

Equality-based Public Policy Development: **Views from the Field**

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Women in Public Policy Initiative
Projet Les femmes et les politiques publiques

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Other publications of the Women in Public Policy Initiative:

"Never Give Up" Women Making Policy Change (September 1999)

"Ne cédez jamais" Les femmes aux prises de la modification des politiques gouvernementales (Septembre 1999)

Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process (June 2000)

Les étapes: d'un processus d'élaboration de politiques publiques crédibles et inclusives (Juin 2000)

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Executive Summary

The Women in Public Policy Initiative (WIPP) started in 1999 with the intent of identifying an inclusive and responsive system for developing public policies. A key objective has been to find ways to ensure that women from diverse communities and realities are equal players in the development of policies that affect their lives. Through working with a broad range of community-based equality seeking organizations and individuals from three levels of government, WIPP developed *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* in 2000.

The current phase of our work draws on the experience of representatives from community-based equality seeking organizations throughout Canada and from three levels of government to provide:

- A profile of why community-based equality seeking groups do policy work
- An understanding of why some government staff and departments seek to include community-based perspectives in policy development
- Guidance on what is needed to do inclusive policy development
- Documentation of the barriers to inclusive cross-sector public policy development processes
- A summary of how *Steps* has been used and direction on how to improve the original edition of *Steps*, and
- Suggestions for the future work of the Women in Public Policy Initiative.

We find that policy engagement is integral to the work of many equality-seeking organizations. For their realities to be recognized and discrimination reduced, policies must be developed or changed. Public sector representatives involved in the WIPP Initiative argue that good policy is developed through a process that substantially includes those impacted by the particular policy. Involvement of all affected parties from the start of policy development is one of the ingredients needed to develop inclusive public policy. In addition,

- Community-based equality seeking groups, and in some cases, public policy staff, require clarification of how public policy is made.
- Community-based groups need to become more strategic in their recognition of their own areas of expertise and how these are conveyed in policy interventions.
- There is a need to develop trust and relationships across sectors, and
- The barriers to community involvement in public policy need to be eliminated.

Much detail was gathered on how to improve upon the existing version of *Steps*. It is found to be a useful resource that can be improved upon to ensure it is accessible and can realistically be adopted by both members of community-based organizations and by public policy staff. The contributions of approximately 60 participants in our most current research has provided the WIPP Initiative with a clear sense of the value of our work and of the most useful direction in which to move forward. We will seek to continue this Initiative by re-working the *Steps* document, extensive dissemination of the resource and a users' guide, and testing the process with government departments or divisions that are committed to achieving similar goals as those of the Women in Public Policy Initiative.

Acknowledgements

Contributors to this research from across the country made it possible to evaluate our earlier work and to look forward. The National Advisory Committee is grateful to all those working with community-based equality seeking groups or for a variety of government departments for their support of and input into this initiative. The contributions indicate that we are undertaking useful work that is currently needed by both sectors.

As the coordinator of this initiative I have found the work and support of the co-Chairs, Kamal Sehgal and Linda Snyder, to be invaluable. The members of the National Advisory Committee have provided the initiative with a national perspective and with input from a wide range of fields and experiences related to the development of public policy. Their assistance with this report is also greatly appreciated. Barbara Anello tirelessly created and updated our web site. Project assistants Nadia Stewer and Marie-Claude Robichaud were key to actually getting all the work done. Brenda Hattie took on the job of transcribing the hundreds of pages that formed the data for this report. Denyse LeBouthillier-Belliveau patiently translated the report. My thanks go out to all these contributors to the work of this initiative.

A.W.

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Public policy is a course of action or inaction chosen by government authorities to address a problem or a set of related problems. Public policies generally identify problems, establish goals and set out instruments for achieving solutions. In government, policies are behind everything from the way Canada decides to accept or reject refugees, to the hours of operation of public parks. Public policies help the government to organize its responsibilities in a way that takes into account different people's points of view and situations.

In this project we are looking for ways to make sure that women from diverse communities and realities are equal players in the development of policies that affect their lives. According to one research participant, "The greatest challenge facing us is that most women do not see policy as something they do; it is something that is done to them."

