

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
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Chicago, Illinois**

**Standards Committee: Revise Procedures for Review  
And Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard  
(Prepared by Co-Chairs Lisa Miller and Dan Santamaria)**

**BACKGROUND**

To fulfill its mission to oversee the process of initiating, developing, reviewing, and approving all standards developed by SAA, the Standards Committee has developed formal procedures for review and approval of standards developed by SAA subgroups. The procedures were substantially revised in 2012 and have generally been effective, but recently the SAA Council and staff have expressed a desire for a “fast track” procedure for standards development as a means of responding to member and other needs in an agile manner while still soliciting appropriate feedback and review from SAA members and the Standards Committee itself. To meet this need, the Standards Committee recommends a change in the Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard.

**DISCUSSION**

The current Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard are available in the SAA Governance Manual.<sup>1</sup> The procedures describe five steps in the standards approval process:

- I. Submission of a Proposal for a Project to Create, Revise, or Review an SAA-Developed Standard
- II. Standards Committee Action in Response to Proposal
- III. Standards Development Process
- IV. Standards Committee Review of Draft Standard
- V. Promulgation, Maintenance, and Review of Adopted Standards

Council members and SAA staff informally voiced the need for a "fast track" standards procedure during the fall of 2013. The recent development process of the “Best Practices for Internships” document is an example of the need for a revision to the procedures. In

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section7/groups/Standards/Procedures-Review-Approval-SAA-Developed-Standard>

the case of the internships document, the Council identified a need to develop a best practices document and formed a group to work on the document without first formally submitting a proposal to the Standards Committee. Instead the procedure followed was:

1. Council identified a need for a best practices document.
2. Council formed a team to research and develop the best practices, including publicizing the effort and seeking comment.
3. The team submitted the best practices and supporting documentation to the Standards Committee for review.
4. The Standards Committee reviewed the document and submitted a recommendation to the Council.

Essentially steps I and II from the “Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard” were skipped in the process. No formal submission was made to the Standards Committee because the Council had already approved work in this area. As the Council is already working on a similar document related to utilizing volunteers in archives, it would be useful to formalize the change in process at this time.

The simplest way to formalize this process is to add language to the “Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard” stating that when the Council identifies a need for a best practices document, it can form a group and essentially start at step III of the procedures. A subset of Council members would serve as the Development and Review Team and be responsible for steps III and V of the procedures, including creating the best practices, publishing the best practices in draft form, soliciting member feedback, consulting with SAA subgroups and external organizations, documenting the consultation process, and submitting the best practices and supporting documentation to the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee would still review the draft best practices document (step IV) and prepare the recommendation to the Council. Upon adoption of the best practices document, the SAA Council would be responsible for promulgating the new best practices and creating a maintenance and review plan.

The revised procedures are designed to allow the Council to act in a quick and agile manner. Other SAA component groups will be encouraged to follow the normal procedures for development of a standard or best practices document. The revised procedures also are intended solely for the development of best practices documents, which are defined as follows in the SAA Governance Manual:

***Best practices*** are procedures and guidelines based on experience and research that demonstrate that they are optimal and efficient means to produce a desired result. Best practices represent consensus on archival practice.<sup>2</sup>

Development of other types of standards, including technical standards, conventions or rules, and formal guidelines, as defined in the SAA Governance Manual should follow the full standards development procedures.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section7/groups/Standards/Development-and-Review>

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT “Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard” be revised to add a new Section VI. as follows (underline = addition, strikethrough = deletion):**

### **VI. Council Fast-Track Procedures**

In some cases the SAA Council may initiate, or encourage/approve a component group to initiate, the standards development process for best practices documents without seeking prior approval from the Standards Committee. In these cases a subgroup of the Council functions as the standard development and review team and the standards approval process begins at step III as described above.

*Revised June 1995, February 2010, January, 2012, August 2013, May 2014*

**Support Statement:** Revising the procedures for standards development in this way will allow the Council to act in a flexible and agile manner while still preserving appropriate mechanisms for review and feedback from the Standards Committee and membership as a whole.

**Impact on Strategic Plan Goals:** The changes could impact any of the four goals identified in SAA's 2014-2018 strategic plan, but especially relate to the goals of participating in new standards development (3.1) and meeting members' needs as an "agile association" (4).

**Fiscal Impact:** None.