policy

CapacityDevelopment

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

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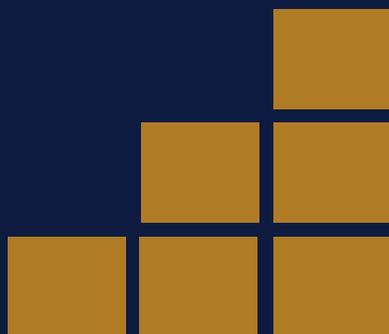
The Capacity Development Resource Guides highlight the key technical areas of expertise needed to effectively influence health policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Each guide identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and capacities that individuals and organizations should possess 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.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO TRANSLATE POLICIES INTO PRACTICE

DEFINITION

Policies communicate key priorities and provide broad guidance on how to achieve goals. However, for a policy to realize its intended impact, it must be operationalized into concrete, actionable steps and the resources (human and financial) needed to implement those steps must be identified. This process can be referred to as strategy development, strategic planning, action planning, implementation planning, or operational planning, depending on the context. While there are differences between these processes and their outputs (e.g., level of detail, time horizon, and internal versus external focus), the terms are often used interchangeably and for various reasons. Within government, politics and hierarchy may influence the term used; for instance, the initiating entity (ministry, department, unit) may be constrained by the type of document it is required to issue (e.g., policy, guidelines, strategy, operational plan). For the purpose of this resource guide, the term "strategy development" will be used as an overarching term.

RELEVANCE TO POLICY

If strategies are developed with the participation and buy-in of those responsible for mobilizing human and financial resources, implementation of the resulting strategic plans—and thus policies—is enhanced. As such, strategy development should involve stakeholders at local and functional levels, and the stakeholders must have the capacity and authority to carry out the plans.

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Thus, while health strategy development falls largely under the purview of government agencies, it is important for all parties ultimately responsible for implementing the policies and programs to understand and be engaged in the strategic planning process.

KEY CAPABILITIES

Strategy development requires a range of competencies and institutional capabilities to translate policy goals into actionable steps that will meet these goals. It is important that individuals have a thorough understanding of the health (or other) system through which the policy will be implemented, as well as the needs of the populations it seeks to serve. Institutions must be able to identify—and secure—the financial and other resources needed to implement the policy. Individual and institutional leadership to bring diverse stakeholders together in the strategic planning process is also important, as is the ability to mobilize social participation to ensure that the strategic plan promotes equitable programming. Lastly, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) skills are needed to effectively integrate M&E indicators into the strategic plan to monitor the policy's implementation and impact.

PERFORMANCE IDEAL

High capacity for strategy development includes being able to

- Take leadership in translating policy into practice through an evidence-based, collaborative process
- Use evidence to guide planners and stakeholders to determine *what*, *how*, *when*, and *where* resources and efforts are required to translate policy into programs

At the highest level of performance, individuals are analytical, systematic, and proactive and facilitate the decision-making process to ensure the optimal programming of valuable human and financial resources. Individuals and organizations also proactively influence and constructively engage internal and external stakeholders to design and adapt need-based and actionable strategies and plans. In the fast-changing and resource-scarce environment, organizations should be able to discern trends, identify future challenges, assess trade-offs of various scenarios, do more with less, and adapt to changing situations.

In the ideal, the following would exist:

- An iterative process of developing policy and implementing action plans, monitoring progress, making mid-course corrections, and updating the policies/plans
- A culture of evidence-based strategic planning and active problem solving
- Information regarding what is and is not working (and why) to inform planners and donors about how and where to allocate resources in a way that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness
- Stakeholder involvement in evidence-based dialogue, decision making, and the handover of policies from policymakers to policy implementers

INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES

KNOWLEDGE OF

New/existing health policies and goals and health issues that need to be addressed	STR1
The health system through which policies are implemented	STR2
The interdependence and importance of sequential strategic planning process steps	STR3
Strategic planning as an iterative and dynamic process	STR3
Key stakeholders and decisionmakers at different levels of the health system	STR4

SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO

Conduct situation and/or process flow analyses to understand issues, challenges, and opportunities	STR5
Use analytical methods and modeling techniques to develop and refine goals and objectives and determine trade-offs between various scenarios	STR6
Organize dialogue and planning meetings among key stakeholders (policymakers, planners, implementers, services providers, financial decisionmakers, and beneficiaries) to	

▪	Build consensus on goals and priorities	STR7
▪	Establish links among national goals, policies, strategies, budgeting, and subnational action planning	STR8
▪	Develop strategic options, specify activities, determine resource requirements, and develop timelines and performance indicators	STR19
▪	Integrate equity approaches and concerns into strategic and action plans	STR9

Strengthen the capacity of planning committee/taskforce members in strategy development	STR10
Collaboratively develop costed subnational (i.e., district, province) action plans in selected areas and design a model for replication in others	STR11
Develop and implement a plan for monitoring the process and evaluating outcomes for iterative planning	STR12

ATTITUDES/VALUES/ATTRIBUTES

Values consensus building and working in collaboration	STR7
Behaves in a politically savvy manner and is cognizant of constraints and opportunities	STR13
Follows a systematic and evidence-based process of planning and decision making	STR5, STR6, STR3

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

TECHNICAL ABILITY TO

Generate an ongoing stream of information to policymakers to inform planning and resource allocation decisions, for example, by systematically using quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques for situation analyses and strategy development (also see the *Data Analysis and Use* resource guide) or using costing and budgeting information to develop financial plans (also see the *Health Financing* resource guide)	STR14, STR15, STR16
Form and/or strengthen a multisectoral planning committee/taskforce	STR17
Facilitate interaction among internal and external stakeholders to set goals and priorities, develop strategic options, assess trade-offs of different policy options, and develop a detailed action plan	STR18, STR7, STR19
Proactively identify barriers and enablers to policy implementation and ensure these are addressed in strategy development	STR20
Systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of proposed strategies to determine their contributions to policy outcomes and learn lessons to improve future activities	STR21
Strengthen the capacity of other organizations in strategy development through training, technical assistance, and/or mentoring	STR30

RELATIONAL ABILITY TO

Recognize and engage a range of policy stakeholders, including communities, decisionmakers, and peer organizations	STR22
Gain the commitment of leaders to ensure that the planning process is successful	STR23
Ensure the participation and buy-in of those responsible for mobilizing human and financial resources	STR24

ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT

Dedicated resources (time, staff, money) to implement strategic planning processes	STR25
Internal standard operating procedures, guidelines, systems, and norms to ensure high-quality strategy development	STR26
A carefully selected planning team that has expertise, commitment, and time to conduct the planning process	STR27
Systems to collect, analyze, and synthesize data to inform the development of action plans and allocation of resources	STR28
An established M&E system that reviews program outcomes, budgets, resource controls, and reporting systems against predetermined benchmarks	STR29

◼ ILLUSTRATIVE CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

- Conduct on-the-job training at national and subnational levels to develop strategy and detailed action plans

- Organize meetings and workshops with decisionmakers to establish the links among national goals, policies, strategies, budgeting, and subnational action plans

- Collaboratively design subnational action plan frameworks for replication and scale-up

- Foster "twinning" among districts to transfer skills and processes to facilitate scale-up and country ownership of action planning

- Facilitate dialogue and discussions among different sectors and different levels at different stages of the planning process

◼ RESOURCES

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This resource guide is part of an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) suite of tools. The USAID-funded Health Policy Project developed the suite to help organizations assess and strengthen their capacity to contribute to improved health systems and health outcomes. The tools include an overview of the OCA approach, a facilitator guide, a series of capacity development resource guides, and a Capacity Indicators Catalog. The suite is available at www.healthpolicyproject.com.