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Supporting the Policy-Making Process

Workbook

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Public Health Ontario

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Executive Summary

The policy-making process involves a wide variety of stakeholders. They work together to define a problem, use evidence to identify potential solutions, and engage in knowledge brokering and transfer to support and influence policy outcomes. From a public health perspective, policies to improve health should be evidence-based. However policy decisions are context sensitive and frequently made based on considerations beyond evidence. Overall, this process can be complex and overwhelming.

This workbook offers a step-by-step guide for engaging in and supporting the policy-making process. It outlines a three-phase, eight-step process (Figure 1) theoretically rooted in the Stages Heuristic Model. The target audience is public health practitioners and those working to create healthy communities by supporting the development and implementation of healthy public policies.

The content details the purpose of the three phases, what each step is about, why it is important, and the activities, tools and recommended actions for consideration. This was informed by literature reviews, peer-sharing sessions and advice from a policy advisory group. It is aligned with the Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada and Health Promoters Competencies. In addition, each of the phases embeds three foundational concepts to the policy-making process: 1) Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach; 2) advocacy; and 3) Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA). A glossary of terms provides additional information about the policy-making process.

Figure 1: Three-Phase, Eight-Step Policy-Making Process for Developing a Healthy Public Policy
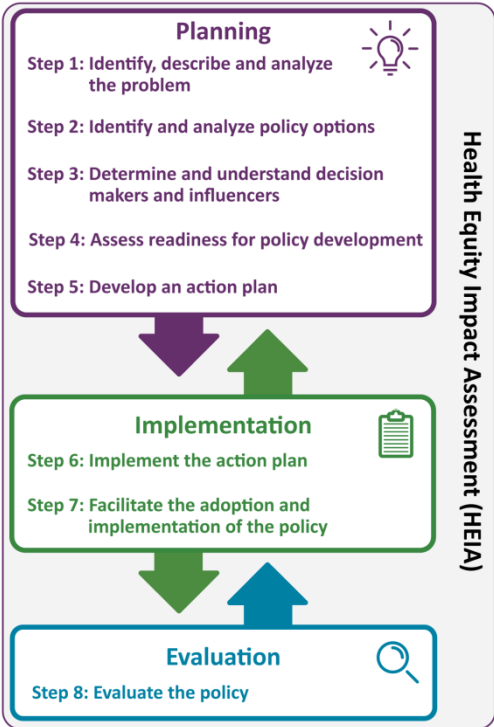
Planning Phase

Set up a working group to plan for the type of policy that will address the problem a community and/or organization is experiencing. This phase includes five steps.

Step 1: Identify, describe and analyze the problem

Purpose: Develop a collective understanding of the problem and gather enough information to determine if a healthy public policy is the appropriate solution.

Activities to implement:

- frame the problem from different perspectives

- conduct a situational assessment

- write a briefing note

- draft policy goals and objectives

Step 2: Identify and analyze policy options

Purpose: Explore different policy options to identify the most important and feasible ones.

Activities to implement:

- identify policy options

- analyze the policy options generated

- engage in decision-making to identify which ones to move forward

Step 3: Determine and understand decision-makers and influencers

Purpose: Determine which decision-makers have the power to implement the policy, and understand their beliefs and attitudes regarding the problem and the policy. Identify influencers.

Activities to implement:

- develop a list of decision-makers and influencers

- conduct a stakeholder analysis

- prioritize the order in which to engage decision-makers and influencers

Step 4: Assess readiness for policy development

Purpose: Assess the readiness of organizations, communities and decision-makers to support and implement the policy option(s).

Activities to implement:

- use the Policy Readiness Tool

- conduct a Force Field Analysis

Step 5: Develop an action plan

Purpose: Develop an action plan to guide the process of implementing a specific policy option.

Activities to implement:

- create a logic model to identify strategies

- develop an action plan

- conduct an HEIA on the action plan and revise based on the outcome of the assessment

Evaluate the planning phase

Before moving to the next phase, consider evaluating the planning phase to demonstrate progress of the policy-making process to funders, upper-management, government representatives and the public.

Implementation Phase

Putting the decisions made in the planning phase into action. This phase includes two steps.

Step 6: Implement the action plan

Purpose: Monitor the implementation of the action plan. Collectively, make necessary adjustments based on the political, economic and social environment, and the human and financial resources available.

Activities to implement:

- develop a progress reporting structure

- update the action plan and communicate changes made to stakeholders

Step 7: Facilitate the adoption and implementation of the policy

Purpose: Engage decision-makers for policy uptake.

Activities to implement:

- understand the process for policy implementation

- write the policy

- communicate the policy

Evaluation Phase

Develop a plan to evaluate the policy and/or the policy-making process. This phase includes one step:

Step 8: Evaluate the policy

Purpose: Develop and manage an evaluation plan and communicate the results.

Activities to implement:

- conduct a policy evaluation

- communicate the evaluation results

Introduction

In the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion[1], developing healthy public policy is an integral strategy for improving public health. The main goal is to "create a supportive environment to enable people to lead healthy lives."[1(p.1)]

The policy-making process involves a wide variety of stakeholders. Working together to define a problem, use evidence to identify potential solutions, and engage in knowledge brokering and transfer to support and influence policy outcomes. From a public health perspective, policies to improve health should be evidence-based, but policy decisions are context sensitive and frequently made based on a number of considerations beyond evidence.[2] Overall, this process can be complex and overwhelming.[3]

About this Workbook

A three-phase, eight-step process is outlined so public health practitioners can support the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies. The aim is to increase the capacity of practitioners to support development of policies that will improve overall living conditions, and ultimately enhance the health of the population.

The target audience is public health practitioners in Ontario. However, this workbook could be relevant to others working to create healthy communities (e.g., municipal decision-makers, health care providers, academics, government officials) in other settings and locations.

The workbook explains the purpose of each phase, what it is about, why it is important, and strategies to consider during implementation. The steps, tools, and recommended actions and strategies outlined are optional. A glossary of terms provides additional information about the policy-making process. Practitioners can use these as a guide to support evidence-based policy interventions. Practitioners are expected to use discretion when selecting strategies, and choose those that consider the unique context and factors of their organization and/or community.

The content of this workbook is aligned with the Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada[4] and the Health Promoters Competencies.[5] This includes strategies to:

1. Describe the potential implication of policy options.

2. Provide strategic policy advice on health promotion issues.

3. Clearly communicate information (e.g., write briefing notes).

4. Assist, enable and facilitate decision-makers, and community stakeholders' contributions to the policy-making process.[5]

Understanding the Eight Steps

The theoretical underpinning of the eight steps is the Stages Heuristic Model.[6] There are four stages in this model and the eight steps of this workbook were developed with them in mind. The four stages are:

1. **Agenda setting**: identify, describe and analyze the problem (Step 1).

2. **Policy formation**: identify and analyze policy options (Step 2); determine and understand decision makers and influencers (Step 3); assess readiness for policy development (Step 4); develop an action plan (Step 5).

3. **Policy implementation**: implement the action plan (Step 6); facilitate the adoption and implementation of the policy (Step 7).

4. **Policy review**: evaluate the policy (Step 8).[5]

The three-phase, eight-step policy-making process (Figure 2) is presented as a linear process. However, the order of steps within the three phases and the amount of time required can vary. Your progression through the steps depends on the political, economic and social environment. Moving forward and backward through the steps is a normal part of the overall process. Policy development is iterative, not linear.[2] A linear visual is used only for ease of understanding the process.

Three methods were used to develop Figure 1 and the content of this workbook:

1. **Literature review**. Two were conducted to identify: 1) whether the Stages Heuristic Model remains relevant for influencing healthy public policy development;[6] and 2) indicators to measure the policy-making efforts of those working in public health.[7]

2. **Peer-sharing sessions**. Two online discussions were conducted with professionals working in healthy public policy development.[8,9] These offered participants the opportunity for mutual learning with others, by sharing best practices, lessons learned, knowledge, experience and resources in real-time.

3. **Advisory group**. An external advisory group of public health practitioners,[10] with expertise on increasing policy development capacity, was consulted on how to present the method for operationalizing the model presented in this workbook.

Figure 2: Three-Phase, Eight-Step Policy-Making Process for Developing a Healthy Public Policy

Planning

Step 1: Identify, describe and analyze the problem

Step 2: Identify and analyze policy options

Step 3: Determine and understand decision makers and influencers

Step 4: Assess readiness for policy development

Step 5: Develop an action plan

Implementation

Step 6: Implement the action plan

Step 7: Facilitate the adoption and implementation of the policy

Evaluation

Step 8: Evaluate the policy

Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA)

Background on Policy Development

A policy is a course of action that drives decision-making to set priorities and allocate resources.[11] It is often developed to address an issue or a problem.[11] An effective policy is informed by evidence and brings about important change through a variety of approaches. This can include raising awareness, educating, building skills and providing environmental supports.[1] Policies shape our daily lives, and may be formal like laws or informal like social norms.

"Policy development is the creative process of identifying and establishing a policy to meet a particular need or situation."[4(p.11)]

Healthy public policies focus on:

1. creating healthy physical and social environments

2. improving the economic or environmental conditions within a community

3. addressing health inequities; and

4. decreasing health-threatening environments[11,12]

Healthy public policies can typically be categorized into three broad levels:

- **Government** such as federal, provincial, regional and municipal

- **Public institutions** such as hospitals, schools, day care centres

- **Organizations and/or workplaces** such as policies that govern company practices and/or employees[11]

To learn more about theories of change at the public policy/societal level, visit Module Six of the Health Promotion Foundations Course.[13]

Practitioners are generally most interested in four types of policy interventions:

1. **Regulation and/or legislation**: Legislated rules or directives that encourage the performance of healthy behaviours (e.g., the use of seat belts, penalties for distracted driving).

2. **Taxation**: The levying of a tax on income (e.g., unemployment contributions) or products such as tobacco or alcohol products to create disincentives to decrease unhealthy behaviours.

3. **Fiscal measures**: Decisions to allocate funds to the resources needed to maintain good health (e.g., municipal subsidies for accessing recreation programs).

4. **Organizational change**: Policies that govern companies and institutions, such as workplace practices and/or employee rules.[1]

If properly implemented, these policies can profoundly influence how people live, learn, work and play, and the choices available to them to make.[11]

Key Concepts

Three concepts are embedded within the policy-making process:

1. Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach

2. advocacy

3. addressing health inequities

Health in All Policies Approach

A HiAP approach coordinates collective efforts to create healthy communities.[14] It is a way to engage in a collaborative process when developing healthy public policies.

