

How to design a policy influence plan?

Toolkit N°6

How to generate the desired impact. Define the proposal

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

In this toolkit we will concentrate on the definition of a concrete proposal to influence on public policies and on the elements it should contain.

Having identified the stakeholders that can affect or be affected by the objectives of the organization, it is necessary to begin designing a solid and consistent proposal that responds to the problems previously identified. The problem tree¹ and the stakeholder's map² serve as a platform to discuss what the organization should do to achieve the desired impact.



A proposal may be a recommendation or a specific initiative to help solve a problem or reduce its negative consequences. It must be oriented to the people in charge of making decisions; therefore it is necessary to think about it in terms of actions that may be carried out, through programs, laws or regulations, by the members of the State.

1 See Toolkit N° 3: Where we are and how far we can go. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.
2 See Toolkit N° 4: Who should we work with. Define actors and alliances.

The initiative should have the following attributes:

- Clarity and precision
- Further explain the context and the perspective from which the proposal is made
- Coherence between the ends and means
- Creativity

The organization must assure that the proposal:

- 1) responds to the identified problem or to one of its main causes or consequences;
- 2) provides content to the specific objectives that were established;
- 3) is built taking into account the interests and the power level of the main involved stakeholders that should engage somehow in the process of policy incidence.

Some examples of proposals³

To promote the adoption of a National Health Care Act organizing and defining an adequate articulation between institutions and jurisdictions of the health care system.

To extend school days from four to six hours for 30% of primary level students with higher social needs across the country.

To establish health care as a basic social and universal right and to promote the establishment of a system to regulate the actions oriented to health care and to articulate it with provinces and municipalities, with a suitable budgetary allocation.

Gradually, raise the minimum retirement age, together with the introduction of an early retirement scheme and exemption from payment of dues and contributions to people who exceed the current retirement age.

3 Extracted from the project: Presidential Agenda 2011-2015, CIPPEC. Available at www.agenda-presidencial.org

Building on the scope of the Ministry of Justice an Access Rights Center (ARC) with three objectives: to survey the legal needs of the population, increase access to justice and to promote legal literacy.

Develop a criminal information system, and create a crime and violence national observatory.

Basic contents of the proposal

- What is the problem?
- What is the proposed solution?
- What is the evidence and the research supporting that solution?
- What can be achieved in a measurable manner by means of this solution?
- How can the objective be achieved (mechanisms and strategies)?
- What are the decision making instances like: time, formal, or informal, ads, scheduled or improvised?
- Who are the stakeholders that should realize the agreed proposal?
- What is the political feasibility that must carry on the proposal?
- How much does it cost to implement it (budgetary analysis)?

Source: CIPPEC, based on Weaving Global Networks (2006).

Particularly, to account for the political feasibility and to make an analysis of the budgetary feasibility to carry forward the proposal demonstrates certain robustness about it and maturity in understanding the context and the work of decision makers. At the same time, if the organization offers more than one public policy solution, it is important to integrate them in the feasibility and budgetary policy analysis. As an example, a common contradiction in

fiscal policy is to recommend an increase in spending in an area that is considered to be a priority (e.g., education) while it is recommended to maintain fiscal balance because an expansionary fiscal policy may cause inflation and damage the teachers' pay, or even worse, the deficit may bring crisis. Every time someone proposes an amendment of the fiscal policy, this affects the overall balance and that has second-order effects. Therefore, if an increase in expending is proposed, it is important to clarify how it would be funded (which other expenditure should be reduced or tax be increased).

One useful way is to develop, based on the Problem tree⁴, a **brainstorming associated with problem and propose alternative actions**. It is important to have a solid backing, that people who participate in the construction of the proposal clearly see the relationship between the evidence gathered through research and the influence strategy. This will also help to identify whether further research or collecting more data is necessary to consolidate the action plan.

In turn, it is fundamental that the proposal takes into account current and potential spaces and instances of decision-making processes (either formal or informal) that may be useful to achieve the main objective. These spaces will be part of the communication plan.

Listening to others! To enrich this series of possible solutions, a broader consultation process can be initiated including other organizations, policy makers, media, local political organizations, academia, specialists and other relevant groups that are potentially affected by the problem and the possible action that will be taken to modify it (Weaving global networks, 2006).

4 See Toolkit N° 3: **Where we are and how far we can go. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.**

Useful Tool

Applying selection criteria and polishing the proposal.

In order to organize and facilitate the process of comparison between the possible ways to follow, it is useful to capture in a table the various proposals (Figure 1) and the criteria used to evaluate and select the final proposal. In turn, to assess the various options and choose the most appropriate one, it is recommended that assessment criteria are discussed and accepted by all participants before completing the decision making process.

How to present the proposal?

Policy briefs are a convenient way to submit a proposal. These are short documents written according to the best interests of the audience they are targeting (press, public, academic, political, etc.). In them, a policy situation or problem is analyzed, the importance or urgency of addressing it is described and the possible solutions discussed about the public policy are informed. In turn, these documents allow the author to share his/her position and to recommend some of the various solutions with the support of the evidence collected during research⁵.

Once the proposal has been discussed, agreed and approved, the organization must agree upon the different strategies and actions that will be implemented to assure the commitment of stakeholders to carry out the proposal.

5 For further information about public policy document, see Toolkit N° 8: **What will be the message. Design the communication plan** in which the design of a communication plan is addressed.

Figure 1. Applying selection criteria and polishing the proposal

Criteria	Proposal 1	Proposal 2	Proposal 3	Score	Importance
It generates a favorable public opinion					
There are data and evidence arising from serious researches supporting the proposal					
They can be reached in the short and medium term (3 to 18 months)					
Policy makers who make decisions about the proposal are identified					
It is politically viable					
It is technically feasible (the government should have the real capacity to carry it out)					
It is economically feasible (the necessary public resources should be available for its implementation)					
It includes a schedule coherent with the officially established procedure for decision making					
It motivates the members of the organization					
It contributes to the creation and strengthening of alliances and coalitions.					
It stimulates the movement of other stakeholders affected by the problem.					
SCORE					

Source: Weaving global networks (2006), based on McKinley and Baltazar (2005)

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 76-78. Available at www.vippal.cippec.org. 
- Web Site “Presidential Agenda 2011-2015”. CIPPEC. www.agenda-presidencial.org.
- *Writing Effective Public Policy Papers: A Guide To Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe.* Eóin Young and Lisa Quinn, 2002.
- *Policy briefs as a communication tool for development research.* Overseas Development Institute, 2008. Available at 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 79-108. Available at www.wola.org.

Next Toolkit:
How to carry out the
proposal. Define the
strategies and actions

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