



POLICY MAKING IN A RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

What is new?	This paper provides research administrators and others with a guide to the stages of the policy lifecycle, to enable them to effectively participate in policy making at their respective institution.
What was the approach?	The paper emphasizes the common scenario where administrators, irrespective of prior policy-making experience, find themselves engaged in policy development due to their operational roles. It highlights the challenges they face and the need for training in policy development, analysis, and implementation, thus providing research administrators with a comprehensive guide to navigating the stages of the policy lifecycle.
What is the academic impact?	The academic impact lies in filling a knowledge gap for research administrators, offering them insights into the intricacies of policy development within research organizations. By addressing the challenges and providing a structured approach to policy lifecycle stages, the paper contributes to enhancing the professional capabilities of research administrators. The emphasis is on alignment with institutional mission, stakeholder analysis, and best practices, and adds academic value by fostering a broader understanding of policy making in the research administration field.
What is the wider impact?	The wider impact of the paper extends to the improvement of policy-making practices within research organizations globally. By equipping research administrators with the necessary

knowledge and tools, the paper aims to enhance the overall effectiveness of policy implementation. This has broader implications for organizational efficiency, stakeholder collaboration, and the successful alignment of policies with institutional goals. The emphasis on ongoing communication and a cultural shift towards best practices contributes to a positive and lasting impact on the broader research administration community.

Keywords

Policy Lifecycle, Policy Development, Stakeholder Analysis, Institutional Alignment, Best Practices, Training, Policy Implementation, Organizational Culture.

WHAT IS POLICY?

A key challenge for administrators is to avoid confusing policy with processes or procedures. Administrators may overcome this challenge through training in and exposure to policy making. Policy is neither process nor procedure. Rather, policy sets the requirements which are then carried out through processes or procedures (Figure 1). Within a research organization, policy is the highest level of rulemaking, and it must align with the mission and the strategic plan of the organization. As such, the policy-owner is the party who holds ultimate responsibility for the policy area.

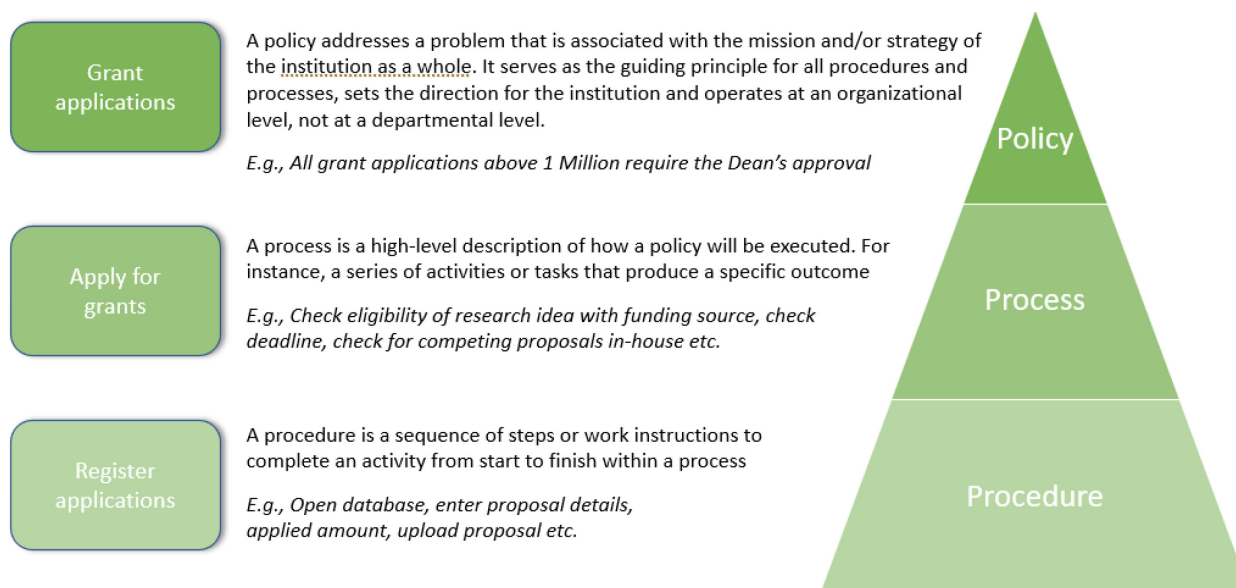


Figure 1. Overview of the relation between Policy, Process, and Procedure

“A set of policies are principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organization to reach its long-term goals... Procedures are the specific methods employed to express policies in action in day-to-day operations of the organization.” (WebFinanceInc., 2019)

Depending on the size of a research organization, there may be many different offices and/or stakeholders responsible for the implementation of a given organizational

policy. A research-related policy may require processes and procedures to be followed by the sponsored research office, i.e. the office responsible for administering contracts and grants from external funding sources, the regulatory compliance office, the research administrator, research teams, and any number of additional stakeholders. The documented processes or procedures of each of these functional areas make up the execution plan for the organizational policy.

