

Participant Workbook



Rural Policy Forum Issue Workshops

February 17-19, 2005
Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia
Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project



The mission of the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre is to conduct and facilitate health promotion that influences policy and contributes to the health and well-being of Atlantic Canadians.

The Coastal Communities Network (CCN) of Nova Scotia provides a forum to encourage dialogue and share information that promotes the survival and enhancement of our rural coastal communities

The goal of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project is to increase the ability of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access and use social science research in order to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of communities. RCIP is a 5-year research project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and co-sponsored by the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre and the Coastal Communities Network.

This workbook has been prepared for:

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Section 1 - Workbook and Workshop Overview

Forum and Workshop Purpose

The purpose of the Rural Policy Forum is to work with rural communities to understand and influence public policy.

Specifically by:

- 1. Exploring issues and public policies affecting rural communities in NS;*
- 2. Developing policy change strategies that include community engagement and the use of social science research; and*
- 3. Making plans for the future of the RCIP Project.*

How This Workbook Works

The participant workbook is divided into three main sections:

Section 1 - Workbook and workshop overview

Section 2 - Workshop agenda

Section 3 - Participant worksheets, related resources, glossary of terms

This participant workbook is provided to support the policy change work of your group. You can use it from start to finish or maybe only certain parts will be useful.

However you use the workbook, we would appreciate your feedback in terms of its usefulness.

From Backgrounder, to Workshop to Plenary

The backgrounder, the Friday workshop and Friday plenary all follow the same basic format:

The Issue

The Policy Implications and Preferred Policy Options

The Policy Change Strategies

The Action Plan *or* Next Steps¹

The workshop agenda has been designed to flow directly from the backgrounder. Prepared and distributed before the Policy Forum, the backgrounder is a starting point for workshop discussions.

Following the workshops, each group will be asked to report highlights to the larger group according to the basic format: **1. Issue(s) 2. Policy implications and preferred options 3. Policy change strategies and 4. Action plan**

¹ Basic format adapted from: *A Brief Guide to Understanding Policy Development*. (2002) RCIP document available online at: <http://www.ruralnovascotia.ca/tacklebox/default.asp?mnu=4&mnu2=15>

Hopefully this basic format will assist individual workshops to stay on track and also highlight the parallels and over-arching policy dimensions for the plenary.

Guiding Principles for Learning

As a participant in the workshop, please bear in mind some of the principles of effective learning. People learn best when:

- the material relates directly to their life experience
- there is a sense of a 'safe place' where different viewpoints are respected²
- there is a focus on real issues and problems
- they can set out their own goals
- they can evaluate/reflect upon their own learning
- they can fully participate in the process

You can create a positive learning setting for this workshop by contributing to a relaxed and friendly atmosphere where the opinions of others are welcomed and listened to respectfully.

Related Resources & Glossary of Terms

Some related resources such as website links, toolkits or documents are listed in Section 3. Definitions of various terms and phrases are also listed in Section 3.

RCIP Support

Please note that Todd is available through the RCIP project if you have any questions or concerns about the workshop.

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² Please note: Individual comments made by participants will be recorded as general comments: i.e. not being attributed to the individual person.

Section 2 - Proposed Workshop Agenda

This agenda is a guide. Your group may need to change it depending on what comes up.

⇒ 1.5 Hour Morning Session: 11:00-12:30pm

⇒ 1.5 Hour Afternoon Session: 1:45-3:15pm

	Activity	Time*
AM	Welcome, introductions, workshop agenda & logistics	20 min
	Identify issue(s) & policy implications <i>Optional Worksheets</i> <i>Worksheet #1 - What is policy? Who has policies? Why change policies? p.7</i> <i>Worksheet #2 - Policies reflect values and people make policies; p.8</i> <i>Worksheet #3 - The different “faces” of policy; p.9</i> <i>Worksheet #4 - Identify the “problem policy”; p.10</i>	40 min
	Explore preferred policy options	30 min
	Lunch	1hr 15 min
PM	Develop policy change strategies <i>Optional Worksheets</i> <i>Worksheet #5 - Sample policy change strategies; p.11</i> <i>Worksheet #6 - What is research and different types of research; p.12</i> <i>Worksheet #7 - Developing a research workplan; p.13</i>	60 min
	Action Planning <i>Optional Worksheets</i> <i>Worksheet #8 - Action planning (logistics); p.14</i> <i>Worksheet #9 - Action planning (tips); p.15</i>	20 min
	Wrap-up and reflection	10 min

