



# TRAINING THE TRAINER ON POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

## A Developmental Evaluation Report

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary/Acknowledgments	03
Guiding Principles at a Glance	04
Detailed Report/ Best Practices	06
Core Competencies	08
Preconditions Phase	09
Getting Started Phase	10
Getting Organized Phase	11
Develop a Profile Phase	12
Develop a Plan Phase	13
Policy Passage Phase	14
Policy Enactment Phase	15
Implementation and Evaluation Phase	16
Conclusion	17

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This developmental evaluation (DE) was developed as part of the University of Colorado's Community Organizing for Prevention (COFP) evaluation plan. This evaluation was collaboratively guided by the following partners:

- Kit Jones, Injury and Violence Prevention Center at Colorado School of Public Health
- Steering Committee Members - The CU Evaluation Team sought out and consulted with both subject and process matter experts in local policy and systems change:
  - Dr. Doreen E. Martinez, Colorado State University
  - Kale McMonagle, The Civic Canopy
  - Jenna Metzinger, Colorado School of Public Health
  - Marc Morgan, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
  - Melissa Pluss

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Community Organizing for Prevention (COFP) program commissioned the University of Colorado's (CU) COFP evaluation team to identify and describe core competencies and best practices for building capacity of trainers or coaches who work with community partners interested in implementing equitable and culturally responsive changes in policies or systems at the neighborhood, city, and county level. We employed the use of a developmental evaluation (DE) in order to assess and provide recommendations for the development of these core competencies and best practices.

To assist in the DE process, the CU COFP evaluation team activated a steering committee of both process and subject matter experts who work with community partners to implement policy and systems change strategies at the local level. Together, they designed interviews to collect data from trainers and practitioners working on local policy and systems change, then guided the analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

This report highlights important conceptual findings from the DE. These findings can be used for the following:

- To build skill, knowledge and understanding of trainers or coaches who support individuals who are leading or organizing policy and/or systems change at the neighborhood/city/county level
- To strengthen a community's system of support by identifying when it might be appropriate or necessary to pull in additional supports beyond the initially identified trainer or coach
- To inform future projects focusing on skill development pertaining to the core competencies detailed in this report, and/or future DEs focusing on how to evaluate the impact, results, or outcomes with what success looks like regarding training a community around local policy and systems change.

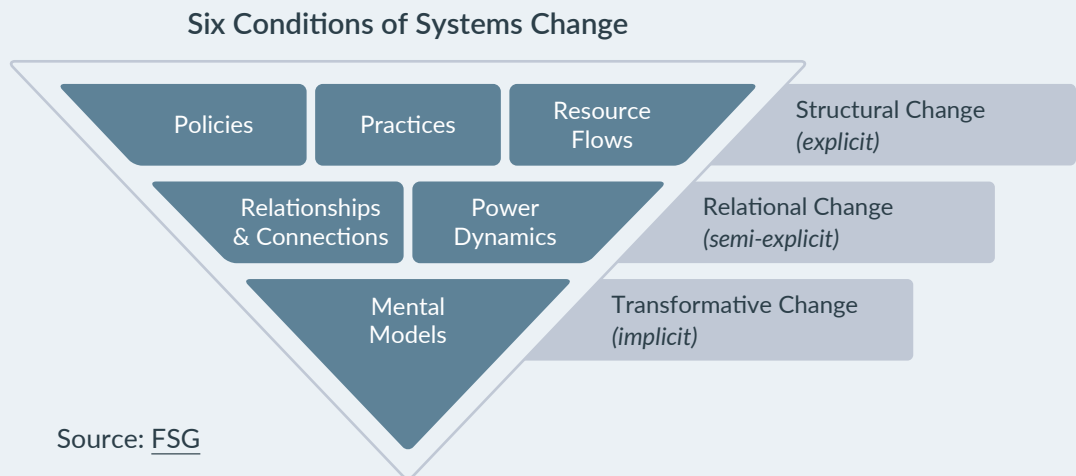
We also identified overarching themes that captured the foundations on which we believe these core components and best practices are based. These **guiding principles** can be used to ensure individuals who use the findings of this report have a base knowledge of policy and systems change, are committed to coaching towards these changes in local communities, and are ready to dig in more to the full DE findings.