1. Introduction

This report is the third publication of the Women in Public Policy Initiative. In 1999 we produced the Nova Scotia based research report *Never Give Up: Women Making Policy Change* and held a national workshop, Sharing Our Strengths. The following year we produced *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* (see <http://dawn.thot.net/wipp>), which was built on the input gathered through the research and workshop. The goal of our current research is to evaluate the *Steps* document and, more generally, to explore how community-based knowledge can become an integral element in public policy development. In the course of this review many recommendations were made regarding how to continue to pursue the objectives of this initiative – to attain a system or means for integration of community-based equality seeking knowledge in public policy development.

This phase of the research draws on the experience of representatives from

community-based equality seeking organizations throughout Canada and from three levels of government to provide:

- a profile of why community-based equality seeking groups do policy work
- an understanding of why some government staff and departments seek to include community-based perspectives in policy development
- guidance on what is needed to do inclusive policy development
- documentation of the barriers to inclusive cross-sector public policy development processes
- a summary of how *Steps* has been used and direction for how to improve the original edition of *Steps* and
- suggestions for the future work of the Women in Public Policy Initiative.

I. What is the Women in Public Policy (WIPP) Initiative?

The Women in Public Policy Initiative was founded in 1999 by a coalition of community-based equality seeking groups in Nova Scotia called Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy (FemJEPP) and by Women's Centres CONNECT!, the collective voice of women's centres in Nova Scotia. It was initiated to respond to an experience shared by many of these groups in Nova Scotia; they found that their experience and expertise were not reflected in public policies that directly impacted their lives.

Women are disproportionately represented among low-wage and part-time workers, unpaid caregivers, victims of domestic violence, and people living in poverty, among other groups. As such, public policies that respond to the needs and conditions of the general public often do not address the situations of women in all their diversity, and in some cases further disadvantage women. The Women in Public Policy Initiative intends to address and alleviate this situation. We are working nationally with women in community-based social justice and equality seeking groups, and with government policy staff, to develop ways for these two parties to collaborate meaningfully and effectively in public policy development processes. The Women in Public Policy Initiative advocates the development of new government departmental standards that ensure and enable community-level involvement in public policy formation.

II. The Need for the WIPP Initiative

The question arises as to why there are a number of different projects going on (see Appendix B) with similar purposes – why do we not join forces and work as one initiative? It seems that each effort is filling a specific gap and the underlying

assumptions and overall objectives vary. The Women in Public Policy Initiative identifies systemic inequalities and discriminations as underlying factors that marginalize women in all their diversity. This marginalization affects multiple aspects of women's lives, including how women's diverse realities are included and excluded from public policy development and decisions.

The WIPP Initiative is working to fill a specific gap. We see a need for an accessible, generic tool that provides a clear process for working across sectors on public policy formation. We need a simple instrument to guide equality seeking community-based groups and departmental policy staff on how to co-develop effective, reflective public policies that respond to the conditions and priorities of discriminated groups as part of the definition of the "general public." Resources are critical to achieving this but are currently lacking from the "citizen engagement" thrust. Some of the key resources needed to enable equality seeking community-based groups to have an impact on public policies in formation or under review relate to capacity. Many organizational representatives identified a need for:

- increased staff capacity,
- increased knowledge of how public policy is made,
- a better understanding of what works when trying to impact public policy,
- funds to enable groups to develop and sustain policy initiatives,
- and some shift in decision-making power to ensure that the final policy reflects their own knowledge base.

III. How We Work: Research Methods

The processes we follow in our research and evaluation are intended to correspond with our ambition of developing a “credible” and “inclusive” public policy process. We are trying to ensure that the actions and tools put forward represent the priorities of a broad base of equality-seeking community-based organizations. The research follows clear, documented qualitative methods. A national committee of women who brought forward diverse issues, backgrounds, knowledge and experiences decided upon the methods. The participants in this phase of the WIPP Initiative range from leaders of community-based equality seeking organizations, to women working on specific issues in their communities, to municipal, provincial and federal civil servants at various departmental levels. All participants are involved in increasing community involvement or input in public policy development in some way.

A fifteen-member National Advisory Committee that develops and monitors the direction of the initiative currently oversees WIPP. Co-chairs liaise regularly with the coordinator, and the coordinator designs and conducts the initiative. Project assistants take on specific short-term parts of the research.

