

Setting agendas and developing and implementing policies

Summary sheet

		Factors	Predictions	Interventions
Setting agendas	Problems stream	<p>Attention to problems may be driven by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing events • Change in an indicator • Feedback (about a problem) from the operation of current programs <p>A condition gets defined as a problem for which government action is an appropriate remedy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing current conditions with values concerning more ideal states of affairs • Comparing performance with that of other countries • Putting the subject in one category or another (framing) 	<p>Government agenda includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governmental agenda (i.e., list of subjects getting attention) • Decision agenda (i.e., list of subjects within a governmental agenda that are up for active decision) <p>Governmental agenda (or the opening of a policy window) is influenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems or politics • Visible participants <p>Decision agenda is influenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coupling of all three 'streams' (problems, policies and politics) into a single package, usually by a policy entrepreneur 	<p>Pick an achievable goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an issue isn't on the agenda, aim to get it onto the governmental agenda • If an issue is on the governmental agenda, aim to push it onto the decision agenda <p>If your goal is to get an issue onto the governmental agenda (or, said another way, to open a policy window)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene in the problems stream by capitalizing upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focusing event ○ Change in an indicator ○ Feedback about a problem • Or intervene in the politics streams by taking advantage of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Swings in national mood ○ Changes in the balance of organized forces ○ Events within government • Find one or more allies among visible participants <p>If your goal is to get an issue onto the decision agenda (or, said another way, to couple all three 'streams' - problems, policies, and politics - into a single package)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene in the problems and politics stream (see above) • Intervene in the policies stream by capitalizing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diffusion of ideas ○ Feedback about a policy ○ Communication/persuasion • Find a policy entrepreneur who can couple the three streams together
	Policies stream	<p>Generation of policy proposals can come about from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diffusion of ideas in a policy area ('natural selection') • Feedback (about a policy) from the operation of existing policies • Communication/persuasion <p>Policies that survive to the state of serious consideration are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technically feasible • Fit with dominant values and current national mood • Acceptable given anticipation of future constraints (e.g., budget workability, political support/opposition) 		
	Politics stream	<p>Political events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swings in national mood • Changes in the balance of organized forces • Events within government <p>Political agenda items that meet the following criteria are more likely to rise to agenda prominence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruent with national mood • Enjoy interest group support or lack organized opposition • Fit orientations of current governing party or prevailing legislative coalitions 		
	Participants	<p>Visible participants (engaged with problems and politics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime minister, premiers or presidents • Ministers or high-level appointees • Opposition leaders • Interest group leaders • Journalists <p>Hidden participants (engaged with policies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic specialists • Civil servants • Political staff of elected officials • Analysts <p>Policy entrepreneurs</p>		

		Factors	Predictions	Interventions
Developing policies	Institutions	<p>Government structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves one or both levels within a federation (unitary states, federal states with layer cake or marble cake federalism) • Number of veto points <p>Policy legacies that affect government elites, interest groups and mass publics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created resource and incentive effects, including administrative capacities for government elites, spoils, organizing niches, financing and access to authority for interests, and lock-in effects for mass publics • Created interpretive effects, including policy learning for government elites and interest groups and visibility and traceability for mass publics <p>Policy networks can be state-directed, closed or pluralist (with the latter including clientele pluralist networks and pressure pluralist networks)</p>	<p>Policy can be described in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, financial and delivery arrangements, or the programs, services and technologies, that would be changed • Legal, economic, voluntary instruments, and information and education instruments that would be used • Where the policy would need to be developed <p>Policy is more likely to be developed at a particular time if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions ('rules of the game') allow it to pass easily <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governing party supports it, it involves the one level within a federation where the party governs (or it involves a unitary state), and it faces no veto points ○ Policy legacies have led to supportive resource and incentive effects (e.g., administrative capacities) and interpretive effects (e.g., learning to avoid highly visible and traceable changes) ○ A group involved in a clientele pluralist network supports it • Interests with influence/power support it (because of concentrated benefits) or don't actively oppose it (because of diffuse costs) • Ideas are aligned with it (because knowledge/beliefs about 'what is' and values/mass opinion about 'what ought to be' are aligned) • External factors are a trigger to action 	<p>Pick an achievable goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an issue is on the decision agenda, aim to influencing the specifics of the policy (i.e., the type of policy and/or the type of policy instrument) and where the policy will be developed to address the issue <p>If your goal is to influence the specifics of the policy or where it will be developed, intervene by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing up the 3I+E factors that are in your favour • Downplaying the importance of the factors that aren't • Shifting where the policy is developed to where you face the greatest chance of success
	Interests	<p>Societal interest groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen groups, patient groups, professional groups, non-governmental organizations, and industry groups <p>Other interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials, civil servants, researchers, and policy entrepreneurs <p>All interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can have direct or indirect sources of power • Face benefits or costs, which may be concentrated or diffuse 		
	Ideas	<p>Knowledge/beliefs about 'what is' can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research evidence • Other types of information • Tacit knowledge <p>Values/mass opinion about 'what ought to be' can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elite opinion • Informed mass opinion following deliberation • Mass opinion 		
	External factors	<p>External factors can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political change (e.g., election of a new governing party, or election of a new leader of a political party, with a clear mandate) • Economic change (e.g., recession) • Technological change • Court decision • Release of major reports • A new disease • Media coverage • International organizations (e.g., WHO and the UN) • International donors (e.g., the World Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) 		

		Factors	Predictions	Interventions
Implementing policies	Institutions	<p>Government structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail <p>Policy legacies that affect government elites, interest groups and mass publics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail <p>Policy networks can be state-directed, closed or pluralist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail 	<p>Approach to policy implementation can be described in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, financial and delivery arrangements that would be changed, or implementation strategies that would be used • Legal, economic, voluntary instruments, and information and education instruments that would be used • Where the responsibility for policy implementation can be delegated to 	<p>Pick an achievable goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a policy has been selected, aim to influence policy implementation (i.e., the approach used to support or enforce policy implementation and/or the type of policy instrument) and where the responsibility for policy implementation is delegated to <p>If your goal is to influence policy implementation or where the responsibility for policy implementation will be delegated to, intervene by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing up the 3I+E factors that are in your favour • Downplaying the importance of the factors that aren't • Shifting responsibility for policy implementation to where you face the greatest change of success
	Interests	<p>Interests include many types of groups, can have direct or indirect sources of power, and face benefits or costs, which may be concentrated or diffuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail 		
	Ideas	<p>Knowledge/beliefs about 'what is'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail <p>Values/mass opinion about 'what ought to be'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail 		
	External factors	<p>External factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for more detail 	<p>Approach to policy implementation is more likely to be selected at a particular time if 3I+E are aligned (as above)</p>	

Citation: Lavis JN. Setting agendas and developing and implementing policies: Summary sheet. Hamilton, Canada: McMaster Health Forum, 2017.

 This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Last updated on 13 November 2024