The core principle of a HiAP approach is that multiple sectors have a stake in the health of a community.[14] HiAP considers the social and political factors that influence the health of the population, and the consequences of public policies on the determinants of health (e.g., socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions, living and working conditions, social and community networks, individual lifestyle factors) and well-being.[14]

This approach systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions made by those working outside the health sector.[15] Recognizing many policies to improve health can also help meet the policy objectives of other sectors. Typically, this approach will lead to a shared vision of how to address issues a community faces and shared decision-making across sectors.[15]

For example, some planning and transportation policies support walkable communities, mixed-land uses, open spaces and multi-modal transportation. These policies can be designed to consider health impacts and outcomes even though this is not their primary reason.

To learn more about how to use a HiAP approach, visit the World Health Organization's Health in All Policies training manual.[15]

Advocacy

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines advocacy as "a combination of individual and social actions designed to gain political commitment, policy support, social acceptance and systems support for a particular health goal or programme."[16(p.2)] Therefore, advocacy is an action that can influence the development of healthy public policies. An underlying aim of both advocacy and policy development is to address health inequities and lessen the health gap.[17]

Policy development follows specific processes that are supported by different theories. Although the mechanisms differ, the policy-making process generally involves three actions:

1. define the problem

2. use evidence to identify solutions

3. engage in the political process to influence policy outcomes[2]

Therefore, developing policies is a collaborative process. It includes influencing those who can implement the policy, what policies get developed and their content.

> To learn more about advocacy, policy development and inter-sectoral collaboration, visit Module 9 of the Health Promotion Foundations Course.[18]

Addressing Health Inequities

The purpose of healthy public policy is to improve physical, social, economic or environmental conditions. However, some populations may experience a greater burden of inequity because of existing or new policies.[19]

For example, a comprehensive tobacco control strategy to improve the health and well-being of Ontarians might include smoke-free home policies in multi-unit dwellings.[19] Tobacco use is most prevalent among those with lower socioeconomic status.[19] As such, those living in a multi-unit dwelling may experience a greater burden than compared to other individuals. Therefore, during development consider whether a policy unintentionally leads to greater health inequities.

Health inequities are differences in health that are not only unnecessary and avoidable, but are also considered unfair and unjust.

Conducting a Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) can identify and address potential unintended health impacts of a policy, program or initiative on vulnerable or marginalized populations.[20]

Vulnerable populations are groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political and environmental resources, and the limitations they face due to illness or disability.[21] Marginalized populations are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.[22]

When conducting a HEIA on a policy intervention, it is important to identify:

1. Population groups most likely to experience inequities due to the policy being considered.

2. Determinants (causes of the causes) of the inequities, particularly as they relate to the policy being considered.

3. Unintended positive and negative impacts of the policy on the populations identified in number one.

4. Modifications and/or strategies that could maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative impacts.

5. How the policy could be monitored and mitigation strategies implemented to ensure that the policy has the intended effects.

6. How the results and recommendations from the HEIA are incorporated into the action plan (Step 5 and 6), the developed policy (Step 7) and when evaluating the policy (Step 8).[20]

These six questions are also part of a comprehensive HiAP approach. Given their importance, they are incorporated in the three-phase, eight-step process featured in this workbook (Figure 1).

To learn more about how to conduct an HEIA, visit PHO's HEIA Training Course.[23]

Summary of the Policy-Making Process

- Policies drive decision-making.

- Healthy public policies are developed to improve people's options and the conditions within which they live, learn, work and play.

- Public health practitioners play a role in supporting the development of healthy public policies in collaboration with those working in other disciplines and sectors.

- A Health in All Policies approach is a strategy to use while working in collaboration with non-health sectors.

- The policy-making process is complex; assessing intended and unintended health impacts is necessary to avoid developing policies that inadvertently lead to greater health inequities.

- The three-phase, eight-step model is designed to make the policy-making process manageable. It includes applying a health equity lens to decisions and activities.

- The steps are presented as a linear process, but moving forward and backward through the steps within the three phases is normal. The actual process may vary in the order of the steps and the time required. In addition, the tools and recommended strategies are optional. Use discretion when selecting strategies, recognizing: 1) the unique context, factors and issues of those who the policy will impact; and 2) the setting and geographic location of the policy.

Planning

The purpose of this phase is to support planning for the type of policy that will address the problem a community is experiencing. This phase involves five steps (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Planning Phase
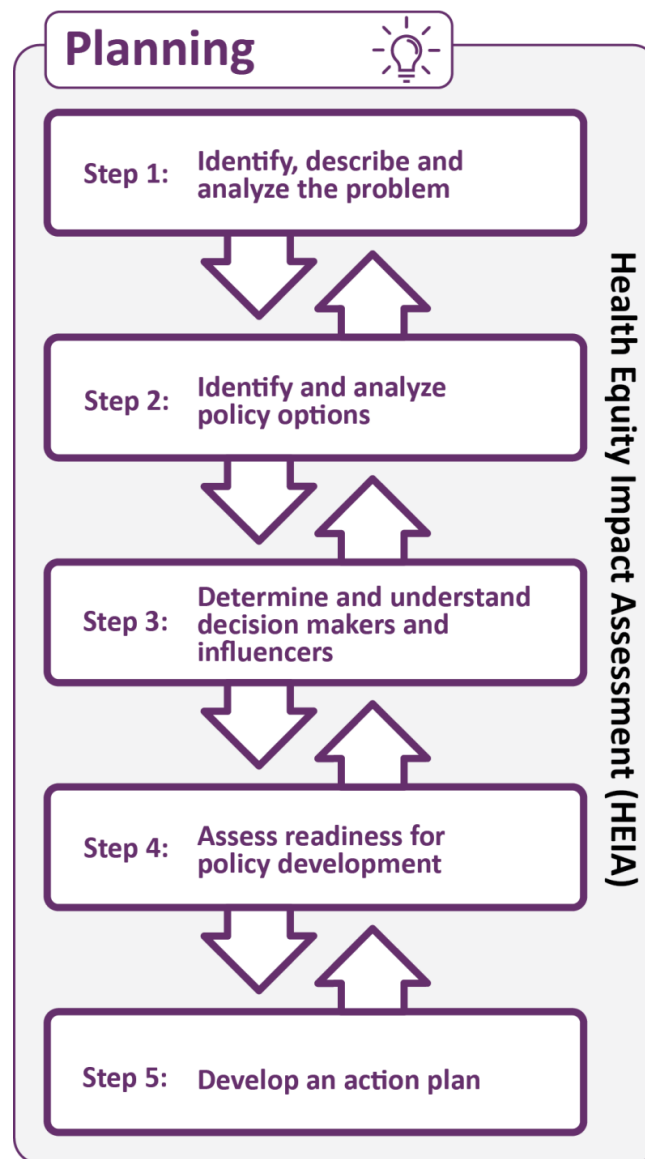
Before starting the planning phase, consider creating an internal working group. Engaging internal stakeholders at the beginning of the process helps to develop organizational knowledge and support. Ideally, include senior management and program staff. The level of involvement of members can vary; there are four levels to consider:

1. **Core**: Involved in all decisions; typically includes program staff and at least one senior management staff (e.g., Program Manager, Policy Advisor); meets regularly; and takes leadership roles to implement the strategies identified.

2. **Involved**: Frequently consulted or part of the implementation process; may attend some meetings; responds to specific requests for information/feedback; and tends to be staff and/or management working in other program areas.

3. **Supportive:** Provides some form of support such as endorsing a decision; could include personnel such as a Medical Officer of Health, Board of Health or another Executive Committee and/or other senior leadership position.

4. **Peripheral**: Needs to be informed but is not part of the decision-making process; could include those who use the services of the organization.[24]

Start to identify members of the working group and their level of involvement. Once this is completed, consider drafting a document (such as Terms of Reference) that outlines the group's purpose, decision-making process, allocated resources, timeline and roles and responsibilities. (Check a Terms of Reference Builder[25] for guidance.) This will strengthen the collaboration needed to plan and ensure that there is enough interest in moving forward.

Governance for Partnership Success[26] is a resource for groups that need to work collaboratively to achieve a common goal.

Step 1: Identify, Describe and Analyze the Problem

This step has two goals:

1. Develop a collective understanding of the problem.

2. Gather enough information to determine if a healthy public policy is the appropriate solution.

Why is this Step Important?

Understanding the problem allows people to explore a variety of potential interventions. A policy solution could be effective, but so might education or skill-building. How problems are described influences the activities undertaken to resolve them. It is also an opportunity to start to build support, internally within an organization and externally with community stakeholders, to address the problem.

The National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy describes three types of problems:

1. **Tame**: Stakeholders agree on the nature of the problem and the best way to solve it.

2. **Complex**: Stakeholders agree on the nature of the problem, but not on how to best solve it.

3. **Wicked**: Stakeholders do not agree on the nature of the problem or its solution.[27]

Public health practitioners often face what can be called "wicked problems", like physical inactivity, substance use, and living conditions that contribute to health inequities. These are extremely challenging, with complex causes, and likely require multiple solutions.[27] Such problems go beyond the capacity of any one organization to understand and address them. Wicked problems can only be truly solved through the collaboration of stakeholders and the integration of competing and diverse perspectives.[27]

Activities to Implement Step 1

There are four suggested activities to carry out this step:

1. frame the problem from different perspectives

2. conduct a situational assessment

3. write a briefing note

4. draft policy objectives and goals

Frame the Problem from Different Perspectives

Framing begins with naming what issue is problematic and looking at it from many sides. It is an opportunity to identify where perspectives align, which can lead to developing a common ground for working together.[28]

One method is to engage in dialogue mapping. This strategy uses available evidence to further describe the problem under consideration.[29] Dialogue mapping starts with a question about the issue and systematically explores possible answers, without judgement, to draw a map of ideas.[29] A visual display of the dialogue map can promote a shared understanding of and commitment to the collective result.[29]

Different perspectives to consider:

- your organization's

- different levels of government (e.g., municipal, regional, provincial and/or federal, provincial)

- public, private and not-for profit institution(s) (e.g., day care centres, schools, community services, employers, faith-based)

- community members (those experiencing the problem, general public)

- special interest groups, informal grassroots organizations; and professional associations

Consider these questions:

- Who is most affected by the problem and why?

- How was "most affected" determined?

- Are some groups more vulnerable or marginalized by the problem?[20]

For each perspective considered, brainstorm how the problem is framed. Is it an individual's responsibility? A community's responsibility? A specific organization's? A societal responsibility?

Members of the working group should complete Worksheet 1.0: Framing the Problem from Different Perspectives before engaging in dialogue mapping. Use the information generated to frame the issue, identify how the problem has been framed (such as identifying underlying causes) and inform a situational assessment.

