

# **Public Policy Workshop: Presenter's Guide**

## **Issue Analysis, Action Plan Development, and Implementation**

### **Overview**

Organization members and leaders find public policy involvement energizing and challenging. Learning to effect policy within an organization is an excellent exercise that helps prepare members and organizations for involvement in public policy activities.

The objective of this workshop is for participants to recognize and experience the steps of issue analysis, action plan development, and implementation. Participants will better understand how to become involved in the public policy process, build awareness of issues, and strengthen their communication with formal and informal decision makers involved in the public policy process.

This workshop guide is adapted from resources developed for the Family Community Leadership program in Texas funded by the Kellogg Foundation. These tools were originated by the former JC Penney Company, Inc. Consumer Education Services to facilitate individual and group analysis of public policy issues impacting families. However, the principles presented here can be adapted to address any policy decision making within an organization.

### **Timing**

Allow at least four hours to complete the workshop. If the group is using the workshop to address a specific organization, community or public policy issue, sessions may be conducted across longer time frames or via a series of meetings so participants have time for effective information gathering.

### **Required Resources**

1. Copies of handouts for each session to give each participant
2. Visuals showing:
  - Definition of Public Policy
  - Definition of Beliefs and Values
  - Definition of an Issue
  - Definition of Implicit and Explicit Public Policy
3. Equipment:
  - Projection equipment
  - Screen
  - Extension Cord
4. 3 x 5 inch cards, name tags, and straight pens for each participant
5. Felt tip pins
6. Newsprint on two easels and tape for displaying pages as used

7. A meeting room that allows the group to work in small groups around tables and in a lecture setting to hear and see large group presentations.

## **Workshop Presenter's Guide**

### **Registration Instructions**

As people sign in, give them two blank name tags.

### **Opening Activity**

There is a growing awareness among many families and individuals that forces outside their home affect their lives. This has always been true, but for many years, few people have considered it their place to do anything about these forces. They felt that someone else would take care of the problem.

Today is a great time to become more involved in doing something about community problems, especially those that affect families. The challenge is to identify the problems, and understand the underlying issues and ways to effectively address the issues.

To help us know who at our workshop shares similar concerns about problems affecting families and communities, take the two blank name badges you were given and write the name you prefer to be called in large letters on one name badge. Now write a word or two that represents a problem or issue in our community that is of concern to you.

In the next three minutes, try to meet as many people in the room as you can who share your concern. When you find someone who shares your concern, stay together as you continue to meet other people.

*(Monitor time and call the group to attention in three minutes.)*

Were you surprised to find people who share your concern?

What is the issue that drew together the largest group?

*(Have participants to be seated.)*

If you want to know what people in your community are concerned about, use this type of name tag at your next meeting.

### **Workshop Introduction**

It is important not to rely on vocal people or the news media to tell you what concerns people in your organization or community. Become aware of what people talk about and what is happening in the community.

Issues grow out of accumulated daily events – concerns people talk about, worries expressed by organization members, friends, neighbors, business people and those in government. Their dialogue projects that, "Something is wrong and something needs to be done about it."

Defining the problem is a big challenge in starting the public policy problem solving process. A public problem in one situation may not be a problem in another situation. A solution that works well in one

situation may not work at all in another. Public policies affect families in both positive and negative ways. Issues are complex. It is necessary to find ways to judge community support and interest in the problems.

So, for public policy problem solving to occur, we must analyze what is happening and why people react as they do. First we will focus on steps for analyzing public policy issues, then we will go through steps for planning a course of action for being involved in public policy decision making.

## Analyzing Issues

A “private” issue becomes a “public” issue when actions of individuals or groups go beyond those directly involved and affect others. An example is parental discipline.

Parents have a right to discipline their children as they see fit. However, parental discipline changes from a private issue to a public issue when discipline causes permanent physical and/or psychological harm. The community protects children by developing a public policy limiting the severity of punishment by parents.

**Public policy can be defined as statements or principles underlying government action at the local, state or federal level.** It is expressed in government actions through: legislation, resolutions, programs, regulations, appropriations, administrative practices and court decisions.