Another challenge for administrators as they transform into policy makers is ensuring that different procedural problems are not combined into one policy problem. The root cause of many procedural problems may not be a policy problem, and if it is, it may not be resulting from a single policy.

For example, one issue that is often raised by administrators is the timeliness of their researchers. This includes lack of sufficient time set aside by researchers to: submit their proposals in time; submit their annual or final reports in time; complete their required training in time; etc. Another problem that administrators often face is the lack of sufficient resources to provide adequate training to the researchers. During a policy discussion, an administrator once mentioned that they would like to address the issue of researchers not completing their training in time combined with the issue of lack of resources for training by having a policy that mandates all training to follow an online format, allowing researchers the flexibility to complete the training in time and using fewer resources to provide training. If one were to examine this as a policy issue, the problem of not completing training in time may or may not be associated with the training format. There may be many different reasons for such delays, including the possibilities of lack of prioritization of training by researchers and/or researchers being overburdened. When thinking of it this way, the issue may be rooted in two separate policies: i) the policy of training requirements; and ii) the policy on workload, effort calculation and expectations. The issue of the format of training would ultimately be a process issue that may be addressed based on the effectiveness of the training that is mandated by the training requirement policy.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

In their roles as policy makers and implementers, research administrators must keep in mind what is most important to each set of stakeholders involved.

"The term (stakeholders) refers to persons, groups, or organizations that must somehow be taken into account by leaders, managers, and front-line staff." (Brugha & Zsuzsa, 2000)

Stakeholders are found at every level. They are: i) policy influencers; ii) policy makers; iii) policy implementers; iv) those directly or tangentially affected by the policy; v) those disseminating the policy and its message; and vi) policy assessors. Stakeholders may be internal or external, and the key to good policy making is to ensure that you are aware of each of these stakeholders and their respective personal agendas which can be either in favor of or against the policy. An example of stakeholders with opposing

interests could be the legal office and the sponsored research office. Since the success of the sponsored research office is often measured on how much money is secured, it has an interest in getting as many grants and contracts as possible, while the legal office has more of an interest in 'watertight' contracts that do not increase the organization's liability. Therefore, the legal office may be willing to spend more time on contract negotiation than the sponsored research office (and the researcher) would prefer. To overcome the barrier of those opposing pulls, it is imperative to look at the overall mission and strategy of the organization rather than the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for a single unit.

External stakeholders and their respective agendas may also influence institutional policy. For example, research organizations must consider the regulatory environment within which they operate, the societal issues that they may wish to prioritize and the policies of their funders when developing internal policies.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, policies operate at the organizational level and must be aligned with the institutional mission and strategy. Research administrators are sometimes unfamiliar with the rationale behind some organizational policies, as these are influenced by stakeholders across the institution, as well as stakeholders external to the organization. Therefore, it is imperative that, when placed in a position to make or contribute to policy, research administrators step outside of their functional area and consider all possible stakeholders, and very importantly, the influencers.

*"Influence is defined as a demonstrated capacity to do one or more of the following: shape ideas about policy, initiate policy proposals, substantially change or veto others' proposals, or substantially affect the implementation of policy... Influential people are those who make a significant difference at one or more stages of the policy process."
(Lewis, 2006)*

Like the stakeholders, influencers may also be either in favor of or against the policy.

Figure 2 provides a sample mind map of possible stakeholders associated with a research organization, and who may play an important role in one or more of the stages of the policy lifecycle. The external stakeholder organizations identified may include both policy makers and those with functional responsibilities. This map may be different depending on the organization and the policy being addressed, and therefore should be tuned to suit the current context.