Conduct a Situational Assessment

A situational assessment is "a systematic process to gather, analyze, synthesize and communicate data to inform planning decisions."[30(p.1)] It involves integrating the best available evidence, such as local context, community and political preferences and actions, public health resources and scholarly research.[31]

To help understand the situation and potential solutions, consider two overarching questions and their sub-questions:

1. **What is contributing to the problem?**

   - What factors in the community affect the problem (e.g., attitudes; values; beliefs; perceptions; social, economic, environmental and/or political factors; cultural differences; conflicting agendas)?

   - Is the problem on the public agenda? Locally? Provincially? Nationally?

   - What is the potential cost (social, human, financial) to address the problem?

   - What is the cost of doing nothing about the problem?

   - What influences are making the problem better or worse?[30]

2. **What possible actions could resolve the problem?**

   - Can the actions be categorized using health promotion strategies (e.g., awareness, education, skill building, environmental supports and/or policy)?

   - Who is responsible to implement each of the actions identified?

   - Are specific population groups most likely to experience inequities related to possible actions?

   - Do these possible actions address the determinants (causes of the causes)? If so, how?[30]

Evidence-based public health policy[32]

Review this article to learn more about how to continuously use the best available evidence to improve public health outcomes and develop policies.

Develop a plan to organize sources of data, tasks and persons responsible, include diverse types of data such as:

- primary data (data collected by your organization)

- secondary data (existing data collected by someone else, like partner organizations or government), including academic reviews

- surveys

- best practice guidelines

- quantitative and qualitative data[30]

For cost reasons, it may be useful to tap into all possible secondary sources of data first, and then use primary data to fill in gaps.[33] See Worksheet 1.1: Data Gathering Plan.

Implement the data-gathering plan by developing an evidence table. This standardizes how evidence is gathered and makes findings more usable, especially if different people are gathering and analyzing the information.[34] To create an evidence table, use a spreadsheet program such as Excel. Using column headings to identify the type of information to extract (e.g., author, year, location, type of data, purpose, method, key findings, implications for practice, and limitations of the study/report).

If more than one member is completing the evidence table, include a column to note who inputted the information and how it was collected. Also, consider pausing after about 10 entries to compare how different members are inputting information. This is an opportunity to standardize the type of information included, and makes it easier to analyze the overall findings.[34]

The length of this phase could vary; review often to see if timelines for the working group need to be revised.

When analyzing the data, consider organizing the findings to answer the two questions:

1. What contributes to the problem?

2. What possible actions could resolve the problem?[30]

Using a health equity lens can help you to consider the applicability and transferability of found evidence. Consider the questions listed in the Centre for Research on Inner City Health, Knowledge Translation Toolkit: Is this evidence useful?[35]

Use the results of the analysis to write a narrative of the problem, often called a problem statement. This is a concise (e.g., 1-5 paragraphs) description of the problem, including its impact, root causes, perceptions of the problem (and from whose perspective) and possible actions to address it. Include citations (using the evidence generated) to support the problem statement. This will make it easier to write a briefing note.

> To learn more about how to conduct a situational assessment visit Planning Health Promotion Programs: Introductory workbook.[33]

Write a Briefing Note

A briefing note helps to inform decision-making. This tool documents what was learned from a situational assessment and how to use this information to identify next steps. Briefing notes provide a framework to analyze the problem, explore options for action and present recommendations.[36]

A briefing note quickly and effectively informs a decision-maker about an issue by distilling complex information into a short, well-structured document.

Typically, a briefing note includes these headings:

- **Issue**: State the problem.

- **Background**: Provide details to illustrate the situation.

- **Status**: Describe the current situation and who is involved.

- **Key considerations**: Offer an unbiased summary of the evidence, with citations to substantiate any statements (provides credibility).

- **Options**: Describe possible actions/options and the rationale for each (perhaps with pros and cons).

- **Conclusion**: Summarize what to infer from the information presented.

- **Recommendation(s)**: Offer clear advice on which actions/options to consider.[36]

Do not feel constrained by these headings or a briefing note template. Include what is needed to meet the requirements of your audience. What do they already know about the problem? What do they want and need to know? How can this briefing note help them understand?[37]

Keep the briefing note to two pages or less. Writing it collaboratively can increase the working group's understanding of the problem and recommendations to solve it.

Review the briefing note to identify if developing a policy is supported, and if the role of your organization and the working group is clear. Ensure there is sufficient evidence to support the preferred role for your organization (e.g., leader, supporting actor) before moving forward. Depending on the recommendation, another community stakeholder may be best suited to lead the policy-making process with your organization playing a contributing role.

Sometimes, the briefing note will reveal that developing a policy is not a viable solution. Other strategies may better address the identified problem, such as communication and education, skill-building, or environmental supports.

Regardless of the outcome, share the briefing note within your organization and with community stakeholders. Include those who contributed to the situational assessment and/or who were identified as important to understanding and addressing the problem.

When communicating the briefing note, use the opportunity to gauge the interest of community stakeholders in creating a partnership to address the problem. Benefits include leveraging the collective skills, knowledge and resources to achieve what individuals and single organizations may struggle to do on their own.

To learn more about developing a plan to communicate the briefing note, visit Community Tool Box: Developing a Plan for Communication.[38]

Draft Policy Goals and Objectives

If developing a policy has been identified as a solution to the problem, use the information gathered to draft potential goals and objectives. Goals are all-encompassing statements that describe the result of the policy.[33] Objectives are specific statements describing the effect of the policy–what should happen, to whom and how.[33]

For instance, a problem might be limited access to healthy foods by those living on low-income.

> **Policy goal:** Ensure healthy food is accessible to all residents.

> **Policy objective**: Increase the accessibility, affordability and availability of local, fresh, healthy foods for residents living on low-income.

In this case, one solution might be to include policy statements in the municipal Official Plan around land use designations for retailers of healthy foods (e.g., locating them within walking and/or cycling proximity of low-income neighbourhoods).

Key Considerations for Step 1

- Frame the problem using different perspectives. Identify underlying causes, including population groups that are most likely to experience inequities with the problem and possibly with the solution.

- As a group, brainstorm to develop a collective understanding of the situation, what is making it better or worse and potential actions to address it.

- Develop a plan and gather evidence to enhance the understanding of the situation, and engage in evidence-informed decision making.

- Analyze the evidence to develop a problem statement and briefing note. Include actionable solutions and whether a policy is one of them.

- Develop a strategy to communicate the information in the briefing note internally and externally.

- If a healthy public policy is a potential solution, draft goals and objectives of a policy intervention.

Step 2: Identify and Analyze Policy Options

Taking the problem identified in Step 1, this step involves exploring policy options, and identifying the most important and feasible ones within your local context.

Why is this Step Important?

Many policies can potentially address an issue and improve the situation.[2] This step helps to narrow down the options. Consider the types of policies that could achieve the draft policy goals and objectives identified in Step 1. The information gathered during this step is critical for making the case and building support for addressing the problem with a policy solution.

Activities to Implement Step 2

This step includes three activities:

1. identify policy options

2. analyze the policy options generated

3. engage in decision-making

Identify Policy Options

To start, set up a table where you can record the information gathered and the policy options. Table 1 provides an example of the headings and the type of questions to consider.

Table 1: Sample Policy Options Table

Identification method	Reference/Source	Policy Option	Categorization	Notes
How did you find this information? Step 1? Internet? Library? Key informant?	What is the reference? Include a web link if available.	What is the policy action outlined?	What best represents the policy action? Regulation/ Legislation? Taxation? Fiscal measures? Organizational change? Other?	Additional information to consider for this policy option.

To generate policy options:

1. **Review your findings from Step 1**: Reflect on the briefing note and the findings related to possible actions to resolve the problem.

2. **Conduct an internet search**: Consider the draft policy goals and objectives and what you know about the problem. Based on this, generate a list of search terms and/or phrases. There are several ways to conduct an internet search:

   - Use appropriate search engines such as Google Scholar, PubMed, Cochrane, CINAHL

   - Search specific websites relevant to the topic of interest (e.g., organizations; professional associations; and advocacy groups).

   - Search government websites.

   - Search neighbouring community and organization websites to identify relevant policy options.

3. **Access library services for assistance**: Use library services within your organization, municipality and/or affiliated university. Search for academic and grey literature.

4. **Contact colleagues, associations and organizations**: Gather key informant information from these sources. Generate a list of potential colleagues, association and organizations that may have an interest and/or knowledge of the problem and potential policy solutions, and then contact them. Another strategy is to post a question on relevant list serves or blogs and ask members to post their ideas. You could offer to share a summary of the responses.

Some resources include internet search strategies related to specific types of policies. Examples:

Municipal: PHO's Municipal by-law development and public health primer[39]

Municipal alcohol: PHO's Municipal alcohol policies and public health primer[40]

Physical activity: A toolkit for developing and influencing physical activity polices[41]

Some types of policies address the social determinants of health. The four most significant are:

1. **Policies to reduce inequalities and mitigate the effects of stratification**, e.g., policies on wealth redistribution; labour market policies that favour adequate work and pay; or a variety of widely accessible government services such as education, housing and health care.

2. **Policies to reduce exposures of disadvantaged people to health-damaging factors**, e.g., policies that support subsidized housing for low-income families.

3. **Policies to reduce vulnerabilities of disadvantaged people**, e.g., policies for those on unemployment insurance or old age security pensions.

4. **Policies to reduce unequal consequences of illness in social, economic and health terms**, e.g., policies for income supplements in times of ill health; and policies that encourage retraining people with chronic illnesses in the work force.[42]

Continue to search for policy options until no new ones are identified. Review your Policy Options Table. Consider reorganizing the information by policy categories, to make it easier to identify the types of options. For example, potential policy options for limiting sugar sweetened beverages (SSB) for youth and children could be headed under:

- taxation (e.g., higher tax for SSB)

- fiscal measures (e.g., lower cost for water)

- organizational change (e.g., change the physical environment by limiting access to SSB, change the messaging environment by denying the advertisement of SSB where children and youth are present)[43]

This process should generate three to five policy options. The next step is to analyze and narrow the options.

The National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy offers a free online training course for analyzing public policies.[44] The four self-paced modules take six to eight hours to complete.

Analyze the Policy Options

To understand whether a policy option is likely to succeed, you need to understand its effects, implementation issues, and the capacity to sustain the policy over time. The National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy[44] suggests six questions to ask when analyzing policy options.

