

Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process

Women in Public Policy Project

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Introduction

These Steps have been developed by combining the Women in Public Policy (WIPP) research project results ("Never Give Up: Women Making Policy Change") and the Sharing Our Strengths workshop outcomes. Both activities were coordinated by Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy and by Women's Centres CONNECT! and held in Nova Scotia in 1999. The research project involved 126 women associated with diverse groups from around the province. The workshop involved 113 women from three sectors: community-based equality seeking groups, government employees and politicians, and researchers involved in public policy, all from across the country. The workshop was part of the Made to Measure Symposium sponsored by the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

This tool is a compilation of the many ideas, recommendations and experiences of those who participated in the WIPP research project and/or workshop. The Steps have been prepared by Anne Webb (research coordinator), Peggy Mahon (workshop facilitator), Stephanie Hunter (project co-chair) and Georgia MacNeil (project co-chair). Input was also received from members of the WIPP National Ad hoc Advisory Committee.

The WIPP project was supported by Status of Women Canada and the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. Additional funding was received from the Women's Program, Status of Women Canada (Ottawa office and Nova Scotia office), Human Resources Development Canada (Nova Scotia Region) and Canadian Heritage to ensure that diverse women from across the country were able to participate in the Made to Measure Symposium (which included the WIPP workshop). The views contained in this document are those of the compilers and project participants, and do not necessarily represent the views of the funders.

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Other publications of the WIPP research project:

"Never Give Up" Women Making Policy Change (September 1999)

"Ne cédez jamais" Les femmes aux prises de la modification des politiques gouvernementales
(September 1999)

This guide is not a finished document, but rather something to build on and to adapt to the issues you are working on. If you have suggestions you would like to pass on please let us know by contacting Anne Webb or Georgia MacNeil (contact information above).

Ce document est disponible en Français. This document is also available in Braille. An electronic copy of these Steps is available at the following web site: www.medicine.dal.ca/mcewh/wipp.htm

Please feel free to photocopy and use these Steps. Please acknowledge the WIPP project.

Purpose of the Guidelines

These Steps are an assessment tool intended to help identify the elements that need to be in place or be recognized for community-based equality seeking groups, researchers and governments to work together on public policy development, implementation and reform.

They are intended to:

- assist community-based groups to be involved in public policy initiatives from their inception,
- provide a set of steps that ensure the public policy process becomes more public and transparent, and
- provide researchers and government policy makers with an overview of what women involved with community-based equality seeking groups are looking for when they speak of community involvement in public policy development, implementation and reform.

In the research project and the workshop the primary focus was on information provided by, and the experiences of, women involved with community-based groups and government policy makers. It seems that the role of a researcher in this process is closely tied to the requirements of the particular group she or he is working with. These Steps will assist researchers to identify their role and what they should be looking for in developing joint research projects that have policy implications.

Suggested Uses of the Guidelines

The following are some suggested uses for these Steps. This is not a definitive list. You may think of many others.

- *You are about to embark on a policy process (including proposal writing) that involves community groups, researchers and government.*

These Steps can help you to decide what needs to be considered to begin the discussion and develop a process.

When writing a proposal these Steps and the points listed can help your group to plan a process that will recognize and integrate your priorities and issues into the structure of the project or activity.

- *You may be in the middle of a policy process and be experiencing some difficulties or conflict.*

Using this guide may help the group to identify where some of the problems or issues are occurring. Together you can identify actions that should be taken to improve the situation.

- *You may have just finished a policy process and wish to assess how well you have done.*

By going through the Steps, group members can reflect on the action taken and identify what they could do differently next time to improve their working relationships and participation in, and impact on, the policy process.

How to Use the Steps

The Steps are in a table format for easy reference. They can be used as a checklist to record what actions are needed or if actions have been taken on any of the steps. The Steps are organized into six sections to capture the relationship building, resource allocation, action planning, implementation and evaluation necessary to have a credible and inclusive public policy process.

Each step is divided into sub-sections that deal with specific elements of the process. At the end of each section there is a space for recording notes on the actions taken or planned, agreements made and so forth. At the end of the document there is a sample Action Planning Worksheet. This is designed to assist groups with planning actions to ensure their inclusive and effective involvement in the public policy process.

Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process: Summary

1. Identify common understandings and ground rules for working together

It is important that all parties – members of community-based equality seeking groups, government policy makers and researchers – discuss and agree to work together on the basis of a set of shared understandings. This includes: agreeing upon an open, clear and inclusive policy process; recognizing the value of community-based and academic research; agreeing to ensure all activities, materials and forms of communication are accessible; and ensuring accountability mechanisms are established and put in place.

2. Laying the groundwork

When the three parties start to work together, each needs to clarify and outline its roles and responsibilities; adopt accessibility guidelines; and discuss and find ways to address power imbalances.

3. Identify and access information and resource needs

There are key resources that need to be recognized and available for all three parties to effectively work on public policies.

4. Build strategies and work plans

For effective involvement in the public policy process, all parties, particularly communities new to the process, should plan their approach in advance. Standard processes should also be set to inform each group of what to expect, and of what is expected of them in terms of input into the process.

5. Put strategies and processes into action

When working together it is important that the three parties adhere to the agreed upon standard processes and forms of input.

6. Evaluate joint process and outcomes

The evaluation process designed in Step 3 is to be carried out and the progress monitored to assess the success of the public policy process and agreements made.

Step 1:

Identify common understandings and ground rules for working together

(community-based equality seeking groups, government policy-makers
[municipal, provincial, band council, federal] and researchers)

<i>Ensure the following:</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Requires action</i>	<i>Action taken</i>
1. The policy process is open, clear and inclusive			
a. An open and clear purpose and process are agreed upon by all participants			
b. The three parties listen, are honest, do not personalize attacks: hard on problems, easy on the people			
c. The three parties recognize and acknowledge that participants hold different perspectives			
d. The three parties recognize that direct community involvement gives an initiative more public credibility and makes for more effective policy			
e. The three parties are committed to working inclusively with members of the public, of government and community-based groups to develop, implement and reform public policy			
f. Communities are to be involved/included early on in government initiated policy development or reform, or in proposed cuts to programs			
g. Public policy processes are to be grounded in women's grass roots experience			
h. Broader/global issues and forces are taken into account when identifying policy issues and strategies			
All parties endeavour to integrate a gender-based analysis (GBA), anti-racism and the rejection of all forms of discrimination into their public policy initiatives			
i. Participants are educated on and are sensitive to issues of discrimination			
j. Diverse groups are to be represented and heard			
k. Diverse communities have members on government boards and committees			
l. The three parties recognize and acknowledge that some participants/groups fear consequences or reprisals for taking part in discussions with government members			
m. It is established that all parties have input into the agenda for working together on a public policy			

n. Realistic timelines are established from the outset and throughout policy discussions			
o. All parties agree to meet at regular intervals			
p. Jurisdiction is respected			
q. All parties work across departments and sectors (horizontally)			
r. Different organizational cultures are recognized and acknowledged			
s. In-person contact is recognized as helping all parties realize that they are working with real people			
t. Process is recognized as ongoing and/or cyclical			
u. Informal meetings are recognized as very beneficial			
v. The need for compromise is recognized			
w. Flexibility is required by all parties			
The public policy process is a public process			
1.2 Recognition of research			
a. Community-based knowledge and research, community needs, and the work of community groups are respected and recognized as having equal value to academic research and government contributions			
b. University departments involved value community efforts and community-academic research partnerships			
c. It is recognized that research clarifies issues and reduces fragmentation between and among groups			
1.3 Accessibility of all activities, materials and forms of communication			
a. Accessible and non-discriminatory language, formats (bilingual resources/communications, plain language, agreement on definitions and terminology) and communication forms are used			
b. Meetings/workshops are held in accessible locations (including rural vs. urban, physically accessible, non-intimidating)			
c. The timing, schedule and process of meetings are accessible to all participants (community, researchers, government)			
d. A clear, inclusive and accessible process is adopted by the three parties that respects cultures, acknowledges differing abilities, difference and			