(*Times are estimates)

Section 3 - Participant Worksheets, Related Resources & Glossary of Terms

Worksheet #1 - What is policy? Who has policies? Why change policy?³

Policy is the means of governing action. We use the word 'policy' in various ways. Community organizations, businesses and governments all have policies. Sometimes we even speak of individuals and households having policies. This workshop focuses on government policies. We sometimes also call these 'public policies'. However it may also be helpful to communities who are developing non-governmental policies.

Public policies affect us in our everyday lives. Examples are all around us. Everything from housing to resource use to health and social services are the result of public policies. Often we don't realize that as policies. Even when we do, we often forget that they are rules that were made up by people, which can also be changed by people.

A policy is . . .

A Guide for Action

What policies do . . .

- Outline rules
- Provide principles that guide action
- Set roles and responsibilities
- Reflect values and principle
- Statement of Intent

Who has policies?

- Individuals
- Families
- Organizations
- Governments

Why change policies?

We want policy change when

- we want to change an existing policy that is harmful
- we want to get rid of an existing policy that is harmful
- we want to stop a new piece of policy that is harmful
- we want to keep a good policy that is threatened
- we want to introduce a new policy where one is needed

³ Unless otherwise noted, all worksheets are adapted from *Rural Communities Impacting Policy - A Workbook*. Draft policy change workbook of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) Project. A partnership between the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University and the Coastal Communities Network of Nova Scotia.

Worksheet #2 - Policies reflect values and people make policies⁴

Although we all have policies that we live by, sometimes we are unable to “live by them” because of other things (or policies!) that get in the way.

Activity

Before looking at the following story, cover up the answers with black bullet points below. After you have looked at the story (individually or in a group), talk about what policies, choices and judgments are made. Were your answers any different from those listed?

Charlene went to her local church to ask for a food voucher and was given one worth \$50. She had asked for the food voucher so she could throw her son a party.

*She went to her local grocery store and picked up several items, including hotdogs, chips, pop, and a cake mix. The cashier rang the items through, but when Charlene presented her food voucher to pay for the items the cashier told her that if she was desperate enough to get a food voucher then she should be using it to buy better foods like fruits and vegetables. The cashier told her to go put the junk back. Charlene was embarrassed but was used to being treated like this. She listened to the cashier and returned the food items for more nutritious ones. She left the store in shame and tried to figure out how she would go home and explain to her son that he wouldn't have a birthday party this year - she didn't have the money.*⁵

- Church had policy to provide vouchers to individuals who seek assistance
- Charlene's personal policy was to celebrate her child's birthday with a party
- Government social and economic policies did not ensure Charlene had enough money to buy the food needed to feed her family
- The grocery store lacked policy to ensure cashiers had proper sensitivity training
- The store clerk made assumptions and had personal judgments of those who used vouchers

What you and your group hopefully discovered is that:

Policy can be supportive when it is made with the people whose lives are affected by it. This is because it will better reflect their values and experiences.

⁴ Activity adapted from: *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy*. By the Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University, 2004

⁵ This story was shared by one of the participants in the Participatory Food Costing Project of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University.

Worksheet #3 - The different “faces” of public policy

Policy Statement:

The Halifax Regional Municipality will increase green space for urban food production in order to encourage community gardens that increase food self-reliance, improve fitness, contribute to a cleaner environment, and enhance community development.

Information: An information package on organizing, operating and sustaining community gardens will be developed and made available for distribution to community groups, housing associations and developments, non-profit organizations, businesses, and public sector offices throughout the city.

