



Public Policy Toolkit

Laidlaw Foundation's Public Policy Toolkit

THIS TOOLKIT CONTAINS A GUIDE ON HOW TO LEVERAGE PUBLIC POLICY TO
CREATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

What You Will Learn

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THIS PRESENTATION



WHAT IS
PUBLIC POLICY?

THE
IMPORTANCE
OF PUBLIC
POLICY

WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE
FOR PUBLIC
POLICY

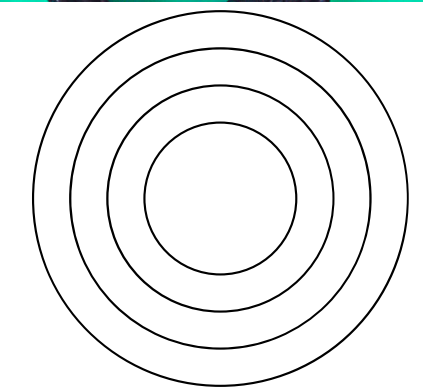
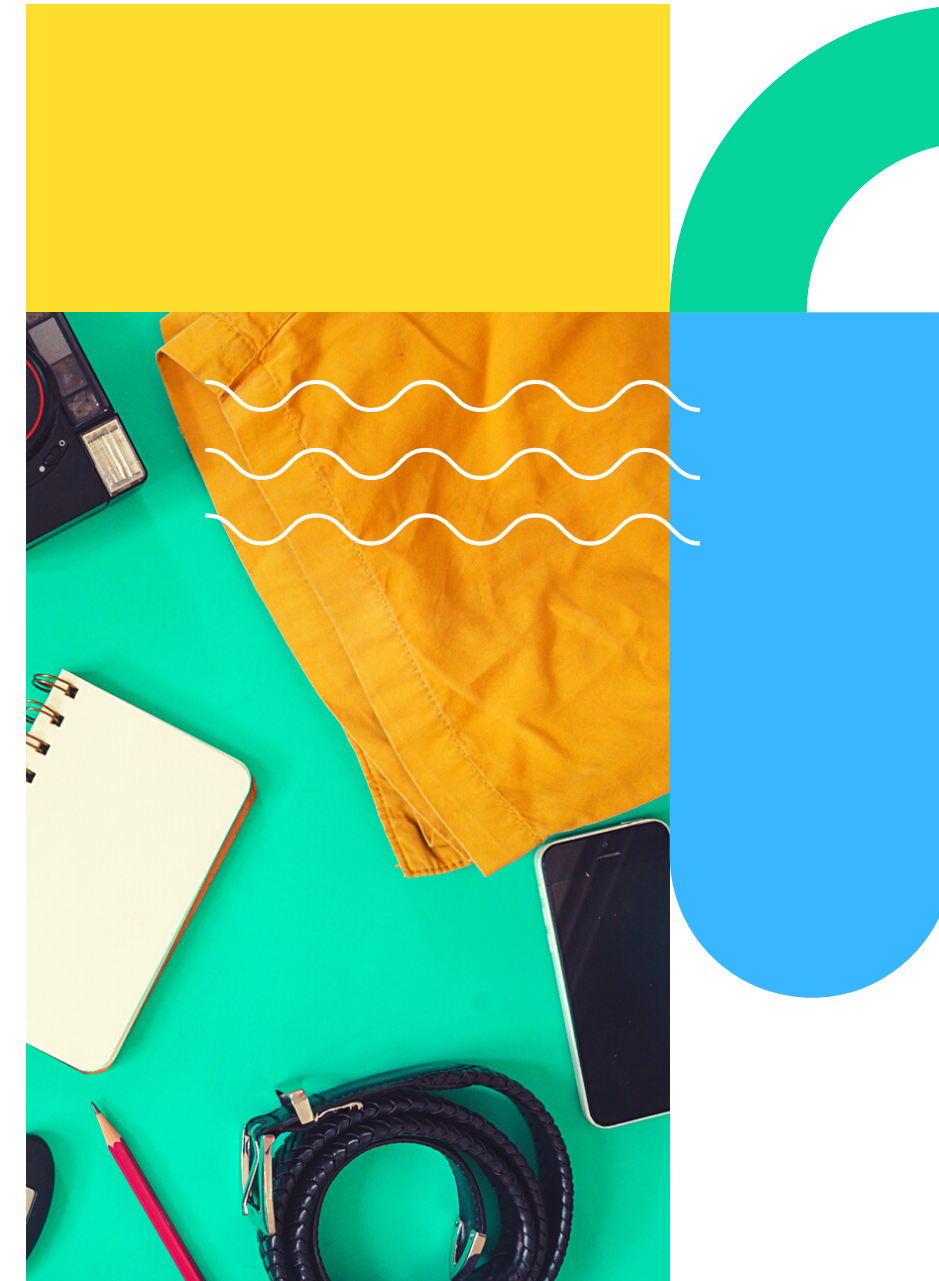
THE STEPS TO
INFLUENCE OR
CHANGE PUBLIC
POLICY