A public policy is a solution to a public issue, such as a law limiting the severity of punishment by parents. We could define **an issue as a topic of public concern which can be acted on and is a subject of fairly wide-spread public interest.**

When an organization or group of citizens defines a public problem, they compare how things are now with how they wish things would be. This process involves using individual values and beliefs. Beliefs and values held by people involved in the issue add to the difficulty in analyzing the problem.

**Beliefs are the ideas people have about the way things are.** They may or may not be based on accurate information. It is hard to screen out “good” information. Generally people pay attention to the information that supports their beliefs.

**Values** affect our analysis of problems. They are expressed in terms of good or bad, beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, appropriate or inappropriate. Values are important as citizens and policy makers:

- Choose what is desirable
- Seek alternatives
- Choose the best alternative

For example, thinking that education is good and right is a value we hold. Our beliefs about how school funds are managed may influence our policy support. If we believe that schools are spending money wisely, we will probably support future funding. If we believe schools are not spending money wisely, we may vote “no” on a tax issue even though we value education.

Value conflicts cause most of the friction in dealing with public problems. Differing values and priorities may affect the conflict. Two people may value freedom. However, one may want the freedom to smoke in public places while the other is a non-smoker who wants the freedom to breathe clean air.

Public policies are statements that underlie government action, and many policies impact families. Policies that are explicit are intended to directly affect families. Policies that are implicit are not developed specifically to impact families, but indirectly do affect them.

Implicit policies can expand or limit the resources and alternatives available to families. Above all, public policy should help families function, encourage families to care for their members and provide for the

general well-being and stability of the family. Family-oriented public policy, “helps families to help themselves,” or provides essential support for those who cannot provide for themselves.

### **Many Perspectives on Issues and Policies**

All public issues and public policies have consequences. They affect society directly or indirectly. They have social, economic, and environmental effects. These effects are felt by all, including individuals, families, industry, management, labor, consumers, producers, and taxpayers.

Because the effects are so pervasive, issues and proposed policies need to be analyzed from many perspectives, including the perspectives of families in diverse family situations.

It is important for family members to be involved in analyzing issues and proposed policies in order to better predict the effect of the issue or policy on their family and community. It is important for family members to communicate their beliefs, values, knowledge and experience to policy makers.

To learn the process of analyzing issues, we will use the child care issue as our focus. If you are thinking, I’m not concerned about child care; you may find it easier to learn the process when your focus is more on learning the process than on convincing others to accept your view on the issue.

So... with that viewpoint, fasten your seat belts as we move into an action-packed workshop.

Individual action can make a difference in issues that shape our future.

The issue-analysis process offers a way to dig beneath the surface symptoms of a situation and identify the real issue to be resolved. Our focus is to gather information and analyze possible outcomes from many points of view in order to facilitate consensus on a desired course of action.

#### **There are six steps in the process:**

- 1. Define the Issue**
- 2. Identify the Interested Parties**
- 3. Gather Perspectives**
- 4. Analyze Viewpoints**
- 5. Form a Position**
- 6. Make an Action Plan**
- 7. Take Action**

To put these steps to work, assume we are citizens in the community of Townsville with a population of 6,700. Our closely-knit community is located 5 miles from an interstate highway. It is 30 miles to a major metropolitan area, Twin Cities.

In past years, the community has prospered from agricultural production. Families have experienced good harvests and poor. Families give each other emotional support and financial assistance when needed. Extended family members have often remained in or returned to the community to live.

The Townsville Independent School System has two campuses. Butler Elementary School serves grades K-6 and Townsville Jr/Sr High School serves grades 7 to 12. Many children ride school buses from the surrounding rural area.

Churches in the area represent most of the major denominations and are supported by families served. There is a local ministerial alliance and the churches cooperate frequently when called to address a community concern.

While the community is viewed as typically middle class, the number of young families who have limited incomes is growing. Demographics indicate that a divorce rate of 5.9 per 1000 population in the county has created many new problems for young families.

The local Chamber of Commerce notes in their Annual Report the establishment of a telephone marketing business in the town and a major pharmaceutical company has purchased property along the interstate just 15 miles from Townsville, on the way to Twin Cities.

The number of families in the workplace is increasing. About 60 percent of mothers with children under age 18 are working outside the home.

Economic conditions associated with agricultural production are increasing the need for employment outside the home.

New areas of concern to employed families include: child care for infants, toddlers and elementary-school-age children; time management; stress management; and, time for family recreation and interaction.

