

How to design a policy influence plan?

Toolkit N°2

The policy making process. Analyze the context for effective influence planning

This toolkit is part of a series addressing the various components of a public policy influence plan.

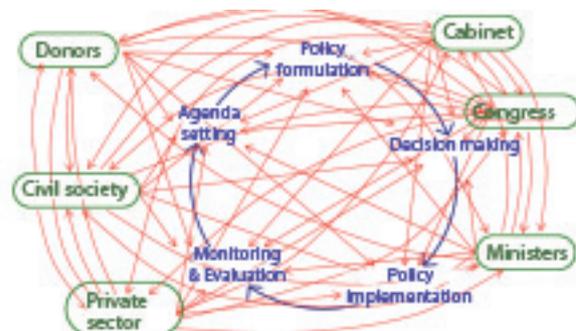
Why does the context matter?

When planning to influence public policies, it is necessary to take into account the context in which planification and actions stemming from our plan will be carried out. The context is made up of other players who wish to influence policy, policy makers, the various policy formulation processes, the public policies themselves, and feasible changes in said policies. Regarding the context, organizations will carry out an analysis of their potential for influence; will define their objectives, activities and products, the players with whom they will interact and make decisions. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that, although the usefulness of designing a plan is in its capacity for organizing actions, organizations cannot manage the context and, often, steps previewed in the initial stage must be reformulated or set aside. This means that context analysis must have a place in the various planning stages in order to visualize in what measure it will be necessary to adjust the plan while allowing a reaction in the face of unexpected change, and take advantage of new opportunities.

Looking at the context: what is the policy making process like?

Although there are different models which strive to describe the policy making process, it is true that none completely reflects their complexity which exists in an **ambiguous, shifting, and highly volatile context, and in which different actors, each with their own interests and motivations, intervene.** **Figure 1** illustrates the field in which the organization usually performs when it wishes to influence public policies.

Figure 1. The chaos of policy influence

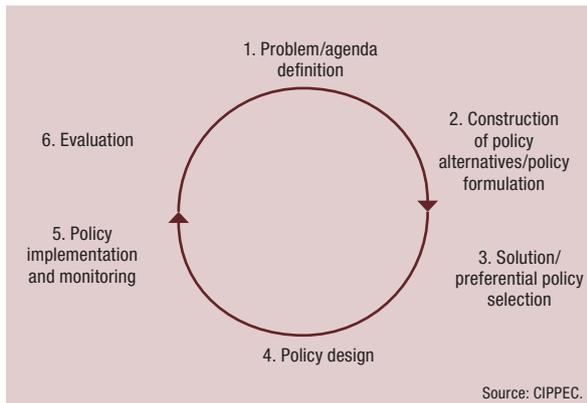


Source: Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

Other policy making process models

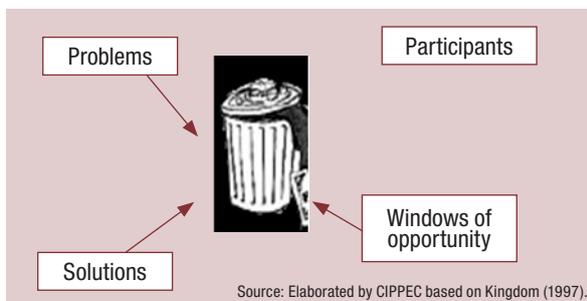
Action planning for policy influence frequently assumes an orderly vision of their operations, known as a linear public policy model.

Figure 2. Sequential or linear model



However, there is much evidence to suggest that this model is far from reality: if a profound analysis is carried out, it will become obvious that the phases do not necessarily follow each other in that direction, and that it is possible to go and return in one or another direction through the process; and that certain phases might not take place. In addition, it is important to highlight that public and private players participate in each phase of the sequential model.

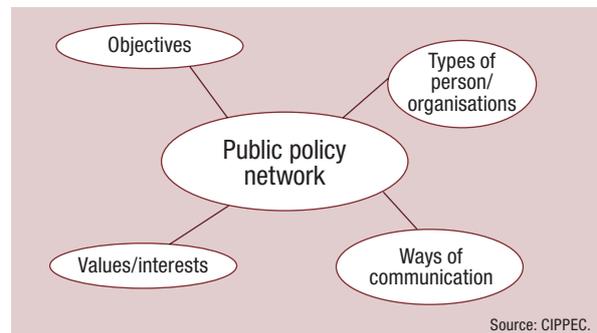
Figure 3. Garbage can model



The garbage can model, coined by Kingdon in *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, highlights the dismantling of policy

making process phases. It poses that policy makers often find a multiplicity of problems, solutions, participants and opportunities in a disorderly and disconnected manner. Policy making would be chiefly accidental and thus, it would become a product of a flow of solutions, problems, and situations randomly associated: solutions and problems would be linked accidentally.