Effects

1. What effects does the policy have on the target problem?

2. What are the unintended effects of this policy?

3. What are the effects of this policy on different groups?[44]

Implementation

4. What is the financial cost of this policy?

5. Is the policy technically feasible?

6. Do the relevant stakeholders view the policy as acceptable?[44]

For each policy option, answer as many of the questions with as much detail as possible. If you need more information to make a decision, see additional questions in the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy Practical Guide.[46]

When adding questions, ensure there is group consensus. What is the purpose of these questions? What aspect of the policy are they evaluating? For example, additional questions could relate to the context of your organization's strategic direction, priorities and capacities.

There are several ways to generate answers for any questions: 1) individual reflection; 2) group brainstorming; 3) hire a consultant who is an expert in this type of analysis; or 4) use a deliberative process that includes engaging relevant stakeholders (this often requires a third-party facilitator).[45]

Engage in more than one method. As a group, decide which would work best and who will take the lead to make it happen. Depending on the methods chosen, this could take several weeks to complete.

Using the answers generated, write a narrative for each policy option. Summarize the information in a comparable table to help determine which policy options to move forward. For an example see A Framework for Analyzing Policies: A Practical Guide.[45]

Engage in and Support Decision-Making

Now it's time for group members to decide collectively on which policy options to move forward. This is a deliberative process, which "allows a group of actors to receive and exchange information, to critically examine an issue and to arrive at an agreement that informs decision-making."[47(p.1)] It is important for those participating in this process to have read the briefing note, policy option narrative and comparable table.

In the first round of this process, review the information to eliminate certain policy options. Provide a rationale. Sometimes, there are reasons based on the local context. For instance, in the early 1990s different municipalities were considering whether to implement a municipal smoke-free by-law. Some municipalities in Southern Ontario with a large number of tobacco farmers chose not to move this policy option forward, but to wait until there was a provincial policy.

After removing some policy options, review what is left. For this second round of the deliberative process, engage in a rating exercise. This concept is borrowed from the concept mapping process proposed by Kane and Trochim.[48] For each policy option, have individual members rate the importance of the policy options against the other policy options listed.

List the policy options, along with a Likert scale (Table 2). Instruct that raters are only to provide one choice per policy option.[48]

Consider using an online survey system (e.g., SurveyMonkey) for conducting and analyzing the ratings. This could save time, and ensure that individual results are confidential.

Table 2: Rating Policy Options for Importance[48]

	Most important compared to the rest of the policy options	Important compared to the rest of the policy options	Somewhat important compared to the rest of the policy options
Policy option 1			
Policy option 2			
Policy option 3			
Policy option 4			

Using a new rating sheet, invite members to rate each policy option on the feasibility of implementing within the next year, such as:

1. highly feasible to implement compared to the rest of the policy options

2. feasible to implement compared to the rest

3. somewhat feasible compared to the rest (Table 3)[48]

Again, provide only one choice per policy option.

Table 3: Rating Policy Options for Feasibility[48]

	Most feasible	Feasible	Somewhat feasible
Policy option 1			
Policy option 2			
Policy option 3			
Policy option 4			

To identify the group rating, calculate the average of the results of each individual rating for both importance and feasibility.[48] Then:

1. reorder the policy options from most important to somewhat important based on the average group rating; and

2. Reorder them based on the average feasibility ratings.

Review the results to identify policy options that were rated both most important and most feasible. These are the ones to move forward. You can use other criteria, like putting more emphasis on importance than feasibility, or vice versa. Whatever the criteria is used to determine the policy options, document it and update the briefing note developed in Step 2.

Key Considerations for Step 2

- Develop a Policy Options Table.

- Generate a list of terms to use when searching for policy options.

- Consider the four suggestions for searching for policy options (review findings from Step 1; internet; library; and key informants).

- Search for policy options until you reach saturation.

- Analyze the policy options using the questions suggested by the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy.[44]

- Engage in a deliberative process to review the comparable policy options.

- As a group, agree on one or two policy options to move forward.

Step 3: Determine and Understand Decision-Makers and Influencers

The purpose of this step is to determine which decision-makers have the power to approve the policy, and understand their beliefs and attitudes regarding the problem and policy. It is also an opportunity to identify those within organizations and the community who can influence these decision-makers, and to build support for the policy option(s) determined in Step 2.

Why is this Step Important?

Individuals at all levels of an organization make decisions. However, not all have the ability to change policies. For example, certain individuals within an organization (e.g., Executive Director, Medical Officer of Health) or political structure (e.g., elected officials) have the authority/power to decide and implement a course of action in their organization or community, including changing policies.

Choosing the wrong people to move a policy forward can waste time and resources. It may also jeopardize future policy development as adopting and implementing a policy (Step 7) depends on the ability to understand and influence the right people. If the right people are not understood, it makes future steps more difficult.

It's also important to engage those who can influence a decision-maker to make the policy change. Internal and external working group members would be considered influencers. A decision-maker could also be an influencer. For example, a municipal elected official could have the power to pass a municipal by-law and influence the perspectives of other municipal elected officials.

Activities to Implement Step 3

There are three suggested activities to implement this step:

1. develop a list of decision-makers and influencers

2. conduct a stakeholder analysis

3. prioritize the order in which to engage these decision-makers and influencers

Develop a List of Decision-Makers and Influencers

Start with identifying whether the policy option needs to be implemented by a:

- **government** (e.g., federal, provincial, regional and municipal)

- **public institution** (e.g., hospitals, school, day care centre, university) or

- **organization** (e.g., policies that govern company practices and/or employees)[11]

Use this information to search relevant websites to identify their structure and practices. Document how they're organized, what position(s) holds decision-making power, what positions(s) could influence these decision-makers (internal influencers) and what needs to happen to change policies. Record the position(s) and name(s) for decision-makers and influencers.

Organizations can have different groups of decision-makers and influencers. For example, in a municipal government the council members hold the most power; these elected officials can change laws and regulations for a municipality. Civil servants working within specific departments are potential influencers, as they often inform elected officials of the benefits and consequences of changing policies. The process for changing a policy, such as a municipal by-law, requires communicating with the municipal clerk.[39]

In addition to the organizations and people in your working group, consider who else could be influencers. It may be helpful to go back to your findings from Steps 1 and 2 to identify those most affected by the problem, professional associations, networks and coalitions. To generate additional names, consider using a "snowball technique"; ask those being considered to identify other decision-makers or influencers.[34]

Once you have names of who could help move your policy option forward, complete Worksheet 3.0: List of Decision-Makers and Influencers.

Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis

Decision-makers and influencers can be considered stakeholders. A stakeholder analysis is an approach to understand their behaviour, intentions, attitudes and beliefs.[49] This analysis involves collecting information from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include conducting interviews, survey and/or focus groups with key decision-makers and influencers.[49] Secondary sources include reviewing documents such as meeting minutes, reports, policy statements, articles and/or social media posts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) to learn more about how parties have publically addressed or weighed in on an issue.[49]

The aim is to cultivate a comprehensive picture of the environment in which the policy is to be implemented, and identify the interests, priorities, and views of your decision-makers and influencers.[49] It is also an opportunity to understand how they perceive their own power.

Consider the following questions to guide your analysis (adapted from the Toolkit for Healthier Communities-Influencing Healthy Public Policies[50]).

For decision-makers:

- What is their position?

- What are the stated goals of their organization?

- What processes do they go through before making a decision (e.g., research, staff reports, public hearings, consultations with certain individuals)?

- What decisions do they have the power to make?

- How can they be contacted?

- Are there formal processes to access them?

- Where do they stand on the issue? On related issues? Voting records?

- What kind of action or position have they taken on similar issues in the past?

- What could they gain or lose from passing the policy option?

- What relationship do they have with the community? With those who may be most affected by the policy option?

- What does the community think of them?[50]

For influencers:

- What relationship do they have or have had with the government, public institution or organization?

- What relationship do they have with the person in the position of power?

- What connections do they have within the larger community (e.g., committee membership)?

- What persuasion or advocacy process do they use?

- What success have they had when influencing other issues?

- Where do they stand on the issue? On related issues?

- Do any of the issues they have previously advocated conflict with the policy option?[50]

Other questions may come to mind. Choose questions that will increase the understanding of who is a decision-maker and who is a potential influencer. The intent is to understand and identify those who could be allies to move the policy forward (or who may oppose the policy option).[50] This information is also valuable in helping to determine the need to include education and/or skill-building activities in Step 5.

Prioritize Decision-Makers and Influencers

Review the list generated. Based on the information collected, use Worksheet 3.1 Prioritize Decision-Makers and Influencers to reorder the list by those who:

- have the most power to support and implement the policy change

- are the most approachable (e.g., open to engaging in a discussion, takes the time to listen)

- are the most accessible (e.g., meets with interest groups)[50]

Rank the names. It makes sense to start engaging with people who have the most power, who are most supportive of the policy option and who the working group can access.[50]

Your group may give more weight to one area than another (e.g., those who have the most power are given more weight than those who are more approachable). Document the discussion to ensure a clear understanding of how decisions have been made, and record the top five key decision-makers and influencers. Keep in mind that some of the decision-makers identified could also be influencers.

Begin to build initial profiles of the prioritized decision-makers and influencers. Use the information to develop collaborative partnerships; invite them to join your working group, share the briefing note and share the information gathered in this step.

The purpose is to identify areas for alignment and opportunities for enhancing partnerships to move the policy options forward. It is also an opportunity to change the membership of the working group from internal stakeholders to including external stakeholders. Consider working with them to complete the Stakeholder Wheel.[24] Revise the terms of reference to reflect the roles and responsibilities of new members.

Key Considerations for Step 3

- Develop a list of decision-makers and influencers.

- Conduct a stakeholder analysis.[49]

- Prioritize the list to identify the top five decision-makers who have the power to implement the policy, and the top five influencers who could sway the decision-maker.

Step 4: Assess Readiness for Policy Development

Step 4 is about assessing the readiness of organizations, communities and decision-makers to support and implement the policy option. Policy uptake involves decision-makers moving the option onto their political agenda, and community members and organizations providing their support when the policy is presented.[51]

Why is this Step Important?

Policy-making requires a significant investment of time, resources and funding. Decision-makers, organizations and the public may be at different levels of readiness; knowing this helps to identify strategies to move them towards supporting the policy option. For example, health promotion approaches (e.g., awareness, education, skill-building and/or environmental supports) can increase the level of readiness for a particular policy. Use this knowledge when developing an action plan (Step 5).

