****

**GOVERNING DOCUMENTS**

At the foundation of your association is your Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. These governing documents serve as the legal and fiduciary bases for the roles and responsibilities of your governing body. The articles of incorporation are the primary rules of your organization, which you will file in order to gain a tax designation. Most associations would fall under one of three designations:

* **501(c)(3)**: Organized to promote charitable, scientific, and/or educational purposes
* **501(c)(4)**: Organized to promote the social welfare of members/constituency
* **501(c)(6)**: Organized to promote professional/business interests

The articles of incorporation contain basic information such as the name and location of your association, your mission, tax designation, and board of directors. Bylaws are the rules which the organization establishes for the purposes of self-regulation. They should be specific enough to clearly outline the duties, roles, responsibilities and procedures involved in the governance of the organization; however, they should not be so specific that even minor changes to organizational procedure require a change in the bylaws.

**ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION vs. BYLAWS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION** | **BYLAWS** |
| Name and purpose | Board size, structure, duties, term limits |
| Location & address | Committee structure |
| Membership organization (yes/no) | Membership structure |
| Tax designation | Duties and authority of board/officers |
| Board authority and list of initial directors | Procedure for amendments to bylaws |