



Idaho State Historical Society Board of Trustees Governance Policy Management Guide August 2025

I. General Governing Policies and Procedures

A. Policy-Making Authority

1. Definition

These governing policies establish the fundamental principles for Board procedures. The Board of Trustees ("Board") of the Idaho State Historical Society ("ISHS") oversees policies guiding the Society's divisions, which include the Agency Administration, Idaho State Museum, Old Penitentiary and State Historic Sites, Idaho State Archives and State Records Center, and State Historic Preservation Office.

ISHS Definition:

Under Idaho Code § 67-4101, the ISHS is defined as a state agency whose purpose is to "administer the state's official history program and to preserve and promote Idaho's cultural heritage through statewide programs, services, and partnerships."

2. Powers and Duties

The Board, as the designated policy-making body of ISHS, is empowered by the Idaho Constitution and statutes under Title 67, Chapter 41 of the Idaho Code. The Board delegates operational management to the Executive Director, retaining authority only when in session or formally designated.

3. Policy Decisions

The Board's policy responsibilities include:

- Reviewing and adopting policy proposals.
- Ensuring effective internal management and high-quality service.
- Approving strategic goals and the mission of the Society.
- Evaluating policy execution.
- Approving or disapproving matters requiring Board action.

4. Compliance with Law

All Board policies and agency procedures must comply with applicable federal and state laws.

5. Policy Adoption, Amendment, or Repeal

Policies may be enacted or changed by majority vote (minimum four members per Idaho Code § 67-4125) at regular or special Board meetings. Proposals may originate from:

- Any Board member

- The Executive Director.
- ISHS division administrators (via Executive Director).
- Idaho residents (via written submission to Executive Director).

Board proposals must be submitted to the Executive Director at least 30 days prior to the Board meeting. The Executive Director may make non-substantive policy corrections for clarity. Absent extenuating circumstances, the Board will vote on proposals no earlier than the Board meeting subsequent to the meeting at which the Proposal is first introduced.

6. Governance Documentation

The ISHS maintains the Governance Manual and will distribute official copies to Board members, staff, and other interested parties as necessary.

7. ISHS Executive Oversight

The ISHS is an executive branch agency of the state of Idaho. As such, ISHS operates under the direction and authority of the Governor and complies with all applicable executive branch policies and procedures.

ISHS follows all guidance and direction for the implementation of its budget, legislation, and personnel administration in accordance with policy guidance issued annually by the Governor of the State of Idaho.

B. ISHS Mission, Vision, and Values

1. Mission

To preserve and promote Idaho history.

2. Vision

To make history essential and accessible through dynamic, enriching, and engaging services.

3. Values

- Customer Service: Exceed expectations via responsiveness, trustworthiness, and innovation.
- Stewardship: Preserve artifacts, sites, and documents representing all Idahoans.
- Education: Advance historical literacy and inquiry-based learning.
- Professionalism: Demonstrate excellence, unity, and dedication aligned with professional standards.

C. Legal Mandates and Authority

Under Idaho Code § 67-4126, Board responsibilities include:

1. Appointing and advising the Executive Director.
2. Promoting interest in Idaho history.
3. Collecting and preserving historical artifacts.

4. Publishing reports.
 5. Supporting local historical efforts.
 6. Facilitating use of Idaho records for official reference and historical research
 7. Managing state records.
 8. Accepting official records and facilitating certified copies.
 9. Mandating preservation of historically important materials.
 10. Establishing administrative rules.
 11. Hiring personnel.
 12. Using an official seal.
 13. Delegating authority.
 14. Identifying historical and cultural sites and coordinating with local historic preservation commission.
 15. Serving as Idaho's Geographic Names Board.
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II. Board Structure and Operations

A. Composition and Terms

The Board consists of seven members representing judicial districts, appointed by the Governor as per Idaho Code § 67-4124. Officers include a Chairman, a Vice Chairman, and an advisory Past Chairman.

