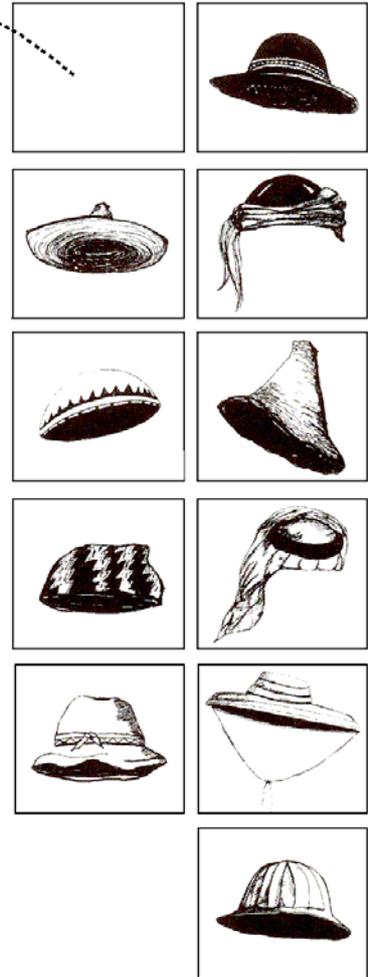**United Nations
Centre for
Human Settlements
(Habitat)**

The Councillor as Policy-maker

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**Training
Materials
Series**

The Councillor as Policy-maker

Handbook 2

Training for Elected Leadership

ISTANBUL, 1996 – "THE CITY SUMMIT"

**UN-HABITAT
United
Nations
Human
Settlements
Programme**

The Councillor as Policy-maker

Handbook 2

Training for Elected Leadership

**The
Councillor as
Policy-maker**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**

FOREWORD

As shown by results of training needs assessments conducted by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), training needs of local government elected officials (councillors), or of local politicians, appear among the most urgent world-wide and, at the same time, the least attended areas of capacity-building for local development and municipal management.

In the last few years, a number of countries as varied as Nepal and Poland or Uganda and Paraguay have embarked for the first time in several decades, and in some cases for the first time ever, on a process of electing their councillors and mayors. Training needs of local-government elected officials are also at the top of the agenda in established municipal democracies such as Ecuador, India, and the United States of America.

To respond to these needs, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has developed and tested a series of training handbooks to assist councillors to represent the citizens, provide civic leadership and effectively work with central government and with the management, technical, and professional staff in local authorities and other local institutions. The handbooks cover policy and decision making, communication, negotiation and leadership, attending, managing and conducting meetings, councillors' enabling and facilitating activities, financial management and other related needs.

This handbook, *The Councillor as Policy-Maker*, is one of the series of 12 and is intended for use primarily by trainers in national training institutions for local government or training units within local governments themselves. As an additional assistance for trainers using these handbooks, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has published a companion *Trainer's Guide for Training of Elected Officials* containing trainer's notes and information prepared exclusively for the benefit of these trainers in planning workshops for local elected officials based on the handbooks.

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It is expected that this training handbook will contribute greatly to strengthening the capacity of local governments through the introduction of good Leadership leadership practices, one of the major objectives of the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

Training for Elected Leadership

I wish to thank Dr. Fred Fisher and Mr. David W. Tees for preparing this and other handbooks in the series in collaboration with the staff of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Training Section within the Centre's training programmes supported by the Government of the Netherlands. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the trainers and local-government officials in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Kenya, Lithuania, Romania and Uganda who assisted in the field testing of these training materials.

Dr. Wally N'Dow
Assistant Secretary-General
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

About the hat

The hat worn by the figure to the right and shown on the pages to come was selected to symbolize the councillor role features in this handbook.

Rakish outback hat of Australian cattle raisers

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WHERE TO FIND IT IN THIS HANDBOOK

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HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This training handbook on THE COUNCILLOR AS POLICYMAKER, like other handbooks in the series, can be used in several ways.

Self-study

The essay that opens this handbook is intended for self-instruction. All you need is a quiet place to think, some time, and something to write with. For best results, we encourage you to write down your answers to the questions raised from time to time in the essay. The learning value of the information is multiplied many times for the reader who takes the time to do this.

Workshop training

The trainer's notes and exercise materials in this handbook are intended for use by experienced trainers in a training workshop for councillors from different local governments. We have included various types of learning activities and formats to provide trainers with considerable flexibility in adapting a workshop to the specific needs of participating councillors. It has been our intention in developing this handbook to encourage you to incorporate your own experiences as a trainer to heighten the learning value of these training materials for participating councillors.

As a trainer, you may decide to use the materials in the handbook in the exact order and manner presented. If you prefer, however, you may rearrange or modify the materials as needed to meet the objectives of a particular training situation. You may choose to offer three hours of training by using key exercises and activities included in the handbook. Or you may take advantage of the many materials in the handbook supplemented by content of your own to extend the length of the programme to a full day.

This handbook is one of 12 in a series for training in elected leadership. You might decide or be requested to provide a workshop that requires you to use more than one or all of these handbooks over a longer period of time. While each handbook can be used independently of the others, their use in sequence can provide a powerful unified learning experience for participating councillors.

