



Reserve Policy: Operating Reserve Fund

Purpose

The purpose of the Operating Reserve Policy for the Minnesota Independent School Forum (MISF) is to ensure the stability of the mission, programs, employment, and ongoing operations of the organization. The Operating Reserve is intended to provide an internal source of funds for situations such as a sudden increase in expenses, one-time unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss in funding, or uninsured losses. The Operating Reserve may also be used for one-time, nonrecurring expenses that will build long-term capacity, such as staff development, research and development, investment in infrastructure or program development or expansion.

The Operating Reserve is not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds or eliminate an ongoing budget gap. The intent of the Operating Reserve for MISF is to be used and replenished within a reasonably short period of time. The Operating Reserve Policy will be implemented in concert with the other governance and financial policies of MISF and is intended to support the goals, strategies and operational plans of the organization.

Definitions and Goals

The Operating Reserve Fund is defined as a designated fund set aside by action of the Board of Directors. The minimum amount to be designated as Operating Reserve will be established in an amount sufficient to maintain ongoing operations and programs for a set period of time, measured in months. The Operating Reserve serves a dynamic role and will be reviewed and adjusted in response to internal and external changes.

The target minimum Operating Reserve Fund is equal to three months of average operational costs. The calculation of average monthly operating costs includes all recurring, predictable expenses such as salaries and benefits, occupancy, office, travel, program, and ongoing professional services. Depreciation, in-kind, and other non-cash expenses are not included in the calculation. The amount of the Operating Reserve Fund target minimum will be calculated each year after approval of the annual budget, reported to the Finance Committee/Board of Directors, and included in the regular financial reports.

Accounting for Reserves

The Operating Reserve Fund will be recorded in the financial records as Board-Designated Operating Reserve. The Fund will be funded and available in cash or cash equivalent funds. Operating Reserves will be maintained in a segregated bank account or investment fund and reported accordingly on financial statements and balance sheets.

Funding of Reserves

The Operating Reserve Fund will be funded with unrestricted operating funds. The Board of Directors may, from time to time, direct that a specific source of revenue be set aside for Operating Reserves. Examples may include one-time gifts or bequests, special grants, or special appeals.

Use of Reserves

Use of the Operating Reserves requires three steps:

1. Identification of appropriate use of reserve funds:

The President and staff will identify the need for access to reserve funds and confirm that the use is consistent with the purpose of the reserves as described in this Policy. This step requires analysis of the reason for the shortfall, the availability of any other sources of funds before using reserves, and evaluation of the time period that the funds will be required and replenished.

2. Authority to use operating reserves:

Authority for use of Operating Reserves is delegated to the President in consultation with the Chair and Treasurer of the Board of Directors. The use of Operating Reserves will be reported to the Board of Directors, accompanied by a description of the analysis and determination of the use of funds and plans for replenishment to restore the Operating Reserve Fund to the target minimum amount. The President must provide a plan for replenishment to the Board of Directors.

3. Reporting and monitoring

The President is responsible for ensuring the Operating Reserve Fund is maintained and used only as described in this Policy. Upon approval for the use of Operating Reserve funds, the President will maintain records of the use of funds and plan for replenishment. The President will provide regular reports to the Board of Directors on progress to restore the Fund to the target minimum amount.

Review of Policy

This Policy will be reviewed every other year, at minimum, by the Board of Directors, or sooner if warranted by internal or external events or changes. Changes to the Policy will be recommended by the Executive Committee to the full Board of Directors.

Approved by MISF board of directors - June 19, 2019