diversity			
<i>Notes on actions and work planned, agreements made, etc.</i>			

**Step 2:
Laying the groundwork**

<i>Ensure the following:</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Requires action</i>	<i>Action taken</i>
2.1 Roles and responsibilities			
a. Participating groups/parties clarify why they are involved in the policy issue			
b. Outline what each participating group brings (skills, needs, wants, values) to the process			
c. Clarify what resources people bring, for example: time, funds, commitment, knowledge, experience			
d. All are clear about each party's bottom line: be honest about what is up for discussion and what is not			
e. Outline the assumptions held by each participating group (see Naming the Moment in the Resources list for a naming assumptions process)			
f. Government department members have examined their accessibility to community groups and to the public			
g. Community groups have examined their own accessibility to the public and to government			
<p>Skill Building Recommendations Policy makers take training to ensure they are aware of issues impacting diverse women's communities Workshops on how government policy-making happens in practice and how to influence public policy are provided at a community level Access is provided to training and support in negotiation, conflict resolution and problem solving Workshops to assist groups from all parties to use these Steps are made available Workshops to assist community groups on how to access the media are organized.</p>			
h. Government is upfront about what it wants from the public			
i. Community groups are clear about who they are and what is their agenda			
j. Parties jointly agree upon realistic expectations			
k. Parties jointly agree to work on clear, focused and manageable issues/points			
l. Parties jointly clarify and agree to a common purpose and priorities			
m. Parties jointly determine who should be at the table and at what points in the policy process			
n. It needs to be established as to which institutions are supportive of their representatives at the policy table			

o. Roles and responsibilities of government, community and researchers in the public policy process are discussed, clarified and agreed to			
p. Terms of reference outlining roles and responsibilities are developed			
q. Parties share information and educate each other on their issues			
r. Parties jointly design an evaluation process and identify what will indicate a successful collaborative process			
2.2 Address power imbalances			
a. A process must be in place to demonstrate the accountability of public policy makers to the community			
b. A process is in place for negotiating the power asymmetries (for example: money, technology, power differences within community groups and government/academic departments and between community, government and researchers)			
c. All parties identify and recognize who has power and on what bases			
2.3 Accessibility of all activities, materials and forms of communication			
a. Accessible and non-discriminatory language, formats (bilingual resources/communications, plain language, agreement on definitions and terminology) and communication forms are used			
b. Meetings/workshops are held in accessible locations (including rural vs. urban, physically accessible, non-intimidating)			
c. The timing, schedule and process of meetings are accessible to all participants (community, researchers, government)			
d. A clear, inclusive and accessible process is adopted by the three parties that respects cultures, acknowledges differing abilities, difference and diversity			
<i>Notes on actions and work planned, agreements made, etc.</i>			

**Step 3:
Identify and access information and resource needs**

<i>Ensure the following:</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Requires action</i>	<i>Action taken</i>
3.1 Appropriate resources are in place for full participation by all parties			
a. Appropriate resources to do the policy work are equally available to the three parties (for example at the community level: funding, support and time required for community development, community involvement/participation, alliance building, networking and skill development)			
b. Supports and back-up are in place to enable people to participate in the public policy process (for example: child care, transportation, access to technology, accessible communications and meeting locations)			
c. Core funding is available for women's equality work			
d. Statistics are recorded and made available that recognize the specific conditions of minority groups			
e. Educational resources are made available on how to increase participation of community and researchers in the public policy process			
3.2 When preparing one's own department, community or research group:			
<i>Researchers</i>			
a. Funding is available for community-based research (volunteers cannot do it all and community-based research needs to be respected)			
b. Communities are informed of the knowledge and resources produced by researchers			
c. Both qualitative and quantitative, community-based and academic research are recognized as valid			
<i>Community</i>			
3.3 Accessibility of all activities, materials and forms of communication			
a. Accessible and non-discriminatory language, formats (bilingual resources/communications, plain language, agreement on definitions and terminology) and communication forms are used			
b. Meetings/workshops are held in accessible			

locations (including rural vs. urban, physically accessible, non-intimidating)			
c. The timing, schedule and process of meetings are accessible to all participants (community, researchers, government)			
d. A clear, inclusive and accessible process is adopted by the three parties that respects cultures, acknowledges differing abilities, difference and diversity			
<i>Notes on actions and work planned, agreements made, etc.</i>			

