Handout 1: An Overview Of Policy

What is Policy? Policy can mean different things to different people. It can mean the rules or guidelines of an organisation; the principles and values and standards of a community service; the procedures that need to be followed in order to complete the tasks of an organisation. Regardless of the definition, policy plays a pivotal role in the shape of our world and the conduct of the community service industry.

The community service worker must adhere to the standards set in public policy and the policies of their organisations.

Public policy (that is government policy) is reflected in how organisations function and in turn how we as individuals respond. Examples of Government policy include: NSW Disability Services Act 1993; Commonwealth Home and Community Care Act 1985 (HACC).

Some government policies provide the guidelines for the delivery of government services. The NSW Disability Act 1993 is an example of this. However there are other government policies such as HACC where the government funds services to provide the services. In these instance service are adhere to the standards set by government policy.

Public policy is reflected in the service offered to clients, the type of programs offered, how they are offered and the way the organisation operates.

Effective Policy

An Effective Policy Consists of:
- A structure to allow for action
- A decision
- A legitimate document
- A written document
- The input from numbers of people
- An ongoing process
- A framework which allows the organisation to operate.

What Do Policies Look Like?

Firstly a policy is a written document but from then on policy can take many forms. The size of policies depends on the size of the organisation. Government departments have hundreds of policies, while a small community based organisation with less than 5 staff might just have one document, which incorporates a number of policies. (If you want to see a policy document used in a community service look at the policy manual of the Carmen Poldis Community Centre (CPCC) You will find these in the filing cabinet in the office).

Everybody has a stake in policy. From the clients who use services and have to fit in with the organisation’s policies, to the staff who design the policy in response to
client and staff feedback or government direction and government itself who develops policy in response to public opinion, the interests of private enterprise or a mixture of both.

Good policy is one where:

- It will be useful for the people whose needs it was intended to meet. i.e does it meet the needs of service users, staff and the management committee of CPCC?
- It includes:
  - those things that are required to meet the standards of the funding bodies
  - the requirements of legislation (e.g. occupational health and safety, mandatory notification of child abuse and neglect)
  - and for accreditation.
- It improves the quality of the service.

Making good policy also depends on good processes as its foundation.

**HINT go to the tearoom for further information about good processes**

Policy making is a complex process and can be long and frustrating, but there is a suggested framework that assists in the decision making process.

Even when policy has to be developed hurriedly in response to an event and there is not the luxury of careful and reflective thought processes, it is still important to follow a sequential framework for effective policy.

Policy is about achieving objectives and in this way, developing policy is a decision to take action to achieve certain results. A new policy needs to fit into the wider picture of an organisation’s activities so the policy objectives need to be stated honestly and clearly. When the intentions of the policy developer are unclear or contradictory then the policy is bound to fail.

Therefore setting the objective of the policy is the first step in a long process. It is also the most important step since the objective is the whole point of the policy’s existence.

Sometimes the objectives are overtaken by other unintended events that only become evident after the policy is implemented and erodes the policy’s effect and creates whole new problems. For example a policy to offer flexible and shared workplace arrangements might result in client dissatisfaction about the lack of staff available. A scheme by government to screen staff working with children can create a costly and time-consuming process for agencies.

In an effort to keep policy development on track and focussed on its objectives policy makers need to constantly ask:

- What is the purpose of this policy
- How will it affect
• Clients
• Staff
• The organisation
• Relationship with funding bodies

• How will the method of implementing the policy fit with the objectives of the policy?
• How will this policy relate to other organisational and funding objectives?
• Will the policy make the difference in the way it was envisaged?

**Eight Step Policy Cycle**

The eight step policy cycle suggested by Bridgman and Davis Bridgeman P Davis G Australian Policy Handbook (1998) Allen and Unwin usually takes the following cyclical form.

When the cycle has gone through the eight stages of policy development ending with evaluation then it starts again. Any good piece of policy needs refining and be relevant to changing circumstances so this means identifying the issues from the evaluation and so on.
In handout 2 this cycle is related to a hypothetical case study at Carmen Poldis Community Centre.