Team training

These materials also can be used, preferably with the assistance of an experienced trainer/facilitator, to improve the performance of councillors who serve together on the same governing body. When training councillors who serve together we believe the facilitator must be prepared to organize the training activities in this handbook in different ways. There may be occasions where you, as facilitator, will choose to add new activities depending on the situation and the characteristics of the group. We hope in situations like these you will view this handbook as a "tool kit" containing many optional training ideas to be mixed and matched, modified or abandoned, as suggested by the situation.

You have many options to choose from with these training handbooks. We hope you take full advantage of them.
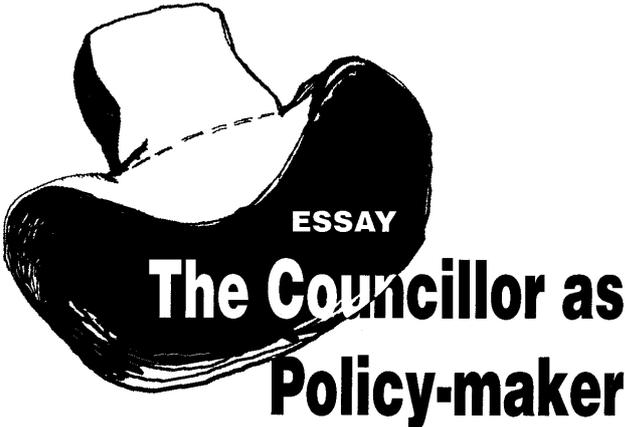
The Councillor as Policy-maker

Training for Elected Leadership

PART I

**The
Councillor as
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9

ESSAY

**The Councillor as
Policy-maker**

Essay

Definition

The councillor, in the role of POLICY-MAKER, is involved in establishing goals, examining alternatives, and determining strategies that ill guide present and future actions to benefit the community.

Summary

This essay will define the many ways policies are determined at the local level of government and how these processes can be better managed. We will examine the differences between policies, goals, and strategies. We will explore how some councils have made the community goal-setting/policy-making process more deliberate and effective. In general, we will help to shed light on a role that is assumed by all but understood, in all its complexity, by very few.

Reflection

When I think of myself as a POLICY-MAKER, the following things come to mind:

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2. _____

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3. _____

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Concepts and Ideas

"Policy" is a word with many meanings. It can be: (a) a philosophical or ideological stance; (b) a plan, an expression of future direction, (c) a definition of current action, (d) specific proposals, (e) a way of announcing decisions of government, (f) formal authorization, (g) a negotiated position between two or more parties, (h) a statement of intent, or (i) an unintended, unannounced reality that was never decided formally by anyone including those who are considered to have "the policy-making" role.

There is often the impression that policies result from a very deliberate process of decision-making on the part of policy bodies based on thorough analysis of all the conditions surrounding an issue under consideration and the various alternatives available to improve upon it. In reality, the policy process is very messy. Sometimes it really does happen as suggested in the statement just made. Other times it evolves out of negotiations with several parties, for example, as conditions precedent in a donor assisted loan agreement for a new water plant.

Policies are made or reaffirmed at budget time when councils allocate resources for the new fiscal year. Or policies may evolve out of unintentional situations. For example, the council is operating with a very tight budget and ignores preventative and routine maintenance of equipment and other fixed resources.

After a couple years of ignoring the maintenance responsibility, the staff decides not to include it in future budget requests. Thus, the council has adopted a non-maintenance policy by default.

Sometimes policies are formulated by "street-level bureaucrats" who, by their actions or in actions, define local-government policy on a particular programme or service. City council may enact a "Policy" defining a specific level of service to be provided in the community but it never gets implemented for one reason or another. Who, in this case, has really made the policy? As you can see, the policy-making process can be a bit complicated and not always under the control of the council which is assumed to have the "policy-making" role.

Pro-active policy-making

As councillors, you are the policy-makers for your community. [1] And yet, it seems that policies (albeit informal) are frequently made by a variety of individuals, groups, or circumstances operating outside the deliberations of the council. Sometimes it is difficult to be in charge, even in charge of those activities that are considered to be your exclusive domain, such as policy-making. As an elected official, it can be discouraging to see the cornerstone of your power and authority chipped away by a myriad of other forces.

For example, funding agencies may "insist" on certain conditions (policies) before they will approve a loan. Or the local-government staff does not implement one or more of your policies, which means they are, in effect, "rewriting" your poll by their contrary actions or in actions. What is a council to do under these circumstances? First, it depends on the circumstances. When the policy represents the efforts of an interdependent set of institutions, such as happens when you deal with outside agency, there may be little you can do to be totally in charge. And, sometimes it is prudent to share in the "policy-making." The issue becomes not one of some other agency infringing upon your turf but rather, what is the best policy stance you can negotiate, given the situation. In these cases, it may be time to put on your "negotiator hat."

If you find the local-government staff is not implementing one of your policies as intended but appears to be "rewriting" the policy by their actions, or inactions, there may be a variety of reasons. Situations like this can probably be clarified or rectified by council monitoring and possible intervention.

There are, of course, many other circumstances that might indicate that and your colleagues are not totally in charge when it comes to making policy for community. And, it may be totally appropriate. Local government need not be involved in every aspect of community life. On the other hand, you may be playing the policy-making role too loosely and abdicating leadership when it is needed most Leadership in the policy arena may be one of the most difficult and challenging role you are called upon to perform as an elected councillor.