**Step 4:
Build strategies and work plans**

<i>Ensure the following:</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Requires action</i>	<i>Action taken</i>
4.1 General standards			
a. The same people are consistently at the table when working on a specific issue			
b. Each party considers how specific initiatives fit with their long-term goals			
c. Community representatives are a majority of those at the table to ensure that community members are heard and to moderate power imbalances			
d. A committee or some other mechanism could be formed to coordinate when, how and which sectors within the three parties need to come together			
4.2 Community standards			
a. Women’s community groups may choose to develop provincial (or national) organizations that can gain recognition from specific government departments and be the community contact on policy issues (such as Nova Scotia’s Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy)			
b. Community groups may choose to meet independently of government to establish their issues and approach (to be strategic about issues they focus on) and to determine when they are prepared to meet with government			
c. Community groups consider the possibilities and constraints that community input will likely face and establish problem solving processes for when strategies meet resistance and are not successful			
d. Community groups consider several approaches and use them simultaneously to influence policy (lobbying, research, protests, petitions, policy briefs, etc.)			
e. Community groups are prepared to fight each others’ fights/support each others’ issues, understand differences			
f. Community groups develop a clear overall strategy when entering the public policy process			
g. Community groups identify allies; build a broad base of support within own community and with other groups: professional, government, political parties, band council, academics			
h. Community groups are well informed on the issue they are bringing forward			
i. Community groups consider what past strategies and			

actions worked well			
j. Community groups identify what types of information and formats can be easily used by policy makers			
k. Community groups have considered inviting senior bureaucrats, politicians (all parties) and/or band councilors to meet with them when the community group is ready			
<i>Notes on actions and work planned, agreements made, etc.</i>			

**Step 5:
Put strategies and processes into action**

<i>Ensure the following:</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Requires action</i>	<i>Action taken</i>
5.1 General standards			
a. Several arguments to back up a position on a policy are developed and documents (research and records) are made available to each party			
b. An independent facilitator mediates and documents the process			
c. All parties negotiate a working relationship and re-negotiate at different points			
d. Alliances are built between and within sectors/parties that have shared concerns and perspectives (this increases capacity)			
e. A system of shared decision making is agreed upon			
f. Trust is built among all players			
g. All parties frame and develop the questions that need to be answered			
h. All parties agree that community input into the policy process is as valid as that of government and researchers' and needs to be acted upon			
i. Sub-committees work on specific aspects of a policy issue			
j. Possible solutions are offered and introduced			
k. All parties acknowledge small success stories/achievements, even small changes			
5.2 Community Standards			
a. Community groups inform and empower their community on policy issues			
b. Community groups identify where and when the openings are for community interventions to be the most effective and act on chosen approaches (see 4.2d)			
c. Community groups identify the best point of contact (employee or politician) within government policy-making			
d. Community groups lobby and monitor actions agreed to by all parties to ensure that decisions are acted upon			
5.3 Communication and network strategies for keeping community groups, government and researchers well informed			
a. Ongoing communications occur between community, researchers and government (bureaucrats and			

politicians)			
b. Information and resources are shared (listservs, policy directory, news bulletins, etc.)			
c. External communication strategies are identified for speaking out publicly on issues			
d. Media is kept informed			
e. Records of decisions are kept, distributed by an unaffiliated report writer, and follow-up to decisions is ensured (this demonstrates that input was integrated into decision making)			
<i>Notes on actions and work planned, agreements made, etc.</i>			