Education: Public health educators and city planners will be engaged to work collaboratively to design an educational program on the benefits of preserving green space for food production targeted at private landowners, including developers, business operators, and home owners.

Legislation: A minimum of 25% of current public green space will be available for urban food production within each voting district of the City.

Regulation: The development of unused or vacant land, or the redevelopment of land for public purposes will be required to maintain a certain percentage of that land for green space, and a minimum of 25% of the green space will be available for urban food production.

Guidelines: Guidelines for proper and sustainable urban food production practices will be mandated for all public green space used or converted to a community garden or other urban food production purpose.

Standards: Future land development will consider a minimal standard of designated green space.

Procedures: Procedures will be established for starting a community garden on public green space.

Programs: Programs through the combined efforts of the Departments of Public Health and Urban Planning within public institutions, including schools, libraries, municipal offices, and hospitals, to start and maintain public gardens with the support of the staff and interested citizens of those institutions.

Grants: The "Community Garden Development Grant" will be established to provide one-time start-up grants to community groups committed to starting community gardens.

Subsidies: Wage subsidies will be made available for supporting a paid staff position for established (3 or more years in operation) community gardens of 100 or more plots.

Expenditures: A minimum of one new municipal position will be created for a Green Space Coordinator who will oversee the implementation of this policy.

Taxes: Property taxes will be increased where private land development or redevelopment does not comply with the regulations of this policy.

Public Ownership: Public green space converted for use in urban food production by community groups will thereafter be considered under shared public ownership between the Municipality and the community group; future decision-making regarding the space will be done so collaboratively.⁶

⁶ Worksheet adapted from: *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy*. Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University, 2004

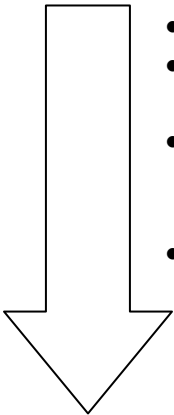
Worksheet #4 - Identify the “problem policy”⁷

Sometimes it's easier to see a problem or issue than to identify the policy that's causing it.

For example, the problem of food insecurity and hunger is obvious when someone has to use a food bank or soup kitchen. Unfortunately, we often don't think of the policies that cause people to have to rely on food banks to feed themselves. Many policies impact food security such as economic policy, social policy, agricultural policy, fisheries policy, land use policies, transportation policies, just to name a few. Before you can change or influence the policies that affect food security, you need to know what policy (or policies) is causing the problem and to be able to make the links between the policy and the problem.

Making these links can take practice. Sometimes the links are not clear or they get tangled up in other problems. By working through the tangles, you'll be able to see the connections more clearly. And that's the first step toward being able to make the connections clear to others and to begin to change the policies that are causing the problems.

An example of this linking process is...



- It's becoming **more difficult to buy fresh vegetables** in your community.
- The local grocery store closed after a big supermarket opened in the next town. Now you need a car to buy fresh food.
- The lack of fresh food for sale in the community is the result of municipal and provincial **policies that give tax breaks and cheap land to large retailers** to encourage them to open more stores. This often drives smaller retailers out of business.
- The lack of access to fresh food is the result of transportation policies that neglect public transportation and focus on individual cars.

⁷ Worksheet adapted from: *Good Policy, Good Health* - 2nd Edition. Nova Scotia Women's FishNet, 2004 & *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy*. Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University, 2004

Worksheet #5 - Sample policy change strategies

Possible policy change strategies:

- Identify Issue
- Determine position of the organization on this issue
- Conduct research - develop key research questions
- Link with other groups
- Public debate
- Engage with community
- Build capacity
- Present position to policy makers
- Evaluate

Tips for influencing policy from initiatives across Canada:⁸

- Celebrate the small successes - policy change can be a long, demanding and some times difficult process.
- Think big but stay focused - there are so many issues to be dealt with.
- Know the political process - learn how government works.
- Meet with policy makers - don't be afraid of politicians.
- Use the media - it can be a prime driving force for shaping public opinion and political agendas, but before going this route seek assistance from others who have experience with media and be sure to communicate clear and accurate information.
- Build broad public support - there needs to be pressure for policy change from outside the political system.
- Identify a champion - someone either within the political system, or someone outside of it who knows the system.
- Develop clear and palatable messages - avoid an adversarial approach that blames or attacks certain people.
- Let policy makers know what they can do to address the issues. Develop action steps and follow through on your efforts.