## Guiding Principles at a Glance:

- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1: Policy and systems change are very interconnected.** By changing policy one is changing the system(s) around them. However, one can do systems change work and never involve policy change. Policy change is a piece of systems change, as there are many other conditions of systems change.

» **COACHING RECOMMENDATION:**

- Coaches must understand how policy and systems change are interconnected. It is important that a coach can explain this to the communities they are working with.



- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #2: Coaching towards policy and systems change requires a team approach.** There is so much that goes into training a community around policy and systems change at the local level. These concepts are very expansive and multi-faceted.

» **COACHING RECOMMENDATION:**

- A coach needs to know their own strengths and limitations. A level of awareness needs to be present that allows a coach to know when it is appropriate to pull another subject matter expert (SME) in to support the work being done with the local organizer. To be considered an “expert” in every core component and best practice is not realistic for any one coach.

- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #3: There is potential for harm.**

There is a possibility that harm can be caused or furthered by upholding oppressive systems and practices towards particular individuals and groups in a community through policy and systems change work.

» **COACHING RECOMMENDATION:**

- The use of an equity lens while coaching is key to preventing further harm and oppression within the community.

- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #4: Policy and systems change are not linear processes.** Oftentimes, the work can experience setbacks, challenges, or unanticipated events that require those doing the work to shift their plans and create new ways forward to reach the end goal. Small but important “wins” occur throughout the policy and systems change process and can occur even if the originally planned policy or systems change never occurs. Identifying and celebrating these can help keep momentum and sustained engagement of those involved in the process.

» **COACHING RECOMMENDATION:**

- A coach needs to assist local organizers in thinking broadly about what “success” means in connection to the initiative. When working with a community, coaches need to provide support around continuous evaluation of the local efforts to ensure that their efforts remain on-track and are appropriate for any unforeseen changes or barriers that have the potential to derail any original plan of action.

- 
- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #5: Policy and systems change can be a slow and challenging process.** This process is natural, and expectations need to be clear and understood by all parties who are involved in the policy and systems change process.

» COACHING RECOMMENDATION:

- A coach needs to be prepared to support a community around how to anticipate and deal with frustration and disappointment that can naturally occur throughout the broader policy and systems change process. Coaches must be prepared to support communities in managing conflict and burnout.

- 
- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #6: Place-based context is essential.** Policy and systems change at the local level requires a basic level of understanding about the social, political, and economic dynamics and community conditions in each community.

» COACHING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- It is essential that coaches spend time visiting the community to learn more about the individuals and context that make up that community, grounding themselves in understanding the various dynamics and conditions in each community.
- Before training a community, a coach should examine how the social issue is currently framed within that community. This also includes having a basic understanding of the community's demographic information, who holds power within that community, and what resources are available to that community.
- It is important to spend time coaching a community around getting to know the decision-making structures and processes of their local government and/or school board and diving deeper into who holds power within those structures.

- 
- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #7: Importance of community as partners.** It is imperative that policy and systems change work be done alongside those who live and work within the community of focus.

» COACHING RECOMMENDATION:

- Coaches need to train communities why it is important to engage community members in local policy and systems change, and help communities identify ways in which this can be done continuously throughout the process (e.g. when collecting and interpreting local data, during the power mapping process, when identifying possible policy or systems change solutions, evaluation and monitoring, etc.)

- Coaches need to advocate for those leading local policy and systems change work to be inclusive of the different demographic identities which are present in that specific community.

- 
- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #8: Relationships are key.** Much of the work involved in local policy and systems change is contingent on the existence of trusting relationships between those who are involved in each step of the process.

» COACHING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Building a relationship where the coach and community can be honest, critical, and transparent with one another will help create an environment that will allow for crucial conversations.
- A coach needs to spend time working with the local organizer on emotional intelligence and self-awareness skill development. Emotionally intelligent organizers can effectively facilitate change and manage the emotions involved within the change process, as change can trigger strong emotions for those who are required to change. Part of this must also include skill building around motivating for change, conflict management, and equitable decision-making processes.
- Coaching towards authentic community engagement is key to ensuring relationships are built out of respect and care and are not exploitative or tokenizing.

