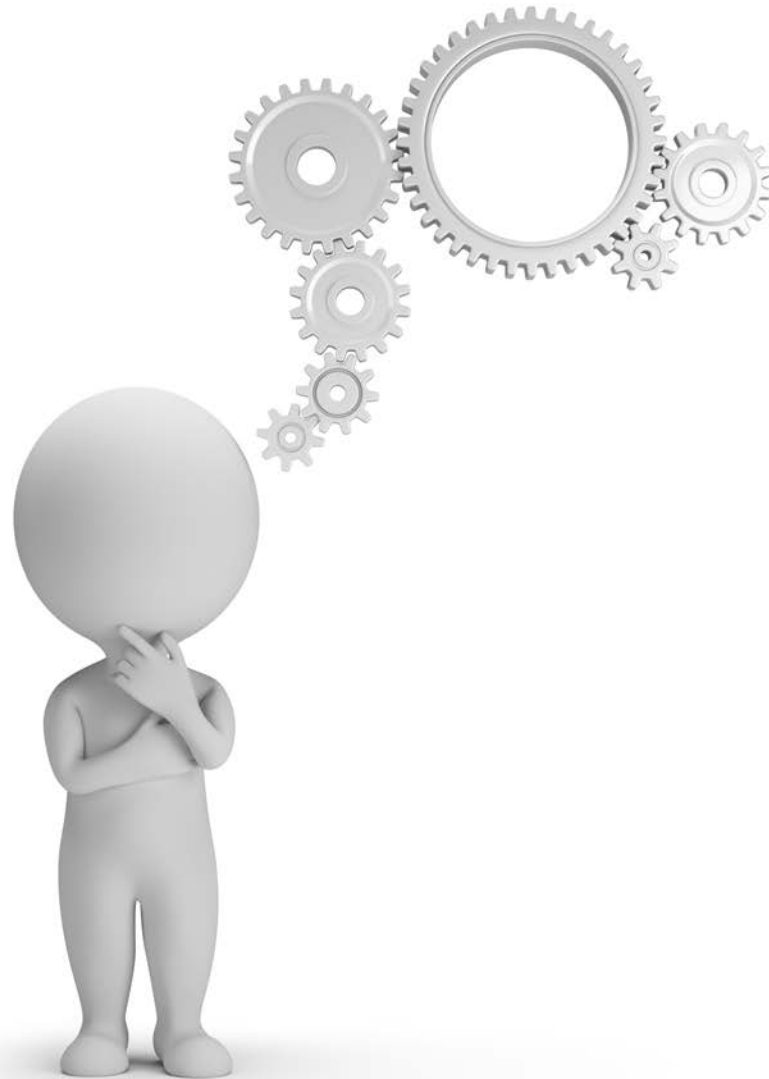




Creating a Dog Policy



So, you've decided to become a dog-friendly workplace. Great! Dogs bring many benefits to an office, but it can all go wrong quickly if there are not guidelines in place.



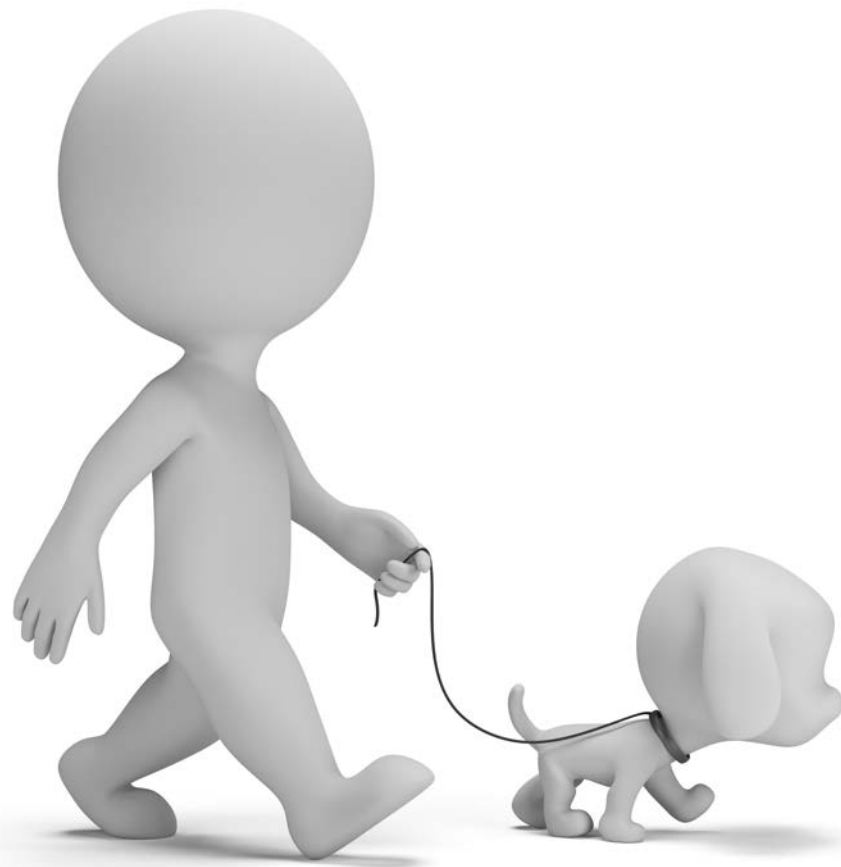
Creating a dog policy that works for your business is essential. But who should be involved in creating the policy? What should the policy include?