It may, for example, require you to take a stand that is unpopular with many of your constituents or in opposition to the will of many of your colleagues on council (You may recall how difficult it was in the beginning, and still is in many communities, to acknowledge the AIDS problem and to recommend policies that would curb the spread of this dreaded disease. Or, it may be apparent that a long standing tradition in the community is hindering economic development but previous councils have not had the courage to confront the need for change.)

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> Tradition is a guide and not a jailer
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> - W. Somerset Maugham

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A council chairperson from a small Texas town in the United States of America, when interviewed about his experience in serving local government, said:

You have to have the courage of your convictions. If everyone else is going in a different direction, you say, 'Wait a minute, that doesn't make a lot of sense. You have to be able to stand up and say that. I've found that the people will respect you more for saying what you think than for saying what the think. Those are the people you look to for leadership. [2]

Never before have local governments been more challenged to take a leadership role in the policy arena. Two local-government advocates, one a city manager and the other a management consultant, recently posed the challenge in an article about the "emerging political reality of the 21st century."

A major redefinition of how local governments, especially cities, ought to work and how basic services can best be delivered in the 21st century is emerging. Economic development, planning and paying for growth, maintaining and expanding infrastructure, providing quality services and amenities, meeting accelerating social/human service demands, and achieving the future each community desires are serious challenges for all local It has become evident that local governments are having to own innovative capacities and resources to meet many of these challenges. [3]

These same advocates go on to point out that centralized approaches to local problems and needs have fallen short of their expectations and seem incapable of producing new approaches in response to the unique needs and desires of the various communities of people that make up our urban environments. (Given rapid advances in communication technology, these communities, for some people, will be global). "Community-oriented, bottom-up, neighbourhood-focused problem-solving will be the basic governance mechanism of the 21st century."

Whether you agree with these authors about the direction that governance is taking, -it is impossible to disagree with the need for change in the role of local governments. Problems are growing, traditional local-government resources are shrinking (compared with needs), and new approaches to community problem-solving are required. Policies are means of articulating new directions that governments can take in response to emergent challenges and to those problems that continue to defy resolution by conventional approaches.

Policy-making can be the cutting edge in solving today's problems tomorrow and warding off tomorrow's problems before they have a chance to exist. Policy proposals are often the articulation of new insights and vision about the role of government, a means of defining emergent values, and the process by which options are presented for scrutiny by various interests in the community.

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Training for Elected Leadership

Goals > Policies > Strategies

Your role as policy-maker provides the opportunity to shape the future of your community and to ensure that those programmes and services, important to your citizens, are given precedent over others. Policies are important because they put your government "on record" regarding the more important issues facing the community. Policies are often described as "statements of intent." But, intentions don't always translate into actions and outcomes. What you should be concerned with, in terms of the policy-making process, are direction and results. But before going further, it might help to define a few terms that are often associated with the policy-making process.

Goals are statements that describe desired future conditions worthy of community effort and commitment. They:

1.   Reflect a community's basic purposes;

2.   Focus on results, not just the performance of tasks or completion of assignments; and

3.   Call for a major commitment of human and material resources for their attainment.

Policies are formal positions taken by council to support the implementation of goals. They are also statements of intent - they state what your local government intends to do. In this context, they are not random consequences of chance behaviour They are deliberate acts by those who possess the responsibility for making decisions that will produce anticipated results. Policies make goals legal and sanction government courses of action. They lead to the development of strategies to carry out the goals.

Strategies are the means used to accomplish goals and implement policies. Strategies should encompass a wide range of alternatives to get programmes and projects implemented. They should consider the use of non-governmental approaches utilizing the private sector, non-profit agencies and community-based organizations.

(**Note**: An example to help you understand the meaning of these various terms is shown in the box on the next page.)

We shouldn't get too bogged down in attempts to be precise about what these terms mean since they are obviously open to interpretation. What is important to understand is the sequence of events and where policy-making fits into the sequence. First comes an awareness of what needs to be done and a vision of what can be done to improve your community. This is not a responsibility that falls entirely on your shoulders as a councillor. Nevertheless, you and your colleagues on the council should provide the leadership. Out of awareness and vision comes the desire and commitment to state where you stand, as a council, and what you plan to do about it.

These position statements, more often than not, are called goals and policies, although there is a tendency on the part of some councils to avoid putting these positions in writing. While undeclared positions make it easier to change your mind, they create confusion on the part of the local-government staff charged with carrying out your goals and policies and keep citizens in the dark about your intentions.

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Essay

Suppose you represent a rural district as a district councillor.

- Only 20 per cent of the district residents have convenient access to a potable water supply at this time. **(problem)**

- In reviewing this problem, the council has decided that 95 per cent of all citizens of the district should have a potable water supply within one kilometre of their primary residence by the year 2000. **(goal)**

- Since the district doesn't have the funds available to construct all the facilities required to meet this ambitious goal, they have adopted legislation that spells out the facilitating role council will take to help citizens develop their own sources of potable water. This legislation has also indicated there will be penalties imposed after certain deadlines have passed if citizens are not using potable water sources in those areas designated as safe water zones. **(policy)**

- The council has detailed what they plan to do to assist citizens in the implementation of this policy. The local government will: assist in setting up neighbourhood user committees; provide training; locate long-term loans for the development of localized water sources; and provide inspection services during and after construction of the facilities to ensure that they meet certain standards. **(strategy)**

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What we have outlined is something that many would characterize as an **enabling approach** to solving a public problem. The council has not adopted a policy and strategy to develop water sources for their citizens but have established technical support and funding strategies that will assist citizens to develop their own resources.