The design of a piece of policy is political in its nature. The issues facing a community agency that demands its attention will shape the action the agency takes and as a flow on then has implications in other arenas.

### Handout 2: Hypothetical Case Study

**Development of a new Carmen Poldis Community Centre policy to meet the needs of children ‘at risk’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage in cycle</th>
<th>Political domain</th>
<th>Policy domain</th>
<th>Administrative domain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying issue</td>
<td>Newspapers report increasing number of new incidents of notified child abuse in the area.</td>
<td>The Research and Social Justice Unit have assisted in the University research.</td>
<td>Finance department examines funding guidelines on existing programs and the extent to which it can change a program without affecting the funding guidelines.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A recent report by the University suggests that the influx of new young families taking up the first home grant and with large mortgages is placing incredible strains on family life.</td>
<td>They now research alternative programs in the area.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff are concerned about the number of child at risk referrals and the strain this is placing on their programs.</td>
<td>The manager evaluates existing services looking for gaps in where those services are not meeting the needs of these children.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff complain to their line manager about the need for a change in program direction to meet the needs of these children. New staff and training is needed.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
<td>Manager of the service meets with the CEO who takes the concerns to the Management Committee of Management to make them aware of the problem at this stage.</td>
<td>Workers meet with the CEO and manager to consider options.</td>
<td>Costings and funding implications are sent to the CEO.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Instruments</td>
<td>Families in community press for more accessible service in terms of times the service is available, particularly at nights and weekends. State Department of Children and Family Service (SDCF), in a response to the latest newspaper report calls representatives from the various agencies together to look at ways to address the problem.</td>
<td>A committee is formed of State Department of Children and Family Services (SDCF) regional manager, the CEO of CPCC a Management Committee member and project manager discuss a possible design structure of a new program.</td>
<td>Finance department at CPCC does a costing on the new program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Manager meets with local community groups to discuss the new program. Staff get together with the manager and CEO to prepare a submission to the Management Committee. Staff meet with the union to discuss the changes to their current working hours and salary implications.</td>
<td>CEO meets with the SDCF regional manager, Police department and area health service to discuss the new program. CEO takes the submission to the Management Committee listing the policy options and desired outcomes from a new service. Management Committee consult with finance about the cost of this new program and the implications it will have on the strategic plan.</td>
<td>Information gathered by research and social justice on the number of families who would potentially use the service. Union meets with the finance department, CEO and manager to discuss salary and award implications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Staff press for a decision from the Management Committee. Issues appear on the Management Committee monthly meeting papers for decisions to be taken. Staff meet to discuss how the centre could operate on extended hours and possibly over weekends.</td>
<td>Management Committee calls for further information from the finance department on overall budgetary implications. A revised submission is completed following a review of the budget.</td>
<td>Research and Social Justice Unit and Family Service Program keep feeding the CEO data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>SDCF considers the submission and accepts the proposal for extended hours during the week until 7pm, with specialist staff. It does not agree to weekends. It increases the funding given to the existing service and agrees that the present funding be transferred to the new program. Additional staff will be appointed to address the needs of children at risk, and babies being placed in care. staff training begins.</td>
<td>The <strong>Management Committee</strong> agrees to the inclusion of a new service providing SDCF can increase the funding and move present funding over to the new program. The <strong>CEO</strong> lets the Management Committee, staff and other community organisations know of SDCF decision.</td>
<td>Staff set about closing the existing service and get structures in place for implementing the new service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Management Committee notes in their papers the proposed new service. A press release is prepared and media attend CPCC for Ministers visit. Minister of SDCF announces decision and presents cheque. Newspapers carry the story of the funding and visit by Minister of SDCF.</td>
<td>New job descriptions drawn up and staff interviewed and appointed. New policy and procedures are drawn up to structure the activities in the new program. They are added to the manual and staff are trained on the new procedures.</td>
<td>Finance and Accounts establish new budgets. Eligibility criteria set down for access to service. Community advised through public forums and leaflets and article in local newspaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Community groups are not happy with some aspects of the service. Staff continue to lobby for more funding and improved salary rates for after hours work. There are delays in purchasing necessary resources. There are safety concerns about staff working after hours.</td>
<td>Minister of SDCF and area manager require a briefing on the ways the new program is meeting the needs of children at risk in the area. <strong>Management Committee</strong> requires CEO to bring them costings and evaluation of effectiveness of the program. <strong>Management Committee</strong> asks for a financial breakdown on the new funding.</td>
<td>Funding needs assessed and advice given to the <strong>Management Committee</strong> on shortfall in funding. Ongoing monitoring of funding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Management Committee meets to consider further developments of community complaints and how to deal with the issues before they reach the newspapers.