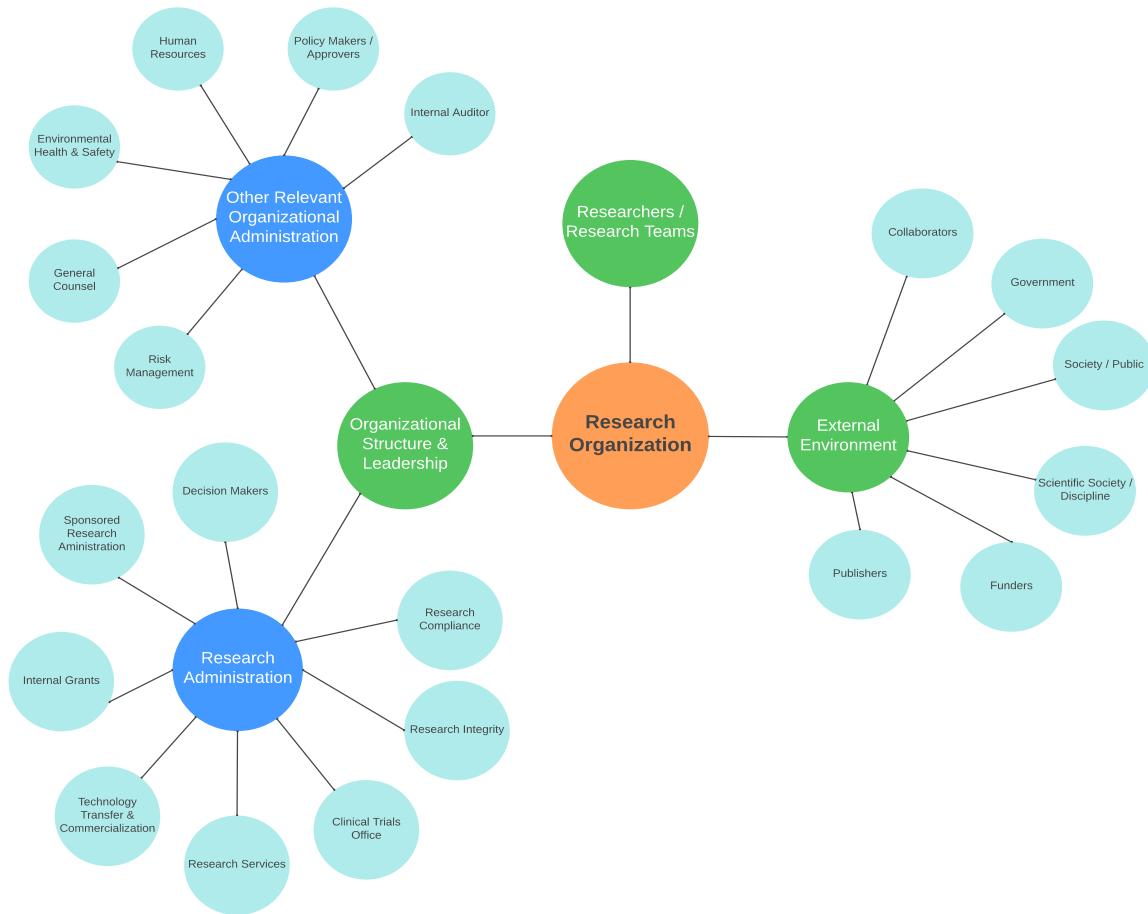


Figure 2. A sample mind map of possible policy stakeholders

STAGES OF THE POLICY LIFECYCLE

How then should research administrators approach policy making? In this paper, a nine-stage policy lifecycle is proposed for use by administrators when making policies on behalf of a research organization. The stages of this policy lifecycle are not necessarily sequential; rather, policy making is an iterative process, and each stage informs the other stages in a cyclical manner. Figure 3 provides an overview of the nine stages of the policy life cycle.



Figure 3. Overview of the nine stages of the policy lifecycle

STAGE 1: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION, AGENDA SETTING & PRIORITIZATION

When faced with what may be framed as a policy need, research administrators must consider why a given issue is being raised, i.e. what is senior leadership aiming to achieve by investing in this issue. Policy needs may be identified from within the organization, including: as a problem solving or improvement need; as a result of changes in institutional mission, goals and/or strategic plan; as a consequence of external factors, such as changes in regulatory requirements, political climate, or changes within a discipline. It may be because a current policy is failing; or a current policy has gaps that must be addressed; or due to many other reasons. It is important to understand why the given issue or policy topic is being raised so that one can then develop a clear and concise problem statement.