- 
- **GUIDING PRINCIPLE #9: "Talking into people's listening ears" is essential.** Knowing how to talk about the work in a multitude of ways allows for the engagement of diverse members of the community and helps to obtain buy-in from those with decision-making power.

» COACHING RECOMMENDATION:

- Learning how to message to a variety of audiences from the start is important to the sustainability and success of local efforts. Values-based coaching techniques, storytelling, public narrative building, and developing media strategies are all skills that need to be used when training local communities in policy and systems change.

---

*For more information, feel free to read the full report.*

# DETAILED REPORT

Policy and systems change are very interconnected. By changing policy, the system(s) around them changes. However, one can do systems change work and never involve policy change. Both policy and systems change are dynamic and can oftentimes be complex. Within both, there are many moving pieces, some even hard to identify at times. Because of this, it is difficult to create a comprehensive “how-to” guide for those training local communities on these topics. However, this DE can help determine particular core competencies and best practices that individuals’ need to be aware of when working with community partners interested in or implementing equitable and culturally responsive changes in policies or systems at the neighborhood, city, and county level.

Further, policy and systems change requires a team approach. There are many elements that can go into training a community around policy and systems change at the local level. These concepts are very expansive and multi-faceted. To be considered an “expert” in every core component and best practice is asking a lot of any one individual. This report details core competencies and best practices in a way that is not meant to be put on one particular individual. Rather, it is important that a trainer or coach is aware of and able to embrace their own skill level and capacity, knows when it is appropriate to build up a particular skill or ability, and when it is appropriate to pull in another resource (i.e. subject matter expert, toolkit, training, etc.) for a deeper level of support or understanding around a particular core competency. For groups providing coaching on policy and systems change, it can be helpful to start off with an assessment of each coach’s strengths so individuals know who they can go to for support when coaching around a new area.

*It is important to note that this report was developed for trainers and coaches who are working within either a collective impact framework or a policy change process without the use of collective impact.*

## Best Practices For Those Training Individuals Who are Leading or Organizing Policy and Systems Change at the Local Level

**Equity at the Forefront:** Individuals’ training a local community need to be aware that there is great potential to cause further harm or be oppressive towards particular groups in a community through policy and systems change work.

- **Demographics:**

It is important that there is an accurate understanding of the demographic information of a community to better understand who makes up that community’s overall population. Communities should examine data that help understand the make-up of the community in terms of age, sex and gender, income level, race and ethnicity, employment status, housing status, and level of education. Understanding the community is essential to engaging partners and understanding how a policy or systems change initiative could potentially impact those within the community.

- **Power and Oppression:**

Having an understanding of how power shows up in the community (i.e. who controls resources, who sets agendas, who has decision-making power) allows for greater understanding of where influence lies, and where work around power sharing needs to be focused. Training community members around the importance of broadening the power base beyond traditional power holders, processes and systems is crucial to breaking down the oppressive systems that hold economic, political, and social issues in place.

- **Impacts on Historically Marginalized and Oppressed Populations:**

It is imperative that those involved have an awareness of how the particular policy or change in a particular system might negatively impact any marginalized or historically oppressed groups of people, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Time should be spent upfront exploring any potentially negative impacts of the targeted effort. Questions should be asked, such as: *Who is impacted by this policy or change in a system and how? Who benefits? Who might be left out by this policy or change in the system? In what ways does this policy or change within a system impact or exacerbate inequality? Does this policy or change within a system help those in power maintain that power?* Having these conversations upfront will ensure that those involved have exercised due diligence to not further harm or oppression within their local policy and systems change efforts.

There are valid reasons why marginalized and historically oppressed groups might be hesitant and even resistant to collaborating with organizations or individuals in a community. Having an awareness of when and how to bring marginalized and historically oppressed groups into collaborative work being done in a community requires some awareness and sensitivity. These situations are best informed when those organizing around local policy and systems change have a historical understanding of what harms may have been caused in the past, and what respect looks like between marginalized, vulnerable, and historically oppressed groups and the greater community. It can take a long time to build and repair past harm between groups in the community. While that history should be examined and better understood, that space must be respected, and nothing needs to feel forced.