We haven't said anything about "objectives," "outputs," "outcomes," or results," but we're assuming we've created enough confusion without extending the lexicon to include these as well. To reiterate, goal setting is the process of deciding the future direction your community will take to meet its needs and achieve it's vision of the future. Policies are official positions required to put goals in motion. And being strategic is deciding how you're going to carry these plans through to completion, achieving the results set forth in your goal statements and policy positions.

Who gets involved in policy-making?

While public policy-making is vested in those representatives who are voted into office, the process of policy dialogue and input to the policy process is, or should be, widespread. First, it is anticipated that you, as a councillor, will perform an ac role in providing fuel for public policy dialogue. You are at the centre of information and energy flows within your community and are, therefore, ideally positioned to contribute ideas for further consideration by your colleagues on the council and by community at large. Effective policy-formulation often begins with a statement of concern, or even outrage, by political representatives who either envision the need change themselves or represent the views of their constituents on specific issues.

Sometimes, policy ideas come from individual constituents who have been thinking about a problem or issue of community-wide significance. When you are presented with ideas from a single source (whether it is an individual, group, or recognition of the problem before becoming its advocate. This should not deter you from seeing "sole source" ideas; rather, it suggests that you should also recognize your broader constituent mandate.

The next obvious source of policy input is from the staff of the council an local government. These individuals, in their efforts to implement current council policies, are in a unique position to suggest ways of strengthening present efforts or forge new programmatic responses. Often they represent professional experience a knowledge crucial to formulating appropriate alternatives for consideration by the elected leaders. They also represent the first line of inquiry into policy proposals emanate from the council and the community.

If your council doesn't have the necessary expertise within the local-government staff to analyse policy proposals and generate options for your deliberation, you should consider other ways to get this kind of technical support.

Options for such support include universities, research institutes, consulting organizations, community groups, and higher levels of government with common interests and concerns. In all cases, it is important to recognize the biases that any source of information and expertise brings to the dialogue.

Policies are only as effective as the support they have from those they ultimately will affect. As a consequence, the community, or special interests in the community, are important participants in policy dialogues. They also provide an invaluable check to make sure the policy you are proposing is grounded in reality and acceptable to the community as it enters the implementation and cost-recovery stages. For exam le, your council may be considering a new traffic-management programme for the central business district that includes one-way streets and new traffic controls at certain intersections. It will be important to run these ideas by the merchants and bus operators, among others, to get their reactions and inputs. Important questions to ask about any new policy initiative, or change in existing policy, are: (a) who will support it, and why? (b) who will oppose it, and why? Knowing your policy advocates and adversaries and why they have taken their respective stands is important to successful policy adoption and implementation.

Sometimes the policy dialogue starts in the community or, once it has been raised in the council chambers, continues in the streets. Some of the most important policy changes at the local level of governance have been initiated at the neighborhood level. The councils that experience the greatest success in policymaking are those that maintain close and continuous contact with individuals and groups who operate at the "grassroots" level of the democratic process. Not only do they represent an important sounding board for new policy proposals that are initiated by the council, they are also a fertile source of new ideas about the direction that government should be heading and a check on how present policies are serving the needs of the community.

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If there is no wind, row.

- Polish proverb

Reflection

Before continuing, spend a few moments to reflect on the way your council makes policy. What was the last policy adopted by your council? Who initiated it? Who originates most policy initiatives in your community? The council? The local government staff? Special interest groups in the community? Others? Finally, what could you and your colleagues on the council do to improve your performance as policy-makers?

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Policy dialogue options

There are many ways to carry out a policy dialogue. Some will be dictated by law, such as the requirement to hold public hearings on new legislation. Others will depend on your willingness to expose your ideas to public scrutiny and share the responsibility (opportunity) for defining the community's future. Here are just a few of the ways your counterparts in other parts of the world are responding to this role challenge. (We've organized them based on the amount of public scrutiny the policy options receive before they are formally adopted or agreed upon by the elected leadership)

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Low public scrutiny

▲

- Policy think-tank approach
- Council staff recommendations
- Council/staff interactions
- Foreign policy; policy dialogues
- Council/community discussions
- Community initiatives

▼

High public scrutiny

The policy think-tank approach. Some large city councils have adopted the corporate strategic planning approach that relies heavily on a professional planning unit to provide it with information and analysis on a wide range of public issues and concerns. This approach has been discredited in recent years for its tendency to become "out-of-touch" with what is really going on in the community. These units are prone to rely heavily on quantitative data and rational approaches to formulating policy options. They may not deny the political processes of negotiation and dialogue, but they don't necessarily embrace them as legitimate sources of information for long-range decision-making. Strategic planning works poorly, if it works at all, when it is confined to analytical decision-making. To be successful, planning must also take into consideration the enormous influence that the institutions leadership, power structure, and organizational dynamics exert on both decisions and implementation.

Council/staff recommendations. Probably the most common approach to policy formulation is to rely heavily upon the local-government's professional staff to make recommendations for council's consideration. Their recommendations are generally tied to programmatic changes the staff wants to make or to proposed budget allocations that may have policy implications. While this approach provides council with a professional perspective, more often than not, it ignores the broader issues of the community and the council's "foreign policy agenda," meaning its interaction with neighbouring public bodies who share problems and opportunities that spill across jurisdictional boundaries.