Activities to Implement Step 4

Two activities are offered: 1) use the Policy Readiness Tool;[52] and 2) conduct a Force Field Analysis.[53]

Policy Readiness Tool

This tool offers two questionnaires: one to assess the readiness of communities and organizations, and one to assess the readiness of municipal decision-makers.[52] Although this tool was designed with municipalities in mind, you can use it to understand other types of governing bodies.[52]

The Policy Readiness Tool is based on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory, which describes how populations react to new ideas or innovations.[52] According to this theory, people can be classified as:

- Innovators (creators of the innovation)

- Early Adopters (first to adopt the innovation)

- Early Majority (next to adopt the innovation)

- Late Majority (those who later adopt the innovation)

- Laggards (lag behind adopting the innovation)[52]

People in each category are motivated by different approaches.[52] For example, late adopters or laggards need persistent and comprehensive persuasion. Innovators are more risk-taking and require less intensive strategies to do something new.

The Policy Readiness Tool condenses these five categories into three: innovators (A), majority (B) and late adopters (C).[52] Use it as a good starting point to assess readiness.

The tool for assessing organizations and communities is available online at Start Questionnaire.[52] The online system automatically tallies the scores and provides you the category and description. To complete a paper copy of the questionnaire visit the Policy Readiness Tool.[54]

Each person in your group should complete the questions individually. If someone is unsure of which answer to choose, consider consulting someone who is familiar with the organization, community and/or decision-maker. Please read each question carefully. While the questions sound similar, there are slight differences.[54]

At the end of the questionnaire, tally the three categories (A, B, and C) to get an overall score for each. Compare individual scores and add them together to identify a collective score for each organization, community and decision-maker assessed. For example, if the municipality to be influenced received mostly 'A' scores, it can be considered an innovator. If they received mostly 'B' scores, they are in the majority. If they received mostly 'C' scores, the municipality is a late adopter.[52,54]

The questionnaire specific to assess municipal-decision makers is available in the PHO By-law Development and Public Health: A Primer.[39]

Use the summary results to identify whether the community, organization and decision-makers are ready to support the policy option, and to inform the discussion when conducting a Force Field Analysis.

The Policy Readiness Tool[52] website has a number of resources available to help administer the tool and understand the results.

Force Field Analysis

A Force Field Analysis is a useful tool to understand the range of factors that may influence the success of a policy option.[53] The premise is that situations exist by equilibrium, i.e., between forces that drive or resist change.[53] To move a policy forward, the force to drive change needs to be greater than the force to resist it.[53]

You can perform a Force Field Analysis[53] as a group activity. Download a [MindTools worksheet](#)[56] and follow these five steps.

1. Write the goals and objectives of the policy option, or an assessment question to be answered.

2. Brainstorm about the forces that are driving change. Consider all the information collected during Steps 1, 2, 3 and the results from assessing readiness. Write the ideas/factors in the column "forces FOR change".

3. Brainstorm about the forces that resist or are unfavourable to change. Write the idea/factor in the column "forces AGAINST change". Consider all the factors such as societal, political, economic and environmental.

4. Assign a score (1=very weak; 2=weak; 3=strong and 4=very strong) for each force listed, according to its influence on the policy option and goals. Add up the scores; lower numbers have a weaker influence and higher numbers have a greater influence on the change.

5. Based on the findings, consider which supportive forces could be strengthened and which opposing forces could be weakened to drive the change. [55] Develop a list for both; ways to strengthen supportive forces and ways to weaken opposing forces. Use this information in Step 5.

> For an example of a visual representation of assigning a score, visit [MindTools: Force Field Analysis: Analyzing the Pressures For and Against Change](#).[55]

If more than one policy option is still being considered, use the Policy Readiness Tool[52] and Force Field Analysis[55] to determine which option the organization, community and/or decision-maker is *most* ready to adopt. Move this policy option forward in Step 5.

The rural village of Smallville, in the Municipality of Hover, has a county road as the main link between two urban centres. It is home to 123 Insurance Company, which employs 30 staff. The current speed limit in the village is 60 km/hour. Few drivers obey. The majority are traveling 10-15 km faster, putting residents at risk. The policy option identified is to change the current by-law to lower the speed limit in the village to 40 km/hour. The goal is to make it safer for residents who live, work, learn and play in the village. The objective is to have drivers slow down.

Assessing the readiness of a community: Is Smallville ready for a municipal by-law to lower the speed limit to 40 km/hour? Are those who travel through the village ready for a lower speed limit?

Assessing the readiness of an organization: Is the 123 Insurance Company staff ready for a municipal by-law to lower the speed limit to 40 km/hour?

Assessing the readiness of a municipality: Is the Municipality of Hover ready to change their by-law to lower the speed limit to 40 km/hour?

Key Considerations for Step 4

- Use the Policy Readiness Tool[52] to assess the readiness of organization, communities and decision makers.

- Identify those that are innovators, majorities and late adopters.

- Conduct a Force Field Analysis[55] to identify what drives and resists change.

- Develop a list of ways to strengthen supportive forces and weaken opposing forces

- Identify one policy option to move forward. Understand the types of strategies needed to encourage this policy change.

Step 5: Develop an Action Plan

This is the last step in the planning phase. The purpose is to develop an action plan to guide the process of implementing a specific policy option.

Why is this Step Important?

The action plan is a way to use the information generated in Steps 1-4 to outline activities to accomplish during the implementation phase. The chosen actions will help build momentum and support for the policy.

Developing an action plan helps:

- Work out the details of what needs to and/or can be done.

- Show how the implementation phase will be organized.

- Identify what is possible.

- Save time, energy and resources.

- Increase the probability that people will do what's needed.[57]

The plan should include:

- What actions or changes will occur? What is prioritized?

- Who will carry out these actions/changes?

- What resources are needed to do so?

- Within what time frame will they take place and for how long?

- Who should know about this action?[57]

The outcome of this step provides a roadmap for the implementation phase.

Activities to Implement Step 5

Three activities are suggested to implement Step 5: 1) create a logic model to identify strategies; 2) develop an action plan; and 3) conduct a Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) on the action plan and revise the plan based on the outcome of the HEIA.

Create a Logic Model

A logic model provides a visual representation of the relationship between the:

- goals (desired end state that the policy would achieve)

- objectives (brief statement specifying the desired impact or effect of the policy)

- policy (which to move forward)

- strategies (broad approaches that help achieve the goals and objectives of the policy)[58]

This model provides the overall strategic direction for the actions identified within an action plan and can be viewed as a representation of the underlying theory of change to move the policy option forward.[58]

The working group may need to prioritize strategies. Any more than five complicates the work. Strategies to consider:

- **Policy research and investigation** (e.g., gather data on public opinion, demonstrate benefits for the policy).

- **Relationship-building and educating decision-makers** (e.g., establish contact and request participation, prepare fact sheets, offer educational sessions, provide constructive feedback).

- **Relationship-building and educating influencers**.

- **Mobilizing public support** (e.g., social media messages, sponsor a public meeting, provide educational sessions).[59]

Some general strategies for working with organizations and communities include:

- developing organizational knowledge and support

- understanding the social, political and economic context

- watching for policy window opportunities

- building partnerships within communities

- engaging "fence-sitter" decision-makers

- building partnerships with those who the policy will impact.[60]

Once the strategies are identified, consider the types of activities that could achieve them. For example, how might new relationships with decision-makers be nurtured? What could be done to build support?

Develop a visual representation of the logical model. They are often shown in a linear fashion, but can be presented in a cyclical model or as a table.[58]

Develop an Action Plan

An action plan (sometimes called a work plan or an operational plan) is the guide for managing your policy efforts. This document clearly describes the core activities, tasks, resources and timelines needed to achieve the strategies.[33] The purpose is to identify what change will happen and who will do what, by when, to make it happen (Table 4).[57]

Table 4: Action Plan Components[57]

Activities	Tasks	Person responsible	Collaborators	Timing	Resources required	Outcome
From logic model	What steps have to happen to achieve the activity?	Who will do it?	Who else will be involved?	When?	What is needed? What is available?	What was accomplished? Who needs to be informed?

Conduct an HEIA Assessment on the Action Plan

After developing the action plan, conduct a HEIA on the actions proposed. To do that, identify:

1. Population groups most likely to experience inequities due to the actions being considered.

2. Determinants (causes of the causes) of the inequities, particularly as they relate to the action being considered.

3. Unintended positive and negative impacts of the actions being considered on the identified population groups.

4. Modifications and/or strategies that could feasibly be implemented to maximize the positive and minimize negative impacts.

5. How the actions being considered could be monitored, and mitigation strategies that could be implemented to ensure that the actions have the intended effects.[20]

These are the same [questions](#) posed in the introduction of this workbook. Use the answers to revise the action plan as needed.

Develop a communication plan to inform stakeholders about the action plan and identify how they could contribute to its implementation.[38] Perhaps develop key messages outlining the objectives for each activity. This information may be inviting to others working towards similar goals; they could reach out to develop a collaborative relationship.

> To learn more about developing a plan to communicate the action plan, visit [Community Tool Box: Developing a Plan for Communication](#).[38]

Key Considerations for Step 5

- Develop a logic model to inform an action plan for implementing the identified policy option.

- Develop an action plan to manage the collective efforts to move the policy option forward.

- Conduct an HEIA on the action plan and make necessary revisions.

- Develop a communication plan to inform stakeholders about the action plan and invite them to contribute to its implementation.

Evaluate the Planning Phase

This is the end of the planning phase. After all this time, resources and effort, there may be a need to demonstrate progress to funders, management, government representatives and the public. A document from PHO, Focus ON: Measuring the policy-making process,[7] offers ways to measure the first four steps in this workbook (Table 5).

Table 5: Measuring Steps 1-4: Questions to Consider[7]

Policy-making steps	Questions to consider
Step 1: Identify, describe and analyze the problem	• Was there a high-level mandate to develop the policy? • Is the policy based on relevant data from a situational and needs assessment? • Has the public health burden been identified? • Has the priority of the issue been stated? • Has the relevance at the local level been identified? • Are the benefits for the policy action stated? • Have those most affected been identified? • Has a cost/benefit analysis been conducted (status quo or implement the policy)? • Have data been prepared for quick and proactive dissemination? • How have data been communicated? Have new ways been considered and used to communicate data?
Step 2: Identify and analyze policy options	• Have you examined policies used within the country and in other countries with similar cultural and demographic patterns? Have these options been integrated where relevant? • Has an exchange taken place with other countries concerning their policies and experiences? If so, how? • Has relevant research been undertaken to inform policy development? If so, what was found?
Step 3: Determine and understand decision makers and influencers	• Has a thorough consultation process taken place with key stakeholders? How?