Google defines the word, problem, as “a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome”. Within the context of a research organization, who decides whether there is a matter or situation that is unwelcome or harmful? And, who decides how we go about dealing with that problem and overcoming it? Identifying the ultimate decision makers and becoming familiar with

their respective goals and agendas is necessary when developing the policy problem statement that must be addressed either through a policy revision or a new policy.

Defining the problem and developing a problem statement "is a crucial step: it gives you both a reason for doing all the work necessary to complete the project and a sense of direction for your evidence-gathering activity" (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016).

According to Bardach & Patashnik, the problem statement should be general, descriptive, and evaluative without the inclusion of a solution to the problem. This is because a problem statement that includes a solution may either be associated with a process rather than a policy issue, in which case the solution is procedurally obvious; or it may be intended to justify the desired solution of the most powerful political stakeholders, without the possibility of comparing alternative solutions for the best possible outcome. If possible, one should quantify the problem and assemble evidence. At this stage, however, it may be important to weigh whether evidence gathering is worthwhile, i.e. whether it will cost more to gather the evidence than the value the evidence will add.

Another important aspect of this step is setting a policy agenda and prioritizing policy problems. Senior leadership and/or policy owners are critical stakeholders to engage in this stage. To achieve this, two key questions about each problem or agenda item must be addressed: (i) whether the item aligns with the institutional mission; and (ii) the degree of risk to which the problem exposes the organization.

Within a research organization, risk can come in many different forms: there is the risk of reputational damage to an individual's reputation, a group's reputation, or to the reputation of the organization as a whole; there can also be compliance risk, financial risk and many other forms of risk.

When considering whether a given risk must be addressed via a policy solution, one must consider the magnitude of the risk. Whereas a significant risk must be addressed at an institutional level via a policy, a very minor risk may require more resources to address and be more burdensome than the problem created by the risk itself. Risk assessment will then inform the institutional policy agenda and institutional priority. This level of risk assessment is typically conducted at the highest leadership level, and therefore, it is important to obtain input from senior leadership of the research organization when considering policy solutions.

Within the context of a research organization, an example of a risk the organization should address is the potential for reputational risk to the organization based on its collaboration with certain industries or pertaining to certain topics (for instance tobacco, pornography, weapons, mineral oil, palm oil etc.). Another example could be that certain countries are considered no-go at an institutional, national, or international level or that certain contracts should be avoided because the freedom of the researcher is restrained by institutional or regulatory restrictions. All these examples have potential advantages and disadvantages for the organization and the stakeholders, and decisions

regarding whether these are addressed in a policy should be based on risk assessment and tolerance for the given risk.

Once it is determined that the problem at hand, in fact, aligns with the institutional mission and the policy problem has been prioritized by senior leadership, one may then proceed to other stages of the policy lifecycle.

Table 1. Summary of the key steps in stage 1

Stage 1: Problem identification, agenda setting & prioritization

- Define the problem
- Develop a clear and concise problem statement
- Set a policy agenda
- Prioritize policy problems

STAGE 2: POLICY FORMULATION

Policy formulation is the process of developing a new policy or a new component of an existing policy. In order to formulate a policy, it is important to return to the policy problem statement, and based on the problem statement, identify the primary or ultimate outcome to be achieved. One must continuously return to this primary outcome throughout the policy lifecycle, as the primary outcome must always align with the goal and therefore keep the policy focus on the initial goal. Examples of primary outcomes within a research organization may be compliance with an external requirement, whether it be a regulatory requirement, a sponsor requirement, a discipline specific requirement, etc.; or it may be to get as many stakeholders trained on a specific topic as possible.

Once a policy outcome is identified, the next step is to define the criteria to be used for achieving the desired outcome. This leads to policy alternatives. Policy alternatives are alternative ways to reach the primary outcome. For each alternative, it is essential to consider the tradeoffs that will influence the decision on the best alternative. Taking a policy of training requirements, for example, the tradeoffs of the various alternatives or policy options may be the time it takes to complete the training versus effectiveness of the training. The effectiveness of the training may then lead to another tradeoff between completion rate and knowledge gained. To a certain extent, for a policy to be effective, the criteria for achieving the desired outcome must also be aligned with the agendas of most of the stakeholders without being unnecessarily burdensome for the majority of the stakeholders. Though it is not possible to appease every stakeholder's interests nor to minimize the burdens on each of the stakeholders, the analysis and its communication should be negotiated and presented such that these stakeholders are able to understand and appreciate the rationale for the decisions being made.