CEO and Manager meet with staff to look at the program to discuss the issues and look at ways to overcome the problems.

THE CYCLE NOW CONTINUES AGAIN WITH IDENTIFYING ISSUES.

### Handout 3: Starting The Policy Development Cycle

**Identifying the Issue and its relevance and currency for the organisation and its clients:**

What drives organisations and governments to review its policies?

Existing organisational, government and other policies relevant to the issue are evaluated to determine currency and relevance for the organisation and its clients.

Much policy that organisations develop comes about through identified problems in existing policies articulated usually through the staff and/or clients.

1. An organisation will be more likely to review its existing policy if it challenges the values of the organisation. For example an existing policy that discriminates against client self determination by not allowing them an equal voice in a case management plan.

2. If the agency is seen less favourably than another agency because of its policy, the agency is likely to pay attention to its impact. For example if CPCC offers less staff entitlements than the large non government agency nearby, it will lose staff and all their knowledge and skills. Also it becomes costly to retrain new workers.

3. Responding to policy review as a result of legislative changes will make organisations review existing policies.

4. An organisation or government will only review its policy if there is agreement on a problem. Unless there is significant interest and a coalition of voices agree, then a policy is unlikely to be reviewed.

5. There must be the hope for a solution. If a problem seems insurmountable then it is less likely to gain attention.
6. With organisations and government concerned about budgetary constraints a policy review is more likely to get up when the decision makers can be persuaded that this issue is more worthy of attention than another.

7. The problem has to fit with the organisation or government ideology. If the focus of the issue is not a comfortable fit with the values of the organisation/government then it is not likely to succeed.

In the example of the children at risk hypothetical case study (in Handout 2) the CPCC responded to a policy review because of the wider public attracting the attention of the media. As the media has any number of issues it can take up, the identifying issue has to be seen by the media as more important than the other issues also seeking attention.

The media will be more biased towards taking up issues that attract public attention make a good story and highlight the deficiencies in current government policy addressing such issues.

Pressure groups will also have a role to play in highlighting deficiencies in government policy when serious problems emerge but must wait until the media coverage carries it to the political forum. An example of how this works is the media coverage on asylum seekers has made the issue a political one with calls for a review of existing policies.

However professionals working with asylum seekers have for a long time tried to highlight their concerns about detention centres but most of their concerns have fallen on deaf ears. It was not until the scope of the problem became larger through the added issues relating to boatloads of people in Australian waters, human rights issues and concerns about overseas ownership of detention centres gained public interest intensified. As well the issues appeared to become more pressing and intense and the media drove the agenda with media coverage that allowed for visibility of the issues.

The example of the asylum seekers and the hypothetical case study will highlight how government is then likely to respond if the media and those with influence and access to government decision making believe the issue need attention.

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**Handout 4: Policy Analysis**

**Appropriate research and consultation, which will contribute to policy development, is undertaken and documented in accordance with organisational policies and procedures.**

Research into policy development involves looking at ways to approach new problems and look at old problems in different ways. Analysing the problem and the underlying issues is a fundamental stage in the policy cycle since analysing and researching is the basis for developing options and good decision making.
The following strategy of researching the problem involves a five-step framework. By applying this method it will hopefully provide a logical, ordered and sequential process whereby all options are identified, assessed and compared.

**Relevant stakeholders are consulted throughout the policy development process to ensure relevance and acceptance of the product.**

When analysing the policy it is important to include in this process the feedback from those who will be affected by the policy. Without the feedback from stakeholders the policy is set to fail.

Appropriate mechanisms are provided to facilitate open constructive discussion about policy issues.