Council/staff interactions. It's becoming more common for city councils to spend a few interrupted days each year thinking through long-range issues and concerns with key members of their staff. These meetings (or retreats) often take place in a setting away from the city and are usually organized and conducted by an outside facilitator, someone skilled in managing small group discussions. It is an opportunity for the council and its professional team to:

1. Reflect on the problems they are facing;

2. Think about opportunities to serve the community more effectively; and,

3. Do some long-range planning (policy formulation).

More often than not, these retreats result in a written document that includes an action plan to be incorporated into the budget document or to serve as a blueprint for future actions by the council and the administrative and technical staff of the municipality.

Foreign policy; policy dialogues. Like countries, cities have foreign policy agendas or issues and concerns that spill across their political boundaries, either affecting their neighbours or being affected by their neighbours. Some local officials have begun to refer to these issues and relationships as their foreign policy programme. However you want to characterize them, they can play an important r in forging an enlightened policy agenda. There is more and more recognition that local governments don't, and cannot, operate in blind isolation of their neighbours those public bodies that may operate within their midst, such as water authorities other single-purpose institutions.

With the recognition that urban problems don't stop at the city's border, it is becoming more and more urgent to establish an ongoing policy dialogue with your neighbours. Often these discussions lead to more formal arrangements, such as councils of governments (voluntary associations of elected officials who can decide interact or not around problems and opportunities of mutual interest). These dialogues can also lead to an examination of existing policies in adjoining jurisdictions that may be counterproductive to their individual and mutual interests.

Council/community discussions. Many councils have initiated community-wide discussions that involve a large number of individuals, representing diverse interests and groups. These expanded dialogues take a variety of forms and cover different time frames. They can be single-issue oriented or include a wide spectrum of community concerns. A number of years ago, one of the authors was involved as a consultant in helping a large metropolitan area develop a set of economic policies for the re 'on. The policy planning session was two days long and involved over 200 elected officials, government officers, private business representatives, community leaders, church officials, labour leaders, and citizens. The participants reached consensus on a seven-point policy statement to provide direction to the region's economic development efforts. Other cities have undertaken policy planning initiatives that included hundreds of citizens and community leaders.

One major western city had large focus groups that explored, in depth, the issues and concerns associated with over twenty different service and support systems operating in the city. Each sub-group was represented in a larger policy advisory group that reported their findings and recommendations to the mayor and council. This process of discussion and consultation took many hours of each participant's time over several months but gave the city's leadership a comprehensive plan and set of recommended policies that provided direction to the city for a number of years. [4]

Community initiatives. The trend toward participatory democracy and local self-governance has prompted some local governments to work directly with neighbourhoods in helping them plan for greater involvement in the

formulation a implementation of city programmes and services within their locality. The term that is being used to describe this grassroots approach to policy-making is "home rule." (Home rule is the process of giving local governments the authority, accountability, autonomy, empowerment, and discretion to address local issues directly, without interference or intervention by a higher level of government.) Some local governments have now taken this concept and extended it to the community and neighbourhood levels. While this may seem like a radical idea, it can also be viewed as a natural extension to the democratic process. Sometimes the council assigns staff members to work directly with these sub-units of the local government in their efforts to be more self-reliant and directed.

> *The village which is not discussed, is not built.*
>
> *- African proverb*

The policy facilitator

John Naisbitt, in his best selling book *Megatrends*, **(5)** talks about the changing role of the local elected official as countries move toward greater local self-governance and participatory democracy. He believes your role will no longer be primarily one of representing your constituents and making decisions based on that representative relationship. You have become catalysts for building consensus and coalitions for change. This new working partnership with the community has redefined the policy-making role of the councillor. According to Carl H. Neu, Jr., this role is to:

1. Identify and focus issues that need to be addressed;

2. Facilitate sharing of information, communication, and education of electors on relevant issues;

3. Act as the integrator of divergent opinions and groups;

4. Develop consensus on the community vision and appropriate goals and actions to be taken;

5. Ratify the emergent consensus through legislative action;

6. Implement programmes, policies, and projects created by the legislative action in reflection of the community consensus; and,

7. Maintain support for the vision and implementation of actions taken. **(6)**

We have incorporated into the policy-making role a number of key tasks, or elements. These include such events as goal-setting, strategy planning, and interaction with others around the policy responsibility. One could easily

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defend the position that policies are devices the council can use to facilitate the implementation of goals. We've taken the stand that policies are forerunners to goals, but then we don't think it's very useful to get bound up by semantics and rhetoric. We will leave the terminology battle to others.

What we have attempted to convey is the importance of the policy-making/goal-setting/strategic thinking and acting roles of councillors. What we see emerging is the need for a much more assertive, pro-active stance by you and your elected colleagues as you provide the leadership that is so desperately needed at the local level. Policies are the blueprints from which you fashion the future.

