

Standard Form for Club Bylaws

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

(Updated March 2025)

The latest edition of the Standard Form for Club Bylaws provides fewer restrictions and greater flexibility to clubs than previous versions, along with simplified language and greater global applicability, making it more relevant to both traditional and nontraditional clubs.

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| Question | Why should my club adopt the latest Standard Form for Club Bylaws? |
| Answer | The Kiwanis International Bylaws (Art. VII, Sec. 2a) state that all clubs must continue to conform to the accepted standards for clubs. Those standards are captured in the Standard Form for Club Bylaws, as revised from time to time by the Kiwanis International Board. All clubs are expected to comply with the provisions of the <i>current</i> Standard Form at any given time. |
| Question | What is the process for adopting the club bylaws? |
| Answer | <p>Clubs submit their bylaws via a simple and user-friendly online process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The club president or secretary may access their club bylaws by logging into the Kiwanis Connect reporting site at kiwanis.org/login and selecting the Club Bylaws tab. (Clubs may also give one other member <i>bylaws assist</i> permission — contact Kiwanis International for details.)2. The club board initially determines the policy information to recommend to the club membership. This is done by entering that information in the online form. All editing must be done online.3. The board provides at least 14 days advance notice to club members that the new bylaws will be considered for adoption at a particular club meeting. At least a quorum (one-third) of the club members must be present at that meeting.4. The board presents its recommended bylaws and policies package to the members. A two-thirds (2/3) vote is required for adoption.5. The club then returns to the pending online version, makes adjustments if appropriate per wording that the club approved, and submits its final version.6. Your club will be notified within six weeks whether its new bylaws have been approved, or if Kiwanis International has any questions.7. Afterward, the club's bylaws and policies can be accessed online anytime and may be amended later via the same process. |
| Question | Have any club operations changed since the previous club bylaws? |

- Answer** Most changes simply broaden a club's options, providing greater flexibility. Specific differences are listed below.
- A modified definition for 'conduct unbecoming a member of the Kiwanis family' and revisions to the process for handling allegations. (Sections 7.1 and 7.2)
 - Removal of the requirement for clubs to keep separate accounts for service funds vs. administrative funds. (Note: Clubs may keep separate accounts if they wish, but it is no longer a requirement. If the club wishes to keep mandatory separation, it can adopt a policy stating it. Use Optional Policy M.) (Sections 8.1 and 8.2)
 - Clarity about quorum for club meetings and for board meetings. (Sections 3.5 and 6.3)
 - Changing the word "federation" to "region." (Sections 8.5 and 10.5)
 - Changing the "Kiwanis International Foundation" to "Kiwanis Children's Fund" (Section 8.6)

Question What are club policies? How are they different from the club bylaws?

- Answer**
- *Bylaws* are each club's agreement with Kiwanis International on basic standards for belonging to the organization. By adhering to these standards, clubs are allowed to use the Kiwanis names and marks.
 - *Policies* capture specific aspects of club operations that may be customized by each club.

Bylaws and policies complement each other, working together as a whole.

Question Why are some club policies mandatory while others are optional?

Answer	<p><i>Mandatory</i> policies carry out basic provisions of the club bylaws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for members to be in good standing. • Certain information related to officers and directors. • Details of the club election process. • Annual financial review. <p><i>Optional</i> policies cover things clubs should consider but are not required to adopt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club dues and fees amounts. • How often the club meets, and when • Additional duties for officers and directors • Standing committees • Non-officer club positions • Higher votes for certain items of business • Special membership types • Other matters
Question	Does my club have to adopt all the policies in the current document?
Answer	A club <i>must</i> adopt the <i>mandatory</i> policies and submit them along with their bylaws. Clubs should also <i>consider</i> the topics covered by the <i>optional</i> policies, but those are truly optional.
Question	Can my club adopt other policies?
Answer	A club may adopt policies on various matters, <i>provided they do not conflict with applicable local laws, the Standard Form for Club Bylaws, the Kiwanis International bylaws, district bylaws or federation bylaws (if any)</i> . Policies are meant to provide clear rules or guidelines on how the club handles certain matters. They should not be adopted in reaction to exceptional matters or one-time concerns. Any club policies not included in the Standard Form must have the approval of a majority of the club board. If a club has questions about the appropriateness or validity of a proposed policy, contact Kiwanis International for assistance.
Question	How many directors is a club required to have?
Answer	The required number of club directors is currently three. (However, remember that each club must have all the required officers as well.)
Question	What is the minimum age for members?