Step 4:
Assess readiness for policy development
	• Was a community readiness model used to measure:
	    • knowledge about the problem or issue
	    • existing efforts to address the problem
	    • knowledge of these efforts
	    • leadership
	    • resources
	    • community climate for policy development

Implementation

By now, you've determined the direction to move the chosen policy forward. This is the phase to put everything into action; it involves two steps (Figure 4). This is a continuous process, so make adjustments as needed to build support for the policy. This may include having to recruit new members for the working group in order to implement the plan.

Figure 4: Implementation Phase
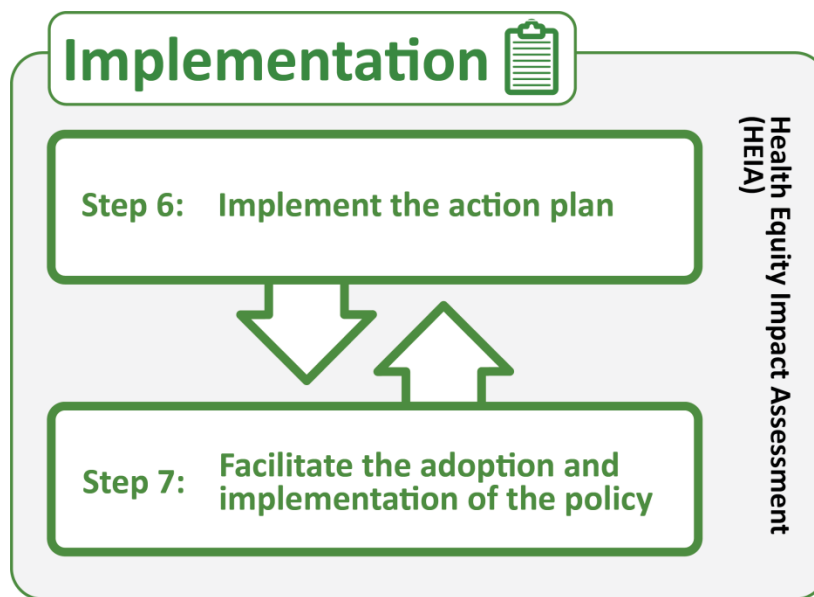
Step 6: Implement the Action Plan

The action plan is a work in progress; as it is being implemented it could change.[57] The focus of this step is on monitoring the implementation of the action plan, and collectively making necessary adjustments based on: 1) the political, economic and social environment; and 2) the human and financial resources available.

Why is this Step Important?

Translating the action plan into practice can be challenging. This step will ensure that activities are happening as envisioned, as needed, and kept within the parameters of the agreed upon goals and objectives.

Activities to Implement Step 6

Two activities are offered for this step: 1) developing a progress reporting structure; and 2) updating the communication plan to include any changes made and to engage new and existing stakeholders.

Develop a Progress Reporting Structure

Typical progress reporting structures include monthly updates and a review of the action plan with the person(s) responsible for the activities and/or tasks. This is a way to track successes, challenges and additional support needed.

Updates can occur through a variety of channels. For example, one working group posted their action plan in a shared directory. Prior to the monthly meeting the person(s) responsible for the activity and/or task updated the progress section. The agenda for the monthly meeting included reviewing the action plan and reflecting on the progress notes. Another channel could be email updates, with standardized headings and newsletter-type content based on the activities.

Regardless of the method, develop guidelines around when, how and by who updates are to be provided. The working group needs to determine this collectively. Perhaps review the group's terms of references to see if it provides guidance in this area. If no candidate emerges to lead the reporting of the progress, engage in deliberative process (outlined in Step 2) to identify an appropriate working group member. Update the working group's terms of reference to include this role and responsibilities.

Develop a system on how to save the revised action plan, so that everyone who needs to can access the most recent version. One example: place the date at the beginning of the file name, and then the name of the action plan, e.g., January 12_2018_workplace policy action plan.

Based on emerging issues and/or responses, the group may need to revise the action plan. If so, screen any new additions to the action plan using the HEIA [questions](). Use the answers to make any necessary revisions.

Avoid the following implementation pitfalls:

- lack of ownership

- lack of commitment

- no accountability

- viewing the action plan as separate from day-to-day work

- overwhelming plan (too many activities, shifting priorities)

- meaningless plan (not enough detail of how the plan moves towards policy development)[61]

Update the Communication Plan

Implementing the action plan could take weeks, months or years, depending on the topic.[57] Along the way, there is a need to communicate what is happening to stakeholders, including decision-makers and influencers.

It's important to develop a response system to communicate changes to the action plan and key messages. Revise the communication plan developed at the end of the planning phase to include a way to communicate changes to the action plan. Ensure that the system developed is being used. The goal is to continuously build support for adopting and implementing the policy option.

Key Considerations for Step 6

- Develop a progress reporting structure to track successes, challenges and additional support needed.

- Determine who will lead the reporting of the progress of the action plan.

- Ensure that everyone who needs to can access the most recent version of the plan.

- Develop a response system to communicate what is happening (changes, key messages) to stakeholders, including decision-makers and influencers.

Step 7 Facilitate the Adoption and Implementation of the Policy

The purpose of this step is to engage decision-makers in policy uptake. Policy uptake is about moving policy recommendations onto the agenda of the decision-maker, and for these decision-makers to adopt (uptake) and implement the policy.[51] The role of the practitioner and working group is largely to share information gathered, the products produced during the policy-making process and to be a resource and sounding board.

Why is this Step Important?

This part of the policy-making process focuses specifically on those who have the decision-making power to adopt and implement the policy within their formal system. It is important to develop an understanding of their process in order to persuade and influence their decision making. Policy implementation involves translating the goals and objectives identified in Step 1 into an operating policy.

More often than not, adopting and implementing a policy can take a lot of time. Sharing information gathered throughout the policy-making process will help avoid duplicating data-gathering efforts, and might lessen the time needed for this step.

Activities to Implement Step 7

Three activities are suggested for this step:

1. understanding the process for policy implementation

2. writing the policy

3. communicating the policy

Understand the process

Policy adoption happens before policy implementation. Part of the action plan covered in Step 5 and 6 included building support for the policy. Now is the time to have decision-makers operationalize this support.

To effectively support policy adoption, it's important to understand the process which organizations, institutions or governments need to follow to adopt the policy.

For example, when municipal by-laws are in the works, municipal staff typically write a report and make recommendations.[39] Build a stronger case for adoption by sharing the information gathered through the

policy-making process with staff at the time of the report writing, as opposed to when the report is being submitted to Council. This way, the working group can support their allies in the process (staff) and reassure the decision-maker (Council).[39,62] The aim is to reinforce that the policy addresses identified concerns, resolves a well-documented issue and has sufficient support in the community.[39]

Step 3 included some initial work to understand the structures and processes for policy uptake by decision-makers. At this point, the following questions should have been considered:

- What processes do decision-makers go through when making policy decisions?

- How long is the process from beginning to end?

- Where are they in the process?

If the answers to these questions are not known, collect the necessary information.

Write a summary of what is currently known about the process for policy implementation. It is important to focus on the specific setting where the policy will be adopted (e.g., organization, institution or government). There will be steps unique to the local context (internal policies and procedures that need to be followed). For instance, all municipalities have to follow the same process when implementing a municipal by-law; however, some have additional procedures. This also holds true for public institutions.[39,62]

Share this summary with key decision-makers and knowledgeable influencers. Ask them to identify any missing information. If there are missing steps or requirements, work with them to develop a complete understanding of the process for policy uptake. Use this summary to revise the action plan (Step 5) and to guide the working group's efforts to encourage the adoption and implementation of the policy.

Write the Policy

A written policy usually has five components:

1. **Rationale**: outlines who created the policy and the intended beneficiary, and the problem addressed by the policy

2. **Glossary**: definitions of key terms used in the policy

3. **Policy content**: the rules, regulations and sanctions of the policy as well as its goals, objectives, plans, procedures, laws, strategies, regulations and course of action related to an issue

4. **Date**: approved and date of any amendments and

5. **Supporting material**: such as the enforcement procedures to address non-compliance, communication procedures, monitoring and evaluating of the policy and any supporting material[64]

Typically, those who are implementing the policy write it. However, members of the working group could be invited to contribute. If not, offer to share information gathered throughout the policy-making process, particularly summaries and briefing notes. Use the relationships developed to contribute to this process.

When a specific policy is being written, encourage decision-makers to build on what others have done. In Step 2, different policy options were identified. Review the options relevant to the policy to be written. Consider what could be recommended for inclusion in the current policy.

Depending on the policy, guidance documents could be available on what to include. For example, Safe Play Initiative[64] has developed a resource to help guide the development of concussion policies. PHO has guides on developing municipal by-laws[39] and municipal alcohol policies.[40]

After the draft policy is written, work with the decision-makers to conduct an HEIA assessment[20] in order to mitigate any unintended consequences of the developed policy. Encourage them to consider how different populations may be negatively affected, identify existing programs to help lessen the effect of the policy, or create a new program.[20]

For example, one municipality moved to implement a new smoke-free multi-unit dwelling policy for municipal housing.[19] This municipality partnered with the Health Unit and other community stakeholders to offer free smoking cessation supports for residents. Work with decision-makers to revise the policy accordingly.[19]

Encourage decision-makers to develop written internal policy and procedures for implementing and enforcing the policy. This should include:

- Identifying the positions within the organization responsible for the implementation, enforcement and evaluation of the policy.

- Ensuring a dissemination plan to engage with people in these positions to clarify their role.[39]

This enables those responsible to follow the recommended course of action and encourages buy-in and promotion.

Policy adoption needs to happen before moving to policy implementation. If decision-makers resist policy adoption, consider using advocacy strategies. These could include sharing evidence-based recommendations, raising awareness about the problem and how the policy is a solution, strengthening partnerships and social mobilization.[65] The intent is to help decision-makers see the need for change.

To learn more about how to advocate for policy adoption, review Evaluating Success in Public Health Advocacy Strategies[66] and Advocacy Strategies for Health and Development: Development Communication in Action.[16]

Communicate the Policy

Policy implementation is the stage between the establishment of the policy and its consequences. It involves decision-makers formally enacting the written policy, and communicating the policy to those who are affected and those who will enforce it.

Work with decision-makers to help them develop a plan to promote, disseminate, implement, enforce, monitor and evaluate the policy. This involves encouraging them to identify the human and financial resources needed for implementation and development of a realistic and logically sequenced timeline.