During the remainder of this workshop, consider yourself to be a citizen in Townsville. Let's see how analyzing issues and taking action can empower citizens to tackle their concerns.

Let's find out what the citizens of Townsville are thinking about child care.

If you have children who require child care, please stand.

If you have grandchildren who require child care, please stand.

If you have ever provided child care for children, please stand.

If you employ someone who has small children, please stand.

If you serve on any type of decision making board, in a church, a community, or school regarding child care, please stand.

If you think quality child care is important enough to help pay for it by taxes or through a community service project in a group you belong to, please stand.

If you wish people would stop worrying about child care and mothers would stay home and care for their children, please stand.

If you have no children, please stand.

If you have another perspective on the child care issue, please share it with us.

Now that we can see how we may take many different stands on the child care issue, we are ready to take the first step in issue analysis.

### **Step 1 – Define the Issue**

First, we have to decide on the issue. Questions we might answer to help us decide are:

1. What is the general concern?
2. What are the elements... what makes up this concern?
3. What is the background?
4. Why has the concern or problem surfaced?

Questions that can help to make sure that it really is an issue are:

1. It is timely?
2. Is it controversial?
3. Are there several perspectives with no one right answer?
4. Is it something that needs to be resolved rather than solved?

If the answers to these questions about an issue are "yes," we have identified an issue. The next challenge is to state the issue clearly. Usually, the issue is stated in the form of a question since an issue has no one obvious solution.

Let me share a little more information about Townsville. Listen and note the concerns you think different people in the town have about child care.

The citizens of Townsville are concerned. Many of the young families in the area are two wage earner families. While growing employment is good for the community, the shortage of child care for young children is a challenge. Rumors are flying.

- There are two family day care homes opening on Moore Street.
- A church is starting a fund drive to renovate some of its facilities to meet standards for child care.
- The school system is considering an extended day program for children of working parents at the elementary campus.
- Child Care, Inc. has an option on a plot of land to build a child care center near the pharmaceutical plant.
- The telephone marketing business is considering a contractual arrangement with local providers for children of mothers they employ.
- Everyone has an opinion.
- Mothers of young children should not work outside the home.
- Relatives are the best sources of outside child care.
- Churches should make a major effort in meeting child care needs.
- Family day care homes are increasing traffic in neighborhoods.
- Family day care homes are the best kind of care for infants.
- Employers should support child care as an employee benefit.

Economic conditions and increased employment opportunities are changing the traditional community. Concerned adults are faced with a complex issue – who should be responsible for the care of the area's youngest citizens?

Depending upon whom was asked, the issue was perceived as:

- A family matter
- An economic matter
- A commercial matter
- An educational matter
- A social issue
- A moral issue

What are other ways you stated the issue? To find out how you defined the issue, let's divide into groups of not more than 10 people. *(Number the participants 1, 2, 3 ... 10. Then ask them move into groups by their number.)*

*(Initiate group discussion.)* If there are many concerns in a community, different members of a group addressing the issue may see it as different concerns. The issue of quality child care may be seen as a concern about raising taxes to fund public child care, an income tax policy that give employers an incentive to provide child care, a zoning issue for residential areas, or some other concern.

Compare your lists of concerns and the way you each described the issue. Agree on one list of concerns and write your list on a page of newsprint. *(As pages are completed, post them in a visible place in the room.)*

As we look at the key concerns you have identified, let's see if there are relationships among these concerns.

For example, several concerns are related to taxes, child safety, or possibly care of the elderly that is being overlooked because of the emphasis on child care.

Let's condense our lists to the broad categories of concern. When broad concerns have been identified, we will determine what the most important concern is, from the viewpoint of those involved now in studying the issue.

*(Prepare two lists of the broad concerns identified by the participants. Place the lists on the two easels in front of the room.)*

The next step is challenging but very important. Stay in your small groups.