- **Cultural Humility:**

These conversations need to be had with cultural humility and cultural relevance in mind. With cultural humility there is an understanding that we can never know everything there is to know about every group within a community. It is important that those doing the work remain humble and open to learning from other groups in the community to better understand how a policy or systems change effort can support those populations. Cultural relevance also needs to be considered when addressing policy or systems change. Does the proposed change incorporate awareness, understanding and responsiveness to the beliefs, values, customs and institutions of the groups within the community that it will impact the most? If not, there is a chance that the proposed change will continue to further inequities within the community.

**Social Context in Place-Based Work:** Policy and systems change at the local level require a foundational level of understanding about the social, political, and economic dynamics and community conditions in each community. This can be difficult to do if one does not reside in that community. Because of this, it is important that anyone training a local community on policy and systems change takes the time to get to know the community through partnership with one or more individuals within that community. Community partners should be individuals who:

- have a good understanding of their own community
- know what the power structures look like within that community
- know the status of specific issues in the community
- know the political landscape
- know the demographic profile of that community
- understand what the history of collaboration looks like in that community
- can identify any leverage points in the community to build from

If possible, the person training the community on policy and systems change needs to make every attempt possible to spend time within that community to develop their own sense of these conditions and circumstances within the community, to be better informed on how they can best support this community.

**Importance of Experience:** Only so much can be learned through a training, webinar, workshop, or toolkit. Much of a trainer or coach's competency and success comes from walking through these processes and working alongside those doing the work directly within their own communities. It is reasonable for it to take time to gain proficiency in this work. One can also learn from their peers or colleagues who are also training communities around local policy and systems change. Trainers or coaches should leverage those relationships with others doing similar work and spend time discussing each other's experiences, sharing successes, challenges, tips and tricks of the trade. They should explore the nuances of the work in detail, get curious, dive in deep, and have intentional dialogue around this work. If possible, they should build relationships with other subject matter experts (SMEs) and shadow their work with communities (if appropriate and with communities' consent).

# Core Competencies

While policy and systems change is not a linear process, there are certain “phases” that can be helpful to understand before starting this process. Some communities might end up cycling back through a particular phase, given any changes or barriers that might occur while navigating the policy or systems change process. That is natural and should be anticipated. For the sake of this detailed report, we have organized the various practices, skills, and competencies into 7 phases in an attempt to lay out a process that a coach can use to help navigate training a community member who is leading or organizing policy and systems change at the local level. The phases are as follows:

- Preconditions
- Getting Started
- Getting Organized
- Develop a Profile
- Develop a Plan
- Policy Design (policy specific)
- Policy Enactment (policy specific)
- Implementation and Evaluation



Within each phase noted above, we have identified priority core competencies one needs to be aware of while navigating through this process. Some core competencies might fall under one phase of the process, while others might be useful in multiple steps of the process. Some may or may not apply, depending on whether one intends to enact policy change(s). Again, policy and systems change are intricate and oftentimes complex. To reduce being overwhelmed, only the identified prioritized core competencies will be mentioned in this detailed report.

Within each phase of the process it is important that a trainer/coach has a fundamental understanding of the various “themes” or components in each phase.

The first theme is that of the **theory**, or the “why”, behind each phase. These are ways of thinking that impact how we approach the work. For example, we can know how to do something (i.e. implementation), but if we’re not thinking with an equity mindset, the results may have a negative impact.

The next theme is that of the **process skills** that are ideal for each phase. These are skills needed to help people work together to achieve your goal. These are things like understanding collective impact, facilitation, and conflict management.

The third theme is that of the **technical skills** needed within that particular phase. These are skills needed to achieve the different tasks throughout each stage of the policy or systems change model being used. They are things like data collection, issue analysis, policy design, evaluation, etc.

The last theme is that of **content competency**. This is knowledge related to the issue you are trying to address (i.e. substance abuse, food insecurity, housing, etc.), like understanding primary prevention, data aligned to issues, and systems change strategies.