Table 2. Summary of the key steps in stage 2

Stage 2: Policy formulation

- Identify the primary or ultimate outcome to be achieved
- Define the criteria to be used for achieving the desired outcome
- Identify policy alternatives
- Identify tradeoffs for each alternative

STAGE 3: ANALYSIS OF EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

Analysis of an existing organizational policy may be required when a policy problem is identified for an area where a policy already exists. Analysis of an existing policy requires all the considerations identified in Stage 2 above, as well as some additional considerations: an important aspect of analyzing an existing policy is to determine whether there are any vulnerabilities to which the policy would be exposed.

"It should be part of standard professional practice in describing smart practices to explain not only how and why they work but also how and why they fail, collapse, backfire, and generally make people sorry they ever tried them." (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016)

In a large complex research organization, for example, there may be conflicting or overlapping policies owned by different units of the organization, where one unit may not be familiar with the policies of another. Involving stakeholders is therefore crucial at this stage too. It may be possible for a policy to create tendencies to pass responsibilities from one team or unit to another, regardless of whether the responsibility appropriately belongs there. It may also be possible for the policy to create tendencies for removal of funds or other resources from a given functional area that would then result in the policy not meeting its goals.

An example of such overlapping policies is conflict of interest and conflict of commitment. Whereas conflict of interest in research is typically reviewed and managed by research administrators, conflict of commitment is generally reviewed and managed by the academic administration. However, a conflict of commitment, such as a prominent role in a spin-off company, may also be a conflict of interest in research when the subject matter of research overlaps with the interest of the company. Without adequate communications across these policy owners, it may be easy to assume that the other owner may be responsible for managing a particular type of conflict. In light of such possibilities, it would be important to identify and implement countermeasures that allow the policy to be successful. In our example, a countermeasure may be to have overlapping membership in the various review committees or built-in alert systems across units.

Another important aspect of analyzing an existing policy is to consult both documents and individuals. People's experiences with an existing policy can be truly enlightening,

particularly when modifying or updating the policy. Finally, the existing policy must be evaluated against any evolving and existing rules and/or good practices. This final aspect of benchmarking is discussed further in Stage 4 below.

Table 3. Summary of the key steps in stage 3

Stage 3: Analysis of existing organizational policy

- Determine whether there are any vulnerabilities
- Communicate with stakeholders and policy owners
- Consult documents and individuals
- Identify and implement countermeasures

STAGE 4: DEFINING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & POLICY ENVIRONMENT

One of the most important aspects of policy making is to assess the organizational structure and the environment within which the policy must reside and operate. At some point during the policy lifecycle, one ought to conduct a benchmarking exercise. It is absolutely critical to benchmark against similar organizations. It is often very tempting to benchmark against the industry's best. However, unless the environment of the industry's best is similar to the environment within which the policy is being formulated or analyzed, what works well for the selected organization may not work well within the organizational structure and environment at hand. Within research organizations, some environmental factors that may be considered include the discipline or disciplines within which research is being conducted; whether there is primarily basic or applied research being conducted; the size of the organization; the volume of research; the primary funding sources; etc.

Another important consideration is one of shared interests. These are often overlooked. Shared interests may be available from other units or other programs. Look for overlap in policy areas and consult with each area's leadership and/or policy owners. For example, an organization's export control policy will likely overlap with the requirements within its office of research, office of faculty travel, student travel, shipping and receiving departments, contracts and agreements department, IT department, facilities department, and others. Consider how the policies of these different areas may overlap, and how you might align the policies. Policy alignment will then allow for streamlining implementation procedures across the organization. To be effective, policies must be considered at an institutional level. Aligning institutional policies requires an open dialogue across the organization regarding institutional priorities.