Not all observers of local councils hold such a high respect for the policy achievements of your counterparts in other places. We want to end this essay on sobering note of reality by quoting one of these observers. James Svara, in his insightful book Official Leadership in the City, makes the following observations about local policy-making in the United States:

> *There are policies without purpose. Some policies outlive the purpose that spawned them or emerge independent of the formulation of goals. "Policy" may be, as Lynn has observed, "expost interpretations of governmental activities based on the consequences as perceived by those with a stake in the action". Rather than reflecting prior intent, some public policies are, 'in effect, 'second-hand hindsight' " Goal setting may occur in reverse as an inference from existing activities. ... In their policy-making activities, many councils fail to provide the direction expected of them and that they expect of themselves.* [7]

Not all policy-making is productive. Not all policy-making is appreciated by those it is designed to serve. Not all policy-making is noble in its intents. Not all policy-making is forward-looking - sometimes it reflects backward planning. Nevertheless, policy-making is central to elected leadership and deserves your best thoughts and actions. Policy is the machinery of governance.

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> *Choose not for anyone*
> *what you do not choose for yourself*
>
> *- Persian proverb*

Essay

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Key points

- Policy is a word that has many meanings.

- While policy-making is the rightful domain of the elected official, others move in by misinterpreting what you legislated or by creating their own unwritten policies.

- Policy leadership means reaching out to involve others in the process.

- Local self-governance is changing rapidly as participatory democracy grows. This means new policies are required to deal with the new reality.

- Policies and goals may be interchangeable steps in the process of defining your community's future.

- Strategies are the means by which you implement goals and policies.

- Councils have many options available to help them be more effective policy-makers and some are more effective than others.

- Increasingly, councils are reaching out to the community in their efforts to make policies and to develop long-range goals. Policies and goals that are made to help others may not have the commitment and appreciation of those they are designed to help if they haven't been involved in making them.

- Policy-making is at the heart of governance. Effective policy-making is at the centre of good government.

References

(1) Sometimes the term "legislator" is used to define the policy-making role. Leadership While it is true that the legislator is one who makes laws (or policies), the legislative role is too limited in interpretation to define what a councillor does; nor, does the term "advocate" adequately define the policy-making role. While advocacy may be expressed through policy stands, being an advocate for your constituents means much more.

(2) French, Jim, "Reflections on public office," *Texas Town and City*, May 1992, p. 28.

[3] Neu, Carl H., Jr. and Ethredge, Jack, "Community-sensible governance: the emerging political reality of the 21st century," *National Civic Review*, Fall 1991, p.381.

[4] For more information on this experience and others of a similar nature, see Public Technology, Inc., *Strategies for Cities and Counties: A Strategic Planning Guide* (Washington, D.C., Public Technology, Inc.), undated.

[5] Naisbitt, John, Megatrends: *Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York, Warner Books, 1982).

[6] Neu, Carl H., Jr., "Strategic governance: a community integration process," *National Civic Review*, Summer 1988, pp. 139-140.

[7] Svara, James H., *Official Leadership in the City* (New York, Oxford, 1990), p. 151

PART II

The
Councillor as
Policy-maker

Training for
Elected
Leadership

WORKSHOP

The Councillor as Policy-maker

OVERVIEW

Purpose

Governing a local government requires that elected leaders decide on goals and then transform these goals into programmes and services through declarations of policy. In other words, policy represents the critical juncture between what government has decided to do (its goals and purposes) and how it intends to do it (action strategies and plans).

Goals -> Policies -> Strategies

This workshop is designed to inform participants about the nature of local-government policy, how it is made, and how to distinguish policies from problems goals and strategies. Participants who complete this workshop will understand the importance of policy-making as a deliberate process and the consequences of governance by unintentional policy.

Contents

A brief description of each learning activity is shown below with an approximation of the amount of time required. If you wish to change the order, to omit something, or to add training material of your own, feel free to do so.

2.1   Warm-up exercise: policy recall

Participants reflect on their own experiences with public policies that have been enacted or should have been. (45 - 60 minutes)

2.2   Exercise: a policy-maker's quiz

Participants identify from a list which statements are policies, goals, problems, and strategies, first working alone and then in small groups. Results are compared. (60 - 75 minutes)

2.3   Trainer presentation

Brief presentation on the role of councillors as policy-makers. Draw on material from the preceding essay to describe the policy-making process to distinguish among goals, policies, and strategies. Describe who is involved in the process of policy-making and the various approaches for carrying out a policy dialogue. (30 minutes)

2.4 Case study: Lukasa's waste-management plan

Participants read a case situation describing the successful development of a waste-management plan by a city council and, working in small groups, identify the problems, goals, policies, and strategies implied by the situation. (60 - 75 minutes)

2.5 Skill practice exercise

Working in small groups, participants discuss problems each of them has in their cities, select one of them, and write a goal statement, policy statement, and one or more strategies for achieving the goal. (90 - 120 minutes)

2.6 Skill transfer exercise

Participants reflect on what they have learned and make personal commitments to put it to use after the workshop. (30 - 45 minutes)

2.1 *Warm-up exercise*: POLICY RECALL

Time required: 45-60 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to stimulate councillors to reflect on their experiences with public policy-making.

Process

Give each participant a copy of the following statement as a handout or print it on newsprint.

A policy statement is the expression in writing of a specific council stand in writing intended to serve as the basis for a plan of action to resolve an issue and achieve a goal (e.g., this local authority's division of licenses and taxes shall collect all past due license fees).

After they have read the statement, ask participants individually to write statements of their own that describe policies adopted by their councils within the last year or two. As an option, ask participants to write policy statements that their councils should have adopted but did not. Suggest that participants use the space below to write their policies.

Your Council's Policies

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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When participants have written policy statements, divide them into groups. Ask each group to answer the following questions about each of the policy statement

1.   For policy statements that were adopted:

- What was the policy intended to accomplish (the goal)?
- What actually was accomplished?