In order to assess the values and shortcomings of *Steps* and to better understand the context we are working in, we used three methods of gathering information. A questionnaire was distributed to all those individuals who had participated in previous phases of the Initiative (members of community-based groups, government representatives and researchers). Over 230 questionnaires (see Appendix F) were distributed nationally. Approximately 20 were returned

completed, even with follow-up phone calls being made to each recipient.

We attribute the low response rate primarily to the significant time lapse between the initial two phases of the Initiative and this current phase (approximately two years). The Initiative relies on project funding and this entails new proposals for each phase of our work. In a period of two years we lost many of our previous participants due to staff and volunteer changes, organizations losing funding and closing, and people moving. However the richness of the data collected compensates for the low returns.

The same questionnaire was used to guide eleven key-informant interviews with diverse women from across the country, some of whom have extensive experience working toward public policy changes from within a community-based organization or from within a government department. Our conversations were taped and transcribed. All transcripts were reviewed and approved by the interviewee for final use.

A final element included three focus groups between Halifax and Calgary and a meeting with some of the staff from the Nova Scotia Department of Health. Separate focus groups were held with government staff members (a combination of municipal, provincial and federal) and with people from community-based organizations. All participants in the focus groups and meeting brought their experience of working to increase community involvement in public policy development.

IV. How this Report is Organized

The information gathered is organized into four main sections. The next section, *The Context we are Working In*, looks at why equality seeking groups do public policy work, and why there is political will within parts of government to include members of the public in policy development. This section highlights what is missing and needed for community groups and government departments to effectively do policy work, what are some of the barriers, and what efforts work when communities or government departments attempt to evoke inclusive public policy processes.

Assessing the *Steps* Document is the second main section. Here we look at the strengths of the current document and the

input received as to how *Steps* can be improved. There is a strong sense that it is taking us in the right direction and that the document can be honed into a highly useful tool. Some Nova Scotia provincial government departments are prepared to test a revised *Steps* as it fits well with the current work of certain divisions.

A number of Recommended Actions have been collected on the basis of the input received from this research. The Conclusion looks at where the WIPP Initiative should go from here. It looks at what additional perspectives need to be included in our work towards a public policy development system that draws together the views and experiences of all members of the "general public," not only the privileged.

2. The Context we are Working In

To understand the role or need for a document such as *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* we need to have a sense of the current situation for both equality seeking community-based groups that are trying to affect public policy, and for government departments that have identified "social inclusion," "citizen engagement," or client involvement as important to their policy work. The research participants identified a wide range of factors that inhibit or support their efforts to contribute to the development of good policy. There was considerable overlap in the benefits of joint processes identified by both parties. Much feedback on these areas was gathered through our questionnaire, interviews and focus groups.

A key difference among advocates for inclusive public policy processes lies in how "inclusion" is understood. For some advocates it means increasing community groups' skills and knowledge regarding how to effectively convey their issues to government departments that are seeking or receptive to public input. For others it means holding public meetings or consultations and taking the input into account when developing departmental or division policies and plans. According to some, the current methods of developing public policy need to be restructured using an "equality lens" to ensure that those impacted by public policies yet marginalized by society have an equal opportunity and equal capacity to engage in policy development.

If including community means giving groups the responsibility to identify their needs and interests, but does not involve shifting any decision-making power or funds, then inclusion could be seen as a form of downloading or privatizing of the state's social responsibility.

I. Why Equality-Seeking Groups Work on Public Policy

It may not always be obvious why equality-seeking groups see their public policy input as crucial until the interconnections between policies, programs and people are recognized. Some of the research participants make these connections explicit.

- For many, policy work is integral to their overall activity and identity. It is seen as something that cannot be separated from service provision.
- According to one contributor to the research, a "really important reason for doing policy work is so that you can maintain the integrity of your mission." In some cases it is necessary to counter government directions that undermine the work of a non-profit, even if this stand jeopardizes funding and causes internal divisions. If you do not do so, "you may just start to run any government program that comes along and then lose the support of those who believe in your mission."
- According to another participant, policy is "one of the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, one of the legs of the table – you can't actually not do policy As we do the work, that's when we actually find out the real depth of the problem and as we uncover that, then we begin to recognize where the gaps in the policy are. They're completely linked, we can't separate them."

- A further respondent indicates that their group engages in policy work to counter "the impact of systemic racism on policy development."