Table 4. Summary of the key steps in stage 4

Stage 4: Defining organizational structure & policy environment

- Assess organizational structure and environment
- Benchmark against similar organizations
- Identify shared interests
- Align related policies

STAGE 5. IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS: ALLIES & OPPONENTS

This stage brings us back to the very important question asked earlier in this paper about who is involved, and we must remind ourselves that "...policy issues are more often than not cross-cutting or have horizontal implications. Thus, one of the critical strategies to successful policy development is to identify who needs to be involved in the process." (Office of the Auditor General Manitoba, 2003) It is critical that each of the stakeholders involved in each of the stages of the policy lifecycle is identified. Typically, there is more than one stakeholder involved in or affected by each stage, and the stakeholders in one stage may be the same or may be very different from the stakeholders in another. An organization specific mapping of stakeholders similar to the sample provided in Figure 2 may be helpful to develop. Once the full range of stakeholders are identified, it is also important to understand their respective agendas and goals and figure out whether they are personal or relating to their function. Ideally, agendas should be related to the greater good of the organization and not to an individual's personal standing, but it can sometimes be difficult to spot the difference.

Stakeholder input may be obtained through formal or informal consultations, surveys, focus groups, or other methods appropriate to the organization or the policy topic area. This allows for an understanding of whether each of the stakeholders is an ally or an opponent or critic with respect to the policy in question.

"Policy actors tend to misinterpret and distrust opponents in policy processes... actors perceive opponents as more powerful and as more evil than they really are." (Fischer, Ingold, Sciarini, & Varone, 2015)

Though it may be enticing to work with allies and overlook the critics, it is not wise for multiple reasons. First, the critics may have valid concerns that truly affect the possibility of a successful implementation of the final policy. Second, ignoring them will result in increased mistrust, and "mistrust among actors strengthens boundaries between coalitions, favors long-term disagreement about problem definitions and hampers compromise finding" (Fischer, Ingold, Sciarini, & Varone, 2015). Finally, ignoring resistance usually does not minimize the discontent, and you may end up with a policy draft that is not accepted. As noted in stage 2 above, it is therefore important to effectively negotiate and communicate with the stakeholders whose agendas are not expected to be met with the proposed policy outcomes, so that they are able to understand the rationale behind the decisions being made. This requires the policy

owners and policy makers to have the “ability to accurately assess the goals and resources of their adversaries. If actors lack this ability, they are unable to choose the appropriate negotiation strategy” (Fischer, Ingold, Sciarini, & Varone, 2015). Within a large research organization, it may be prudent to include senior leadership and/or policy owners in identifying allies and objectors, and when negotiating interests.

Another important element is the art of converting challengers into allies. This is a huge undertaking, but one that will have significant immediate and long-term payoffs. The first step in this conversion process is to try to understand the objectors’ goals and agenda, i.e. discovering what is most important to the objectors, what do they prioritize and why, and how is the policy preventing them from accomplishing their goals. Once the objectors’ priorities and goals are clear, the next step is to build trust. One way to build trust is through a multi-step process: first, there must be transparent communication with the objectors with the goal of understanding their side of the story; one goal of this communication process should be to identify at least one thing of value that can be promised to them; then, one must either deliver on this promise or provide a rational explanation for why it cannot be delivered. This will build trust. It is important to recognize that the relationship with a challenger should start with giving and not receiving. Once a trusting relationship is in place, the process of converting a challenger into an ally is underway.

Table 5. Summary of the key steps in stage 5

Stage 5. Identifying stakeholders: allies & opponents

- Identify stakeholders for each stage
- Map stakeholders
- Identify goals and agendas of each stakeholder
- Determine who are allies and opponents
- Build trust

STAGE 6: STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING

During the policy formulation stage (stage 2), the primary policy outcome was defined, and the alternatives and their respective tradeoffs outlined. During the strategic decision-making stage (stage 6), the focus shifts to the details related to each of the alternatives and their respective tradeoffs, allowing for a systematic analysis of the alternatives, and thus leading to a strategic decision on the best possible policy to be implemented.

“A decision is considered more rational if the process leading to it is based on insight into the consequences of alternatives, and the selection follows the logic of choosing the alternative that is expected to best achieve one’s goals or objectives.” (Kornov & Thissen, 2000)

The first step in this stage is to determine whether additional research is required to obtain a better understanding of any of the alternatives and their implications. The required research may take many forms, including but not limited to, further analysis of existing policies, additional discussions with policy owners and/or the previously identified stakeholders, identification of stakeholders previously not recognized, or further examining the institutional organization and its environment. The need for additional research may be different for each of the alternatives and mapping out these needs and a plan of action to fulfil these needs is critical for strategic decision making.