I'm going to point to two concerns, one from each set. Your challenge is to decide which one of the two you believe is most important. I'll ask for a show of hands on each. I will record the answers for the whole group on the newsprint. I need someone from each group to record your group's answers for each concern. *(Make sure each group as a recorder.)*

*(Go through the list and match each concern to all of the concerns. For example if there are four concerns, point to the first on one the left and the second on the right. Ask participants to raise their hand if they believe that concern one on the left is more important and write the number under the first concern listed on the left hand sheet. Then ask participants to raise their hand if they believe the first concern listed on the right is more important and write the number under the concern. Continue by choosing between concern one on the left and concern two, three and four on the right, concern one on the left. Next have them compare concern two on the left and three and four on the right. The last step is to compare concern three on the left and concern four on the right. When all concerns have been compared*

*with each other, add the numbers written under each concern to see their total score. Write their total score on the right hand sheet.)*

From this exercise, we have found a way to give everyone an equal say about their beliefs while finding out which concern is most important, the one with the highest score. However, I'd like to know what the total score for each concern was for each of our groups.

*(As each group gives their total scores for each concern, write their totals by the whole group total using a different marker color so the total group score is distinguished from the small group scores.)*

What does this information tell us about the diversity or consensus of our group's views on the issue? In a group where people have a lot in common, there may be strong agreement from the smaller groups with the larger group. In a diverse group you may find issues of greater importance to some smaller groups than to the group as a whole.

When you are studying an issue with a group, they may already have a specific issue identified, or they may need to use this process to define their concerns more clearly.

You will be using the issue or concern that your group scored highest as we work through the remainder of the workshop. Having groups with different views will help us better evaluate the options for addressing the issue.

While we have the current views of the issue our citizens hold, it is very important to also study the background on the issue. You would want to take time to gather information to answer at least two questions:

- Why did the issue arise?
- What values are expressed in the reasons given for the issue's importance?

If the group studying the issues lacks diversity in views and experiences with the issue, involve more people with other views in future session or getting their input through interviews, group dialogue or other sources of information available. Doing so will make policy decisions easier for people to support, particularly if they see their input used in policy decisions.

Now, we face the challenge of stating the issue as a question. Remember, we use a question because there are no clear cut solutions.

Using the Townsville example and your group's discussion about what the real issue is, why the issue arose and the varying viewpoints on the issue, try to state the issue in question form.

*(Give each group a piece of newsprint and a marker to write their issue question. Tape each issue statement ... question ... on the wall so others can see how one issue may be defined differently by different groups studying the same issue.)*

## **Step 2 – Identify the Interested Parties**

The next step in the issue-analysis process is to identify the interested parties.

Questions to ask include:

1. Who is involved?
2. Who is affected?

By looking at the consequences of addressing the issue, identify:

3. Who might gain?
4. Who might lose?
5. Who controls the resources that could resolve the issue?
6. Who has power to affect the issue?

Interested parties are usually called stakeholders. They have something at stake in whether or not the issue is addressed and in how it is addressed.

Use the form “[Who Are the Interested Parties](#)” to list the stakeholders in the issue in the column on the left of the form. (*Allow time for participants to list a few.*) No go across the page, and under each heading check their involvement in the issue. Do they have something to gain or lose from the issue? Will they be affected now or later? Are they aware or unaware of their stake in the issue? Do they control resources or have power to help resolve the issue? At what level are they involved in the issue, local, state, regional, national or international? Check only the items that apply to each stakeholder.

Sometimes it is necessary to look at second and third-order consequences — events that will happen if something else happens — in order to identify all of those who might be affected by the issue.

Usually policy stakeholders also consider opportunity costs. That means that when an issue is resolved in one way, there will be a cost in missed opportunities to do something else. If resources are used for one purpose, they are not available to be used for another. This means that different groups could be affected in different ways.

Identifying stakeholders and how they relate to the issue can help in grouping interested parties according to their interest in the issue as your work continues. At this point you are trying to have the broadest view of the issue possible before choosing a course of action.

I am going to give you a little more information about the stakeholders in Townsville regarding the child care issue. Use this form to list the stakeholders you identify. Also check what opportunity or cost they might experience as the issue is resolved.

The lines of opinion in Townsville are moving people into several groups.

- There are older citizens who want zoning restrictions to prevent child care in their neighborhoods.
- There are parents who feel extended child care before and after the school day should be a function of the school.
- There are child care providers who feel that churches and schools should not compete with local child care businesses.
- There are individuals who feel no tax dollars should be spent to purchase child care for families who cannot afford it.
- There are professionals in early childhood education who feel something is needed to serve young children and prepare them for school.
- There are agency representatives who had to locate, monitor and support child care.
- There are church leaders who feel there is a moral/social issue that needs to the support of the church.
- There are employers who are concerned about a labor pool.