- Answer** Members must be the legal age of majority (that is: considered to be an adult, in legal terms) in the country, state or province where the club is located.
- Question** What is the current definition of “member in good standing”?
- Answer** The term “member in good standing” has never been formally defined in Kiwanis. It has been informally interpreted that a member is in good standing if they pay their club dues within two months. However, clubs have varying payment deadlines. Also, some clubs have strict attendance requirements, while others have virtually no attendance rules. Under the most recent bylaws, each club is allowed to set its own standards for members in good standing. (Note: Kiwanis International has no attendance rules for club members. It is up to each club whether it wishes to set attendance rules.)
- Question** We have several senior or honorary members. Are they required to become active members?
- Answer** Individual clubs may retain the senior and honorary membership designations if they wish, but clubs are no longer limited to those two types. Clubs may define and use other membership types as well, as best suits their individual needs.
- Question** Must senior and honorary members pay dues?
- Answer** Clubs have always been required to pay dues to Kiwanis International and the district for *senior* members. It has been up to the club whether they charge senior members for club dues or meals charges, etc. For *honorary* members, clubs have never had to pay regular dues, but only the cost for the official publication. Clubs may continue that practice or use the honorary membership category in some other way.
- Question** Can my club establish a membership type that does not pay dues to Kiwanis International or the district?
- Answer** Technically, yes. But remember: Clubs must pay dues to Kiwanis International and its district *for each active member*, and all reported members are considered by Kiwanis International to be active members. Your club may choose to not charge a member for Kiwanis International or district dues; however, your club still will be responsible for paying those costs.
- Question** Has Kiwanis International eliminated life members?

Answer No. The life member designation remains the same as it has been for many years. Technically, life member is a *dues status designation*, not a membership class. Club members still may become a life member of Kiwanis International by paying 15 times the amount of Kiwanis International dues in effect at any given time. (Some districts also have separate life membership programs.)

Question Must Kiwanis approve our club dues, club fees or our club meeting information?

Answer No, Kiwanis leaves the determination of what amount your club charges for its club dues or other fees to the discretion of the club. And if your club is meeting at least once per month, Kiwanis does not require you to seek approval for how often or when your club is meeting. The current bylaws version simply provides a place to capture that information for easy reference by the club and its members.

Question I tried to submit the new bylaws, but Kiwanis International denied them due to the amount my club entered for the new member enrollment fee. Why is that?

Answer Both Kiwanis International and most districts charge a fee for each new club member. The combined total varies. Many clubs may not be aware of the proper amount for their district; this is often the challenge. When completing Optional Policy F, if the club states an amount that is less than the combined total, the club must provide some brief explanation such as "The club covers the difference." If the club charges nothing, then state "The club covers this cost for the member." This confirms the club realizes it must pay a fee for new members and provides transparency on the amount.

(Consult Kiwanis International or your district office for the proper new member fee amount for your district.)

Question We feel our club needs a vice president. Can we have one?

Answer Yes, clubs may have one or more vice presidents. It is no longer a requirement, but still an option.

Question Can we combine the offices of president-elect and vice president? If not, why not?

Answer	Since a vice president is not required, a club would only have a vice president if it has a specific role for that officer, separate from the role of president-elect. If the two officers do have distinct roles, the two offices should not be combined. If they do not have distinct roles, there is no need to have both — so the option to combine them is not relevant.
Question	Are the club secretary and treasurer required to give bond? If we want our secretary or treasurer to give bond, how do we do that?
Answer	A bond is a way to provide assurance that a person responsible for club funds, property or records will take proper care of them. It has never been a requirement for the club secretary or treasurer to give bond; it has always been an option — and it still is. If a club would like the secretary or treasurer (or any other officers) to give bond, it should be stated in the policy about additional duties of officers. However, Kiwanis International strongly recommends that clubs instead secure crime insurance, which covers a number of officers and circumstances for the same or lesser cost.
Question	Why don't the bylaws provide for the term of each officer? How do we know what their terms are?
Answer	Clubs may set officers' terms at either one year or two years. Because this is something each club determines for itself — customized to its own operations — it is stated under club polices.
Question	Where is the process for club elections?
Answer	Each club must adopt a written process for nomination and election of club officers and directors. The basic requirements are stated in the policy about club elections. The club may add requirements at its discretion (deadlines, special forms, nominating committee, etc.) or as may be required by local law. Guidelines about electronic club elections are available from Kiwanis International.
Question	Must clubs have an annual audit?
Answer	Unless otherwise required by local law, clubs are permitted to have an annual <i>examination</i> rather than <i>audit</i> . An audit must be conducted by a certified public accountant (CPA), while an examination may be conducted either by a qualified firm or by a qualified committee of the club.
Question	Does the club membership have to approve everything the club charges members? I thought the club board did that.