The five-step process is as follows:

1. **Identifying and defining the problem**
2. **The objectives are established**
3. **Identify the parameters for making a decision**
4. **Look for alternatives**
5. **Come up with a proposal or solution to the problem.**

**1. Identifying and defining the problem:**

Once an organisation has been made aware of a problem or issue the policy makers then need to identify the size and extent of the problem, what form it takes and how it is characterised.

For example using the hypothetical case study at CPCC, policy makers would be asking:

- How the incidence of more children at risk in their region came about?
- Who are the people affected by this problem and why?
- What do other professionals in the area say about the problem?
- Are there any figures coming through that show this trend?
- Do the problems identified here show up as a trend in any other region?
- Can the problem be broken down into smaller parts and looked at as a series of related problems?
- Are there any programs that can be utilised?
- Who else other than Carmen Poldis Community Centre should be involved in owning this problem?

*HINT visit the tearoom for further discussion on identifying issues using the Carmen Poldis hypothetical case study above.*

**2. Objectives are established:**

Defining the objective in a way that will encompass the problem is a difficult process. If they are too specific it is likely to miss some of the issues that impinge on the problem. On the other hand if they are vague then evaluating the policy objectives becomes too hard. If the objectives are too broad then any activity...
could fit into them and if they are too narrow then the objectives would tend to favour one area over another.

Shaping and defining options by an organisation calls for it to be ethical in its decision making by considering all the options fairly and without prejudice. This is a difficult thing for an organisation to do with its own values.

3. **Identify the parameters for making a decision:**

   Policy makers can identify options once they know:

   1. What will be the likely objectives of the Management Committee or Board of Management, the strategic plan of the organisation and how it will fit in with their funding body
   2. How likely it will be to get additional resources or have to work within the existing budget
   3. The time frame for considering the policy and acting on it
   4. How important the problem is in relation to other problems facing the Management Committee/Board of Management.

If it looks like the decision makers are faced with other more pressing concerns so this problem is not going to get strong interest, then the policy maker may choose to make minor changes to an existing policy or program or introduce existing procedures that work in another program to a new program to address this problem.

It may be that the problem has no solution. This could be because the problem is outside the professional scope of the policy maker or that the problem is just too hard and cannot be broken down into smaller more manageable problems. If the decision maker can’t come up with a solution it is important to let the decision makers know of this honest appraisal of the problem.

It may be that the problem can be revisited with new eyes.

4. **Look for alternatives:**

   This is the time when the options are narrowed down so it involves collecting as much relevant information as required and to identify possible responses. Any option will identify the financial implications, the impact on clients, community and staff. The option could have an effect on the environment so this will need researching. Legal ramifications must be considered with each policy option and finally, research will need to consider the likely outcome of an option in relation to its acceptance and adoption by the decision makers of the organisation and government funding bodies.

   To search for data when considering all the parameters above, policy makers will need to seek ideas from:

   - current policies from other agencies here and overseas
   - look how other agencies have tackled the problem
• search for reviews and articles in professional magazines and academic journals
• seek advice from key personnel and consultation with clients.

When presenting the various options it is important to present each of them as a model or as a logical argument highlighting supporting reasons for its inclusion and backing it up with evidence.

5. **Coming up with the solution:**

Finally the policy maker should be able to recommend a solution to the problem. This will usually be in the form of a report but often an organisation’s management committee /Board of management and staff will be briefed through a presentation.

This recommendation should be accompanied by a comparison with the other options and the reasons why one choice won over another.

If the management committee does not accept the solution because it is too costly, too political, or has widespread social consequences they may ask for further information or change some part of the plan. Policy makers should therefore be forewarned that they might need to revisit the report in search for more acceptable choices.

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**Handout 5: Policy Instruments**

This is the part of policy development where the ideas turn into a reality, where it gets converted into a practical application.

There are broadly four different ways of applying policy:

• **Advocacy** – getting people to accept the idea through being persuasive, arguing the case and community education
• Financial – using funds from the budget or through seeking funds from elsewhere
• Government action - getting government to deliver the services through community welfare organisations
• The law – using legislative power and official authority.

