

Policy Development Lifecycle

The Policy Development Lifecycle: A Repeatable Framework

Purpose: A structured, six-stage process trustee boards can apply to any library policy — whether new or under review — using NotebookLM as the research and drafting engine.

Why a Framework Matters

Most NH library boards work on policy when something forces the issue: a complaint, a vendor change, a new state law, a peer library's example. Without a framework, each policy is approached from scratch, which is slow, inconsistent, and prone to gaps.

A repeatable lifecycle gives the board:

- **Predictable rhythm** — Every policy goes through the same steps.
 - **Defensibility** — A documented process is easier to defend if challenged.
 - **Equity across policies** — A board's Meeting Room Policy and Collection Development Policy rest on the same foundation.
 - **Onboarding for new trustees** — New members can learn one process, not 25.
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The Six Stages

Stage 1 — Inventory

Goal: Know what you have before you change anything.

Key questions:

- What policies do we currently have on this subject?
- When were they last reviewed? Last revised? Last legally reviewed?
- Where are they posted (website, manual, board files)?
- Are they consistent with one another?
- Are they actually being followed in practice?

NotebookLM role: Upload your full current policy manual. Ask the model to identify all policies that touch a given topic (e.g., "patron data," "meeting space," "minors"). It will surface cross-references, conflicts, and gaps you might not have noticed.

Sample prompt: *"Looking at our current policy manual, list every policy that addresses patron privacy or patron data, and note any inconsistencies between them."*

Stage 2 — Synthesize

Goal: Bring authoritative external guidance into the conversation.

Inputs to add:

- ALA Library Bill of Rights and the relevant interpretation
- Applicable NH RSAs (202-A, 91-A, 201-D as applicable)
- 2-3 peer library policies (similar size, similar community)
- Any relevant NH State Library or NHLTA guidance
- Professional commentary (Library Journal, ALA publications)

NotebookLM role: Ask the model to compare your existing policy against the external guidance.

Sample prompts:

- *"Compare our current Meeting Room Policy against the ALA Meeting Rooms Interpretation. Where do they align and where do they diverge?"*
- *"What does the ALA Challenged Resources Interpretation require that our current Reconsideration Policy doesn't include?"*
- *"Summarize the practical requirements RSA 91-A places on a Public Comment Policy."*

Stage 3 — Identify Gaps

Goal: Produce a working list of changes the board should consider.

NotebookLM role: With existing policy + external guidance loaded, ask the model to enumerate gaps.

Sample prompt: *"Based on the ALA guidance and NH RSA 91-A in this notebook, what specific gaps or risks exist in our current Public Input Policy? Cite the source guidance for each gap."*

The output becomes a policy committee agenda. It is *not* a list of mandatory changes — the board still uses its judgment about which gaps matter and which are acceptable for this library and community.

Stage 4 — Draft

Goal: Produce a working draft for board review.

NotebookLM role: Ask the model to draft revised policy language.

Sample prompt: *"Draft a revised Meeting Room Use Policy that:*

- Aligns with the ALA Meeting Rooms Interpretation
- Reflects RSA 91-A and RSA 201-D:11 where applicable
- Matches the tone and structure of our existing policies in this notebook
- Treats this as a living document with regular review
- Is appropriate for a small-to-mid-sized New Hampshire public library

Keep the language clear and accessible for trustees, staff, and the public."

The draft is a starting point. It is not adopted policy. Every section can be traced back to source guidance through citations.

Stage 5 — Review

Goal: Test the draft against multiple lenses before adoption.

Three required reviews:

- **1. Staff review** — The Library Director and relevant staff confirm operational feasibility. Is this enforceable as written? Does it conflict with other procedures?
- **2. Legal review** — Town counsel or library counsel reviews for legal compliance, especially where the policy interprets RSA 91-A, RSA 201-D:11, or ADA requirements.
- **3. Community input** — Per RSA 91-A, the policy is discussed in public session. The Public Input Policy applies. For high-impact policies (Reconsideration, Meeting Room), some boards hold a dedicated public hearing.

NotebookLM role: Generate a Briefing Document or Audio Overview to share with reviewers. Generate a one-page FAQ for the public.

Sample prompt: "Generate a one-page plain-language summary of the proposed policy for community members who don't have time to read the full document."

Stage 6 — Adopt and Schedule Revision

Goal: Adopt formally and set the next review date.

Required elements:

- Motion in public session, vote recorded in minutes
- Effective date specified
- Old version archived (per Records Retention Policy)
- New version posted to website and policy manual
- Staff trained on any operational changes
- **Next review date set** — typically 3 years for established policies, 6-12 months for newer policy areas (like AI use)

NotebookLM role: Generate a board-meeting briefing for the adoption agenda item, including a summary of the changes, the rationale, and the source documents reviewed.

Cadence: When to Trigger the Lifecycle

A board should run a policy through this lifecycle when **any** of these is true:

Trigger	Example
Scheduled review interval	"It's been 3 years"
Change in state or federal law	New RSA, new federal mandate
Change in ALA guidance	ALA amends an Interpretation

Trigger	Example
Change in technology or vendor	New ILS, new AI feature in a database
Incident or complaint	A reconsideration request, a meeting room dispute
New facility or service	Library of Things, makerspace, hot spots
Peer library example	Town next door adopted something useful

Worked Example: Meeting Room Policy

Stage	Action	NotebookLM use
1. Inventory	Pull current Meeting Room Policy. Note: last revised 2014.	Ask: "Summarize the key provisions of our current Meeting Room Policy."
2. Synthesize	Add ALA Meeting Rooms Interpretation, ALA Library Bill of Rights, RSA 201-D:11 (reservation records).	Ask: "What does ALA say about content-neutral access? What does NH law say about reservation record confidentiality?"
3. Identify Gaps	Compare. Gap 1: Our policy doesn't address fees neutrally. Gap 2: No language on equitable access. Gap 3: Confidentiality of reservation records not mentioned.	Ask: "Compare our policy against ALA guidance. List specific gaps with source citations."
4. Draft	Write revised policy incorporating gaps.	Ask: "Draft a revised Meeting Room Policy addressing the gaps identified, in our existing policy tone."
5. Review	Director reviews for operations. Counsel reviews for First Amendment compliance. Public hearing in 30 days.	Ask: "Generate a 1-page community summary." and "Generate a 5-minute Audio Overview for trustees who can't make the next meeting."
6. Adopt	Vote in public session. Set next review for 2029.	Ask: "Generate a board memo summarizing what changed, why, and what was reviewed."

What This Framework Is Not

- **Not a substitute for legal review.** AI-drafted policies must always be reviewed by counsel before adoption.
- **Not a way to skip community input.** RSA 91-A applies. Public hearing where appropriate.
- **Not a one-shot tool.** This is a repeatable cycle, not a single event.
- **Not a way to avoid trustee judgment.** The board reads, debates, and votes. NotebookLM accelerates research; it does not replace deliberation.