Another step in this stage is to determine whether and to what extent each of the alternatives will require further education of the stakeholders, and/or additional relationship building efforts. If needed, factor in tradeoffs such as the financial and non-financial resources required for these endeavors. Once the alternatives and their associated tradeoffs are evident, strategic decisions can be made to fulfill policy objectives.

Table 6. Summary of the key steps in stage 6

Stage 6: Strategic decision making

- Systematically analyze each alternative and its tradeoffs
- Perform additional research if needed
- Determine if further education or relationship building is warranted
- Identify best policy option

STAGE 7: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

"Perhaps the overarching, obvious conclusion running through empirical research on policy implementation is that it is incredibly hard to make something happen, most especially across layers of government and institutions." (McLaughlin, 1987)

The success of policy implementation will depend on the administrators' ability to share responsibility for the policy implementation with stakeholders across the organization who can contribute to its implementation. Some implementers will be very apparent, for example, if the policy requires alterations to electronic systems, one must reach out to the IT department. Others may not be so easily identified. For example, if the policy requires securing physical storage of some materials, identifying who is ultimately responsible for covering the cost of such storage may be a more difficult task, requiring new dialogues and negotiations.

Once the implementers are identified, an appropriate timeline for policy implementation must be developed. Developing the timeline requires consideration of the needs and schedules of each of the implementers. Therefore, it is important not to set a policy implementation date prior to identifying each of the implementers. Another consideration is whether the policy can be implemented in one phase or whether

multiple phases with their own respective evaluations will be required, i.e. whether the implementation of a subsequent phase is dependent on the success of the prior phase. Take, for example, an export control policy. If the policy implementation requires an on-site export control officer to be identified and trained, who will then be responsible for developing and implementing site-specific processes, a phased implementation timeline would be appropriate.

Another important element of this stage is to clearly identify all the resources that will be required to successfully implement the policy, including shared resources. Shared resources, though often overlooked, can make the difference between the success and failure of a policy, particularly in fields such as research administration where there are many demands with very few available resources. An ongoing communication with stakeholders is critical for sharing knowledge about resources that can be shared. For example, if an electronic platform exists for another functional area, it would be helpful to discuss if it can also be utilized for the implementation of the new or revised policy. Similarly, if another department has a training program in place for the same audience required for training related to the policy at hand, consider whether a collaboration may be appropriate.

Once the implementer and the resources are identified, a critical step is the training of the implementers in the details of the new or revised policy. This step must be taken without making any assumptions about the implementers' understanding of the rationale for the policy. Success of policy implementation depends heavily on whether the implementers are sufficiently familiar with the policy problem, the policy decision, the rationale behind the policy decision and their role in it. The policy implementers' thorough understanding is necessary, as they may be required to make decisions on the spot when faced with challenges during implementation.

"We have learned that policy success depends critically on two broad factors: local capacity and will... In part, questions of motivation and commitment (or will) reflect an implementor's assessment of the value of a policy or the appropriateness of a strategy." (McLaughlin, 1987)

The ability of the implementers to make decisions during implementation is also dependent on the amount of flexibility allowed for changing situations. The context may have shifted since the development phase, and what may have seemed ideal during policy development may no longer be the best way forward. Therefore, allowing sufficient flexibility for slightly changing situations should be considered to give the policy a chance at having a decent shelf life.

Finally, it is important to plan for significant changes in the environment as well.

"Because implementation takes place in a fluid setting, implementation problems are never 'solved'. ... New issues, new requirements, new considerations emerge as the process unfolds... Supports previously

available may disappear as budgets are re-drawn or new requirements are imposed on the implementing unit." (McLaughlin, 1987)

Consideration must be given to the types of circumstances under which the policy should be closed out, postponed, differences mediated, or compromises made. In the case of research administration, this may include changes in regulations, changes in tangentially related policies within the organization, budget changes, changes in the organization's strategic plan or goals, or changes in institutional administration.

Table 7. Summary of the key steps in stage 7

Stage 7: Policy implementation strategies

- Identify policy implementers
- Develop an implementation timeline
- Identify resources needed for a successful implementation
- Train the implementers
- Plan for significant changes in the environment

STAGE 8: FRAMING & DISSEMINATING THE MESSAGE

Once an implementation plan has been developed and implementers have been trained, it is time to develop a plan for informing all stakeholders of the new or revised policy. This includes all individuals and groups who may be directly or tangentially affected by the policy implementation. Considering whether similar policies have been implemented amongst these groups, and whether there are examples of successful implementation that could prove to be valuable in determining the best approach to information dissemination.