**HINT visit the tearoom for further discussion on ways to implement policy using the Carmen Poldis Community Centre hypothetical case study above.**

The criteria for selecting one method over another will depend on:

• How appropriate a particular method will be i.e. is it a reasonable way of proceeding taking into account the client group, staff, resources and timing?
• Cost effective- will the choice of implementation be efficient?
• Effectiveness – can this method of implementation achieve the objectives?
Equity – will the consequences of implementing the policy in this way just and equitable?

Workable – can the method be implemented easily. Is it sound but simple and can it hold up in adverse conditions?

Choosing the correct policy instrument is crucial to achieving the objective of the policy.

Handout 6: Consultation

While consultation is a process that should be used through the entire process of developing policy it is crucial at this stage that consultation is structured into the process.

Now that the best option has been identified and the method of implementing it chosen (policy instrument) it is smart policy making to consult with those people who are going to be affected by the policy. Additionally, it could be a requirement of government legislation that consultation is part of the process.

There are many examples where decision makers have talked about consultations with other stakeholders but this turns out to be no more than the decision makers telling others that this is what we are going to do which is more like informing. Such processes only serve to discredit the consultation process.

True consultation, is asking and taking on the Management Committee other’s opinions while still remaining in charge of the agenda and outcome.

Consultation also draws all the different views and by its acceptance the policy then has legitimacy. Those affected by the policy are more likely to accept a piece of policy if they have ownership of it.

Consultation can have its costs. It is time consuming and can be expensive if wide consultation is required. Additionally there is the potential for a dominate voice to railroad the process. However consultation in the community services industry is a reflection of the industry values of participation, democratic principles, to be open and transparent.

An appropriate consultation plan is developed and implemented to test and review draft policies.

Policy implementation issues including monitoring and evaluation processes are discussed with relevant personnel and the policy modified as appropriate.

Changes to policy are notified to those affected in time to take remedial action.
Some of the methods of consultation will include:

- Focus groups
- Public hearings
- Community information campaigns
- Surveying key stakeholders
- Circulating the proposal for comment
- Setting up an advisory committee
- Holding interest group meetings.

To lessen the pitfalls of consulting, discussed earlier, the process must have defined processes with clearly articulated terms of reference, time lines and expected outcomes. This keeps the discussions focused and sets the agenda for those attending.

The way that the consultation process is carried out will depend on a number of factors. These will include:

1. **The purpose of consultation is to:**

   - Provide access to information so thereby improve the quality of the policy decision
   - Ensure the policy is understood and accepted by all to maximise its legitimacy
   - Promote consensus about policy choices
   - Confront the dissident voice who may challenge the policy process by being
   - Open and transparent accountable and offer opportunities for participation.

2. **The method of consultation** for example:

   The resources and expenses that the agency has to spend on consultation will reflect the significance of the problem, the importance of the policy and the time it has to adopt the policy.

   To ensure that as wide a consultation occurs as possible and to limit any bias that can occur through only concentrating on one method it is usual to select more than one of the above methods of consultation.

3. **Identifying those who have an interest in the policy** for example:

   While there will be the obvious stakeholders who have an interest in the policy any consultation chosen must take into account other players who may identify as being interested.

   The mix of consultation methods must consider access and equity issues by ensuring those who have language barriers, physical disability and poor literacy skills are not denied the opportunity to participate.
Advertising the consultation process will ensure wider distribution even though there may be many who will not take part.

4. **Starting the Consultation** for example:

- Start the process early so that any feedback can allow for suggested alternatives
- Ensure the consultation is clear and open
- All the issues and the impact of the proposed policy must be made aware to those who will be affected by the policy
- The objectives and limits of the consultation process should be clear. For example the purpose, and process needs to have previously been determined.

5. **Communicating With All Concerned**:

- Identify the main stakeholders to get their views on the draft policy. The purpose for meeting with them should be given in advance and what type of information you may want to have ready for the meeting.
- To ensure that the consultation process does not become too unwieldy consider circulating written proposals or public meetings to gather responses.
- While consultation is important it is also important not to go overboard with too much consulting with groups or individuals who have little or no interest in the effects of the policy. Therefore be clear about who to consult and set up times to do so.
- If representatives of different organisations affected by your policy have to take it back for their members feedback, ensure your consultation process has the time for this built in.
- As community services agencies are always busy and strapped for time consider concise written information that shows clearly the issues identified for them to comment on, rather than trying to find time to meet.

