Advanced Policy Writing for Impact

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Why Do We Write Policy Papers?

- To get a grade

- To get something published

- *To have a significant sustainable positive impact on the state of the world and/or a specific community*

  - *Achieving this goal often requires being focused from the beginning*

How Can We Have Impact?

- Select and solve a problem

- Communicate the solution in such a way that decision makers will act on the recommendations

- **This will almost always be an iterative process**

What does it mean to solve the problem?

- For Communication Purposes the solution can be thought of as being in three clunks (lots of variations)

  1. Statement of the problems and the recommendations (e.g., early childhood education in X, lags national standards we recommend the following actions to close the gap)

  2. The Current Situation: In X we lag national standards ...l

  3. The Vision for the Future

- In general a good solution will satisfy Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle

  - It must create public value

  - *It must have legitimacy and support*

  - *It must be operationally feasible*

Why is a communications strategy critical to have impact?

- Legitimacy and Support Will Often Depend on a Communications Strategy

- Understanding What is (or is not) Operationally Feasible Will Often Depend on Communications Strategy (e.g., syndicating work in progress and getting feedback)

- If Your Recommendations Are Not Viewed as Legitimate, Do Not Have Support from Key Stakeholders, or Are Not Viewed as Operationally Feasible - they will not be implemented

What is a communications strategy?

- Thinking about creating Legitimacy and Support from the beginning of the project

- Who are the key decision makers?

  - What are their priorities/interests?

  - If your recommendations are not implemented, what is the decision makers best alternative (e.g., status quo)?

- Who are the key stakeholders?

- Over the course of the project how often will you meet with key stakeholders/decision makers to make sure they buy-in?

- How will you test and confirm recommendations are operationally feasible?

How will you communicate with decision makers?

- Decision makers are busy, time is the scarcest resource

- Present information in as logical a manner as possible to make it easier to digest (e.g., Pyramid Principle)

- Retention is improved by logical order using a pyramid structure

  - Ideas at any level in the pyramid must always be summaries of the ideas grouped below them

  - Ideas in each grouping must always be of the same kind of idea

  - Ideas in each grouping must always be logically ordered.

How will you persuade?

- Good policy writing must persuade

  - Likeability

  - Reciprocity (Golden Rule)

  - Social Proof in What Others Do

  - Consistency of Word and Action

  - Authority from Expertise

  - Scarcity

  - Identifiable Target vs. Anonymous Statistics

  - Principles and Values

Case study New York City Economic Development Strategy

- Discussion of developing policy papers for NYC

  - Media.NYC.2020

  - Fashion.NYC.2020

  - FinancialServices.NYC.2020

- The problems we worked on

- The communications strategy

- Recommendations and impact

  - Applied Sciences NYC

    - Cornell University Engineering Campus

    - Expansion of NYU and Columbia's engineering programs

DPI821 Advanced Policy Writing

- Module in Spring

- Seminar Format Capped at 18 Students

- Monday seminar discussion of a policy paper understanding why it did (or did not) have impact

- Wednesday writing workshop for student assignments (each student to submit 2-3 assignments)

- Monday discussion will make extensive use of guest speakers/practitioners to discuss policy papers they have been involved with, e.g.

  - Stian Westlake, leads Nesta's Policy and Research team, which develops new insights into how innovation works and influences policy and practice to make it happen, topic: "The Vital Six Per Cent", a survey of which UK businesses create jobs and the impact this paper has had on UK Government Policy

  - Jerry Hultin, currently Senior Presidential Fellow at NYU, was Under Secretary of the Navy in the Clinton administration, topic: Reshaping Naval Procurement

Suggested reading

- Cialdini, R. B. (2001). Harnessing the Science of Persuasion. Harvard Business Review, 79(9), 72-79.

- Goldstein, N. J., Martin, S. J., & Cialdini, R. B. (2008). Yes! : 50 scientifically proven ways to be persuasive. New York: bFree Press.

- Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing. Psychology Review, 63 (2), 81-97

- Minto, B. (1996) The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking, & Problem Solving

- Moore, M. (1995) Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government

- Small, Loewenstein, G., & Slovic P. (2007). Sympathy and callousness: The impact of deliberative thought on donations to identifiable and statistical victims. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 102, 143-153.

- Skitka, L. J., & Tetlock, P. E. (1993). Providing public assistanc: Cognitive and motivational processes underlying liberal and conservative policy preferences. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65, 1205 - 1223.