Share relevant information and results from the communication plan developed in Step 5. One suggestion is to develop an awareness campaign plan, post the plan online and provide updates on its implementation. An example is the campus smoking/tobacco policy developed by the University of California.[67] Another suggestion is to develop media releases, both written and verbal (video), to post/broadcast on traditional news networks (television, newspapers), and social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook). Stakeholders could also promote the message.[38] For example, CAA has a dedicated campaign called Heads Up! to advise their membership about legislation and policy changes related to road safety.[68]

At this stage, encourage the decision-makers to prepare for organizations and/or people who are not supportive. Consider working with them to brainstorm who may oppose the policy. Engage them in assessing their readiness for policy change, similar to what was done in Step 4.

Key Considerations for Step 7

- Determine if you need to shift from a facilitative/supportive role to advocacy if decision-makers resist or defer policy adoption.

- Understand the specific steps in the adoption process for the targeted organizations.

- Emphasize relationship building with key stakeholders and decision-makers.

Evaluation

The purpose of this phase is to develop and manage an ongoing system to help gauge the policy's effectiveness. This phase only includes one step: evaluate the policy (Figure 5). This provides an opportunity to engage additional stakeholders who may not already be involved in the policy-making process (e.g., evaluation specialists, epidemiologists and/or community-based researchers).

Figure 5: Evaluation Phase

Evaluation

Step 8:   Evaluate the policy

Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA)
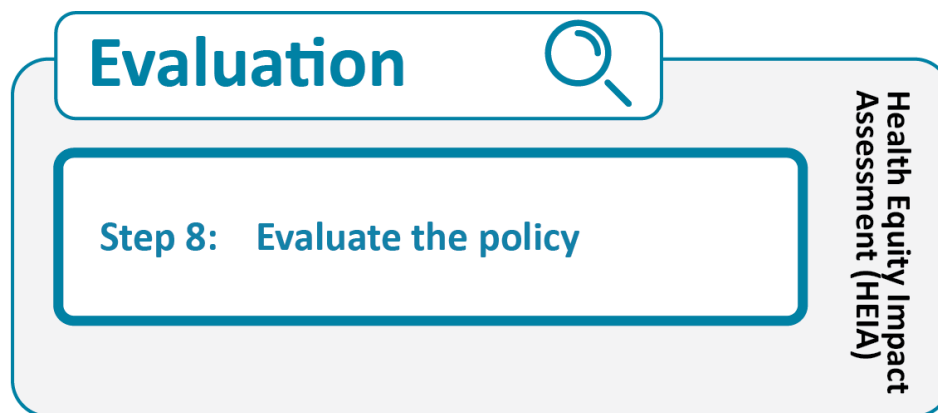
Step 8: Evaluate the Policy

Just like the planning and implementation phase, evaluating a policy is also a systematic process. The purpose of this step is to develop and implement a plan to evaluate the actual policy and/or the policy-making process. This is to ensure it has been implemented as intended and is having the desired impact, as well as to understand the process used.

Although this is the last step, activities throughout the policy-making process should be monitored and evaluated regularly. The results from these early evaluation efforts should also be revisited in this step.

Why is this Step Important?

Policy evaluations apply evaluation principles and methods to examine the content, implementation and impact of the policy to identify its merit, worth and utility. Policies are evaluated to:

- document and inform development, adoption and implementation efforts

- determine effectiveness and build an evidence base

- gauge support

- assess compliance

- inform future efforts[69]

Policy evaluation can be challenging, time-consuming and require many resources.[69,70] However, this effort has the potential to improve existing policies and build an evidence-base of best practices for policy development for future policy efforts.[71] This step also provides an opportunity to document and celebrate successes, and identify areas for improvement.

Difference between a policy and program/service evaluation

- **The level of analysis required**: system or community level for policy; program level for a program

- **The degree of control**: clear boundaries may be more challenging with policy evaluation

- **Ability to identifying an equivalent comparison**: more challenging with policy evaluation

- **Scale and scope of data collection**: may be greater with policy evaluation

- **Type and number of stakeholders involved**: may differ for a policy evaluation[72]

To better understand how to apply evaluation principles, review [Ethics and evidence generation: Steps to guide public health evaluations and promote ethical reflection throughout the lifecycle of an evaluation](#).[73] This article outlines three steps to guide public health evaluations and highlight ethical considerations during an evaluation.

Activities to Implement Step 8

There are two suggested activities to implement this step: 1) conduct a policy evaluation; and 2) communicate the evaluation results.

Conduct a Policy Evaluation

Decisions are made throughout an evaluation to determine: 1) what is to be evaluated; 2) how the evaluation will be conducted; and 3) what recommendations can be made.[71] To help determine this information, it is recommended to use [PHO's ten steps for conducting an evaluation](#)[70] to guide the development and implementations of a policy evaluation. Based on the article [Ever wonder whether policy makes a difference? Conduct an evaluation to find out,](#)[71] Table 6 outlines the steps and suggestions on how to apply them.

Ensure the policy evaluation is designed to overcome these common challenges:

- access to appropriate data

- lack of appropriate measurements

- political scrutiny and desire for quick production of results

- external and contextual factors that impede the evaluation

- lack of time[69]

Use the results of the evaluation to revise the policy content, implementation and/or impact.

Table 6: 10 Steps for Conducting a Policy Evaluation[71]

Steps	Application for evaluating a policy
Step 1: Clarify what to evaluate	• Develop a logic model that outlines the policy's goals, populations of interest, outcomes, outputs and activities. • Develop the purpose statement for what to evaluate and how to use the results. The purpose of the evaluation is usually a broad statement, rather than specific questions to be addressed. • Engage in facilitated dialogue to identify evaluation questions.
Step 2: Engage stakeholders	• Identify stakeholders and their interests or expectations with the policy evaluation. • Involve them in planning, data collection and interpretation.

Step 3: Assess resources and evaluability	• Assess the resources available to plan, implement and disseminate the results of a logical and thoughtful evaluation.
	• Determine readiness for conducting the evaluation using four standards:
	  1. defined, agreed-upon, and realistic goals (existing or planned policies)
	  2. well-defined information needs (agreement on evaluation focus)
	  3. obtainable evaluation data
	  4. intended users willing and able to use the evaluation information[74]
	• If these standards cannot be met, it may not be the right time for an evaluation.

Step 4: Determine your evaluation questions	• Prioritize and refine the questions generated in Step 1 of the evaluation process, considering the results from Step 3. Organize these questions under one of the three types of evaluations.
	
	1. Content: Can happen any time after the policy is written and can be used to compare policies.[72]
	  • How was an existing policy developed – under what conditions or context?
	  • How do different policies addressing the same issue compare?
	  • Are the necessary components (goals, implementation and underlying logic) articulated?
	
	2. Implementation: Can happen any time after the policy is enacted.[72]
	  • Was the policy implemented as intended?
	  • What were barriers and facilitators to implementation?
	  • Is there continued support for the policy?
	
	3. Impact: Can happen any time after the policy is enacted and implemented.[72]
	
	  • Were the intended short-term and long-term outcomes produced?
	  • Any unintended consequences?

Steps	Application for evaluating a policy

Step 5:
Determine methods of measurement and procedures
	• Using the results of Step 4 of the evaluation process, determine:
	    • What you will measure (indicators)?
	    • When you will collect data?
	    • How you will collect data (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods)?
	    • Who you will collect data from (staff, specific sub-groups or sample of population of interest)?
	    • Who will use the data?
	• Use the responses to these questions to: develop procedures for recruitment, data collection and analysis; and identify and address ethical considerations.[73]

Step 6: Develop evaluation plan	• Ensure the plan includes the purpose of the evaluation; methods; procedures; a data collection matrix (e.g., evaluation questions, indicators, methods, data source, timing, roles and responsibilities, budget); and ethical considerations (e.g., informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, cultural sensitivity). • Use this plan to ensure everyone knows what needs to happen, how and when.
Step 7: Collect data	• Pilot test data collection or extraction tools. • Adequately train data collectors and address any issues to ensure procedures are being followed correctly.
Step 8: Process data and analyze results	• Synthesize the information from all data sources. • Verify the quality of the data collected, organize the data and analyze it.
Step 9: Interpret and disseminate results	• Work with stakeholders to interpret the results. • Develop a communication strategy to share the results.
Step 10: Apply evaluation findings	• Apply lessons learned and/or recommendations made. • Consider evaluating the evaluation (called a meta- or process evaluation). This will help to identify what worked well and areas for improvement when evaluating future policies.

Communicate the Evaluation Results

This activity focuses on enhancing efforts for Step 9: Interpret and disseminate results of the evaluation process, outlined in Table 6. The intent is to emphasize the need to purposely and intentionally develop a plan to communicate and disseminate the evaluation results to stakeholders and other interested audiences. It involves moving beyond writing just a report that may not be utilized, to using the report as the foundation to communicate the policy evaluation results. Using this plan can build awareness and support for the policy, make necessary improvements and demonstrate accountability. This effort could enhance or address issues with the current policy and/or policy-making process; lead to a similar policy being implemented elsewhere; and strengthen relationships for new policies to be developed.

Start by considering: what have you learned through the policy and evaluation process? How could/would stakeholders use the evaluation results? How do they like to receive information?

Use the answers to:

1. **Establish the goals and objectives for the communication plan and identify target audiences/stakeholders for the dissemination plan**.[75]

2. **Choose communication formats** (the means to disseminate and convey the messages) based on the goals, objectives and target audiences identified.[75] Such as:

   - reports

   - memos and emails

   - bulletins, newsletters and blogs

   - videos

   - infographics

   - briefing notes

   - workshops or webinars

   - meeting presentations[75]

3. **Choose communication channels to distribute the messages**, such as:

- **Mass media**: print, broadcast media.

- **Social media**: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, website.

- **Interpersonal**: stakeholder meetings, one-to-one meetings.

- **Community-specific**: public gatherings.

- **Professional**: conferences, articles, online forums.[75]

Once this work is done, develop a communication plan to disseminate the evaluation plan. Include the following sections:

- goals for the communication/dissemination plan

- objectives

- target audiences/stakeholders

- communication format

- communication channels

- timeline for development

- person responsible for development

- review process with timelines

- timeline for dissemination

- person responsible for dissemination and progress reporting column[38,57]

Once complete, implement the plan, review the process and revise the plan as needed.

Using the Evaluation Results

To increase the likelihood policymakers will use evaluation results:

- Frame the findings in relation to local context and the original purpose for the policy.

- Provide real-life examples and comments.

- Present statistical data clearly using compelling visuals.

- Communicate with brevity and clarity.

- Highlight cost-benefit analyses.[69]

To learn more about how to develop messages that make a difference, check out this book list. These books have been used by many people, including public health practitioners.