- There are parents who need child care for their children.

Who are the interested parties?

What do you think they have to gain or lose as the issue is resolved?

*(Allow a few minutes for groups to complete the worksheet and highlight some of the stakeholders they identified and the opportunity/cost they might experience.)*

### **Step 3 – Gather Perspectives**

The perspectives of each party must be gathered next. One might ask:

1. What does each group want?
2. What will they win?
3. What will they lose?

It may also be necessary to find out what policies, rules and regulations presently exist. What values and beliefs are held?

The gathered information can then be summarized into the perspectives of each of the individuals or groups that have a stake in the issue.

Think about your experience so far in working with the child care issue. Have you begun to form an opinion? Is your opinion one you have long held? Has it been formed or reshaped by what others have shared? Hopefully you have become aware of how others might feel about the issue and they have a better understanding of your feelings about the issue.

To quickly help others in your group know your perspective on the issue at this point, take the 3x5 card I am giving you now. Show your opinion of how important the issue is using a scale of 1 for very unimportant and 5 for very important.

Now, turn your card over, and on the other side write a number between 1 and 5 which represents how important you think the issue is to another person in your group. Know whose viewpoint you are rating.

*(Give participants time to record their ratings. Ask five people to stand. One at a time, ask them to share their rating on the importance of their issue. Ask if anyone else rated how these participants would rate the issue... if so what rating did they show? Were people reasonably close or pretty far off?)*

It is seldom possible to know exactly what other people think about an issue.

To begin to shape the various perspectives of the people in Townsville on the child care issue, each group member needs to assume the role of an interested party in Townsville. Choose the role you want to assume.

As a group, list the roles each group member is taking on this worksheet entitled [“Where Do They Stand?”](#)

List the names of the interested parties in Column A of the form.

Let each role player state their perspective.

You might use the same factors or perspectives you had personally in the previous exercise. Write their perspectives in Column B.

The information in Column A and B is called **primary data**. This is **what people are saying about who they are and where they stand**.

To help you gather the information so you can verify and adjust your role play perspective, use the [Personal Interview](#) form I am giving you now to expand and analyze primary data.

*(Give each person the [Personal Interview Form](#) and [Collecting Secondary Data Worksheet](#))*

The worksheets for conducting a personal interview and collecting secondary data are similar in content. It's important to keep them separate for analysis.

Secondary data is gathered about people you cannot talk to personally to determine where they stand on the issue. You discover where they stand from secondary sources such as newspaper and magazine articles quoting them, editorials, radio, and TV reports and research studies focusing on their views.

When primary and secondary data are gathered, summarize the information into a perspective statement in column C of the form, *Where Do They Stand?*

To assist you with this step in issue analysis, let me give you a little more information about what is happening in Townsville.

Community leaders are quickly recognizing that the issue of child care has many facets. The town council is faced with the review of zoning regulations. The school board has been asked to address the possibility of extended care for school-age children. Various church boards are being approached by their members about establishing child care. Industry management is examining approaches to child care support as an employee benefit. Existing providers are concerned about potential competition. Older families are concerned about the possibility of increased taxation and parents are concerned about available, affordable, accessible, quality child care.

Take a few minutes to interview each other to collect information about where group members, as stakeholders, stand on the issue. Create information from secondary sources. Group members can create what they've read in the paper, heard on the news or seen in studies reported.

#### **Step 4 – Analyze Viewpoints**

Analyzing viewpoints requires you to use vision. Each viewpoint must be analyzed for the possible outcomes, should that viewpoint become policy.

We will develop a vision describing what the situation might be like if each of the projected outcomes becomes a reality. Each vision is called a scenario.

This is an imaginative step into the future. Starting with the present situation and what is known about people, organizations, and institutions, imagine what might be true if certain events occur.

It is also important to include in the vision possible consequences if nothing is done about the issue.

Looking at the scenarios of possible outcomes from each viewpoint, possible compromises between perspectives may be found that could create a scenario which would meet the needs of a greater number of people. It is also possible to learn from what other communities and/or other cultures have done in similar circumstances.

