

# **Policy Development and Implementation Sequence**

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## **Introduction**

This paper summarizes the key steps in developing and implementing a policy in government. It is a check list for policy planners and others who support, approve, or may be impacted by a policy initiative. It begins with a definition of what a policy is and where it fits in the various parts of a country's governance framework, and then continues to describe the main steps in designing and implementing a policy.

## **Definition of "Policy" and Where it Fits in Governance Documentation**

A policy is one of many components of a government's multi-level administrative framework. In general, a country's constitution, its national development strategy, and its laws are at the highest level, providing a context for policies addressing particular problems. In some circumstances where there is an absence of legislation, this order is reversed: an officially approved policy can provide a framework for drafting of laws. Regulations define how laws and policies are to be implemented, with strategies and procedures providing greater detail. Guidelines define even further levels of detail on actions required to carry out the intent of a policy, all of which should ultimately result in strategic plans, budgets, staffing charts, performance management procedures and, ideally, in monitoring and evaluation systems to feed performance data back to senior leadership so they can manage the organization appropriately.

## **Steps in Policy Design and Implementation Process**

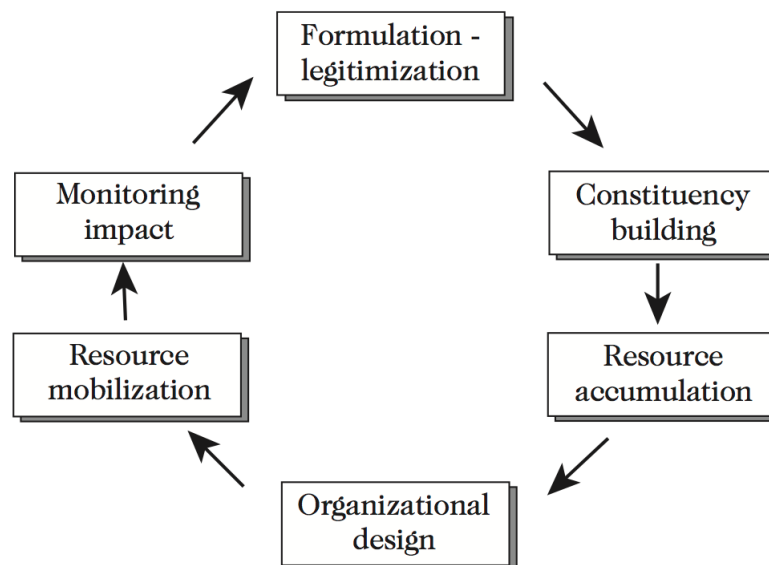
Once an issue has been identified by leaders as a problem that needs to be addressed, the rest of the policy development and implementation initiative is underway. This multi-stage process has been described by Brinkerhoff and Crosby<sup>2</sup> as a sequence or cycle, with major steps shown in the following figure. They stress that in reality the process is unpredictable and not as neat and tidy as it appears in the figure: it is rarely as linear and clearly defined, and there can be blockages or reversals and multiple iterations of the cycle as the policy initiative proceeds. Policy documents prepared at the beginning may undergo significant change as a result.

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<sup>2</sup> Brinkerhoff, D., & Crosby, B. (2002). *Managing Policy Reform: Concepts and Tools for Decision-Makers in Developing and Transitioning Countries*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner - Kumarian Press. Pp. 32, 57-59.

### Policy Implementation Sequencing and Tasks



The authors describe a participatory approach to defining these six steps of the policy implementation process:

- **Formulation – legitimization:** preliminary analytical or diagnostic work to lay out the rationale for the reform. This work is used by interest groups both inside and outside of government to legitimize the policy initiative.
- **Constituency building:** identifying and reaching out to stakeholders to bring them into the policy process.
- **Resource accumulation:** identifying and acquiring access to the resources required for the policy initiative.
- **Organizational design:** defining and putting in place new implementation arrangements and structures.
- **Resource mobilization:** providing resources to the implementation actors and ensuring the new processes run smoothly and effectively.
- **Monitoring impact:** generating and analyzing feedback to support adjustments, adapt to changing conditions and contribute to future policy initiatives.

