I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy manual is to provide general policy direction to users regarding administrative functions which are common to most, if not all, County Departments. This manual provides a central location for regularly used policies of countywide significance issued by either the Board of Supervisors or the County Administrator. It aims to improve organizational communication, reduce risk and exposure to liability, and provide internal controls. This preface defines administrative policy, establishes the criteria to be met to create a new policy, describes how to change or edit a policy, delineates steps to take to add a policy, and establishes the responsibilities of the County Administrator and department heads.

II. Administrative Policy Defined

A. An administrative policy is an ongoing directive based on law, guiding principles and/or goals governing the business operations of the County of Sonoma. It is a guide to decision-making in order to promote legal, consistent and fair business practices and the appropriate use of resources throughout the organization.

III. Criteria and Format

A. Administrative policies should, at a minimum:

1. Be written at a general level, pertaining to the entire County, as opposed to a specific department;

2. Be clear and concise;

3. Contain the following information:
   a. A Purpose covering the objectives of the policy and what public benefit the policy is trying to achieve;
   b. A Statement of Policy section with any information critical for the understanding or implementation of the policy;
   c. Language clarifying what duties or responsibilities a designated department or division may have regarding the policy; and
   d. Procedures delineating or referring to the process(es) to implement the policy. If the procedure is simple, it may be included in the body of the policy. When the procedure is not included in this section, due to length or complexity, a reference should be provided to an easily accessible location where users may find the corresponding procedure.

4. Improve County practices in some way.

B. All policies should be reviewed biennially by department(s) with designated authority, to ensure their currency. As times change, policies will need to be updated or new policies generated to address changes in law, technology or other operating conditions.
IV. Procedure for Policy Development

A. Proposals for new or significant changes to existing policies will be brought to the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) for further review before major development. If and when the MAC and County Administrator concur, the County Administrator will designate a department to develop the proposal into draft language. When other departmental expertise is needed, input from those departments will be obtained by the drafting department. Any policy proposal should be in keeping with the general purpose of the manual.

B. Once a draft has been completed, it should be submitted to the authoring department’s assigned CAO Analyst for review. The County Administrator will determine when a new or changed policy requires Board approval and, in conjunction with the Director of Human Resources and County Counsel, the appropriate method of communication appropriate with affected employee organizations.

C. In General, a policy need Board approval when it:
   1. Directly affects the Board;
   2. Has the potential for significant legal, cost, or political implications;
   3. Changes a previously established Board policy;
   4. Has been requested by one or more Board members.

D. When necessary, the drafting department will submit a Board Agenda Item, to take the proposed policy language to the Board for approval.

E. All new or changed policies will be added to the Intranet website and notification of any changes will be distributed electronically to all department heads by the County Administrator’s Office.

V. Responsibilities

A. County Administrator Responsibility
   1. The County Administrator’s Office (CAO) has overall responsibility for the management and maintenance of the policy manual.
   2. Specifically, the CAO is responsible for:
      a. Deciding what policies are included in the manual and what should remain at the department level;
      b. Ensuring that the manual is up to date;
      c. Providing clear communication on how to access the manual;
      d. Determining when a policy requires Board approval;
      e. Interpreting policies and answering questions that may arise;
      f. Assigning departments to be responsible for the update and maintenance of specific policies; and
      g. Notifying department heads of additions, revisions, or any other changes affecting the state of the manual.

B. Department Head Responsibility
1. Department heads shall become familiar with policies herein and are responsible for:
   a. Updating, reviewing, and/or making changes to policies designated under their authority and are assigned to manage and maintain;
   b. Ensuring that appropriate departmental staff have all necessary information; and
   c. Ensuring that operational level policy/procedure manual and other documents referenced in the Administrative Policy Manual, yet maintained at a departmental level, are current, accurate and accessible.

VI. Authority

The department responsible for the duties outlined above is located under the AUTHORITY heading on the first page of each policy.