The scenarios must be analyzed for their potential impact. It is important to see how each of the interested parties might be affected – not just today, but in the future as well. The scenarios meeting the

needs of the greatest number of people should be identified in order to find the solution which addresses the common good in addition to individual advantage.

To help you project possible outcomes if different viewpoints were implemented, let me update you further on Townsville activity.

The newly established Economic Development Council of Townsville served as a neutral host for an organized "town hall meeting" of interested parties concerned about the availability of affordable, accessible, quality child care for families in Townsville. The meeting was planned to meet several objectives the Economic Development Council felt were important:

- To document the current status of child care for children of various ages
- To identify current child care needs
- To project future child care demands in the next 5-years
- To solicit the cooperation of parties with vested interest in child care
- To develop a Townsville plan of action that would assure available, affordable, accessible, quality child care

An overview address provided information about existing child care services for various ages of children, related costs to families and support services for limited income families. Projections of employment opportunities and labor force needs were also provided.

The group then divided into task forces which represented:

- Existing providers
- Church representatives
- School administrators, educators, educational organizations
- Employers
- City Council, committee members, agency administrators
- Parents

Each group was asked to discuss their role in assuring quality child care for children in the community and to develop one or more scenarios from their perspective(s). Each group was asked to use impact wheels for illustrating the results of their perspective. Here is an example of an [impact wheel developed by the school group](#).

*(Give participants the School System example of an Impact Wheel. Explain first and second order consequences on the wheel.)*

When the group completed their scenarios, reports were given to the total town hall meeting. A Committee for Child Care (CCC) was established to develop a Townsville plan of action.

Now... try your hand at developing a scenario. It's important to develop a scenario for each perspective and for a situation in which nothing is done to resolve the issue.

*(Each member is given a [blank Impact Wheel form](#). They work in groups to prepare several Impact Wheel perspectives. Ask each group to share one example. After several*

*groups have reported, if no one has shared what would happen if nothing were done, ask a group to share their projections of what would happen if nothing were done. Let as many groups report as time allows.)*

You have been a most creative group. You have demonstrated your understanding of the complexity of this issue.

You may feel that you are experiencing “paralysis by analysis!” However, I hope you have gained several new visions from this workshop.

So far we have seen that an issue is a complex problem, viewed in many different ways by different people in the community. The more information decision makers have and the greater understanding the citizens and decision makers have of the possible consequences from the different courses of action that could be taken, the better decisions they can make.

Now, let’s plan for action. Your intense work to understand the issue will be wasted if a course of action is not chosen and tested. It will likely be modified to make it workable as you continue through the process of influencing public policy decision making.

### **Step 5 – Form a Position**

Most people have an opinion when they begin the discussion of an issue. The process of analyzing an issue and forming a position helps group members reevaluate their original position before planning action.

It is important to form a group position carefully, using the new-found information. This involves knowing what is acceptable and unacceptable to group members, and how much they are willing to “give and take.” Questions to ask include:

1. Which outcomes are acceptable?
2. Which outcomes are unacceptable?
3. Which perspectives offer advantages for the greatest number of people?

A position establishes the direction which personal or group action will take. One way to develop a group position is to individually complete an [Acceptability Scale](#). Use the one I’m giving you as an example. Take the second order outcomes from one of your scenarios and write them in the first column of the form. Then, as a group reach a consensus about the level of acceptability of each option.

Let me update you further on what is happening in Townsville. Consider these developments as you complete the acceptability scale.

The Committee for Child Care decided to enlist the help of the local paper. They believed if everyone could see child care as a community need and could recognize possible roles of various groups, there would be a comprehensive effort that would result in quality child care for the children of Townsville. The issue became “What can we do about assuring affordable, accessible, quality care for the children of Townsville?”

- Parents had to consider their role.
- Churches had to consider their role.
- Existing providers had to consider their role.
- School administrators and educators had to consider their roles.

- The town council and state agencies had to consider their roles.
- Related organizations had to consider their roles.

With this information in mind, develop a position statement and rationale. If you would like another copy of the Impact Wheel to use to project outcomes and create a scenario as part of your new position statement, I have extra copies.

Because a position must be both acceptable and practical, it may need to be adjusted. There may be several acceptable positions. A more flexible position has greater possibility for success.