Some major policy development and implementation projects can take a long time: they can extend over a decade or more during which there may be several changes in governments. Stakeholder engagement needs to be strong enough to withstand unanticipated changes in the political context as proposed policy changes move toward becoming embedded in government operations.

The next section describes the steps in a policy development and implementation process in greater detail.

**Define the Problem to be Addressed**

The first step in a policy development process is to describe the problem the policy is to address. The basic problem should be clearly summarized in one or two sentences. Examples could be:

- The government can not reliably and systematically assess its own performance.
- Subnational governance is not properly organized.
- Women and minorities do not have equity of access to justice and to opportunities.

In complex situations where there are influential stakeholders who may need to be convinced, it might be necessary to prepare supplementary material describing the problem in some detail, and its significance in the operations of the state.

**High-Level Agreement in Principle that the Problem Must be Addressed**

The next step is to get confirmation from senior governing authorities that the problem is serious enough that it requires the government's attention, and to receive approval in principle to proceed with developing a policy to address the issue. Cabinet level endorsement should be obtained for policies that are likely to have broad impacts so there is a government-wide mandate to deal with the issue. This may need a concept paper for senior officials' review, adjustment (if required) and approval.

**Identify Political Level Sponsor(s) and Technical Team**

Identify appropriate political level sponsor(s) for guiding development of the policy, and form a technical team to work on the policy project. Define a project management structure and process, and ensure both groups have sufficient time and resources to work on the policy. The technical team should regularly inform political level sponsors of the progress of the policy development project so they can provide guidance and approve major steps as it proceeds.

**Prepare Preliminary Project Workplan**

Draft a preliminary step-by-step workplan for the next phase(s) of the policy development project. This workplan should include the following:

- Define the policy approval procedure – key actors and steps in the process.
- Define the regulatory context for the policy – list applicable laws, regulations and other formal and informal protocols related to the problem the policy is addressing.
- Analyze possible impacts (legal, financial, social, environmental, etc.).
- Identify major stakeholders – list agencies and groups that have an interest in the problem the policy is addressing, and who might be impacted by the policy.
- Define likely sources of support and opposition to the new policy.
- Plan stakeholder consultation process.
- Provide technical team with needed support – facilities, equipment, project management software, etc.
- Draft a preliminary project management workplan, get approval from key senior level sponsor(s).

### **Implement Project Workplan**

Start work on the main steps described in the previous section:

- Analyze the regulatory context, define areas that may need to change, plan and implement regulatory changes.
- Analyze possible sources of support and opposition, plan and implement a strategy to increase support and reduce opposition.
- Carry out a stakeholder consultation process, focusing on defining the policy content and implementation process.
- Identify policy implementation resource requirements (personnel, organizational structure, budget, etc.).
- Monitor policy development project progress, revise or update the workplan as required.

### **Write Draft Policy and Revise as Required**

Write a draft policy document based on findings from the workplan implementation process.

- A policy should be as concise and clear as possible, and usually has the following sections:
  - **Purpose Statement:** Why the policy exists
  - **Policy mandate or authority:** Legal foundation of the policy
  - **Context and Scope:** Where the policy fits and who it applies to
  - **Policy Statement:** Details of the actual policy
  - **Supporting Regulations:** List of issues to be dealt with in other more detailed supporting regulations and procedures
  - **Responsibility:** Who is responsible for implementing and reviewing the policy
  - **Definition of terms**
- Submit the policy draft(s) to senior officials and key stakeholders for consultation: review and revise as required.
- Repeat previous steps as often as required to obtain formal stakeholder and senior level approval of the policy.
- Obtain access to resources needed for policy implementation.

### **Implement and Monitor Approved Policy**

Work with stakeholders to start policy implementation:

- Develop roll out strategy and deploy required resources.
- Make necessary organizational changes – structure, budget, personnel, operations, etc.
- In some cases it may later be recognized that new legislation is needed to address the problem, and senior institutions such as Parliament should be engaged in the assessment, approval and monitoring process.
- Monitor policy implementation process.
- Adjust policy as required – repeat steps above at regular intervals if needed.