

Getting started

Tool

Purpose:

This tool describes what can be involved in policy work, why it is worth doing, who should get involved, and how to get started – it works as a starting point to other tools in the Power Tools series.

Activities:

Identify the issues - the problems and the opportunities. Clarify reasons for intervention and whether the issue can be tackled. Capture key issues in a clear written description to identify and communicate chains of causes, the people involved, and the values and assumptions made.

Develop initial understanding of: *context, actors, process, instruments and impacts.*

Investigate each of these factors and the links and interplay between them.

- **Context** relates to the physical, cultural, political, technological and economic environment, and to decisions made in the past.
- **Actors** and relevant power structures involved in decision-making need to be identified.
- **Process** means the dynamics and interactions that bring about change by, and within, policies and institutions.
- **Instruments & structures** can be regulatory, economic, informational, institutional, or contractual. Levels of actual agreement and ability to implement are important.
- **Impacts** may be assessed at three levels: immediate outputs of action; the effects of those outputs; and the long-term outcomes of those effects.

Keep in Mind

★ Safety warning!

Power tools can be dangerous, causing more harm than good, so proceed with caution!

★ **Policies** are commonly thought of as what organisations say they will do – but we are more interested in what they actually do because the point is not just to make good policy, but also to put it into practice.

★ Why and when to use:

Progress is made when policy and institutions learn from local solutions. Tools help identify key



Identify type of influence desired - and plan a strategy for achieving it.

Choose among a range of possible objectives, such as building long-term consensus among disparate groups.

Match scope of work to available time and resource.

Balance short-term and long-term objectives realistically.

Select working mechanisms.

A proven effective combination is a convenor, steering group, working group and key informants.

Formulate specific objectives and methods.

Identify priorities and specific questions, agree the outputs and who will get them, then select and sequence methods.

Analyse potential impact of findings, and revise.

Rethink strategies in light of the likelihood of implementation.

Produce outputs – and use them.

Packaging and presentation are critical - recommendations must be owned by the broad group of key actors, not just the authors.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at: www.policy-powertools.org

Mayers, J. and Bass, S. 1999. *Policy that works for forests and people. Series Overview.*

International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

(Summary on www.iied.org/ptw/oversum.html)

individual and organisational choices, trace the rules, structures, market and policy signals which affect them, and develop improvements.

★ Who should work on policies and institutions:

These tools intend to help groups who avoid policy work to demystify policy and find means of positive influence. Such groups include local representative organisations, workers on aid projects, government service delivery agency staff and agency leaders, private sector managers, policy-makers and strategy developers, advocacy groups, lobbyists, analysts and academics.

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