B. Officer Roles and Responsibilities

1. Chairman

- Call and preside over meetings.
- Sign minutes post-approval.
- Coordinate Board activities.
- Appoint committee and liaison members.
- Execute official documents.
- Consult with the Executive Director.
- Remain knowledgeable about relevant laws and policies.
- Take action consistently with the purpose of ISHS and Board approval.

2. Vice-Chairman

- Act in Chairman's absence.
- Stay informed on applicable regulations.
- Support delegated responsibilities.

3. Immediate Past Chairman

- Serve in advisory capacity for two years post-term.

4. Officer Elections and Vacancies

- Chairman and Vice Chairman serve two-year terms.
- Vice Chairman automatically succeeds Chairman.
- Past Chairman may serve as ex-officio (non-voting) if Board term ends.
- Vacant positions are filled by Board vote.

C. Meetings and Quorum

- Meetings held quarterly or as needed, in accordance with the required public meeting notice.
- Quorum requires four members.
- Majority vote of present members constitutes Board action.

III. Governance Processes

A. Decision-Making Protocol

ISHS staff refer matters to the Board using the following categories:

- Approve: Authorize significant financial or programmatic actions.
- Request Policy Direction: Solicit guidance before final recommendations.
- For Information: Share updates on major agency activities.

All decision items include:

- Background/context.
- Budgetary impact.
- Review by relevant stakeholders and legal advisors.

IV. Board Appointments

A. Appointment Procedures

1. Incumbent Reappointment

If an incumbent seeks reappointment after one term, the Board may recommend them to the Governor without soliciting new candidates. In determining whether to recommend an incumbent for reappointment, the Board shall consider factors including, but not limited to, the trustee's attendance and participation in Board meetings, fulfillment of assigned duties and responsibilities, ongoing commitment to the agency's mission, and adherence to Board policies and standards of conduct. This process ensures consistency and transparency in evaluating continued service.

2. Open Appointments

- Vacancies promoted via ISHS communication channels.
- Applicants submit a statement of interest and qualifications.
- Board evaluates candidates on criteria including history, preservation, education, public service, advocacy, and professional background.
- A minimum of two finalists are recommended to the Governor within 14 days of selection.
- Geographic and experiential diversity are considered.

V. ISHS Overview

A. Divisions

1. **Idaho State Museum:** Accredited, reimagined in 2018, delivering immersive exhibitions and interactive historical/educational programming.
2. **Idaho History Center:** Administrative Central Services hub, including Finance and Budget, Maintenance and Operations, Human Resources, Marketing and Communications, and Development and Membership.
3. **Idaho State Archives and State Records Center:** Stewards, manages, and provides access to historical and government records.
4. **State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO):** Administers the required preservation programs of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and federal project reviews; oversees archaeological repositories.
5. **State Historic Sites:** Operates and maintains multiple historic/destination/educational properties across Idaho.

B. Staffing and Service

The ISHS includes approximately 62 full-time staff, 20 part-time staff, and 150 volunteers. It serves over 150,000 people directly and nearly 1 million online annually.

VI. Oversight and Collaboration with Affiliate Boards

The Board recognizes the importance of partnerships and collaboration with affiliate boards and advisory councils that support the ISHS's mission to preserve and promote Idaho history. These partnerships strengthen programmatic reach, enhance stewardship of historic assets, and foster broader community engagement across the state.

The Board provides oversight and collaboration with the following organizations:

- Foundation for Idaho History
- State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)
- Friends of Stricker Ranch (Hansen, ID)
- Friends of the Bishops' House
- Franklin Pioneer Association and the City of Franklin

- J. Howard Bradbury Logging Museum and the City of Pierce
- Historic Sites Review Board
- Archaeological Survey of Idaho Board
- Idaho Geographic Names Advisory Council

These collaborative relationships ensure responsive decision-making, resource alignment, and shared responsibility in safeguarding Idaho's diverse historical and cultural heritage.