A dogs-at-work program is most effective when all affected parties are represented in the decision-making process. This means management and employees need to be involved, and it is also a good idea to include employees who do not own dogs. Every employee needs to feel their viewpoints and opinions are represented and heard when starting a program that will affect everyone in the workplace.



A dog policy should reflect your organization's decisions about bringing dogs to work, be specific to your needs, and provide clear guidelines about dog behavior and accountability.



Dogs at Work suggests that a dog policy cover the people and dogs who can participate in the dogs-at-work program and clearly outline the dog owner's responsibilities. To take part in a dogs-at-work program, employees must agree to honor the dog policy.

Scope

A dog policy needs to clearly outline the scope of the program. Questions to consider when determining the scope of your program:

Who can bring their dogs? Is it just employees or can visitors bring their dogs too?

- One dog-friendly company has this clause in their policy: This workplace dog policy applies to employees only. Because it would be too difficult to track requirements and participation, we do not allow visitors to bring dogs to our workplace.

What workplace locations are pet friendly? Are there any locations that are not pet friendly?

- Some companies only allow dogs at their business offices, but warehouse locations are not eligible because of the potentially unsafe environment. Other companies only allow pets in certain areas of their building, such as offices and cubicles, but communal areas are pet-free zones.

Is your program specific to dogs or are other pets eligible?

- A dog-friendly company includes this clause in their policy: The focus of our policy is dogs. Other pets are not included at this time. Please contact HR if you would like to explore adding other pets to the workplace dog policy.

Dog Requirements

Some dogs are excellent candidates to be “co-woofers,” but there are some dogs that just aren’t right for the workplace. Some organizations “interview” each dog before it can be included in the program, but a dog policy that includes a specific list of requirements is also effective in ensuring dogs are a good fit for the organization.

Here are some questions to consider as you develop this portion of your dog policy:

What age should the dog be? Are puppies allowed? Are very elderly dogs allowed?

How healthy should the dog be? What vaccinations should they have? How often should they see a vet?

Should there be bathing and grooming requirements?

How much training should the dogs have?

One Dog-Friendly Organization

has these requirements for dogs involved in the program:

- Be at least 3 months old
- Have up-to-date on vaccinations required by state law
- Be free of any communicable infections or parasites, such as fleas
- Be clean, well-groomed, and house-trained
- Be obedient and well-socialized with no history of biting, excessive barking, chasing, or aggressive behavior
- Have a microchip to help locate and return them in case they run away while visiting

Dog Owner Responsibilities

The final component of a dog policy is the responsibilities of the dog owners.

A dog policy should clearly outline that it is the pet owner who is responsible for everything his or her dog does in the workplace. This includes the dog's behavior, well-being, hygiene, and care. Beyond these basic guidelines, there are other things to consider.

Who is responsible if the dog owners have to be away from their desks?

This is how some dog-friendly companies handle this question in their pet policies:

- Owners must keep their dog with them and controlled throughout the day or make arrangements with a colleague to do so if they need to step away from their workspace.

What if a dog disrupts another worker?

Example pet policy clauses:

- Owners will be respectful of other employees, and their dogs, to ensure everyone can be as successful and productive as possible at work
- Owners will ensure that their dog's behavior does not interfere with other employees' comfort or ability to do their work.
- Owners will keep dogs out of dog-free zones.

Under what conditions should dogs be left at home?

Example pet policy clauses:

- Owners should use alternate dog care away from work on days when the employee would be unable to fully manage the dog at work (e.g., an all-day meeting) or the dog is ill.
- Owners must take their dog home at any time if the dog's behavior or health makes it a distraction, nuisance, or danger to anyone else, or if asked to do so by their manager.

Who should provide dog-safety items like leashes, doggie gates, crates, etc.?

Example pet policy clauses:

- Owners must manage their workspace to ensure it is “dog-proofed” and safe for other employees or visitors.
- Owners will provide their own dog items to ensure dog safety, such as leashes, crates, or gates to keep the dog securely in the employee’s work area.
- Owners will provide their own dog wellness items, such as waste bags, toys, food, and water bowls.

Who should clean up after any accidents the dogs have?

Example pet policy clauses:

- Owners will provide adequate bathroom breaks, access to water and food, and exercise throughout the day.
- Owners must clean up after their dog immediately if any accidents occur.

How often should proof of wellness and vaccinations be provided?

Example pet policy clause:

- Owners will provide annual proof of vaccination and health for their visiting dogs.

What happens if the dog destroys property or injures someone? Who is responsible?

Example pet policy clauses:

- Owners are legally and financially responsible for any damage caused by their dogs.
- Owners will maintain homeowners/renters' insurance that covers dog bites.





Remember, a pet policy that clearly outlines the responsibilities of all parties involved in the program will ensure your organization reaps the many benefits of having dogs at work.



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Dogs at Work is a social-advocacy company that makes good companies better through the successful integration of dogs in the workplace. If you would like to join us or make a contribution please contact us through our website [dogsatwork.us](https://www.dogsatwork.us) or through our Facebook group, Dogs at Work.

THANK YOU!

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