

POLICY ANALYSIS

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The Capacity Development Resource Guides highlight the key technical areas of expertise needed to effectively influence health policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Each guide identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and capacities that individuals and organizations should possess in the area. The standardized indicators listed for each competency and capability map to the accompanying Capacity Indicators Catalog, which helps to generate a tailored tool for assessing and scoring an organization's capacity level. Each guide also includes a list of useful resources for designing and delivering capacity development assistance.

CONDUCTING POLICY ANALYSIS TO INFORM DECISION MAKING

■ DEFINITION

Policy analysis has various meanings (Walt and Gilson, 1994). In this guide, policy analysis refers to the process through which policy solutions to social problems and public health issues are identified, analyzed, and presented to policymakers for consideration.

■ RELEVANCE TO POLICY

Policymakers weigh their decisions on myriad criteria. Policy analysis involves conducting data analysis to inform and support decisions based on the technical aspects of an issue; but it also requires an analysis of the political and financial costs and benefits of policy reform (Thomas and Grindle, 1994). Policy analysis includes identifying the need for policy, assessing the pros and cons of current policy language, identifying new or revised policy approaches, identifying opportunities for advocacy, and monitoring policy implementation; the steps of the process are not always linear and may need to be repeated (Bardach, 2011).

■ KEY CAPABILITIES

Policy analysis is an important area of expertise for researchers, officials who formulate or evaluate policy implementation, health advocates, investigative journalists, and other policy stakeholders. Key competencies for policy analysis include skills in compiling best practices, conducting literature reviews, analyzing existing policies to identify where new policies are required, identifying policy barriers or contradictions between policies, and maintaining up-to-date

knowledge of the program and international best practices to be able to draft policy recommendations and weigh policy options and their tradeoffs. Those conducting analyses also require financial analysis skills to estimate the costs of policy options. Policy analysis requires skills in understanding the range of motivations of policymakers in decision making, communication skills to tell the story in support of a policy option, and advocacy skills to hold governments accountable for policy decisions.

■ ■ PERFORMANCE IDEAL

High capacity for knowledge translation includes being able to

- Systematically use data and research to define problems that can be addressed through policy action
- Clearly articulate the linkages between the goal of policy and the ultimate impact sought from policy (and related authorized programs and services) on the population of interest
- Proactively communicate policy analysis results to decisionmakers to facilitate their use in policy decision making, strategy development, and program planning

In the ideal, the following would exist:

- A policy process informed by evidence at every stage—from policy analysis to identifying issues that require policy solutions and to advocacy, policy dialogue, public policy debates and discussions, policy formulation and implementation, and policy monitoring and evaluation
- Opportunities and mechanisms for conducting policy analysis in all sectors (government, private, NGO, civil society)
- Active policy dialogues and participatory policy monitoring and evaluation
- Systemic monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of policy formulation and implementation
- Clearly defined accountability mechanisms and evaluation indicators

■ ■ ILLUSTRATIVE CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

- Conduct policy analysis training for health and government development agencies, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, civil society groups
- Facilitate access to an array of national and local data so it can be used for policy analysis
- Provide on-the-job mentoring and support to apply policy analysis tools and methods
- Integrate policy analysis into relevant academic curricula (e.g., political science, demography, law, public health)

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES

KNOWLEDGE OF

Recent data, analyses, guidelines, and studies related to the analysis topic, including international best practices	PA1
How to interpret the results of financial analyses regarding the program or interventions (e.g., the social/economic costs and benefits)	PA15
Relevant laws, policies, ordinances, guidelines, and programs at national and decentralized levels	PA2
Contextual factors that affect how the analysis may be received and its likelihood of use	PA4
Key audiences for the analysis, including their needs, interests, and level of technical understanding	PA17
Formal policymaking and implementation processes and formal and informal decision-making bodies at the national and local levels and where needed policy actions should emerge	PA7
Appropriate data sources, research, and key informants on the analysis topic	PA3

SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO

Review, synthesize, and analyze relevant policies, frameworks, data, and research reports	PA8
Apply different analytic lenses, such as gender or health equity, to issues to determine root causes and the need for potential policy solutions	PA9
Compile, adapt, and apply analytical tools to assess the applicable policy environment	PA10
Draw on a range of methodologies, including qualitative and quantitative methods, to explore policy questions	PA6
Assess the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed policy actions based on a study of policymaking and implementation processes at different levels of government	PA12
Conduct financial, cost-benefit, and cost-effectiveness analyses of current or proposed policy interventions (also see the <i>Health Financing</i> resource guide)	PA16
Assess policy implementation and identify, document, and report policy barriers to effective program implementation (also see the <i>Policy Monitoring</i> resource guide)	PA14
Analyze and project social/economic implications and outcomes if the problem is addressed or not addressed through recommended policy actions or solutions	PA5

SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO (CONTINUED)

Communicate effectively to decisionmakers and other stakeholders and explain technical terms and findings in simple, relevant ways (also see the <i>Knowledge Translation</i> resource guide)	PA19
Able to study data and different issues and concerns through a “policy lens”	PA11

ATTITUDES/VALUES/ATTRIBUTES

Open to working in collaboration with individuals and organizations from various sectors	PA18
Recognizes there will be multiple perspectives on a given issue and values a neutral or evidence-informed approach to addressing policy issues	PA13

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES**TECHNICAL ABILITY TO**

Develop and maintain a process for regularly and systematically compiling and assessing relevant data and research from reliable sources	PA27
Organize, facilitate, and lead participatory policy analysis with other stakeholders and organizations	PA29
Engage with other organizations to analyze implications of existing and proposed policies and interventions, especially from the perspectives of gender, equity, and inclusion	PA30
Present analyses and recommendations in policy forums and disseminate them externally	PA31
Propose criteria as a basis for policy and program decision making, including provisions for financing or building on existing plans, programs, interventions, or logistics mechanisms	PA26
Maintain a system for technical review of and quality assurance for the organization’s reports	PA28
Build the capacity of other organizations and stakeholders in policy analysis tools and approaches	PA35

RELATIONAL ABILITY TO

Establish and maintain strong working linkages with statistical agencies, health economists, and policy researchers	PA34
Communicate findings and present a compelling case for a policy option to decisionmakers and other stakeholders	PA24
Solicit and capture the perspectives of constituencies who will be affected by a policy	PA32
Gain access to and the confidence of decisionmakers and advocates	PA33

ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT

Allocation of adequate resources (staff, time, money) to conduct policy and financial analyses	PA23
Communications staff and dissemination infrastructure (e.g., website, mailing list of decisionmakers, etc.)	PA25
Inclusion of policy analysis responsibilities in the job descriptions of relevant staff	PA20
The provision of staff training in various policy analysis methodologies and tools	PA21
Inclusion of policy analysis is in the organization's mission and/or strategic plan	PA22

RESOURCES

Bardach, E. 2011. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 4th Edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California. Available online for purchase.

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