2.   For policy statements that should have been adopted:

- What might have been accomplished by adopting the policy?
- What are the consequences of not adopting the policy?

After about 20 minutes, reconvene the small groups and ask for summary reports from each of them.

2.2 *Exercise*: A POLICY-MAKER'S QUIZ

Time required: 60-75 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to help participants distinguish among problems, goals, policies, and strategies.

Process

Distribute copies of the two-page Quiz beginning on the page following the scoring key. Ask participants to complete the *Quiz* individually following instructions.

When all participants have completed the *Quiz*, divide them into four small groups of five to seven each and distribute a second copy of the *Quiz* to each group. Explain that the purpose of the exercise is for participants in each group to discuss their answers and decide on a single group answer to each statement.

Give the groups about fifteen minutes to complete the task. Then, supply each small group with a copy of the *Scoring Key* (see *Trainer's Guide to Training for Elected Officials*). Using the scoring key, have participants record the number of answers which they as individuals and which their respective groups scored correctly. Also, ask each small group to calculate the average of individual correct scores for comparison with the group score.

Reconvene the group and ask for reports from each small group. In most cases, small groups will have more correct answers than the average of their individual members. Discuss this outcome and ask participants why they think groups tend to outperform individuals on many tasks. Ask them what implications all of this has for policy-making by their own councils.

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A POLICY-MAKER'S QUIZ

Instructions

Read each of the 16 statements below. In each case, decide if the statement is a problem, a goal, a policy, or a strategy. Make a selection for each statement by placing an "x' in the appropriate box opposite the statement. Do not leave out any of the statements.

Statement	Is it a …			
	Problem	**Goal**	**Policy**	**Strategy**
1. Only the town's central streets are paved.	❏	❏	❏	❏
2. Shift five per cent of the town's annual personnel services budget to training.	❏	❏	❏	❏
3. Plan a two-day council/staff goal-setting retreat.	❏	❏	❏	❏
4. Retention of not less than 95 per cent of existing businesses each year.	❏	❏	❏	❏
5. Switch from asphalt to concrete for all future street-paving projects.	❏	❏	❏	❏
6. The town's only waste-disposal site reached capacity last month.	❏	❏	❏	❏
7. Affordable housing for every resident of the town in 10 years.	❏	❏	❏	❏

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Statement	Is it a …			
	Problem	**Goal**	**Policy**	**Strategy**
8. Pursue aggressively every possible way to privatize services where reduction in cost will result.	❏	❏	❏	❏
9. A potable supply of drinking water to 5000 new households this year.	❏	❏	❏	❏
10. Adequate protection from flooding and drainage to all flood-prone neighbourhoods on the west side by the end of next year.	❏	❏	❏	❏
11. There is no money to operate the town's new recreation complex.	❏	❏	❏	❏
12. Organize a citizens committee to study the feasibiltiy of town-centre rehabilitation.	❏	❏	❏	❏
13. Develop close ties with neighbouring towns to save money and avoid needless service duplication.	❏	❏	❏	❏
14. Take advantage of all national grants and technical assistance available to the town.	❏	❏	❏	❏
15. Authorize a consulting firm to conduct a water rate study.	❏	❏	❏	❏
16. The national government has reduced by half its aid programme for indigent health care.	❏	❏	❏	❏

SCORING SHEET

	GROUP			
	1	2	3	4
Your individual score (number correct):	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯
Average of all individual scores (divide sum of individual correct scores by the number of participants):	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯
The small group score (number correct):	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯
Highest score (individual participant):	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯
Lowest score (individual participant):	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯	⎯⎯

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2.3   TRAINER PRESENTATION

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This presentation is to provide participants with ideas and perspectives on the policy-maker role and a conceptual foundation they can use for the individual and group exercises included in this workshop.

Process

Prepare the presentation based on information from the preceding essay on the policy-maker role. Most especially, describe the policy-making process and distinguish among goals, policies and strategies. Describe who is involved in the process of policy-making and the various approaches for carrying out a policy dialogue.

Outlined information on note cards may help you cover the information systematically and stay on schedule. Ask questions from time to time during the presentation as a check on participant comprehension and to hold their attention. Augment the presentation with visual aids including pre-printed newsprint sheets and overhead transparencies as a further aid to comprehension.

2.4 *Case Study*: LUKASA'S WASTE-MANAGEMENT PLAN

Time required: 60-75 minutes

Objective

The process of policy-making is a complex business. As a rule, policies are an expression of intent by a local government to fulfil a purpose or goal through specific actions or strategies to overcome a problem or seize an opportunity facing the community.

The case study is to help participants understand the complexity of the policy-making process and how they as councillors can become more effective policy-makers.

Process

Provide each participant with a copy of a case called *Lukasa's Waste-management Plan*. Ask participants to read the case. When participants have read the case, divide them into four or five small groups. Ask each group to answer the four questions that follow the case situation and report back with its answers in about 20 minutes.

When small groups have reported back, ask each group how it answered each of the questions. Encourage a general discussion and comparison of points of view.

LUKASA'S WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The situation

The city of Lukasa operates an open dump for disposal of the town's solid waste. Last year, the dump reached capacity and the continued disposal of waste material has led to unsanitary conditions, foul odours and growing rodent infestation. The Lukasa City Council discussed the purchase of land as a first step in constructing a landfill to replace the depleted dumping area.

