

The Eight Steps to Developing a Health Promotion Policy

1 Describe the Problem	2 Assess Readiness for Policy Development	3 Develop Goals, Objectives, & Policy Options	4 Identify Decision Makers & Influencers
<p><i>Obtain a detailed understanding of the specific problem. This will be a foundation for developing clear goals, assessing options, & building support for the policy among decision makers.</i></p> <p>Understand the problem:</p> <p>Causes – What is the origin or cause of the problem? What has contributed to its development?</p> <p>Impact – What is the extent & cost of the problem in your community? What would happen if it was NOT dealt with?</p> <p>Perception – Who else thinks it is a problem? Who thinks it is not?</p> <p>Solutions – What has been done to try & resolve the problem, in your community & others? What are potential policy & non-policy solutions? What are the costs & benefits of various solutions?</p> <p>Search for information to find answers:</p> <p>Types of data – quantitative opinion, community health status survey, community stories, evaluation & research findings, cost-benefit, "best practices" synthesis & guidelines, organizational mandates, historical approaches</p> <p>Sources – journals, magazines, books; consultants, private sector; resource centres; government departments; local health units; non-governmental organizations & strategies, polling companies, researchers, community spokespersons</p>	<p><i>Determine whether to proceed. This decision should be based on whether your community is ready for a specific policy & your organization is ready to lead the process.</i></p> <p>Assess readiness:</p> <p>Community – Who will be supportive or unsupportive? Why? What is public opinion? What reasons to oppose this policy will be put forward? Are there educational & awareness programs in your community that focus on your problem? How successful have they been? Has the problem been a recent focus in the media?</p> <p>Organizational – Is the policy & development process a fit with your mandate? How much time/resources do you have to support it? Who can you support the process?</p> <p>Shape your answers into a Force Field Analysis – a snapshot of the forces that will drive or restrain the process. The snapshot may be different for different policy options.</p> <p>You may use other strategies before beginning policy development (e.g., focus on data collection, education, & persuasion or find additional resources). If you start when public opinion is negative or resources are inadequate you may fail & reduce your credibility.</p> <p>"Lead" may not be the best role for you. If the community is ready but you are not you can support policy development in other ways.</p>	<p><i>Define clear goals & objectives for the initiative & generate a list of policy options that you want decision makers to consider. Putting forward more than one option shows stakeholders that you are flexible & willing to negotiate. Assessing numerous options prepares you to explain why there are certain ones that you will not support.</i></p> <p>Develop one or two goals – These are broad statements summarizing the ultimate direction or desired achievement of your policy.</p> <p>Develop your objectives – These are brief statements specifying the desired impact or effects of a policy. Objectives should be specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic & time limited.</p> <p>Generate a list of policy options to address the issue – These are choices regarding the types of policies that can be put in place to address health issues.</p> <p>Assess all policy options to determine fit with goals & objectives – Choose a shortlist of choices from the ones that fit after considering community & organizational readiness for each option. This shortlist comprises the options that will be presented to decision makers.</p>	<p><i>Decide which decision makers will be the focus of your support-building efforts. Choosing the wrong people can waste resources & may even jeopardize future strategies if you approach people at the wrong level.</i></p> <p>Ask city clerks or other government officials who would be best to approach & how to approach them. Don't assume that you already know the best person.</p> <p>Consider starting with someone lower on the hierarchy rather than heading straight for the top.</p> <p>Start with more sympathetic & supportive individuals rather than pouring your energy into the "toughest nut."</p> <p>Find out as much as you can about how your decision makers make decisions. For example, consider whether they are most driven by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media coverage, • their own strong beliefs & values, • the needs of their clients or constituency, &/or • other influential people or groups.
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5 Build Support for a Policy	6 Write &/or Revise the Policy	7 Implement the Policy	8 Evaluate & Monitor the Policy
<p><i>Choose channels & vehicles through which to try to persuade decision makers to proceed with policy development & develop the messages that are put forth using these methods. This step can win or lose battles.</i></p> <p>Choose one or more of the following to help advance your agenda:</p> <p>Low profile – quiet negotiation, meet civil servants, share information, non-public briefs</p> <p>Medium profile – continued negotiation, meet civil servants, public briefs, committee meetings, alliances with others, letters to newspapers</p> <p>High profile – public criticism, PR & ad campaigns, release information, letter writing, demonstrations</p> <p>Focus messages on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the links between the policy & a compelling issue, • simple descriptions of solutions, & • signs in the community that change is warranted & desired (e.g., public opinion, media coverage). <p>Prepare to counter arguments such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too costly, • increased regulations restrict individual freedoms, & • there is an non-policy solution. <p>Scan the community continually for opportunities to get your message out.</p> <p>Frequently adapt messages as public opinion, media, & decision-maker landscapes change.</p> <p>Be strategic in every vehicle & word choice.</p>	<p><i>Define the specific logistical & legal details about a policy. The precise wording of a policy often dictates whether or not it is passed.</i></p> <p>Include all of the following in your policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purpose of the policy, goals, & objectives; • a description of the regulations & sanctions; • procedures for non-compliance; • a plan for promoting & disseminating the policy; & • a plan for monitoring & evaluating the policy. <p>Prepare to revise as many times as necessary. "Seeing it in writing" will often re-ignite opposing forces.</p> <p>Consult stakeholders throughout the writing & revision process. People responsible for funding, implementing, & otherwise acting upon the policy should be included. Community consultations are often a part of this process.</p> <p>Consult with a legal professional about the policy.</p> <p>Review every policy draft to ensure that the policy goals & objectives will be met.</p>	<p><i>Ensure that all pre-requisites are in place for policy implementation & then implement the policy. Many policies have been retracted upon realizing that implementation is impractical, too costly, too controversial or progress toward the ultimate goal cannot be demonstrated.</i></p> <p>Ensure the following conditions are met before embarking on policy implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy meets stated goals & objectives. • Objectives are measurable. • Approval of key decision makers & stakeholders has been obtained. • An accurate estimate of the resources needed to implement your policy has been developed. • The timeline is realistic & appropriate. • The policy specifies who is responsible for what. <p>Consult with people responsible for funding, implementing, & otherwise acting upon the policy as implementation is considered.</p>	<p><i>Develop & manage a system for evaluating the long-term effectiveness, feasibility, & support for a policy. Early identification of problems & timely policy amendments may help avoid full retraction of a policy when implementation presents challenges. A thorough evaluation will also help to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders & reduce implementation costs.</i></p> <p>Seek answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the situation better than it was before the policy was implemented? • If the policy was not as effective as anticipated, why not? • Are people who were involved in the policy process happy with the results? • Do the people affected have a favourable view of the policy? If not, what can be done to address their concerns? • Are there foreseeable developments that may affect the policy? <p>Use indicators such as the following to help answer these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • behaviours or health status of community members, • number of infractions, • mass media coverage of the policy, & • resources allocated to implementing the policy.
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