What Is Public Policy?

While there's no universally agreed upon definition of public policy, it's generally understood as a set of rules, actions, laws or policies that affect people or organizations. These rules are often outward-facing and have some relation to government at the municipal, provincial or federal level.

For the purposes of your grant, consider what laws, policies or rules that exist right now that either hinders the progress of your initiative/the community you serve or enhance your impact. For example, some of our grantees work to improve the correctional services system for incarcerated youth- there are often issues with access to adequate healthcare and dignified programming within the institutions. Because detention centers are operated by either the federal or provincial governments, any rules within those institutions would be under their control and therefore a matter of public policy.

Let's try another example; educational streaming is a practice that has often encouraged youth from racialized and low-income backgrounds to choose 'applied' courses in their early highschool years. This has negatively affected their ability to move on to post-secondary institutions and has had lifelong, negative educational consequences. The practice has been shown to specifically disenfranchise, Black, Indigenous and Newcomer youth, it is therefore considered discriminatory. Since the policy of streaming is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, it is therefore a public policy issue.



WHERE ARE SOME OF THE THE PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOUR WORK OR THE COMMUNITIES YOU SERVE?

Why Is Public Policy Important?

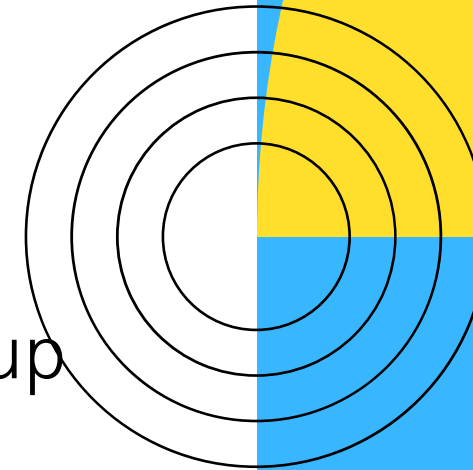


Public policy governs the world around us, from the laws that we follow to the rules that make up our society. Historically however, these rules and laws were not necessarily created to be the most reflective, modern, just or equitable given how our national fabric has changed.

Policymakers historically have not always reflected or represented the communities they served. It's therefore important to know what policies govern your work and your communities that lead to negative outcomes and know that you have the ability to challenge and eventually change them for the better.

Who Is Responsible For Public Policy?

Policymakers and/or elected officials are often responsible for drawing up bills, laws and legislation but public policy is something that all of us can and should have a say on, especially when it affects us. The very intention of democracy was to ensure that everyone has a right to influence how they're governed. While this hasn't always been the case and has been much harder for certain groups than others, it's important to never forget this simple notion.



How Can You Influence Or Change Public Policy?