6. **Now You Have Finished the Consultation**:

- Make sure you acknowledge the feedback as soon as possible.
- To develop trust and ensure people know their input has been valuable let all those who contributed know how their input has been used.
- Give stakeholders and others in the community who have contributed a summary of the views and data collected and what the likely proposal or action will be. This process can then be used for comment.
- Comments back from those with an interest in the policy allows for identifying any inherent problems with the policy proposal and for continual improvement of the policy.
Issues to be Aware of in the Consultation Process

Make sure that a particular group does not dominate the consultation process. This is more likely to happen if the issues are complex or technical which may be a problem for other groups e.g. those with English as a second language.

Make sure that representatives of groups can speak on behalf of the group. This must be made clear.

Those with the professional interest in the policy and have expertise in the area are likely to provide useful feedback.

Handout 7: Coordination

Coordination is an important process in developing policy as it ensures the proposed policy is not in conflict with other policies and procedures, that its broad purpose can be discussed at a Board of Management or Management Committee level and that the finer points about the policy can be settled before it comes before the Management Committee or Board of Management.

The first step is to get staff to comment on the proposed policy to ensure the policy is appropriate and sits comfortably with existing policies and other frameworks in the organisation.

This is the time when the finer details of the policy are discussed and any inherent problems are addressed.

The next stage is for the draft policy to be presented to the Management Committee or the Board of Management. Here there will be questions such as:

- Does this policy fit with our existing policies?
- Is it consistent with our organisation’s directions and values?
- Can the organisation afford it? What are the legal and organisational issues?
- Will it be in conflict with our funding bodies?
- What will be the consequences for the users of our service?
- What was the process of consultation and how were their views reflected in this policy?

The answers supplied by the staff involved and policy maker/s will allow the Management Committee or Board of Management to make the final decision.

Management Committees and Boards of Management rely on their coordinators and senior staff to give them the answers they need to make decisions. Therefore these staff members are key players in the coordination process. Staff involved in policy, finances and administration all have a coordinating role to play when advising the Management Committee or Board of Management.
From a Policy Perspective For Management Committees and Boards of Management they will want to know if the proposals put forward for the policy –

- Are consistent with the strategic plan of the organisation
- Are logical and well thought through
- Fit with the organisation's overall profile
- Are compatible with the vested interests of other stakeholders
- Are consistent with funding obligations
- Are not so controversial that there will be community/agency social action
- Are introduced at an appropriate time.

From a financial perspective Management Committees and Boards of Management must ensure that:

- Financial costs are budgeted for
- The financial costs do not exceed the budget
- The proposal is cost effective
- The policy meets the right priorities
- There are no hidden costs that require extra and unexpected funds.

From an administrative perspective the Management Committee or Board of Management will be concerned about personnel implications and want reports on:

- Staffing implications with the new proposals
- Any industrial relations issues
- Access and equity and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) considerations.

Handout 8: The Decision Is Made

By now the draft policy has gone through a number of processes. With the consultation and coordination processes complete and the policy modified with appropriate changes made following consultation and with Management Committee or Board of Management feedback, it is now time in the policy cycle for the decision to be made to develop the policy material as a final product.

When Management Committees rely on the expertise of their staff to brief them with technical advice it is often outside the technical knowledge of the Management Committee. Therefore the recommendations about the policy put before the Management Committee are all-important.

The recommendations should summarise the action the Management Committee or Board of Management is asked to consider so consequently the Management Committee pays particular attention to these recommendations and conclusions. Therefore they should be clear and concise, complete, flow logically and sequentially and are precise enough to form an agenda item for action to be taken.
Once the decision has been made to accept the draft policy it is important to now consider its final format and style.

**Preparing Policy Material**

While policies may take on different formats it is important the policy is prepared in a format and style that will facilitate understanding and its implementation.

