

Section 4—What is policy?

Learning Objectives:

- To develop a better understanding of policy and how it can be used to address social problems such as food insecurity.
- To identify the food security issues the community would like to address through policy.
- To identify the community's readiness to move forward to influence or change policy.

This section is an introduction to policy. It explains and provides examples of three different types of policies: personal, organizational and public. As well, this section provides information on various policy tools, and processes that communities can use to help identify issues of concern and assess a community's readiness to move forward to address them.

Icebreaker to introduce the concept of policy

What does policy mean to me?

Divide participants up into small groups. Give each group a piece of paper on which the word "policy" is written. The participants should not know that all the groups have the same word. In small groups ask participants to brainstorm for five minutes about what this word means to them and make a list of related words or phrases. When the five minutes are up ask the groups to report what was said, without revealing their word. After everyone has shared the list of related words or phrases ask the groups to guess the words being described. Through brainstorming and feedback, participants should have a better understanding of what policy means.

You could also have on a separate flipchart one of the policy definitions on page 26 to 28. This will help to show the participants that their words and phrases reflect other definitions of policy and help them to feel comfortable that they do understand the concept of policy and just how broad it can be.

Activity 4.1 – Policies reflect values

Objective: To connect policies to the values that influence people's actions.

Using the story in this activity participants can begin to see how policies are connected to values. From legislation to personal interaction, policies play a role in the decisions people make about how they will act (or not act) in relation to others.

Process: Divide into small groups. Have participants cover up the bulleted text in the bottom right hand corner of page 35. Read through “Charlene’s story”. Ask each group to think about and discuss what values or policies are at play in this story. Then each group reports back to the larger group. Uncover the bulleted points and compare answers. After you have identified the various policies that are relevant to this story, name them according to whether they are personal, organizational or public policies. This will help participants sort out the various forms of policy and their connection to underlying values.

Activity 4.2 – Looking at policy impacts

Objective: To look at specific policies and examine their potential for affecting food security.

Process: In this activity an individual or group can look at specific policies and examine their potential for affecting food security. This activity provides some examples of personal, organizational and public policies on page 36 and 37 but the participants may like to use their own examples.

Activity 4.3– Using policy tools

Objective: To identify the tools that are needed to implement policy.

There are many different methods used to guide the implementation of policies. In *Section 4*, on page 30 and 31 various policy tools are discussed. Using a fictitious policy, the workbook explains some of the possible policy tools that would be needed to implement the fictitious policy.

Process: The participants will be given a case study to show the policy tools used in the HEAL School Food and Nutrition Policy Project from British Columbia. The group will be asked to cover up the bottom part of the page. The participants will then be asked to read the case study and brainstorm some of the policy tools they see used in this example.

Another way to identify policy tools is through stories in the newspaper. Divide the participants into small groups. Hand each group a daily newspaper. Ask the groups to look through the stories in the newspaper and identify some of the policy tools that go along with the stories. The example given on page 30 of this workbook may be helpful for the participants to look at. Ask the groups to report back to the larger group about the policy tools they were able to identify from the stories in the newspaper.

Activity 4.4 – Identifying problems and solutions using stories

Objective: To use story-sharing techniques to help people connect what they see happening in their communities with the larger issue of food security and to start thinking about strategies that can be used to address it.

Process: Ask people to start sharing their stories or experiences with food security. Listen to the stories carefully. Ask the group to look for recurring themes, issues and needs in the stories that are being shared. Brainstorm ways to address the issues and the causes. An example process is laid out using the story of ‘Amy’ in the voices box on page 40.

Activity 4.5– Identifying the “problem policy”

Objective: To identify policies that may be causing the problems and to see the connections between policies and food security.

Process: Ask your group to brainstorm problems related to food security they may have noticed in their communities. From the problems identified have groups pick one and work back to the policy (or policies) underlying it.

This activity can serve two purposes. It can be used to help participants gain further knowledge about identifying issues or to brainstorm about issues in their own community. NOTE: You may want to wait to do this activity until *Section 5* when the group is working towards developing their action plan. One of the hardest things for a group to do is to narrow down the issue they want to work on. A useful tool to help the group do this may be a SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This analysis can help a group to see where they may have the most success.

Activity 4.6– Are we ready to move forward?

Objective: To do a SWOT analysis to assess the internal (group) strengths and weaknesses, and the external (environmental, societal) opportunities and challenges the group will face in order to determine if the group is ready to move forward with their work.

A SWOT analysis helps to focus activities into areas where the group may be strong and to show where the greatest opportunities lie.

Process: Lead the group through the questions outlined in Activity 4.6. The information in their SWOT analysis can help them decide on the best place to focus their efforts.