There are several critical elements in planning for message dissemination: first, it is important to establish how the policy can be aligned with the interests of the target audience; second, a crucial step is to discern which critical aspects of the policy must be communicated to each of the groups, and this may be different for each group; third, there must be an assessment of who would be best suited to present the information to each of the groups, and again, this may differ from one group to another. For one group written communication may be all that is needed, for another a personal meeting is what is needed and yet for others training may be required. Together, these elements frame the message for each individual group based on their priorities and goals.

"Framing puts information into a context and establishes frames of reference so people can evaluate information, comprehend meanings, and take action, if appropriate." (Hallahan, 1999)

Table 8. Summary of the key steps in stage 8

Stage 8: Framing & disseminating the message

- Identify all individuals and groups to be informed
- Align messaging with interests of each target audience
- Identify best person and format to deliver the message to each audience

STAGE 9: POLICY MONITORING & EVALUATION

For a policy to be 'alive', a continuous monitoring and evaluation program is needed. The concepts of monitoring and evaluation are often confused, and it is important to distinguish these two processes within the organization.

Policy monitoring involves a structured periodic collection of information related to the effectiveness of policy implementation. This information is then analyzed at specific time points to identify any gaps or issues in policy implementation or lack of effectiveness of internal controls that may have been implemented to ensure compliance with the policy. It is important to develop a simple achievable policy monitoring plan by identifying data that will address the effectiveness of the processes implemented in support of the policy. Monitoring should require collection of data that is readily available and easy to access based on the pre-identified threshold for policy success. A good monitoring plan will define the how, what and when of the minimum amount of data required to assess whether the processes are being followed and possible to execute.

Policy evaluation also involves the collection of information and its analysis; however, it is conducted less frequently, and the goal of policy evaluation is to assess whether the policy is achieving the goals and outcomes defined at the outset in stage 2 above. Data required to evaluate a policy must be aligned with the defined policy outcomes, strategic direction of the organization and give consideration to changes in the environment. Ideally, policy evaluation will include a before and after comparison of indicators identified to measure the success of the policy. A thorough evaluation would consider all the elements defined in stages 1-8 above. A good policy evaluation plan would identify how success indicators, both short and long term, will be obtained, who will assess policy success and how. The results of a successful policy evaluation will inform how the information collected may be used to improve the policy. A policy that ends up 'forgotten' should be removed, otherwise it will not be followed, and it may end up being contradictory to working and new policies.

Table 9. Summary of the key steps in stage 9

Stage 9: Policy monitoring & evaluation

- Develop a simple and achievable policy monitoring plan
- Identify short and long term success indicators
- Develop a policy evaluation plan

CONCLUSION

The goal of this paper is to provide research administrators with a guide to the stages of policy lifecycle, such that they can effectively participate in policy making at their respective organization. Once again, we stress that policy making is an iterative process, and the stages delineated in this paper are not intended to be sequential. Rather, depending on the complexity of the policy under development, it may be necessary to go back-and-forth between the various stages in order to reach the optimal solution. On the other hand, for much simpler policies, it may not be necessary to step through each of the stages. The main conclusions are first and foremost to address who should be involved in the policy making process, and then to be aware of the different stages of the Policy Lifecycle. Using this framework will help to address challenges and mitigate against risks when making and implementing policy.

The importance of ongoing communication with stakeholders is a critical underpinning activity at all stages in the policy making life cycle. Within a research organization, it is also imperative to understand and incorporate cross-organizational perspectives to ensure that the policy is aligned with the organizational mission. A wider organizational culture and the need for a broader understanding of best practice approaches to policy making across all stakeholders in the organization is needed to successfully implement and work with policies.

Key components of policy making include: alignment with institutional mission and strategic plan; stakeholder and environmental analysis; feasibility of implementation and enforcement; and monitoring and evaluation. "Policy making is fundamentally shaped by actors who seek to use the resources at their disposal to have their concerns taken seriously." (Lewis, 2006) Therefore, inclusion of research administrators in the policy-making process may be to the advantage of the policy owners, senior leadership, and the research organization as a whole. However, for this to be successful, it is critical for research administrators to be trained in policy making, exposed to the context of the wider organizational culture, and provided with relevant tools and best practice approaches.

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