⁸ This section adapted from: *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy*. Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University, 2004

Worksheet #6 - What is research & different types of research

What is research and why do it?

Research is ...

The systematic gathering of information

Community groups can use research as part of their policy change work in order to

- develop well-formed positions
- adopt effective strategies
- ensure that they have “done their homework” when they talk to government about policy change
- identify other potential allies, group with similar issues

Different types of research *or* Different types of research methodology

1. **Case Studies** - involve recording and analyzing the actual experiences of an organization or community around specific issues. These can provide a more complete understanding of the complexity of a situation and can also be used to examine the process by which a policy has been implemented.
2. **Cost-Benefit Analysis** - occurs when the researcher compares the costs and benefits of alternative policy options. These benefits and costs can be monetary, societal or environmental.
3. **Field Experiments** - examine the effectiveness of implementing a strategy to address an issue or problem. You collect data on the resulting changes and analyze this to determine the impact of the implemented strategy.
4. **Focus Groups** - selected individuals participate in a discussion on a pre-specified topic. An advantage to using a focus group is that many diverse opinions and knowledge levels are placed together at one time.
5. **Interviews** - Useful in gaining rich, in depth information and for generating solutions.
6. **Review of Existing Research** - involves the selective review of written materials and existing research findings relevant to your issue or problem. To do this, you examine published articles and other sources, such as discussions with experts and stakeholders, personal past experiences, unpublished documents, and staff memoranda.
7. **Secondary Analysis** - examine data from existing databases. The procedures used to examine this type of data range from descriptive statistics that describe the data to inferential statistics that model behaviour.
8. **Questionnaires/Surveys** - can involve personal interviews or written questionnaires administered once or several times. These are useful for gathering data on an issue or problem and its causes.

Worksheet #7 - Developing a research workplan

Developing a research workplan⁹

- Establish any research partnerships & create a collaborative agreement
- Develop research question(s)
- Choose research methodology
- Design research tools
- Decide on a sample/target population
- Data collection procedures
- Data analysis
- Data interpretation (what do the research results mean?)
- Share the information with others!

⁹ For more information about doing research, see “Key Resources and Tools” on p. 17

Worksheet #8 - Action planning (logistics)¹⁰

“Now that the group knows what it wants to do...how will you do it?”

Creating a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)¹¹

The first step to developing a schedule and timeline is to identify all the work that needs to be done and how long each task will take. Develop a task network diagram using these steps:

Step 1: Brainstorm all of the tasks or activities that need to be done or carried out in the project, i.e., WHAT will be done, not how.

Step 2: While the tasks are still independent, not in any order, estimate the time it will take to complete each task.

Step 3: Put the tasks in order (imagine one person is doing ALL the tasks) to get the sequence. Identify the tasks that can be done simultaneously. Group them in columns.

Step 4: Assign tasks to groups or individuals

Step 5: Determine any resources needed for task completion.

Step 6: Put this information into some form of chart or table that can be easily shared.

The Workplan: Organizing tasks, timelines & who’s responsible

The GANTT Chart example

RCIP Rural Health Project																											
Tasks	Resources	January					February																				
		24	25	26	27	28	31	1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24		
Administration		←→																									
create contact list/add to database?		←→					TB																				
Policy Forum 2005		←→																									
prepare backgrounder		←→																									
Brad’s Report		←→																									
mailing list	labels	←→																									
send report	envelopes	←→																									

Made using Microsoft Excel¹², this type of workplan is useful because it takes the tasks and who’s responsible and ties it into a real calendar - which is useful for incorporating holidays and other time constraints.

