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Community- Centered Governance for Effective Policy Making

1 Understanding Context

Policy needs and problem identification begins by listening to communities. Responsive policy and governance is driven by understanding the diverse lived experiences within communities.

Diverse Lived Experiences Drive Policy

Understand the Roots

We got to the present moment because of a variety of histories and forces. Learn the multi-layered stories and dynamics of a place so you can develop responsible policy.

Know the System of Governance

There are a whole slew of existing laws, rules, infrastructure, additional jurisdictions and assumed precedents that influence policymaking. Awareness of these is a helpful starting point.

Build Relationship and Listen

Community is not a monolith. Take the time to understand different ways issues are experienced by building relationships and hearing stories from many perspectives.

Remembering the Policy Aims

Don't lose the original spirit of the policy and what called for the policy in the first place. Policy creates conditions for change but the work is not done at policy passage. Look for meaningful ways to learn about implementation successes, challenges, and opportunities for course correction.

The Details Add Up

There are several early implementation opportunities that will set up successful policy execution. These include leveraging governance relationships; understanding rule making, procurement, and legal interpretations; responsible updates to communities and partners; and responding to feedback. When done well, these will all add up in service to greater buy-in, execution, and long-term success.

Evaluating Impact and Continuing to Learn You share responsibility for ensuring that the policy passage brings about the desired changes. Bring in partners and communities to see what kinds of changes and outcomes are being realized.

Effective Implementation Beyond Policy Passage

4 Observe, Learn, Adapt, and Improve

Policy passage is just the beginning. Operationalizing and executing the policy means taking advantage of early implementation opportunities, setting governance up for long-term success and sustainability, and remaining open for learning.

2 Setting Shared Vision & Building Alignment

Generate effective policy solutions by connecting purpose, partners, data, and meaningful engagement. The right team and roles can better understand the problems and possible policy solutions by working with a rich array of information.

Effective Solutions Through Collaborative Partnerships

Get the Problem Right

Everything depends on how you see and define the problem. Ensure the voices and perspectives represented help you better understand the challenges.

Engage Your Partners

You have existing partners. And new policy will likely need new partners. Partnerships benefit from good listening, sharing information, and meaningful collaboration.

Robust Community Engagement

There are established best practices on how to do robust community engagement while serving your constituents. Follow these and make sure you also engage those you know the least.

Prioritize Outcomes

Build a shared vision and learn how to tell the story. Carefully prioritize and identify shared values and desired outcomes within the vision and story.

Establish an Excellent Team

Your team will determine the success of policy development. Set clear roles, determine the data you will use, and decide how decision-making will occur (linked to values and priorities you will center).

Community Voices & Needs

Plan As Much As You Can

Your plan is the roadmap for how you will get from conception to passage. It should outline roles, objectives, strategies, tactics, needed resources and metrics for evaluation.

Real Impacts and Constraints

You are not creating policy in a vacuum. There are real political, fiscal, and governance impacts and constraints. Sound strategy includes being aware of changing conditions and knowing where negotiation works and what values may be less negotiable.

When There is Disagreement

It is not a question of *if*, but *when* you encounter disagreement, diversity of opinion, and tension. While challenging, all of this will be supportive, *if* you can establish clear "bottom lines" and can hear and engage the messiness. Aligning around shared values can help you move partnerships through challenging moments.

Communications Strategy

How you communicate and bring different folks into the story will greatly support your success. Carefully consider framing, narrative, storytelling, and messaging choices.

Off Ramp Strategies

Policy passage is not the only successful outcome. Ensure you see other outlets and off ramp strategies that can still address the core problem.

Expanding Partnerships and Navigating for Policy Passage

3 Policy Action & Laying Groundwork for Implementation

Successful policy passage depends on the planning team being able to leverage effective communication, relationships/connections, rigorous honing, along with technical and political savvy.

Practices Spur Change

As important as structure and process can be, what sparks effective governance and long-term material change are meaningful and consistent practices that bring vision and values to life.

Values-based Decision-Making

Leaders apply values to decisions of significance. These decisions extend far beyond what happens in formal council chambers. Decisions about your time, priorities, and resource allocation reflect your values. Governance roles are shaped by the responsibility to make complex (multi-layered) decisions while representing a much broader community.

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