## PRECONDITIONS PHASE:

Before training a community, the initial phase should focus on grounding oneself in the community and examining how the issue is currently framed within that community. This looks like working alongside the community to dive deep into:

- how the issue is currently viewed within a community
- what is known about the issue in the community
- who or what the issue impacts in the community (directly and indirectly)
- if there is a sense of urgency to change that issue
- what the political landscape looks like within a community
- identifying what past work (if any) has been done around and issue
- what policies exist that impact that issue
- if there is current momentum around changing that issue

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- Systems change basics
- Collective impact (if applicable)
- Preconditions of collective impact
- Policy change and the CDC Policy Process (if applicable)
- Readiness for policy change and/or collective impact
- Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion principles
- Issue analysis
- Primary prevention

## → GETTING STARTED PHASE:

In this phase, it is assumed that the community is ready to move forward with the beginning steps of a local policy and/or systems change initiative. (If not, there are tools to aid in building up the preconditions phase.) Here, one is setting the stage, bringing other community members onboard who are (or could be) invested in the priority issue being addressed to assist in moving the policy and systems change work forward. Interpersonal skill development of the local organizer comes into play here. It is important that the individual(s) leading the charge on the initiative can connect with a variety of individuals in their community to ensure that multiple voices, experiences, skill sets, and sectors are represented from the get-go. Investing time into one-on-ones and focus groups with community members is needed. This will help to build a strong foundation that is culturally appropriate and well-informed, which will aid in the sustainability of efforts. One should be starting to build skills around facilitation, ways to reach people, how to bring people together in a community, broadening mindsets, and educating those involved on the basics of understanding the social/economic issue (i.e., substance misuse).

It is also necessary to have an understanding of the demographic information of the particular community, where traditional power lies in that community (i.e., who sets the agenda, holds decision-making power, what resources are sourced/available, who controls resources, etc.), and be able to identify individuals in the community who hold other forms of power (i.e., connection power, expert power, referent power, those with lived experience, etc.). In this phase, one should also understand the basics of starting this work with an equity mindset to ensure one is doing their best not to uphold systems of inequity within their policy and systems change initiative.

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- 7 Types of power
- Mindsets and behavior change
- Defining a vision and purpose
- Community organizing
- Relational meetings (aka one-on-one meetings)
- Anti-oppressive facilitation
- Equity assessments
- Creating a community profile
- Data-based planning for effective prevention
- Values-driven community engagement



## GETTING ORGANIZED PHASE:

In this phase community members and other groups have been strategically identified who are interested in investing time and energy into the policy and systems change initiative. Members are starting to:

- meet and build relationships among themselves
- decide upon a group structure that is realistic to all involved
- lay out group norms and agreements, roles and responsibilities
- build out timelines
- address existing power dynamics
- identify the skills and knowledge needed to be successful
- identify any other members of the community who are integral to the success of the initiative

Here, the group needs to be starting to undergo a deep dive into assessing the priority issue being addressed and developing a problem statement, using multiple forms of data (organizational, local, regional, and state) to inform their efforts. If focusing on policy change, this is where the group will need to review and analyze the organizational/municipal policies' language to identify any gaps and build comprehension. Knowing what resources are and are not available that can help support this policy and systems change effort is also important. The individual leading the organizing efforts will need to start to work on educating and level-setting around the basics of the importance of data-driven decision making, the policy process, policy law, prevention science, prevention strategies, types of power, justice, equity, diversity, inclusion (JEDI), and systems change. Self-awareness of the organizer is imperative. An organizer needs to be honest about their own level of understanding of this information and pull in SMEs if needed.

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- Coalition development and management (if applicable)
- Team development (storming, forming, norming)
- Group decision making
- Interest matrix (aka partner mapping)
- Resource scans
- Policy law (if applicable)
- Prevention strategies
- Community data informing possible prevention activities



## DEVELOP A PROFILE PHASE:

In this phase, the focus is diving into the details of the issue and identifying what exactly those working on the issue are trying to change or trying to impact with the work being done. The collection and analysis of local, regional, and state-level data are needed here. It is important that both quantitative and qualitative data be included in this part of the process, as both are needed in order to build a more accurate and robust picture of how this issue presents itself locally, who it impacts, and how the issue is influencing or impacting those in the community. Time needs to be spent undergoing a root cause analysis to inform the initiative in attempts to understand the issue exists and to identify areas where potential impact can be made to address this social issue at the local level.

