How to design a policy influence plan?

Toolkit Nº9

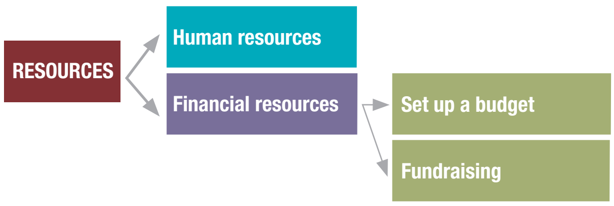
Who, how much and when. Define resources and timeline

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

1. Diagnostic
2. Objectives
3. Actors and alliances
4. Proposal
5. Strategies and actions
6. Communication plan
7. **Resources and timeline**
8. Monitoring
9. Evaluation

Close to the final design stage of the influence plan it is important to reflect upon the timeframes in which every activity will be developed, and about how the organization´s resources will be used in order to carry them out. Although it is recommended to consider the availability of resources from the moment in which influence strategies are designed (for example, from the production of a SWOT[1]) this is the instance in which to assign, in a specific manner, the available resources and define how to obtain those not in hand.

Figure 1. Necessary resources to carry out an influence plan



Human resources: the importance of leadership and coordination

To achieve effective results, an organization must take advantage of the different abilities and experiences of each member. It is recommended that the leader assign tasks according to those interests and capacities; for this he/she must know if they are, for example, specialists in communication, researchers or lobbyists and what kind of dedication

1 See **Toolkit N° 3: Where are we and how far can we go? Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges**. Available at: www.vippal.cippec.org

is needed from each profile in each stage of the plan.

The working team leader is also responsible for encouraging and motivating other members who join the project (Weaving global networks, 2006). This human resources designation will be useful for the fundraising team as well (if the organization has an area that fills this function), since it will not only seek support for the direct costs of the activities, but also for contracting specialists who need ad hoc or to incorporate the total cost of the influence effort into the projects presented to potential donors.

Simon Maxwell (2009), Overseas Development Institute highlights four useful models to think about the leadership role within what he calls "policy entrepreneurships," which are:

Story tellers
One way of motivating and involving individuals in pursuit of an objective is to develop powerful stories with a clear message which help reach individuals (the working team as well as decision-makers) and which establish problems and solutions.

Networkers
In the arena of organizations seeking to influence policy, it is common that individuals who known to each other interact. The leader who involves his/her organization in these networks will increase possibilities of influence for the project. It is about being "inside or outside the tent:" if one is inside, the voices of the leader and of the organization will be heard; if one is outside, they will not.

Engineers
Within the policy framework, the leader must be aware of what is happening and what is the thinking at the decision-makers level inasmuch as what is really happening in the "field." It is about not being purely academic, but becoming involved in a practical manner in the testing of ideas.

Fixers
When interacting with decision-makers, the leader must take advantage of the power involved in being an "expert" in a specific policy area of or in the process of policy formulation in general. In this way, his/her influence capacity will be increased.

The majority of leaders combine diverse styles according to the moment. It is not about being an expert in all styles, but if one often works with a certain style, it is important to reflect and balance with another, or find a partner within the team who may complement his/her abilities.

Source: CIPPEC, based on Maxwell (2009)[2].

Inter-program coordination

If an organization counts on programs and teams dedicated to diverse policy subjects, it is interesting to reflect about the possible articulations facing the influence objective, to add different insights and perspectives. Also, joint projects usually generate valuable institutional learning, in terms of knowledge management. For example, if the proposal consists in comparing a budget destined to health in a series of national localities, joint work can be encouraged among a program dedicated to fiscal policy, one dedicated to health, and one to local development.

2 Available at: www.odi.org.uk.

Some questions before allocate human resources:

- How many individuals work on the team?
- Are they involved in other projects?
- Have they time enough to tackle a new project with commitment and quality?
- What type of abilities and experience do they possess? Are these the right ones for the new project activities?
- Are they interested in being involved in a new project or in learning about new issues?
- What profile type, and how much experience are needed in order to incorporate? (expert researchers in one policy area, communicators, evaluators, administrators, etc.)
- Where can people with this type of background be found? (universities, state agencies, other organizations)
- What can the project and the organization offer them?

The importance of adding strategic views

Inasmuch as the budget allows, it is useful to create spaces of dialogue with experts on the specific subject of the proposal as well as people with knowledge of the political context, in order that they may share their strategic views about the best way to implement the proposal.

Financial resources I: How to set up a budget? What to keep in mind?

Setting up a budget is a key instance in an influence plan: what is needed is a realistic reflection of the timeframes and human resources which must be committed, and of the direct costs of each strategy for influence planned.

The budget must be based on the strategy and the activities to be carried out (lobby, work with media, coalitions, stakeholder mobilization, etc.). It is probable that some activities may not imply direct costs, and that others may be too costly.

For example, contracting a consultant or a communications agency may be a costly activity, yet a necessary one in order that the message is effective and that it reaches key audiences. Instead, if it is decided to use the institution´s resources to write media articles or policy briefs, the cost of the communication component will be lower.

If the proposal involves a national scope, perhaps it is necessary to include face-to-face meetings which may involve travel and accommodation costs, etc. In this regard, virtual (or web 2.0) tools allow for cost reductions as well as greater scope. It is about thinking how to maximize financial resources to achieve successful results.

The context may present opportunities (and threats) which could impact the budget; therefore, an expenditure item for unforeseen events must be assigned as well: it is good to count on a margin of money (and time) to be used, for example, on strategic trips to present the proposal or to spend on publications.