**Step 6:
Evaluate joint processes and outcomes**

<i>Ensure the following:</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Requires action</i>	<i>Action taken</i>
6.1 A jointly-designed evaluation is conducted			
a. Evaluation is to be undertaken of what has been working and what needs to change in the public policy development, implementation and reform process			
b. Process and policy agreements made by all parties and resulting actions are monitored and evaluated			
c. Those effected by a public policy are part of the evaluation process			
d. Community groups' objectives and action strategies to influence public policy are monitored and evaluated for their impact and the degree of effort required to achieve change			
e. A mechanism for follow-up and monitoring is established such as a women's national policy advisory network			
f. Evaluation results are shared with the WIPP National Advisory Committee (via email addresses on page 2) or similar women's national policy advisory network to enter into a feedback bank			
Long-Term Goals Half of band council members should be women More women form part of the legislature A newsletter or listserv is established that identifies and disseminates actual policy related initiatives, results and problems that affect women			
<i>Notes on actions and work planned, agreements made, etc.</i>			

Action Planning Worksheet

Action Objective: _____

Tasks	Responsibility (Who)	Resources (With what)	Timeline (When)

Appendix A

Tools for Designing Action Strategies

Barndt, Deborah. 1989. *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action*. Toronto: Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice.

Barnsley, Jan and Diana Ellis. 1992. *Research for Change: Participatory Action Research for Community Groups*. Vancouver: Women's Research Centre.

Barnsley, Jan, Diana Ellis and Helga Jacobson. 1986. *An Evaluation Guide for Women's Groups*. Vancouver: Women's Research Centre.

Beer, Jennifer with Eileen Stief. 1996. *The Mediator's Handbook*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Czerny, Michael, Jamie Swift and Robert Clarke. 1994. *Getting Started on Social Analysis*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Hope, Anne and Sally Timmel. 1988. *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.

Kaner, Sam, with Lenny Lind, Duane Berger, Catherine Toldi and Sarah Fisk. 1998. *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Lewis, Debre with Jan Barnsley. 1992. *Strategies for Change: from Women's experience to a plan for action*. Vancouver: Women's Research Centre.

Milne, Glen. 1999. *Making Policy: A Guide to the Federal Government's Policy Process*. Ottawa: Glen Milne. Copies available from author at 78 George Street, Suite 201, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5W1. Tel: (613) 562-4333 Fax: (613) 562-4063 E-mail: **ggdm@istar.ca**

Shields, Katrina. 1991. *In the Tiger's Mouth: An Empowerment Guide for Social Action*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

Webb, Anne. 2000. "Directory: Community-Based Equality Seeking Groups Currently Involved in Public Policy Initiatives that Affect Women. Nova Scotia." Halifax: Atlantic Regional Office of Health Promotions and Projects Branch of Health Canada. Available on MCEWH web site, **<http://www.medicine.dal.ca/mcewh>** and from HPPB, 1505 Barrington St. Suite 1802, Halifax NS B3J 3Y6. Tel: (902)426-2700; Fax: (902) 426-9689; E-mail: **margie_macdonald@hc-sc.gc.ca**

Webb, Anne. 1999. "Never Give Up: Women Making Policy Change." Halifax: Women in Public Policy Project. Report available from Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy, Tel: (902) 423-8025 E-Mail: **hunter.group@ns.sympatico.ca**

Appendix B

Profile of FemJEPP and Women's Centres CONNECT!

Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy (FemJEPP)

Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy is a provincial alliance of autonomous, equality seeking, community-based women's organizations working in the public policy arena for the betterment of women and their families. The alliance has developed over the past five years and has worked to incorporate the work from various initiatives around collaborative relationship building and the establishment of meaningful, ongoing consultation. The overall purpose of FemJEPP is to insure the development of equitable and just public policy for all Nova Scotia women in our differing realities. Our long term goal is to establish a model/process for inclusive, ongoing, meaningful consultation in the formulating, developing and implementing of public policy that utilizes a gender and equity analysis as a founding principle.

Women's Centres CONNECT!

Officially formed in 1988, Women's Centres CONNECT! is the collective voice of women's centres in Nova Scotia. CONNECT! works both on a provincial and a national level. It provides coordination and information to women's centres and articulates their activities, needs and concerns.

CONNECT!

- facilitates networking and communication among women's centres;
- acts as the channel through which women's centres access provincial funding;
- acts as a clearing house for information;
- works in cooperation with like-minded organizations on particular issues;
- provides guidance to groups that wish to explore the possibility of forming a women's centre in their community.

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