LEAD & SCALE

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE TEMPLATE

Document reliable work so quality, control, and capability can scale.

2026 EDITION | PRACTICAL BUSINESS RESOURCE

01 / DOCUMENT CONTROL

Establish the Official Procedure Record

Create one controlled source for the procedure, its owner, approval, effective date, classification, and review cycle.

Document field	Record
SOP title	
SOP identification number	
Business function / department	
Process owner	
Document author	
Approver	
Version	
Effective date	
Next review date	
Classification / access level	

Approval record

Role	Name	Decision / signature	Date
Process owner			
Functional leader			
Risk / compliance reviewer			
Final approver			

02 / PURPOSE & SCOPE

Define Why the Procedure Exists

State the business or customer result the procedure protects, where it applies, where it does not, and the standards it must satisfy.

Definition area	Description
Purpose	
Required outcome	
Scope - included	
Scope - excluded	
Customer / stakeholder served	
Locations / markets	
Systems / channels	
Policies / regulations	
Related processes	
Known limitations	

One-sentence purpose statement

_____

_____

03 / ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Clarify Who Owns Each Part of the Process

Assign responsibility, accountability, consultation, approval, and escalation. Avoid ambiguous references such as “the team” when one role must act.

Role	Responsibilities	Decision authority	Required capability	Backup role

Responsibility checks

- ☐ One role is accountable for the process result.
- ☐ Every step and control has a responsible role.
- ☐ Approval and escalation authority are explicit.
- ☐ Continuity exists for absence, turnover, or emergency.
- ☐ Separation of duties is preserved where required.

04 / INPUTS & PREREQUISITES

Confirm What Must Be Ready Before Work Begins

List required information, approvals, access, tools, materials, training, conditions, and upstream outputs.

Input / prerequisite	Standard / specification	Source / provider	Required by	Verified
Request / trigger				☐
Customer or transaction data				☐
Approval / authorization				☐
System access				☐
Tools / equipment				☐
Materials / inventory				☐
Template / form				☐
Training / certification				☐
Safety / compliance condition				☐
Prior process output				☐

Condition that prevents the process from starting

_____

_____

Who resolves a missing prerequisite

_____

05 / PROCEDURE STEPS I

Document the Core Workflow

Write instructions in the order performed. Begin each step with a clear action, identify the responsible role, and state the expected output or evidence.

Step	Action / instruction	Responsible role	System / tool	Expected output	Control / evidence
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

- ☐ Instructions use specific actions rather than general intentions.
- ☐ Screens, fields, files, forms, and locations are named where necessary.
- ☐ The expected result of every step is observable.
- ☐ Critical warnings and controls appear before the risky action.

06 / PROCEDURE STEPS II

Complete the Workflow and Handoffs

Continue the process through final output, communication, records, and handoff. If fewer steps are needed, use the remaining rows for detailed substeps.

Step	Action / instruction	Responsible role	System / tool	Expected output	Control / evidence
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

Final output and recipient

Formal completion or acceptance evidence

Next process or handoff owner

07 / DECISIONS & EXCEPTIONS

Define Branches, Variations, and Escalation

Document what happens when conditions differ from the standard path. Specify decision authority and prevent informal exceptions from becoming uncontrolled practice.

Condition / decision	If true	If false	Decision owner	Evidence / record

Exception controls

Exception type	Who may approve	Maximum duration	Required record
Customer / service			
Financial / commercial			
Quality / operational			
Policy / compliance			
Emergency			

08 / CONTROLS & QUALITY

Protect Accuracy, Safety, Compliance, and Customer Value

Identify preventive, detective, and corrective controls. Define the standard, evidence, frequency, owner, and response to failure.

Control / quality check	Type	Standard	Frequency	Owner	Evidence	Failure response

- ☐ Controls address the highest customer, financial, safety, privacy, and compliance risks.
- ☐ Evidence is retained long enough for review, reconciliation, or audit.
- ☐ Control owners understand the response to failure.
- ☐ The SOP does not rely on memory for critical verification.

09 / RECORDS & SYSTEMS

Define What Must Be Recorded and Retained

Specify documents, data, evidence, storage, access, retention, disposal, security, and the authoritative system of record.

Record / data	Created by	Storage / system	Access	Retention	Disposal / archive	Required fields

Official system or location of record

Backup, recovery, and continuity requirement

Privacy, confidentiality, or access restriction

10 / TRAINING & IMPLEMENTATION

Prepare People to Use the Procedure Correctly

Define who must be trained, the learning method, practice requirement, assessment, authorization, refresher cadence, and implementation communication.

Audience / role	Training required	Method	Practice / observation	Competency evidence	Due / cadence

Implementation checklist

- ☐ The approved SOP is published in the correct controlled location.
- ☐ Affected roles receive communication before the effective date.
- ☐ Legacy forms, instructions, and links are removed or archived.
- ☐ Access, tools, templates, and system changes are available.
- ☐ Supervisors know how to observe and reinforce the standard.
- ☐ Early-use feedback and defects have a response owner.

11 / REVIEW & CHANGE CONTROL

Keep the Procedure Accurate and Useful

Review the SOP when performance, technology, law, policy, risk, customer needs, or responsibility changes—not only when the calendar requires it.

Review trigger	Evidence / change	Impact	Required revision	Owner	Due
Scheduled review					
Process or system change					
Customer / quality issue					
Control failure / audit finding					
Policy / legal change					
Role / organization change					
Supplier / input change					
Improvement opportunity					

Version history

Version	Date	Change summary	Author	Approver

12 / REFERENCE NOTES

Use Guidance

Write the procedure with the people who perform, supervise, receive, and control the work. Test it with a realistic case before approval and publication.

Recommended working sequence

Step	Working action
01	Establish document control, ownership, scope, and approval.
02	Define roles, prerequisites, inputs, outputs, and process boundaries.
03	Document steps in action order with observable results and evidence.
04	Add decisions, exceptions, handoffs, controls, and escalation.
05	Define records, systems, access, retention, and continuity.
06	Test the SOP, train affected roles, and implement the controlled version.
07	Monitor use, capture learning, and revise through change control.

Final SOP quality check

- ☐ The purpose, scope, outcome, and owner are explicit.
- ☐ A trained person can perform the work from the instructions.
- ☐ Decision points, exceptions, and escalation are defined.
- ☐ Controls protect quality, customers, safety, finances, privacy, and compliance.
- ☐ Required records and the source of truth are clear.
- ☐ Training and competency evidence are planned.
- ☐ Version history and review triggers keep the SOP current.

Important: This template provides general process-documentation guidance. Confirm legal, employment, privacy, safety, accessibility, financial, regulatory, contractual, tax, and other requirements for your operation.

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