Regardless, if one is focusing on policy or systems change, it will be important to investigate and analyze potential policy/systems change solutions and explore feasibility and appropriateness of these solutions. Time will need to be spent developing and framing key messages that will be used throughout the process with the community. One will also need to determine relevant partners and their values and position on the matter as well as explore potential and known opposition within the community and anticipate their involvement.

Before moving forward with selecting any plan of action, those involved in the initiative at this point will need to understand the importance of why doing an equity impact assessment on any proposed plan of action is important. Once that understanding has been achieved, the group will then need to undergo an equity impact assessment of their proposed policy and/or systems change action to systematically examine how different racial and/or ethnic groups may or may not be affected by the proposed policy or systems change strategy. This assessment will help catch any possible negative unintended consequences that could further harm or oppress historically marginalized and oppressed communities before finalizing priorities for further action.

This work will result in finalizing priorities for future action steps. Time will need to be spent on helping to build the interpersonal skills of those leading the local policy and systems change initiative. In addition, as potential solutions are being identified, time will also need to be spent examining if the initiative and if those involved have enough power to “win” or achieve that solution. Decisions should be made around which actions to push ahead in the community. Conflicting opinions might present themselves during this time. The organizer should be ready to guide those involved in how to navigate this natural group dynamic. Group communication, decision making, consensus building, and conflict management and resolution skills are all techniques that one leading this process should be trained in and ready to utilize if and when needed.

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- Conflict management and resolution
- Authentic Community Engagement (those affected by the issue are at the table and involved/in shared leadership in choosing policy approach/solution)
- Data-based decision making
- Power mapping
- Data sourcing and analysis
- Centering racial equity throughout data integration
- Gaps analysis
- Results-based accountability



## DEVELOP A PLAN PHASE:

By the time one reaches this phase, a proposed solution has been identified and now a plan needs to be made. Specific steps, timelines and those responsible for seeing the actions through will need to be identified at this point. It is important that those leading the efforts have built a skill set that allows them to facilitate the process of assigning who is responsible for carrying out an identified task, when tasks need to be completed, what resources are needed, and a process for accountability. This person (or an otherwise identified individual) will need to be prepared to monitor these components with performance measures to ensure the work is getting done in a timely manner and in accordance with the agreed-upon plan of action.

Time will also be spent thinking about how the group needs to communicate their efforts into the community in order to gain more support and traction, and to build an overall public narrative. Those invested in the initiative will develop the story they want to share with the community to bring attention to the issue/effort and to help gain traction to move things forward. Attention should be given to whether or not this description should be modified to reach different audiences, as the initiative is more likely to be successful if more people in the community are supportive of the effort. At this point it is important to put time and energy into developing a media strategy to help relay the message in a way that effectively reaches various members of the community.

There will need to be some focus on getting more strategic partners and decision makers on board, depending on what the proposed solution will be. These are people who have been identified as important to the implementation, success, and sustainability of the proposed solution. Time will need to be spent sometimes in a group setting, but oftentimes one-on-one. Strategic partners will want to know why the issue should be of importance to them, how the issue impacts them, why they are important to the success and sustainability of the proposed solution, and how the proposed solution impacts them. Time should be spent before meeting to gain an understanding of that person's culture and values. This information should be built into the messaging when meeting with the individual or group. Getting commitments from those partners can take time, trust-building, and regular communication.

If focusing on policy change, it will be important for those organizing the local efforts to pull in people who are connected to and have an understanding of local government and/or school board decision-making structures and processes. There needs to be some time spent in advance getting to know the profiles of those who hold decision-making power (e.g., local legislators, public officials, board members) within these structures (e.g., policy changes they have supported in the past, topics that they have been actively engaged in). This will help those involved in the initiative to use a more informed approach when attempting to engage particular individuals who are important to the passing of the proposed policy change. Those involved should have a solid understanding of the goals of the policy once enacted. The strategy and policy development process is not always straightforward. Bringing in SMEs at this point is recommended for those who are not familiar with the policy change process at a local level. Lastly, looking ahead, it is important that those involved understand that sometimes it can take more than one attempt to get a policy to pass. A plan for what to do if the policy does not pass needs to be built into the conversation during this phase.