Identify your issue



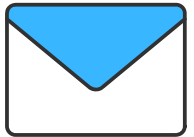
Identify your ask



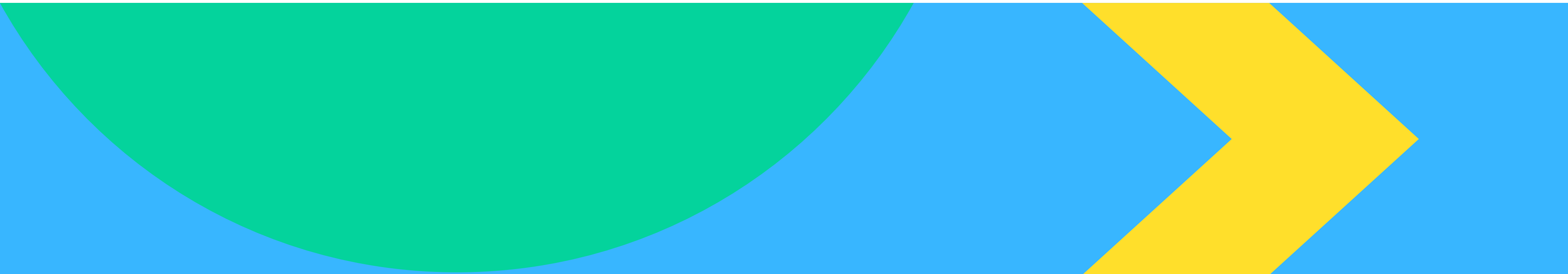
Identify Your Approach



Identify Your Resources



Follow Through and Next Steps





Identify Your Issue

To advocate for a public policy solution you have to have a clear understanding of the issue you face. We covered a few examples above and it's very important to understand as much as possible about the issue you face including:

- Which level of government does this issue fall under?
 - How does this issue specifically impact my initiative/my community?
 - Roughly how long has this been an issue?
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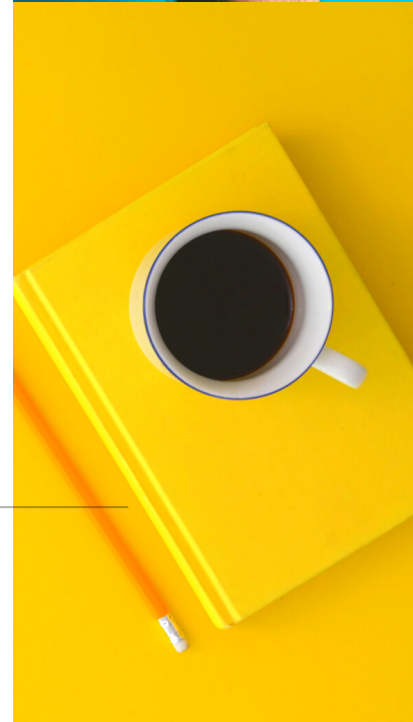
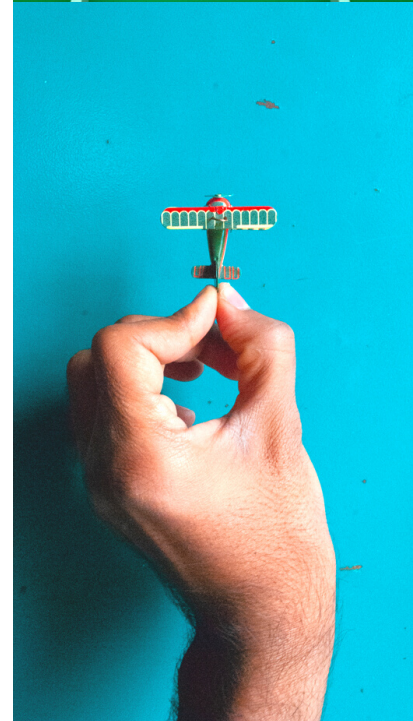
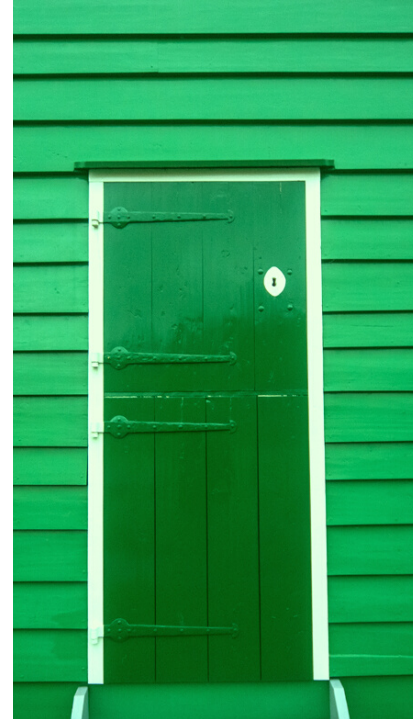
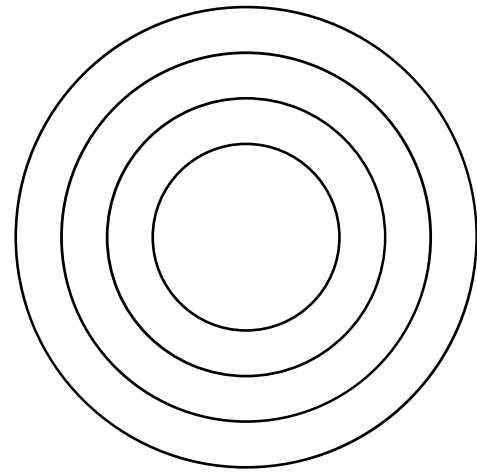
Identity Your Ask