The Council's plan to scrap the city's open dump and replace it with a sanitary landfill operation soon came to the attention of a group of informal sector manufacturers of stoves and cooking utensils. These manufacturers were dependent on the open dump as a source of scrap metal for their manufacturing operation. In a landfill operation, all solid waste collected from Lukasa homes and businesses would be covered immediately with soil, making it impossible to salvage any waste material for other uses. Several of the more influential members of the manufacturing group began to apply pressure on members of the Council to consider another way to handle the waste disposal problem that would not deprive them of the scrap metal.

Anxious to find a solution to the community's waste-disposal problem without alienating the informal sector, the City Council began to explore options. One council member observed that there could be other materials that are being used in the community that would be lost in a landfill operation. This prompted a lively discussion. One council member, critical of recycling, pointed out the added burden of recycling since homes and businesses would have to take the time to separate disposable items.

As a way of exploring the options in more detail and getting input from the community, the Council formed a waste-management committee. The committee was given two assignments: (a) to investigate the market for various kinds of waste products (e.g., wet garbage, glass containers, plastic); and (b) to recommend a method for retrieving and segregating recyclable materials prior to disposal (e.g., at the source, at the disposal site, or somewhere in between). The committee was instructed to report on its findings within six months.

Analysis of the case

1. What problems or opportunities confront the councillors in Lukasa, given this situation?

2. What is the City Council's goal or goals for improving solid-waste management?

3. What policy does the City Council seem to be following in this situation?

4. What strategies were implemented by the City Council in furtherance of its policy?

2.5 SKILL PRACTICE EXERCISE

Time required: 90-120 minutes

Objective

There is powerful learning value when workshop participants take new concepts and apply them to situations they face in their activities as councillors.

This exercise is to encourage more informed and deliberate council policy-making by engaging workshop participants in the active preparation of goals, policy statements, and strategies for resolving current issues in their own local governments.

Process

Divide participants into a number of approximately five-member teams. Ask participants to share problems with each other that currently are confronting their councils, preferably problems that will have dire social or economic consequences if something isn't done about them soon. An example of problems that might be mentioned are a sudden rise in the crime rate or the loss of a major local-government revenue source.

Some participants may prefer to share opportunities which could have significant benefit for the areas served by their local governments if the council is able to move quickly and decisively. Such an opportunity might be to create the proper conditions for a large manufacturing or other industrial plant to locate in the community.

After participants have shared their problems and opportunities, ask them to select one of these and write (a) a goal statement, (b) a policy statement, and (c) one or more strategies to achieve the goal (specific actions to overcome the problem or seize the opportunity). Suggest that each team appoint a team leader and someone to record the results of team activity on newsprint for later reporting. A worksheet for recording results is shown on the next page.

Reconvene the teams and ask someone from each team to report on what the team would recommend the council do to deal with the selected problem or opportunity.

FORMAT FOR GROUP REPORTING OF GOALS, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES

The goal we hope to achieve is: _____

_____

_____

The policy stand we intend to take is: _____

_____

_____

  Some strategies for implementing the policy and achieving the goal are:

1. _____

   _____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

   _____

3. _____

   _____

   _____

| Transfer to newsprint for ease of reporting |

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2.6   SKILL TRANSFER EXERCISE

Time required: 30-45 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to help participants transfer the learning experiences of the workshop into their real-world activities as elected officials. The focus of the exercise is on raising expectations, engaging in realistic planning, and making personal commitments. Most of the work is done on a personal basis with some interpersonal sharing.

> *Between knowing and doing there is a wide chasm*

It is generally agreed that the purpose of training is to improve the way people do things by showing them a better way. In fact, the success of a training experience can be measured by the amount of personal growth and change that takes place both during training and after the training is over.

Training rarely has the impact on workshop participants that trainers hope it will have, particularly after an exposure of only a few hours. The exhilaration of the moment fades quickly when the trainee is confronted with old work habits and the resistance of work associates who have not shared the training experience.

On the other hand, commitments to learning and change made at the close of a workshop can help participants overcome learning resistance in themselves and in the work environment. A trainer can help learners make a successful transition from the world of learning to the world of doing through a few simple planning exercises. The time taken to encourage learning transfer could be the difference between a brief exposure to some interesting ideas and a life-changing experience.

Process

Spend at least half an hour at the end of the workshop to focus the attention of participants on important learnings and encourage them to continue experimenting with these learnings in their council activities. Begin by giving participants about 15 minutes to work independently on a simple learning transfer questionnaire.

When participants have completed the questionnaire, ask them to share quickly with the group two or three things they intend to do differently in their council roles as policy-makers to close the workshop.

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A LEARNING TRANSFER QUESTIONNAIRE

Take a few minutes to reflect on the role of the policy-maker, the new ideas you encountered in this workshop, and how you feel about them. Then, in the space below, write a sentence or two to describe something interesting you have learned about yourself during this workshop.

_____

_____

_____

Based on what you have learned about yourself and the many possibilities for change presented by this workshop, what two or three things do you intend to do differently in your council role as policy-maker?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Finally, what obstacles in yourself or in your work environment do you expect to experience during your efforts to implement these changes? What will you do to remove or minimize these obstacles?

Obstacle	Action to remove the obstacle
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

> If you can learn it, you can do it.