

# How to design a policy influence plan?

## Toolkit N°3

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

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

As stated in **Toolkit N°1: What is an influence plan. Why planning**, in this series we will work with the following policy influence plan structure, whose stages we will begin to review from the present Toolkit.



Once the meaning of influence is defined, and questions arise as to the reasons for wishing to influence policy, conditions will be set to delve into influence plan design.

### Diagnostic summary

A diagnostic summary is a good first step to visualize how the organization is positioned to build a strategy and a policy influence plan, as well as achieving consensus regarding opportunities and challenges. It is also possible to produce a specific program or project diagnostic which, given its complexity or strategic value is well deserved. This “photograph” must include every resource (human, financial, knowledge) necessary to design and implement an influence plan, as well as the political and social stage which will influence actions (and which these actions will strive to influence). Thus, the organization will identify those factors which best describe its internal and external situation, and will then prioritize and build on them. **In this phase,**

it is key to look for consensus generation regarding expected objectives, priorities, responsibilities and results stemming from an influence plan.

## Key organizational factors for effective policy influence

- Background / experience
- Human resources/ Working team
- Communications / Institutional strategy of dissemination
- Credibility / External perception
- Funding
- Capacity to generate alliances
- Transparency / accountability / internal information flow
- Strategy for building capacities on influence
- Identification of influence objectives
- Influence evaluation mechanisms
- Commitment / institutional will

Source: Policy influence capacities development, Workshop Report CIPPEC – ODI, 2007, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

## More tools

**Problem Tree Analysis:** Another useful exercise to utilize before beginning to agree on a plan is to ask oneself which specific fields are to be influenced. When influencing existing policies, or when promoting existing ones is attempted, the organization's developed proposal should be linked to a problem or to a set of public problems. The problem tree analysis is a tool for linking a proposal with a problem to be solved, identify its causes and consequences, and decide where efforts will be focused.

## Useful tools

Among other diagnostic tools, the following stand out:

- Questionnaires and/or interviews.
- The SWOT matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

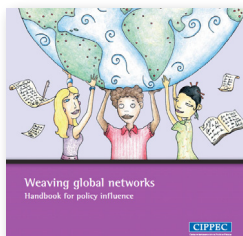
SWOT matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)	
<p>The SWOT analysis is a tool for the organization to <b>identify factors which best describe its current situation</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify current strengths and weaknesses as well as threats and opportunities which the organization should take into account when building its capacity to influence policy. <b>Where are we?</b></li> <li>Detect the location of the most significant challenges and potential. <b>How far can we go?</b></li> </ul> <p>Strengths and weaknesses relate directly to the internal characteristics of the organization; and threats and opportunities belong to the context in which it is immersed (they are external to the organization).</p>	
<b>Advantages</b>	Allows for prioritizing and focusing on influence intervention. Based on the SWOT, the organization can build strategies which take advantage of strengths and opportunities and which mitigate weaknesses and threats.
<b>To take into account</b>	<p>Many threats may become opportunities; many strengths may become weaknesses, etc., depending on how conscious organizations are of their own barriers and potential; and how they decide to work on them.</p> <p>Since organization characteristics and context often vary with time, it is recommended to utilize this tool at least once per year, to detect changes and to have a view as close to reality as possible.</p>
<b>How is it implemented?</b>	<p>This matrix is composed of four quadrants in which strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats must be consigned. Those who participate in the exercise must know the organization and the actors with which it interacts, in order to nourish the matrix with their perspective.</p> <p>It is recommended that all members of the organization linked with the goals outlined are allow to state their opinion. <b>If the exercise is more inclusive, there are more opportunities for the different members to coordinate and achieve synergy in their future efforts.</b></p>
<b>Some guiding questions</b>	<p>What type of knowledge and political influence capacities does the organization have?</p> <p>In what areas or opportunities have they been utilized with relative effectiveness?</p> <p>Who are its strongest allies?</p> <p>Are there windows of opportunity within the political, economic or social context to influence policy?</p> <p>Which factors or who is a frequent obstacle to policy influence?</p>

**Through SWOT, and by questioning the wish to influence public policy the organization will achieve a panorama to begin thinking about the influence plan.**

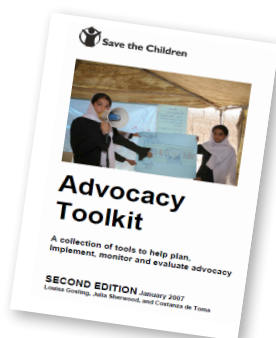
## To continue searching!

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

- *Weaving global networks. Handbook for policy influence.* CIPPEC, 2006. Pages 17-33, 68-69.  
Available at [www.vippal.cippec.org](http://www.vippal.cippec.org).



- *Advocacy toolkit. A collection of tools to help plan, implement, monitor and evaluate advocacy;* Save the Children, 2007, page 68.



- *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers,* Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, Overseas Development Institute, 2004, pages 18-20.  
Available at [www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk).



In Spanish:

- *Manual para la Facilitación de Procesos de Incidencia Política,* A. Mc- Kinley y P. Baltazar, (*Handbook for Policy Influence Processes*) Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) 2005, pages 155-167.  
Available at [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org).

Next Toolkit:

What we desire.  
Define influence  
objectives

If you wish to quote this document:  
Weyrauch, Vanesa and Echt, Leandro (2012).  
Toolkit N°3: Where are we and how far can we go.  
Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and  
challenges, 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](http://www.vippal.cippec.org)

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CIPPEC thanks GDNet for their support in producing this Toolkit.

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