¹⁰ Adapted from *Project Management workshop handout*, (2004) Riversystems. <http://www.riversystems.com>

¹¹ For additional information on action planning and project management, see “Key Resources and Tools” on p. 17

¹² See: <http://pw.english.purdue.edu/resources/doc/gantt/index.shtml>

Worksheet #9 - Action planning (tips)¹³

Implementing a policy change strategy is a lot like...*project management*

A project management cycle: a) Initiate b) Plan c) Implement d) Manage e) Close

Two major aspects of project management: 1) Tools 2) People

Ideas for the action plan

- *Work Breakdown Structure*
- *The Workplan*: Some way to organize the information including roles and responsibilities and resources needed (e.g. GANTT chart)
- *Communications plan* (how will the group get messages out to others - internally and externally)
- *Evaluation plan* (how will the group and individuals reflect on what has happened?)

Questions to consider when working with people

- How will the group stick to timelines?
- How do you keep people focused and motivated?
- How will the group resolve conflict?
- What are some ideas around team-building?

Two types of meetings

1. *Fast/check-in meetings* (how are things going?)

These meetings are meant to be quick and motivational. If a major problem(s) arises during the meeting, schedule a problem-solving meeting for a different time.

2. *Problem-solving meetings*

¹³ Worksheet adapted from *Project Management workshop*, (2004) Riversystems of NS <http://www.riversystems.com>

Glossary of Terms¹⁴

Social science research - Research about human subjects. For example, the RCIP Rural Report: *Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia*. (population trends, economy, education, environment and health)

Issue - A vital or unsettled matter. For example, coastal erosion.

Policy - A guide for action. A definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions procedures. For example, buying vegetables from a local farmer whenever possible.

Public Policy - A definite course or method of action ultimately decided upon by a governmental body. For example, the speed limit on a highway *or* a community development policy.

Policy Implications - How public policy is related to an issue. For example, global warming guidelines have implications for the issue of coastal erosion.

Preferred Policy Options - Public policies that support the resolution of an issue for a group or individual. For example, a local community group believes that global warming guidelines and development moratoriums will limit coastal erosion.

Policy Change - A blanket term used for when:

- we want to change an existing policy that is harmful
- we want to get rid of an existing policy that is harmful
- we want to stop a new piece of policy that is harmful
- we want to keep a good policy that is threatened
- we want to introduce a new policy where one is needed

Policy Change Strategy - An idea used by a group or individual for achieving policy change. For example, building a coalition or developing relationships with policy-makers.

Action Plan - A detailed description of how a strategy (or strategies) will be carried out. For example, a workplan.

¹⁴ Some definitions adapted from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: <http://www.m-w.com/>

Key Resources and Tools

Impacting Policy

- *Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) website*. This website contains practical tools and information to help carry out research and develop policy change strategies. Including the *Rural Tackle Box* and *Rural Report - Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia* www.ruralnovascotia.ca
- *Good Policy. Good Health - An Information and Action Kit for Women in Coastal Communities. (2nd Edition)* Nova Scotia Women's FishNet, 2004. Ordering information available online at: www.ruralnovascotia.ca/tacklebox/default.asp?mnu=11
- *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy*. Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University, 2004. This workbook is in the draft stages. For more information, please contact: Amy MacDonald, Workbook Coordinator, Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre at Dalhousie University amy.macdonald@dal.ca 902-494-2764
- *What Works! Putting Community Issues on the Policy Agenda*. Atlantic Health Region - Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) 2004. Available online at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/canada/regions/atlantic/documents/index.html#policy

Doing Research

- *Guidelines for Preparing Research Proposals*. (1999) Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre & Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S. For copies, call or email: **Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre** (902) 494-2240 ahprc@dal.ca This publication is available on Internet at www.ahprc.dal.ca/
- *Guidebook for Successful Research Internships and Collaborations*. (2005) RCIP document available at: www.ruralnovascotia.ca/studentintern.asp

Action Planning and Project Management

- *Community Toolbox - University of Kansas* <http://ctb.ku.edu/>
- *Project Management Institute* www.pmi.org Nova Scotia Chapter www.pmi.ns.ca/
- *Goal QPC* www.goalqpc.com/
- *Mind Tools* www.mindtools.com/

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