There also needs to be a plan put into place that allows for continual assessment and monitoring of the policy change or systems change strategy, identifying who is responsible to do that work, and determining what is done with that information once collected. This plan will be presented as a part of the proposed policy (either suggested or written into the legal language) or systems change initiative. Having a plan in place here will allow for continual improvement and assessment of the desired impact of the policy or systems change initiative embedded into the approach.

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- Strategic planning
- Leadership development
- Selecting indicators and performance measures
- Policy analysis (what policy options are there in our chosen topic and which one is right for the unique community conditions)
- Policy scan (looking at local code vs. looking at policy options)
- Education policy, rules and laws from your organization around advocacy (if applicable)
- Local government structures and processes

### Note:

If considerable time has passed since starting the initial policy and systems change process, the individual(s) leading the effort should gauge whether time should be put into re-evaluating any of the aforementioned components of the overall process (i.e. if decision-makers have changed, if the political landscape has changed, etc.).

## **POLICY PASSAGE PHASE** (Only applicable to policy change):

Generally, up to this point only broad structural parameters around the policy have been identified. Now, work needs to be done to develop the rules and regulations to implement and enforce the new policy. Pulling in a SME that can help with drafting best practice policy language is recommended at this point of the process. Additional time should be spent continuing to engage decision makers, as well, as there are still areas where the appropriate parties can influence this process. Spending intentional time building relationships and educating these individuals can help to build out equitable and well-informed rules and regulations around the policy. Sharing stories/data about how the policy can possibly impact members of the community (intentionally or unintentionally) can be a powerful tool in this part of the process.

This phase can be complex and will involve a number of individuals and agencies/organizations. It is important that those involved at this point have a general understanding of the appropriate local policy process norms. Further, it could be determined at this point that certain amendments need to be made to the policy. Therefore, it is important to be educated on the policy amendment process, and pull in SMEs to help ensure that the best policy practice language is being built into the amended policy.

A particular policy change can be challenging for some members of the community, especially policies that are aimed at reducing inequities that exist within that community. Opposition should be expected, and a plan needs to be developed for how to address this dynamic. One needs to understand the opposing party's beliefs, background, and position on the matter. Doing so will put those advocating for the policy in a better position to address the opposition. Take time to become educated on any tactics the opposing party has used in the past. This will help inform ways in which one can address the opposition with more success. Always keep the focus on the policy and social issue it aims to address. Being prepared with data (both qualitative and quantitative) to use in order to remind the opposing party and general public about the specific concerns around the social issue can help to curtail the opposition and remind the public why this policy change is important.

- Building a public narrative and storytelling/building community buy-in
- Decision maker strategy (who is supportive and who isn't)
- Drafting best practice policy language
- Local policy process norms (Study session, 1st reading, 2nd reading and passage)
- Active advocacy and education at decision maker meetings
- Anticipating and planning for opposition
- Policy amendment
- Presenting and being a Subject Matter Expert (SME) at Decision Maker meetings
- Speaking and Organizing others to speak during Public Comment periods



## POLICY ENACTMENT PHASE (Only applicable to policy change):

In this phase the proposed policy has either passed or failed. If the policy passed and was officially authorized, one would move on to the next phase: implementation and evaluation. However, there is always a chance that a proposed policy may not pass. If that is the case, it is important that time is spent helping to build the skills to navigate how to support those who have been involved in the policy change effort to deal with any feelings of disappointment, frustration, or anger. It is also important to have some strategies in mind of how to reframe what success looks like in this situation. There are successes to celebrate even if a policy is not passed. Successes up to this point can look like more awareness built around the issue that was being addressed, more people who are invested in creating change around the issue, and an increase in community collaboration and engagement. Even with the loss of the policy passage, other achievements experienced throughout the process can positively impact the community and create momentum towards future change.

Conversations need to be had around debriefing the process up to this point and discussing what those involved see as appropriate next steps. Identifying what parts of the process worked well for those involved and which ones could be improved will help strengthen any potential policy change efforts moving forward. These conversations could be among those focused on the work, but can also include the broader community. Feedback can be elicited through community conversations, conversations amongst collaborators, anonymous surveys, or other avenues deemed appropriate to get the information that is most helpful to the process. Any information is good information, regardless of a win.