- *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*[76]

- *The Tipping Point: How Little Things can Make a Big Difference*[77]

- *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*[78]

- *Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed*[79]

Key Considerations for Step 8

- Determine if you are evaluating the policy, the policy-development process or both. Clearly identify how the results of each will be utilized.

- Follow PHO's 10 steps for conducting an evaluation.[70]

- Engage key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the evaluation plan.

- Frame evaluation results in relation to the local context and the original purpose for the policy.

- Choose your format and communication channels based on audience information needs and preferred sources.

- Develop a dissemination plan to communicate the results of the evaluation to stakeholders and other important audiences.

Conclusion

Developing a policy is complex. It involves a comprehensive process and a wide variety of stakeholders. Together, they work to define a problem, use evidence to identify potential solutions, and engage in knowledge transfer to support and influence policy outcomes.

This process can seem overwhelming. By following the steps in this workbook, public health practitioners can learn the concepts and strategies to support a manageable policy-making process. This will help to support evidence-based policy interventions, which can lead to better health outcomes.

"Policy work is a long road, which requires a sustained effort. It's often about small, incremental changes and successes. But when it all comes together, the positive impact for the population as a whole is well worth the effort."[54(p.3)]

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Worksheets

Note: All worksheets are from the planning phase and are numbered corresponding to their respective step.

Worksheet 1.0: Framing the Problem from Different Perspectives

Perspectives to consider	What is the problem to solve?	How has the problem been framed? (e.g., from an individual's, community's, organization's, society's responsibility?)	Who is most affected? (e.g., are some population groups more vulnerable or marginalized by the problem?)
Your organization's			
Different levels of government (e.g., municipal, regional, provincial and/or federal)			
Public, private and not-for profit institution(s) (e.g., day care centres, schools, community services, employers, faith-based)			
Community members (e.g., those experiencing the problem, general public)			
Additional perspectives (e.g., special interest groups, informal organizations, professional associations)			

Worksheet 1.1: Data-Gathering Plan

Situational assessment questions	Possible data sources	Timelines	Roles and responsiblities	Method of data analysis
What factors in the community affect the problem (e.g., attitudes, values, beliefs, perceptions, and social, economic, environmental and/or political factors, cultural differences, or conflicting agendas)?				
Is the problem on the public agenda? Locally? Provincially? Federally?				
What is the cost of the problem (e.g., social, human, financial)?				
What is the cost of doing nothing about the problem?				
What possible actions (e.g., awareness, education, skill-building, environmental supports, policy) could resolve the problem? By whom?				
Are specific population groups most likely to experience inequities related to specific solutions?				
Do these possible actions address the determinants (causes of the causes)? If so, how?				

Worksheet 3.0: Identifying Decision-Makers and Influencers

Who are the key decision-makers?

Position	Name of person in the current position	List key characteristics What do you know about this person?

Who are the key influencers?

Position	Name of person in the current position	List key characteristics What do you know about this person?

Worksheet 3.1: Prioritizing Decision-Makers and Influencers

Who are the top five decision-makers?

List the five most powerful decision-makers	List the five most approachable decision-makers	List the five most accessible decision-makers
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

After reviewing the table, who are your top five key decision-makers?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Who are the top five influencers?

List the five most powerful influencers	List the five most approachable influencers	List the five most accessible influencers
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

After reviewing the table, who are your top five key influencers?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Glossary

Action plan: A document that outlines the activities needed to build momentum and support for the policy, especially during the implementation phase of the policy-making process. Clearly describes the core activities, tasks, resources and timelines needed to achieve the strategies outlined in a logic model.[33] Identifies what changes will happen and who will do what by when.[57] Used to inform the implementation phase of the policy-making process. An action plan is a living document, and needs to be reviewed and revised throughout the policy making process.[60]

Advocacy: Actions that can influence the development of healthy public policies.[1]

Advocacy strategies: Sharing evidence-based recommendations, raising awareness about the problem and how the policy is a solution, strengthening partnerships and social mobilization.[65]

Briefing note: A communication format to quickly and effectively inform people about an issue by distilling complex information into a short, well-structured document (two pages or less).

Communication channels: The way information is distributed (e.g., mass media, social media, personal communication, professional).[75]

Communication formats: The means to disseminate and convey information (e.g., written reports, short communications such as email or memos, video, infographic).[75]

Communication plan: A document that outlines how information/key messages will be clearly communicated.

Communication plan for communicating evaluation results: Specific action plan to disseminate the results of a policy evaluation. Includes, in a table format: target audiences; communication channels; communication format; timeline for development; person responsible for development; review process with timelines; timeline for dissemination; person responsible for dissemination; and progress reporting column.[38]

Dialogue mapping: Process used to develop a shared understanding of and commitment to the collective result.[29] Uses available evidence to further describe the problem. Starts with a question about the issue and systematically explores possible answers, without judgement, to draw a visual display of ideas (the dialogue map).[29]

Decision-maker: Those who have the power to implement the policy and/or are individuals who decide on a course of action.

Deliberative process: Intentional process that "allows a group of actors to receive and exchange information, to critically examine an issue and to arrive at an agreement that informs decision-making"; [47(p.1)] can be used when engaging in dialogue mapping.[47]

Evidence-based: Using the best available information to inform decisions.

Evidence table: Used when collecting data to standardize how evidence is documented. Helps increase the usability of the findings, especially if different people are gathering and analyzing the information.[34]

Evaluation phase: The final phase of the policy-making process. Involves developing and managing a policy evaluation (Step 8).

Force field analysis: A tool to help understand the range of factors (those that drive or resist change) that may influence the success of the policy option being considered.[55]

Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA): A tool to identify and address potential unintended health impacts of a policy, program or initiative on vulnerable or marginalized populations.[20]

Health inequities: Differences in health that are considered unnecessary, avoidable, unfair and unjust.[20]

Health in All Policies (HiAP): An approach that coordinates collective efforts to create healthy communities by taking into account the health implications of decisions made by those outside the health sector.[14]

Healthy public policies: Specific type of policy developed to: create healthy physical and social environments; improve economic and/or environmental conditions within a community; address health inequities; and decrease health-threatening environments.[11,12]

Implementation phase: The second phase of the policy-making process, putting the decisions made in the planning phase into action. This phase involves two steps: implement the action plan (Step 6) and facilitate the adoption and implementation of the policy (Step 7).

Influencer: Anyone who could influence decision makers to make a policy change. A decision maker can also be an influencer (e.g., community members, those working in profit, non-profit and not-for-profit organizations).

Logic model: Used to guide the development of an action plan (Step 5 of the PHO policy-making process). Provides a visual representation of the relationship between the: 1) goals (desired end state that the policy would achieve); 2) objectives (brief statement specifying the desired impact or effect of the policy); 3) policy (which to move forward); and 4) strategies (broad approaches that help achieve the goals and objectives of the policy).[58]

Marginalized populations: Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.[22]

Planning phase: The first phase of the policy-making process. Includes planning for the type of policy that will address the problem a community is experiencing. Involves five steps: Step 1 – identify, describe and analyze the problem; Step 2 – identify and analyze policy options; Step 3 – determine and understand decision makers and influencers; Step 4 – assess readiness for policy development; and Step 5 – develop an action plan.

Policy: Course of action that drives decision-making to set priorities and allocate resources; written document that outlines the rationale and supporting information for the actions.[11]

Policy adoption: Happens before policy implementation; is the part of the policy-making process when decision-makers operationalize their support for a policy and activities in the action plan (Steps 5 and 6) can make it happen. Involves understanding the processes used to implement policies, sharing information, and assisting decision-makers in the writing of the policy. Also, includes encouraging a Health Equity Impact Assessment to be conducted on the draft policy. The role of the practitioner and working group may be to inform and support decision-makers to see the need for change.

Policy evaluation: Applies evaluation principles and methods to examine the content, implementation and/or impact of a policy to identify its merit, worth and utility.[71,72]

Policy goals: All-encompassing statements that describe the overall results of the policy.[33]

Policy implementation: The stage between establishing the policy and seeing its consequences. Involves decision-makers formally enacting the written policy and communicating it to those who are affected by it and who will enforce it. As with policy adoption, the role of the practitioner and working group may be to inform and support decision-makers.

Policy-making process: Involves a wide variety of stakeholders who work together to define a problem, use evidence to identify potential solutions, and engage in knowledge brokering and transfer to influence policy outcomes.[2]

Policy objectives: Specific statements describing the effect of the policy – what should happen, to whom, and how.[33]

Policy option/intervention: A feasible solution to a problem that can be addressed by creating a policy.

Policy options table: A chart that records the information gathered on the policy options being considered; includes headings such as identification method, reference/source, policy option, categorization of the policy, and notes.

Policy Readiness Tool: Based on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory, this tool assesses the readiness of communities, organizations, and municipal decision-makers to support policy change.[54] The results can be used to encourage the adoption and implementation of healthy public policies.

Policy uptake: Moving policy recommendations onto the agenda of the decision-maker and for these decision-makers to adopt, approve and implement the policy.[51]

Problem statement: A summary of the impact and root causes of the problem (from a particular perspective) and possible actions to address the problem.

Situational assessment: A systematic process to gather, analyze, synthesize and communicate data to inform planning decisions.[30] This assessment integrates the best available evidence (such as local context, community and political preferences and actions, public health resources, and scholarly

research) into the decision-making process.[31] The goal is to answer two questions: 1) what is contributing to the problem?; and 2) what possible actions could resolve the problem?[30]

Stages Heuristic Model: A model that takes complex policy steps and refines them into manageable stages such as agenda setting, and policy formation, implementation and review.[6]

Stakeholder: A person or organization that has an interest in or concern with the problem, and/or solution and who may positively or negatively affect the policy-making process.

Stakeholder analysis: An approach to generate knowledge by collecting information from primary and secondary data sources about decision-makers and influencers.[49] A means to understand their behaviour, intentions, attitudes and beliefs. Primary sources could include interviews, surveys and/or focus groups.[49] Secondary sources could include documents such as meeting minutes, reports, policy statements, articles and/or social media posts.[49]

Strategies: Broad approaches that help achieve policy goals and objectives.[58] Four strategies to be considered in Step 5: Develop an action plan (see Logic model):

1. Policy research and investigation (e.g., gather data on public opinion, demonstrate benefits for the policy).

2. Relationship-building and educating decision-makers (e.g., establish contact and request participation, prepare fact sheets, offer educational sessions, provide constructive feedback).

3. Relationship-building and educating influencers.

4. Mobilizing public support (e.g., social media messages, sponsor a public meeting, provide educational sessions).[59]

Vulnerable populations: Groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the: 1) barriers they experience to social, economic, political and environmental resources; and 2) limitations they face due to illness or disability.[22]

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