VII. Legacy Circle of Emeritus Trustees

A. Purpose

Established in 2014, the Legacy Circle of Emeritus Trustees seeks to build a statewide network of ISHS advocates through the long-term involvement of ISHS Emeritus Trustees. Emeritus Trustees remain committed to and engaged with the ISHS and its continuing efforts.

B. Criteria for Selection

The Board may invite past trustees to join based on:

- Years of service with ISHS
- Special accomplishments during and after Board service
- Standing and involvement in their community
- Customized qualifications deemed fitting
- Continued residence in Idaho

C. Benefits of Emeritus Status

- Listing on the ISHS website
- Invitations to ISHS events and communications
- Invitations to Board meetings when in their districts

D. Continued Service

The Board asks Emeritus Trustees to stay informed, attend ISHS events, and serve as ambassadors. The Board may invite Emeritus Trustees to serve on committees or support Foundation initiatives based on expertise and alignment with ISHS strategic needs.

E. Authority

Emeritus Trustees may use the title in correspondence but may not speak on behalf of the Board or ISHS. Violations of policy may result in the revocation of status by Board vote.

VIII. Public Trust and Institutional Integrity

Purpose

ISHS is committed to maintaining and enhancing public trust. As a steward of Idaho's cultural heritage, the ISHS recognizes that transparency, ethical stewardship, and community engagement are essential for fulfilling its mission and sustaining its credibility.

Museums and history-based organizations, including the ISHS, are consistently recognized as some of the most trusted institutions in society. This trust arises from their roles as nonpartisan educators, ethical custodians of historical artifacts, and inclusive community partners. Studies—such as the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer, research published in *Museum Management and Curatorship* (Smith & Johnson, 2022), and surveys by the American Alliance of Museums—confirm the enduring public confidence in museums and historical societies.

Research by Susi Wilkening further emphasizes that trust is cultivated through transparency, active community engagement, and ethical accountability. These findings underscore the importance of governance policies that reflect best practices in building and maintaining public trust.

Governance Policy Statement

The Board affirms the ISHS's commitment to fostering public trust by adhering to the highest standards of transparency, ethical stewardship, educational integrity, and broad community involvement.

Policy Provisions

1. Transparency

- ISHS shall provide clear, accessible information on collections, programming, and governance decisions through reports, public communications, and open meetings where appropriate.
- ISHS shall promptly communicate significant operational or mission-related changes to stakeholders and the public.

2. Ethical Stewardship

- ISHS shall comply with the professional standards of the American Alliance of Museums, Society of American Archivists, and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators Codes of Ethics for acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of artifacts and archival materials. Adherence to the highest levels of Government Accounting Principles in the management of financial resources.
- ISHS staff, in consultation with appropriate stakeholder groups, shall review exhibition content and publications for accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and connectivity to all Idahoans.

3. Community Engagement

- ISHS shall involve Idaho communities in programs and decision-making to ensure broad representation.

- ISHS shall promote educational access and invite public feedback to improve services continuously.

4. Educational Integrity

- ISHS shall base all educational content and programming on factual, unbiased historical research.
- ISHS shall encourage respectful discourse on historical topics, fostering critical thinking.

5. Accountability and Implementation

- ISHS shall periodically assess public trust and community satisfaction through surveys and feedback channels.
- The Board is responsible for reviewing and updating governance policies regularly to reflect evolving standards and community expectations.
- The Executive Director and senior staff shall recommend relevant annual/strategic plan actions and report annually on efforts to maintain and enhance public trust.
- Public and stakeholder feedback will be considered in ongoing governance and strategic planning.

References

- American Alliance of Museums (AAM). (2021). *Public Trust in Museums: A National Survey*. <https://www.aam-us.org/resources/2021-public-trust-survey>
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- Wilkening, S. (2017). Museums and Public Trust: Creating a Culture of Transparency and Engagement. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 60(1), 3–14.
- [2025 Edelman Trust Barometer | Edelman](#)