When advocating for a solution, it's important to propose the solution, the onus often rests with you. This is why it's important to have an understanding of how government works so that the proposed ask when it comes to the solution, is something that can be realistically implemented. This is where Laidlaw can assist, you can speak with our team at any time to assist you in developing your ask and strategy, along with determining the feasibility of your ask.

Some questions to consider when determining your ask include:

- How realistic is the ask/proposed solution?
- How urgent is the ask/proposed solution?
- What steps will it take to have the ask/proposed solution implemented?

Identify Your Approach



When trying to advocate for a policy change, there are many styles, approaches, and strategies that are specific to each issue and organization. It's impossible to identify a one-size-fits-all approach. However, it is always helpful to start off with a collaborative and non-confrontational approach when possible as that approach has often been successful and the fastest. Working with government and policymakers has always proven to be effective because you then form a working relationship which can be helpful for future policy advocacy initiatives.

There are times however when direct and persistent advocacy is required. Such times are often due to urgency, gross injustice, or an unresponsive/uncooperative government.

Sometimes it could be as simple as meeting with an elected official to present your ask, and other times it could be as time-consuming as assembling a coalition, engaging media, and launching a public advocacy campaign. Various approaches have unique pros and cons, expenses, and time commitments, it is important for you to decide how much bandwidth you and your organization have.