If a particular policy did not pass, those involved in the efforts might look back at the original policy scan results to re-examine if there is another policy that might be appropriate to shift the momentum and energy into. Time will need to be spent to regroup and determine if the circumstances are present that will allow for the continuation of efforts. Conversations will also need to focus on planning around how to gain more community or collaborator engagement and buy-in moving forward, and a new timeline will need to be developed.

### Note:

It is important to be conscientious around any celebrations if a policy is not passed, as there are still people in the community who must live with the negative ramifications of the existing policy that remains in place.

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- Critical reflection
- Regrouping if policy did not pass on next steps to continue the work
- Policy enactment
- Process/plan for continued policy evaluation and assessment of efficacy



## IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION PHASE:

In this phase, the action steps previously identified begin. The focus in this phase is to ensure that the policy and systems change actions are being implemented according to best practices and are being properly monitored and evaluated as planned. Part of the monitoring process involves holding those responsible for implementation accountable for their commitments. Just because a policy passes or a particular systems change strategy is adopted, it still can require time, resources, and attention to ensure it is achieving what had originally been planned. Additional time might also be needed to build relationships and educate anyone else who might not have been a part of the process up to this point but has been identified as critical to the successful implementation of the policy and/or systems change strategy. This could be other public or school officials or administrators, or other municipal or school board members. Change is difficult at times for some people, especially when they are altering pre-existing administrative operations or entire systems. While some might be celebrating a recent policy or systems change effort, others who are also directly involved in seeing that change through might be resistant to it. That is natural, expected, and might also take some time for people to fully get behind.

It is important to continue to keep the issue, process, and efforts in the public eye. This will aid in sustainability of the efforts and can be used to leverage any future efforts around the priority issue (or even other issues that might overlap or influence one another). It is also important to think about how success of the efforts up to this point can be celebrated within the group working on the initiative, but also in the public eye. A lot of time and energy has been put into the efforts up to this point. There needs to be attention given as to how one can best support those who have been leading the charge, as their work will still need to continue.

Another main area of focus in this phase is around evaluation. Time and attention must be given to examining the intended and unintended outcomes of the policy or systems change strategy. This process needs to be data-driven and those involved need to be able to identify if any changes need to be recommended. It is important to keep in mind things like knowing what data will be needed to see if the policy or systems change strategy is working as intended and how one knows if they are on the right track to meet their goals while undergoing this part of the process.

Core competencies needed in this phase include a foundational understanding of the following:

- Policy implementation
- Strategy implementation
- Qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods
- Continuous and emergent learning
- Local, regional and state-level data



# CONCLUSION

It is important to re-emphasize here that it is extremely difficult for any one person to be an expert in everything that influences policy and systems change. This work takes a team approach of involving other SMEs, learning from peers, shadowing experts, and using existing tools and resources.

This work is also heavily experienced based. It requires that one be put in the situation to be coaching a community towards policy and systems change. Further, if one has been given the opportunity to coach towards systems change strategies, but not policy change, it is even more important that they are taking the time to learn from others doing that specific type of work. It also requires that one really leans into the communities they are coaching. So much of this work is place-based and requires that one has a deep understanding of the social context of the community that they are working within. It is recommended that someone training a community on policy and systems change travels to the community to help solidify this sense of understanding. There are some things that can be learned from speaking to those who live within a community, and there are other things that can be understood if one has physically stepped foot within that community. Aside from building relationships that are important to the work, it allows a coach or trainer to see and feel certain dynamics and the political landscape for themselves. It may even allow one to pick up on something important to the work that someone in the community might not be aware of or in denial around, for whatever reason.

This report can be used as a guide to better understand the best practices and core competencies for someone who is leading or organizing policy and systems change at the local level. Further, it can be used as a leverage point to begin building out a database of trainings, trainers, resources and tools one can tap into when building their capacity around training a community on policy and systems change at the local level. It can also be used as a starting point in developing benchmarks for success for those training a community on policy and systems change at the local level.