It is important for all the information to be contained in the policy, that it be clear and unambiguous in its strategies so that staff can implement it without reference to their supervisor or manager.

Additionally, policy proposals are developed which acknowledge a range of sources and interest groups.

A suggested format below lists all the headings of a policy and under these headings where all the necessary information should be contained.

A. Title
B. Date policy ratified by the Management Committee
C. Policy Statement (Reason for the policy)
D. Policy scope (who has to take notice of this policy)
E. Details of the policy (Here the policy is set out)
F. Procedures for implementing the policy (if required).

**Handout 9: Implementation**

It is crucial that good policies are implemented rather than sit on a bookshelf and never get used.

Long before the stage of implementation, issues about the implementing of the policy should have been considered. Way back at policy analysis, resources needed for implementation should have been identified and methods of implementation determined. Poor design at the earlier stages will be one of the causes a policy may fail.

When the implementation of the policy fails, poor design has failed to consider the number of constraints an agency may face when enacting the policy. Constraints such as:

- The depth of the problem
- The range of other issues faced by staff
- The large number of stakeholders affected by the policy
- The degree of behavioural change required by those affected by the policy
- Insufficient expertise and resources
- Competing priorities of the organisation
- Lack of staff expertise or commitment
- Lack of cooperation between different sections of the agency
• Too few incentives to encourage compliance
• Those implementing the policy/program do not understand what is required.

Drawing on the work of Ingram 1990 and Davis and Weller 1993 there are a number of factors that will contribute towards successful implementation.

The theory was based on the values of the organisation, however if these values are mistaken or have changed then the policy will fail. If, on the other hand the policy is simple and sound and tested through experience then a policy can survive.

There should be only a few stages between the formulating of the idea and the implementation. The more complex, then the more likely misunderstandings occur or competition between different stakeholders arises causing a policy to fail.

Implementation of the policy should be the responsibility of one or two people. As more people become involved then coordination becomes difficult to manage and control.

One person must be responsible for the success of the program and have the capacity to intervene when the implementation of the policy/programme gets into difficulties.

Those who deliver the policy/program should be involved in its design, to have been informed and consulted at every stage to ensure their cooperation.

**Policy Implementation Plan**

A policy implementation plan should be developed to ensure maximum impact of new or revised policies. Such a plan should involve the following:

• Staff training for all staff in the new policy or program
• Involve all staff affected by the policy to be involved in its development
• Management Committee responsibility for the implementation of the policy
• Identify one person who is responsible for the success of the program. This will usually be the coordinator, manager
• One person responsible for the updating and maintaining of the policy. This is usually the responsibility of the Secretary or personnel section
• Amend staff job descriptions to reflect the responsibility of implementing, coordination and maintenance of the policy
• Staff supervision and performance appraisals should monitor staff’s performance in following policies
• Users of the service and other stakeholders should be consulted to check that the policy is being followed.

Strategies should be identified to ensure wide dissemination of policy information. Usually more than one method needs to be used for successful implementation. The choice of disseminating the information is inevitably a judgement about factors such as available resources, the target group and the risks and failures of one method over another.
Some of the likely methods of disseminating the information about the policy could include:

- Public hearings
- Community information pamphlets
- A form letter to key stakeholders
- An article in the local newspaper
- Staff bulletin
- Email.

**Handout 10: Evaluation**

It is here that the policy cycle ends and restarts. An issue has been identified, analysed, developed into a policy proposal a decision has been made and the policy has been implemented and now it is time to evaluate the policy.

Evaluation serves the following purposes:

- It checks the degree to which the policy once implemented meets its objectives
- Discovers if there are improved ways of achieving these objectives
- It holds particular staff and management committee members accountable for the implementation of the policy
- It provides important pointers for future policy making
- It allows the policy to be adapted and more meaningful when agency objectives change
- Assesses the case for designing new programs or extending existing ones
- Decides whether the resources for the programs should continue at their current level, be increased, reduced or discontinued.

One of the biggest problems with a policy is keeping it up to date. As soon as it does then people stop using it. Therefore if evaluation is built into policy procedures it becomes a mechanism for review. And identify if the policy is still meeting its objectives.