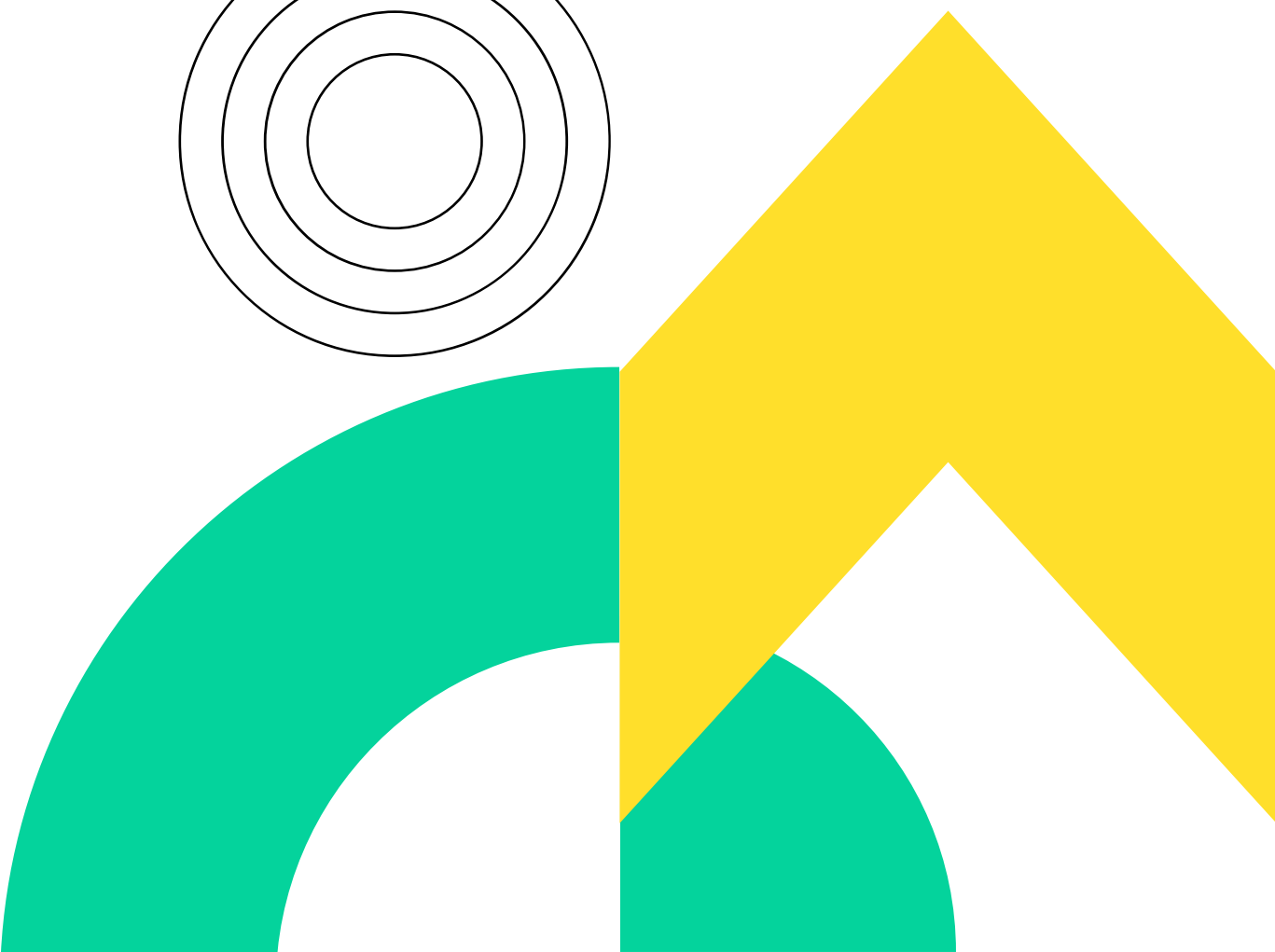
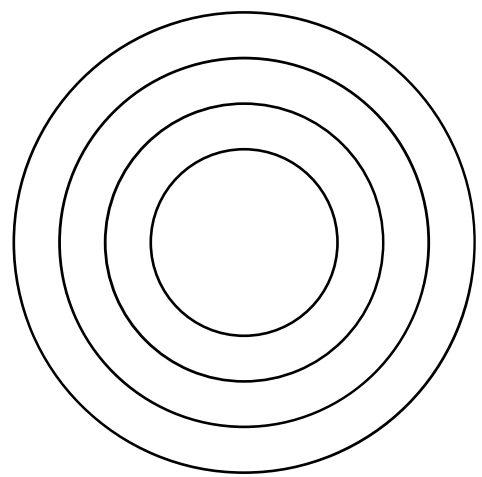
Understanding what approach to use and when is a learned skill and should you require more information for your specific situation feel free to contact us.

Identify Your Resources

The size of the ask will determine the number of resources you will need to see it through. Many organizations get excited about policy advocacy only to find out that their intended goal will require years of advocacy, money, and organizing. Sometimes the ask could be simple, for example, if you meet with an elected official for a partnership or for them to change discriminatory language, this could be seen as a relatively easy ask that one could do off the side of their desk in addition to their duties, but other, larger asks that require policy/legislative change can take years especially if the government is not in agreement.

This doesn't mean that you need to give up but it does mean that you need to take inventory of the time you can personally offer, the money that you have to fund your advocacy, the volunteers, and their ability to be motivated for the long haul. These are all key elements to successful, long-term advocacy.

When the ask is large, it's also helpful to get other organizations on board to do some of the heavy lifting. Coalitions and campaigns have been successful in changing policy because each organization is able to contribute in the form of either input, money, volunteers, or other necessary skills. If you're the one getting the group together, they will look to you for leadership and delegation but it's key that everyone has a solid understanding of their organization's role.



Follow Through And Next Steps



If you've secured a meeting with a policymaker, the follow-through is just as important. Ensure that next steps are clearly outlined so that there's actual implementation and enforcement of the decision.

Make sure to add "Next Steps" as an agenda item in your agenda so that the policymaker and your initiative knows what to expect next and who is responsible for what.