Answer	The club board <i>recommends</i> the amounts for annual club dues, membership induction fee and other charges; it is the club membership that <i>approves</i> these amounts.
Question	Do club members still have to subscribe to the official publication?
Answer	Members of Kiwanis clubs in the United States and Canada (other than those in French-speaking clubs) are required to subscribe to the official publication, as stated in the Kiwanis International Bylaws. However, because the provision does not apply to all clubs worldwide, it is not repeated in the club bylaws, which are the standards for all clubs.
Question	I see that clubs only have to meet once each month, but my club wants to meet weekly or every other week. Can we do that?
Answer	Yes. Clubs may have regular membership meetings as often as desired and may hold projects, fundraisers, committee meetings, planning meetings, etc., as often as desired or needed.
Question	How often do club boards have to meet?
Answer	The current bylaws version indicates that club boards should meet “regularly,” but how often they meet (monthly, quarterly or otherwise) is up to each club board.
Question	In the past, there was a provision in the bylaws about long-term service projects. Is that no longer valid?
Answer	The previous clause regarding long-term service projects was eliminated. It is up to the club board to determine service projects. If a club board so wishes, it may either: (1) take a “straw vote” (an informal poll) of the club membership before deciding on a long-term project; or (2) turn over the decision to the club membership via a formal vote. If a club wishes to continue following the former provision on long-term service projects, it can include that under new Policy K — Special Vote Requirements. Consult Kiwanis International for that wording.
Question	I see club boards can meet and vote electronically. How does that work? Can we meet by email?

Answer Electronic meetings can be very helpful when urgent matters develop or if a quorum cannot be obtained at a regular face-to-face meeting. **Club boards may conduct business by any method allowed by law where they are located.** In the U.S., check with your secretary of state's office. Outside the U.S., check with the proper governmental authority. Your district office also may be able to guide you regarding proper electronic meeting methods permissible in your area.

In the U.S., state law *usually* allows nonprofit corporations to meet "by any method that allows all participants to simultaneously communicate with each other." The law *usually* recognizes audio- and video-conference calls and instant messaging as simultaneous but email often does not qualify because there is some lag time in transmission that can cause confusion in the conversation. Email is a good tool for informal advance discussion of issues, or it may be used if votes are needed in writing after an audio- or video-conference meeting — but email is not recommended as a means of conducting the actual meeting (and, indeed, may not be a legal means where the club is located). Instead, Kiwanis International suggests an

audio- or video-conference call for meetings that cannot be held face-to-face. (Internet clubs use some version of instant messaging).

Question What about the club membership? Can they meet and vote electronically too?

Answer Yes, Kiwanis International allows this **if the electronic method used for the club membership meeting is allowed by law where the club is located.** The same factors noted above for club board meetings apply to electronic meetings of the club membership. Note that email meetings of a group's *membership* (as opposed to its *board*) often are *not* permitted by state law in the U.S.

Question My club needs to adopt the current version of the club bylaws, but already has some policies we want to retain. Can we do that?

Answer

Yes. Simply incorporate your club's existing policies into the policy section of the current Standard Form. For instance, if your club had a policy stating the amount of club dues, that would be captured in Policy F — Club Dues and Fees. An existing policy stating your club's standing committees would be captured in Policy I — Standing Committees. An existing club policy on a subject not covered in the new document could be added under Policy M — Additional Topics.

Note that Policy M — Additional Topics may be duplicated as many times as necessary to accommodate all club policies, making the club bylaws and policies the club's one-stop location for nearly all club rules, with no need to consult other documents that may get lost or separated over time.

(Alternatively, if your club has *numerous* additional policies, the club could place a note in Policy M saying something like: "Other policies are kept on-file by the club.")

Question

What is the option for "special vote requirements" about? How does it work? Why would my club want to use it?

Answer

This is meant to cover two types of situations:

1. If the club wishes to require a vote on something not specified in the bylaws or mandatory policies, the club should list it in the special vote requirements policy. (An example would be a vote of the membership regarding a multi-year commitment by the club.)
2. If the club wishes to require a greater or stronger vote on something than what is stated in the bylaws or mandatory policies, it should state it in the special vote requirements policy. Here are two examples:
 - Bylaws 3.4 requires a majority vote of the board to establish a standing committee. But maybe your club feels a *two-third vote* should be required. Since that is greater than a majority vote, it is permitted, as long as it is stated in policy.
 - Bylaws 2.1 requires no less than a majority of the club *board* to admit new members. But maybe your club believes that should be a decision of the club *membership*. Because the club members have greater power than the club board, that is permitted. This should be captured in policy.

Clubs cannot adopt a lesser vote than normally required.

A greater-vote requirement must first be adopted by each body it pertains to (the club board and/or the club membership), then stated in the policy on special vote requirements.

OTHER QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions not addressed in this document, email them to Kiwanis International at clubbylaws@kiwanis.org or governance@kiwanis.org, and we'll send you a response.