Figure 4. Public policy network



Public policy networks refer to relatively stable social relationships among inter-dependent players who develop around problems and/or public policies. According to Diane Stone, public policy specialist at Warwick University, a distinctive feature of these networks is the fact that they share a problem around which information exchange, debate, disagreement, persuasion, and the search for solutions and appropriate policy answers take place.

The network model visualizes the process as the result of a conjunction of different players with diverse objectives, values, etc. from whose interaction policy decisions emerge. It could be said that these emerge from the manner in which a community determined by players (politicians, bureaucrats, researchers, activists, etc.) performs, whether united or whether confronting each other regarding their interests, objectives, etc.

Where to influence?

Another key aspect to take into account when designing a plan is the level or area in which influence is desired. Identifying the most appropriate levels or areas of influence is a key step in planning design.

Some possible areas of influence:

- **Powers:** Executive, Legislative, Judicial
- **Levels:** regional, national, subnational (provinces, regions, states, etc.), and local (councils, town/city halls, etc.)
- **Communications media**
- **Private sector**
- **International arena**

Useful tools

Since it is necessary to take the context into account when planning to influence policy, we present two useful tools that help to analyze it:

- **Force field analysis:** provides a wide vision of the different forces which act upon a probable policy issue and evaluates their sources of power and strength.
- **Stakeholders analysis:** consists on clearly identifying all actors involved who have interests and/or resources which may affect or be affected by policy change. As well, analysis of the players attempts to reflect each player's power level, according to resources, needs and interests of others involved (*Weaving Global Networks*, 2006).

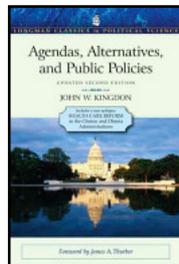
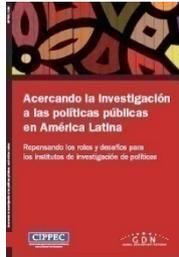
These tools will provide identification of the various stakeholders, and of other factors which interact with the public policy issue that an organization wish to influence.

When utilizing these tools it is useful to have made a previous analysis of the organization's own potential and to have defined influence objectives, since the intervening stakeholders and factors will vary according to the subject matter which they wish to influence. For this, we will return to context analysis and tools to carry it out in upcoming Toolkits.

To continue searching!

Reading recommendations
by CIPPEC's Civil Society Directorate
to design an influence plan

- *Bridging research and public policies in Latin America.* CIPPEC and GDN, 2009.
Available at www.vippal.cippec.org.
- *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies,* John Kingdon, 1997.
- *Mapping Political Context. A Toolkit for Civil Society Organisations;* Robert Nash, Alan Hudson and Cecilia Luttrell, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2006.
Available at www.odi.org.uk.
- *The policy process: an overview;* Rebecca Sutton, Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Available at www.odi.org.uk.



Next Toolkit:

Where are we and how far can we go. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges

If you wish to quote this document:
Weyrauch, Vanesa and Echt, Leandro (2012).
Toolkit N°2: The policy making process. Analyze the context for effective influence planning, at *How to design a policy influence plan?*
Buenos Aires: CIPPEC.

Other guides from the series:

How to design a policy influence plan?

Toolkit N° 1.

What is an influence plan. Why should we plan.

Toolkit N° 2.

The policy making process. Analyze the context for effective influence planning.

Toolkit N° 3.

Where are we and how far can we go. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Toolkit N° 4.

What we desire. Define influence objectives.

Toolkit N° 5.

Who should we work with. Define actors and alliances.

Toolkit N° 6.

How to generate the desired impact. Define the proposal.

Toolkit N° 7.

How to carry out the proposal. Define strategies and actions.

Toolkit N° 8.

How to communicate. Define the strategy and key messages.

Toolkit N° 9.

Who, how much and when. Define resources and timeline.

Toolkit N° 10.

What have we learned? An approximation to monitoring and evaluation of policy influence.

Other series:

How can we monitor and evaluate policy influence?

Tools for policy influence

Available at www.vippal.cippec.org

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CIPPEC thanks GDNet for their support in producing this Toolkit.

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