Evaluation then becomes a tool for collecting and managing data for improvement in the policy and for making the policy more effective.

Community agencies receiving government funding may be required to evaluate their programs before further funding is forthcoming so in this way evaluation is a necessary criteria for the future viability of the program.

Policies are evaluated on their effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness.

Effectiveness: Is the program producing the results needed for the money being spent? Is the program meeting its objectives?

Efficiency: Is the program efficient in the way it uses government funding and other sources of finance for the policy purpose?
Appropriateness: Is this new program needed does it meet client needs or should an existing one be adapted or maintained in its place?

It may not be necessary to evaluate all three of these areas. The subject matter at hand and the purpose of the evaluation should define the level of analysis.

**Methods of Evaluation**

The format for evaluation follows a standard format.

- Firstly there are terms of reference prepared which identifies in clear and concise terms the parameters of the evaluation and its expected outcomes
- An evaluation strategy is identified specifying the questions to be asked and approach to be taken
- Data is collected and consultation with clients, staff, stakeholders and other key people is carried out
- The information gathered is the analysed leading to a report with findings, conclusions and recommendations.

This process mirrors the original cycle that produced the policy in the first place.

**Issues to Consider in Evaluation**

- Who will be responsible for the evaluation?
- The frequency of the evaluation
- How other stakeholders will be involved in the evaluation and review process
- What are the key questions that need to be asked
- How the outcomes of the evaluation will be used in modifying the policy
- Available resources including financial.

While it is common practice for personnel involved in the programs to undertake the evaluation it is important to consider issues such as conflicts of interest. While internal staff of an agency may be the best people to evaluate the program because they are in the best position to identify problems and implement the findings they may also be biased and have personal interests in maintaining a program the way it is rather than being objective about its failings.

To avoid this conflict of interests agencies employ outside evaluators. The disadvantage of this can be the lack of intimate knowledge of the program, lack of experience of having been part of the difficulties and not part of the successes.

**Evaluation Strategies**

1. Efficiency evaluation:
   - Examination of the accounts and invoices
   - Compares the budget and actual spending
   - Compares the program in terms of finances against similar programs in other regions
   - Measures wastage of hours, staff utilisation and other resources
2. Effectiveness evaluation:
   - Interviews with participants and clients
   - Undertakes an historical and descriptive evaluation using case studies etc
   - Submissions from interested parties
   - Development of performance indicators

3. Appropriateness evaluation:
   - External policy review
   - Longitudinal research studies
   - Long term testing against performance objectives

Performance Indicators:

These instruments of policy evaluation have become an integral part of program design. Funding bodies require that agencies identify a method of assessing the performance of a plan of action from a program in their submission for funding. Evaluation of the program is then assessed against the performance indicator set down in the submission for that particular program.

For example, a new youth program to increase labour market skills may have as one of its performance criteria “the agency will increase the number of its unemployed youth into paid employment by 50% at the completion of the 12 month training program.”

Performance indicators allow for some degree of flexibility in their outcomes rather than absolutes. This is because very few programs are total successes or failures and progress towards the goals rarely reaches complete attainment. So for example if the above example stated as a performance indicator that 100% of the youth achieved paid employment then failure is more likely. If on the other hand the program can show an increase in the number of youth in paid employment then the same program might be seen as a success.

Findings

Integrating policy review into policy design means that evaluation can be a continuous process throughout the policy cycle.

For example findings from feedback gained during the marketing and promotion of the policy/program (the implementation stage) can be utilised in the evaluation stage.

On the other hand while a policy may fail its implementation, careful analysis of what went wrong in the evaluation stage can mean that the policy can be improved over time and eventually meet its goals.

The findings from the evaluation must be concise and objective if they are to influence future policy design. The evaluation report must specify the area to be
studied, present the evidence, explore alternative explanations for the findings and justify a particular recommendation.

Evaluation is essential if programs are to improve. Information from the evaluation informs the following round of policy development and implementation.

Evaluation also ensures that policies are adapting to changing agency needs and in this way are dynamic rather than a static useless piece of work that gathers dust on a shelf.