



Corporate Documents in Support of Freedom of Religion or Belief

These documents offer templates and sample language that businesses can use to ensure that freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is respected in the company and its external and internal dealings.*

Freedom of Religion or Belief – FoRB – is an internationally recognized human right protecting people’s right to practice, change or have no religion. Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

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MISSION: The Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (RFBF) educates the global business community about how religious freedom is good for business, and engages the business community in joining forces with government and non-government organizations in promoting respect for freedom of religion or belief (FoRB).

Emphasis: The RFBF places emphasis on helping businesses foster interfaith understanding and peace.

VISION: The RFBF envisions a global future of innovative and sustainable economies where freedom of religion or belief and diversity are respected.

ACTIONS: The RFBF accomplishes its work through research, the Empowerment+ initiative, global awards, world forums, and education on how freedom of religion or belief is in the strategic interests of businesses and societies. See: <http://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/>

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* Comments are welcome. Contact RFBF president Brian Grim: brian@ReligiousFreedomAndBusiness.org.



Corporate Charter Statements

Recommended amendments to a company's governing documents:

Option A: [Name of Company] respects the religion or belief of all employees, officers, customers, and shareholders.

Option B: [Name of Company] respects the religion or belief of all employees, officers, shareholders, and customers. The Company will not permit discrimination or harassment on the basis of religion or belief.

Option C: [Name of Company] respects the religion or belief of all employees, officers, shareholders, and customers. The Company prohibits any and all types of harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation based on religion or belief. No matter the religion or belief, the Company recognizes and promotes the economic value and social benefits of robust religious liberty.

Attached as an Appendix are draft resolutions of the governing body to approve these changes.



Employee Policy

Recommended language for a Company's HR policies:

Discrimination on the Basis of Religion or Belief. [Name of Company] is an equal opportunity employer, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. This prohibition on religious discrimination applies to all aspects of employment including, without limitation, recruitment, interviewing, hiring, training, job assignments, promotions, demotions, compensation, benefits, transfers, terminations, layoffs, firing, recalls, tuition assistance, and social and recreational programs.

It is the responsibility of every employee to strictly comply with this policy. This policy prohibits unlawful harassment of any kind, including jokes, slurs, offensive gestures, and bullying on the basis of religion or sincerely held beliefs. Furthermore, supervisors should allow religious expression among employees to the same extent that they allow other types of personal expression that are not harassing or disruptive.

Any employee who feels that he or she has been treated contrary to this policy, including any harassment by company personnel or work-related harassment by any other person, should contact his or her supervisor, any member of the Human Resources department or the Employee Relations office. Any employee who is found to have violated this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. [Name of Company] will not retaliate against any employee for filing a complaint and will not tolerate retaliation by management, employees, or co-workers.

Religious Accommodation. [Name of Company] respects the religious beliefs and practices of all employees and will provide, upon written request, a reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation is one that does not create an undue hardship on the company's business.

- a. **Requesting a Religious Accommodation.** An employee whose religious beliefs or practices conflict with his or her job, work schedule, or with [Company Name]'s policy or practice on dress and appearance, or with other aspects of employment, and who seeks a religious accommodation must submit a written request for a reasonable accommodation to the company's human resources department. The written request will identify the type of religious conflict that exists.
- b. **Providing Religious Accommodation.** The human resources department will evaluate the request considering whether a work conflict exists and whether an accommodation is available that is reasonable and that would not create an undue hardship on [Company Name]'s business. Depending on the type of conflict and suggested accommodation, the human resources department may confer with the employee's supervisor. The human resources department and employee will meet to discuss the request and decision on an accommodation within thirty (30) days of the employee's request. If the employee accepts the proposed religious accommodation, the human resources department and/or the employee's supervisor will implement the decision. If the employee rejects the proposed accommodation, he or she may appeal in accordance with the company's general grievance policy and procedure.



External Policies

Possible language for a Company's corporate social responsibility policies:

[Name of Company] is committed to treating every person with dignity and respect. No matter the religion or belief, the Company recognizes and promotes the economic value and social benefits of robust religious diversity and liberty.

In its interactions with suppliers and customers, including without limitation the decision to do business with such, [Name of Company] does not discriminate on the basis of religion or belief. The Company emphasizes the need for ethical working conditions for those within the Company's supply chain. The Company encourages its suppliers to enact their own protections against religious discrimination and harassment.

In the larger community, [Name of Company] supports governments and organizations that protect religious liberty. Societies in which human rights are respected are more stable and provide a better environment for business. Businesses whether operating outside their country of origin or at home may have the opportunity to promote and help raise standards in countries where protection of human rights issues is insufficient, especially in ways that are strategically relevant to its core business.



Corporate Pledge

(1) Promoting Sustainable and Innovative Business Through Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief

[COMPANY] affirms that freedom of religion or belief (“FoRB”) is a fundamental right. [COMPANY] also recognizes that religious freedom promotes sustainable and innovative businesses, contributes to human flourishing, and results in peaceful and stable societies. For these reasons, and with a vision of a future of innovative and sustainable economies where FoRB and diversity are respected, [COMPANY] strives to be a leader in promoting and protecting FoRB in its workplace and communities. [COMPANY] will not tolerate abuses of religious freedom within its sphere of influence.