*(Allow time for groups to reach a consensus about the acceptability of each option. Let groups share how they worked through differences of opinion about the acceptability of the options. Allow time for groups to develop a position statement and share their position statements and new scenarios, where appropriate.)*

### **Step 6 – Making and Implementing the Action Plan**

Once a clear position is developed, it is time to develop a plan of action. What should be done about the issue? How will individuals and groups get involved? Individuals have the options of:

- Doing nothing
- Working alone
- Working informally with others
- Working as a member of an organized group
- Leading others

The issue-analysis process can be helpful in trying to state concerns clearly and to clarify positions. It also aids in weighing the positions by considering both individual and common good. The process assists individuals and groups in taking a position and forming a plan to influence the outcome of the issue.

The issues of today will have far-reaching effects. The issue-analysis process is a citizenship tool for all to use as they try to make a difference in the resolution of issues that affect the quality of everyday life today and in the future.

Let's take a minute to see how the action planning process is working in Townsville.

Townsville is focused on citizens' concerns about increasing employment of mothers of young children and the resulting increasing need for child care while mothers work.

Some of the options under consideration are:

- After school care for school-age children
- Preschooler care
- Infant care
- Shift worker child care
- Sick children care

The Child Care Committee is in the process of making a [Comprehensive Plan of Action](#).

They set about pulling together all of the data and decisions gathered to this point and combined them in a comprehensive plan of action. They had to:

1. Decide priorities, cost, needs and legalities
2. Set a time frame for making a plan of action and implementation
3. Decide the steps under each priority
4. Identify obstacles, assets and benefits

After the plan of action was finalized, the most important step left was to implement the plan of action... making it happen! To implement their plan of action, they had to think about:

- Involving power brokers and influencers
- Involving experts (internal and external)
- Getting users' commitment
- Communicating their general plan to citizens at large
- Delegating tasks appropriately
- Setting time frames for task completion

Pretend you are on the Child Care Committee for Townsville. Your task now is to develop a plan an action plan that shows what has to be done to implement your group's chosen course of action.

Use the CCCs Action Tree as an example, and develop [your group's Action Tree](#). Describe the present situation and the desired goal to be achieved. Then determine your priorities, action needed and who needs to be involved to move from the current situation to goal achievement

As you develop your action plan, list all possible actions and decisions which could bring about the desired result. If there are several acceptable end results, discuss each separately.

Information from opinion holders gathered from interviews and secondary data may offer insights into what actions influence decision makers and power holders.

Arrange your group's actions and decisions in the appropriate sequential order then map them as pathways to achieve your goal.

Evaluate the pathways that emerge in your Action Tree(s). Use the preferred pathway to develop a plan of action.

People are a primary resource in accomplishing any community goal. There are many ways in which individual people can help. The form entitled [Resource Finders](#), can be used to identify people who can best help with tasks in your plan.

The [Action Plan Form](#) is the final worksheet for charting your plan of action. After the steps for action are listed, scan your list and be sure you have included checkpoints for evaluating progress and deciding if the same or a revised course of action is needed.

## Conclusion

In summary, you will want to keep these points in mind as you continue to experience the energizing process of analyzing policies that impact families and communities. Determine the best way for you to take action on the issues.

1. You will be involved in selling your viewpoint on the issue. Sell it as quickly and clearly and quietly as you can.
2. While selling your viewpoint, listen for new information that may open new avenues for gaining support, managing opposition or strengthening your strategy by incorporating new ideas.
3. Develop your skill in selling your ideas to power brokers by selling them on the benefits of your view point vs. attacking their viewpoint on the issue.

Your involvement in this workshop says to me that you want to be involved in the policy making process. We have talked about taking ideas and moving them into action. My goal was to help you see things you can do to have a broader understanding of an issue and your view of what options you have for doing something about it to make a difference – to risk taking action.

We have gone through the process quickly. You will have some easy successes, some challenging successes and some difficult defeats. Hopefully your workshop experience will remind you of your options for becoming more involved in public policy decision making. We have an excellent resource you can buy to learn more about strategies for civic engagement.

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences public policy committee has published a handbook, "Family and Community Policy: Strategies for Civic Engagement." It will build on the foundation we have laid in our workshop. Continue to draw on AAFCS resources through their web site, [www.aafcs.org](http://www.aafcs.org).

Thank you.