Group Structure

When forming a group, there are some legal implications to consider in terms of how it is structured. Even if you are not applying for 501c3 status immediately, there are still benefits to registering as a nonprofit at the state level, including limiting your personal liability. Outdoor Service Guides groups would fall under the Public Benefit Corporation category, as the mission revolves around providing youth outdoor education and service opportunities. You will need to have articles of incorporation and bylaws in place to register.

Once you have registered with the Secretary of State, you can go about applying for an EIN. This allows you to open a business bank account in the name of the group. Once you have an EIN, you can consider applying for 501c3 status. The primary benefits to being a 501c3 is that income is not taxed and that you may apply for grants without needing an external fiscal sponsor. Groups are not required to hold 501c3 status but it is recommended that they incorporate and obtain an EIN to limit personal liability.

Groups in some locations (such as Portland, OR and Brooklyn, NY) have established local councils that may be able to assist with the process of organizing and registering a new group.

Articles of Incorporation

Articles of incorporation are a legal document required to file with the Secretary of State.

Bylaws

Bylaws are a legal document required to obtain nonprofit status. These detail the structure and workings of your organization.

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Last update: **2024/04/19 00:01**