(2) Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment on the Basis of Religion or Belief

[COMPANY] respects each individual’s rights to freedom of religion or belief, provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. This prohibition on religious discrimination applies to all aspects of employment including, without limitation, recruitment, interviewing, hiring, training, job assignments, promotions, demotions, compensation, benefits, transfers, terminations. [COMPANY] will take appropriate action upon receiving a report consistent with its general non-harassment and non-discrimination policy.

(3) Religious Accommodation and Inclusion

[COMPANY] promotes a religiously inclusive environment where each employee’s beliefs are recognized and respected, but where religion or belief is not a matter of force or coercion. Consistent with this policy, an employee may seek, and [COMPANY] will provide, a reasonable religious accommodation that does not create an undue hardship on [COMPANY]’s business if his or her religious beliefs, observances, practices, or requirements conflict with his or her job, work schedule, [COMPANY]’s policy or practice on dress and appearance, or with other aspects of employment.

(4) Protecting and Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Our Communities

[COMPANY] strives to be a leader in promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) among its stakeholders and in the broader community. [COMPANY] gives priority to business partners, suppliers, and contractors who share [COMPANY]’s values, including FoRB. [COMPANY] supports their efforts to promote these values through their business activities. Among other practices that are consistent with this policy, [COMPANY] will strive to support local, national and global initiatives that promote FoRB, and may refrain from doing business with or investing in companies and governments that restrict FoRB.

[SIGNATURE]



Best Practices

Religious Non-Discrimination and Non-Harassment

- A company should not discriminate against a job applicant if the applicant includes religious experience on a resume.
- A company may choose to integrate its religious non-discrimination and non-harassment policy with its general non-discrimination and non-harassment policies. This may include establishing a safe, anonymous reporting system for employees who feel they have been discriminated against or harassed, including for reasons related to an employee's religion or belief.

Religious Accommodation and Inclusion

- A company should consider FoRB when implementing other policies and programs. For example:
 - A company should ensure that its dress code policy allows an employee to request a reasonable accommodation if the employee's religious beliefs require certain grooming and dress practices.
 - A company may ensure that its cafeterias provide menu options for employees whose religious beliefs require certain dietary restrictions.
 - A company may consider allowing employees to take a "floating holiday" that may be used on a date of the employee's choice, which may include a religious holiday.
- A company should welcome inclusiveness in religion and belief, without making religion or belief a matter of coercion. For example:
 - A company may consider allowing employees to form religious or faith-based employee groups, provided that the company does so on a non-discriminatory basis.
 - A company may consider creating designated spaces that employees may use for prayer or other religious devotional practices.
 - A company should never allow employees to feel compelled or pressured to participate in religious or faith-based observances or activities. For example, if a group of employees in a religious or faith-based group chooses to have a prayer meeting on company premises, other employees should not be implicitly or explicitly pressured to attend the meeting.

Protecting and Promoting FoRB in Our Communities

- A company may integrate its FoRB policy with its corporate social responsibility program. For example:
 - A company may make religious freedom protections part of contracts for organizations that are part of the supply chain.
 - A company may choose to pull direct foreign investment out of countries that abuse human rights, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.
 - A company may provide resources and fundraising for NGOs that promote religious freedom.
 - A company may approach governments about creating social or political situations that are more favorable to expatriate employees who will be religious minorities.
- A company may consider making religious freedom initiatives part of its disclosures in its annual statements.



Appendix (Draft resolution of the governing body to approve changes to corporate charters)

CONSENT OF
[BOARD OF DIRECTORS/SHAREHOLDERS, MEMBERS/MANAGERS OR PARTNERS/GENERAL PARTNER]
OF
[COMPANY NAME]

The undersigned, being all of the [Board of Directors/Shareholders, Managers/Members or Partners/General Partner] (the “Governing Body”) of [Company Name] (the “Company”), and who act herein pursuant to the provisions of the governing documents of the Company and by applicable law, do hereby adopt the following resolutions, which shall have the same force and effect as if such resolutions were duly adopted by the required vote of the Governing Body at a duly called, noticed and convened meeting thereof, and do hereby approve each and every action effected thereby:

WHEREAS, the Governing Body desires and finds it to be in the Company’s best interest to amend the [Bylaws/Company Agreement/Partnership Agreement] (the “Governing Document”).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Governing Document of the Company be amended to add the following to Section ____:

Option A: [Name of Company] respects the religion or belief of all employees, officers, customers, and shareholders.

Option B: [Name of Company] respects the religion or belief of all employees, officers, shareholders, and customers. The Company will not permit discrimination or harassment on the basis of religion or belief.

Option C: [Name of Company] respects the religion or belief of all employees, officers, shareholders, and customers. The Company prohibits any and all types of harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation based on religion or belief. No matter the religion or belief, the Company recognizes and promotes the economic value and social benefits of robust religious liberty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the directors, officers, and managers of the Company be, and each hereby is, authorized, empowered and directed to perform any act, in the name and on behalf of the Company, without the necessity of joinder by any other party, as any such person may deem necessary, advisable or appropriate for the purpose of effectuating the intent of the foregoing resolutions.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Governing Body hereunto subscribe their names as of the ____ day of _____, 20__.

By: _____

By: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Title: _____