In this sense, it is useful to count on a budget model or "template" which ensures that the members of the organization become accustomed to being precise and to consider all variables. If there are individuals managing this knowledge, it is recommended that other members are trained, so that an ability which promotes efficiency becomes an installed capacity.

Beyond the sophistication level of the utilized tool for budget design (this will depend on resources, knowledge and needs of the organization), what is most important is that regular controls exist regarding its compliance. It is fundamental to know whether resources are being assigned efficiently or if they are under-executed (re-assigning them is allowed), etc. A member of the team can do this with certain regularity, and communicate with the leader or supervisor. Together, they can evaluate decisions to be made.

Budget for influence: some categories to keep in mind

- Working team salaries and benefits
- Materials
- Activities and events (conferences, breakfasts, lunches, press conferences, etc.)
- Communication (telephone, modem, mail, etc.)
- Printing and distribution (brochures, reports, press articles, promotional materials etc.)
- Office expenses
- Consulting services (public relations, lobby, legal services, etc.)
- Development of virtual platforms
- Translators
- Training
- Transport
- Travel
- Taxes
- Unforeseen expenses
- General expenses

Financial resources II: fundraising

When developing a policy influence plan, it is necessary to consider how the funds will be raised.

Policy influence processes can be very extensive and often unpredictable: for this, it is advisable to have institutional funds available (in addition to those assigned to the project in question) to afford the human resources timeframe and the expenses for specific activities. These funds allow the organization to: i) have higher response capacity to the windows of opportunity that emerge in influence processes and, at the same time, contribute towards increased resources for the organization, in order to: ii) systematically generate high quality evidence to support debates and proposals, iii) monitor the decisions and commitments attained, among others.

Figure 2. Aspects and decisions regarding sources of funds

Aspects to consider	Decisions
Fund raising strategy	• Amount to be raised • Responsibility in the search for funds: from a specific area of the organization (centralization) or from the working team that develops the influence plan
Types of support	• Funds related to a project vs. institutional funds without specific allocation • Contributions in kind: supplies, free publicity, celebrity support, sponsorships, etc.
Sources of financing	• Diversification level: international cooperation, individuals, private sector, governments • Institutional mechanisms and/or internal policies to evaluate acceptability and convenience of certain source of funds
Accountability	• Area in charge of receiving funds • Financial reports • Public access to information on how the organization uses its resources • Communication about sources of funds

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

Funding models: a necessary debate

Some difficulties which arise when thinking on the institution´s financing model relate to how the process affects its capacity for influence. In this sense, experience shows that::

- Diversification is necessary in terms of autonomy and sustainability.
- The logic of one to two-year projects hampers influence processes requiring longer terms.
- Recurring tensions in fund raising prevent a deeper planning of the influence and of the work with longer temporary horizons.

How to achieve a balance between financing, working agenda definition and influence? As an example, CIPPEC developed, in 2010, a mechanism for "leading project" within each policy program which involves institutional commitment to sustain the intervention of certain subjects through time, and which constitutes a priority for fund raising, as well as in terms of institutional strategy for influence.

Timeline: the importance of flexibility

Owing to the complex and changeable context in which the policy making process take place, influence initiatives are usually dynamic. Therefore, it is important to have a clear but flexible line of action which directs the distribution of activities and their timeframes. The timeline, such as the budget, must be produced before beginning to implement a project to foresee dates and have a margin to incorporate or attend to modifications of the plan. For example, due to a change in an audience previously identified (changes in government positions) an ally of the proposal becomes an opponent, or a strategy believed to be effective becomes too costly and not efficacious enough.

On some occasions, the concretion periods for a policy are reduced, for example, from five years to five months, or an allied policymaker is promoted to a position with higher decision- making capacity and can boost the subject to a place of priority in the policy. In others, a short term project of influence can be interrupted by the on-the-scene arrival of new actors who oppose the process. A flexible timeline allows, among other things, to take advantage of windows of opportunity and rapidly adapt to external and internal changes (waivers, promotions, etc.)

In addition to flexibility, it is fundamental to have control of the planned activities´ progress. It is also recommended that the timeline make clear who is responsible for watching over compliance of each activity. This is also the moment to identify allied organizations and closing dates for certain products (if they were under consideration of the project). **Figure 3** presents a template of timeline for monitoring activities and be aware of their progress.

To keep in mind:

The political context may change rapidly: it is fundamental to maintain a flexible timeline. Unexpected important opportunities to the influence goals of the organization may emerge.

Figure 3. Timeline of activities for influence

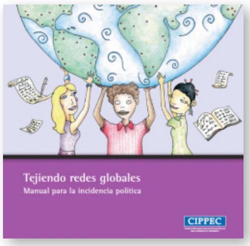
Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	John	Louise	Richard	Mary
Activity 1													X		X	X
Activity 2													X		X	X
Activity 3													X		X	
Activity 4													X		X	
Product 1														X	X	X
Activity 6														X		
Activity 7													X		X	
Activity 8													X	X	X	
Activity 9														X	X	
Product 2													X	X		

Beyond the level of sophistication of the tool utilized to control the timeline, it is essential to anticipate the timeframes for each activity, and that someone commits to monitor its compliance and transmit changes and advances to the other members involved.

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 92-95. Available at: www.vippal.cippec.org.



- *Advocacy Matters: Helping children change their world. An International Save the Children Alliance guide to advocacy,* Save the Children, 2007, pages 142-148. Available at: www.savethechildren.org.uk.

Next Toolkit:

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

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