A general theme that comes across from equality-seeking groups is that the needs of their sector/population are not being met by public policies, the subsequent programs, or the program cuts. "Nobody's listening to us and nobody's introducing any [relevant] policies, and they say well, our policies are for everyone. Well, it's like for everyone and for no one. By making them for everyone, nobody in this group uses it ... because you have programs that don't relate to their needs."

Implications

The links between non-profit program or service delivery and the need for policy work are made clear by the research participants; the implications of this work for community-based groups are varied. There is always a shortage of time and resources. Many equality-seeking groups are stretched to their limit by service delivery and advocacy. Something is left undone when a policy issue gets taken on, unless resources can be accessed or shifted around for this purpose. If it is management tasks that are displaced the stability of the staff and organization may be compromised until there is time to catch up. A balance between these two needs is seen as very valuable to some equality-seeking groups.

- The opportunity to step back and develop a stand on an issue provides groups with the chance to feel "confident that we can make a difference, we are experts in what we do."
- Doing policy work leads to "greater awareness in terms of the staff providing services ... that this is also a legitimate use of time and, in fact, kind of an extension of the work they're

doing. "It gives staff "a chance to reflect on the work that they've been doing in a different way, so it's very energizing."

- For volunteer members of community-based groups it is also empowering: "Once they know they can do one thing, they'll think they can do other things.... We also hope that they get involved in politics, that they'll come and work on election campaigns and support candidates that will support their issues."

A degree of success with one issue has seen equality-seeking groups expand their issue focus and their numbers, making the group more sustainable. The major hurdle is that these benefits can seldom be realized due to funding and, consequently, time limitations.

There is a sense from those interviewed that their work on public policy issues affects their sustainability one way or another. In some instances making the time to reflect on the organization's stand on a particular issue brings to light internal policies that need to change to enhance the group's programming. In some cases policy stands that keep an organization true to its mission cause splits in a board. Such a stand can result in a loss of funding and leave the board with having to "go with the ... fundraising type of board member and not the policy type who's trying to tackle those cuts as a more long-term sustainable issue." As many community-based equality seeking groups rely on government funding, there is a sense of needing to be "cautious how [they] advocate for change at the policy table."

Charitable Status

Another factor that comes into play for non-profit organizations is their charitable status and the restriction on the proportion of resources they can apply to advocacy work. Involvement in consultations at the

request of government departments is not considered advocacy work, whereas the opposite is true if the community-based group initiates the policy work. Most research participants indicate that their activities have not been directly affected by this status to date, although it is a restriction that has to be kept in mind. A few participating organizations have been denied charitable status, and some organizations are purposely not registered so as not to inhibit their advocacy work in the policy realm. Those without charitable status experience significant financial challenges that inhibit their ability to do organizational development work, such as networking and coalition building because their funding is project specific.

II. Why Government Departments Seek Community Input into Public Policy

The opinions, research and analysis on "social and economic inclusion" and "public engagement" in policy development processes are extensive and varied. However, a key element of the current emphasis on social and economic inclusion is the recognition of the need to build cross-sectoral working processes. How these processes take shape (cross-sector collaboration, joint policy tables, public consultations), and the consequences of these processes are fodder for much debate. In this report the range of opinions is kept to those expressed by the research participants. We do not try to capture the full extent of dialogue on this issue. The government representatives (including policy analysts, planners, division managers, program coordinators) who took part in this research express clear interest in and valuing of public, consumer or client input into policies and programs. There is recognition of a need "to change things so that the voluntary sector is included in public policy development," and to "do better at

balancing the power at the table." "Just adding one consumer to a table of ten people who work in government or research who are salaried, it's quite uneven." There are efforts underway "to develop a structure that makes it safe for individuals, makes it safe and makes it meaningful for community and client voice to be heard at the table of policy development." These efforts are undertaken with reflection: "do we value participation and how do we value it? How is this measured?" The rationale for seeking the involvement of those affected by public policy is clearly articulated by some government representatives: "Any public policy developed with everyone affected by it will be better policy." "Community participation will strengthen the policy and its implementation." Genuine, transparent policy consultation can also increase public confidence in government procedures and accountability.

Those who chose to participate in the Women in Public Policy Initiative may hold views and values that are an exception to the rule (by their own admission) in government departments. There is clearly expressed interest in a revised *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* as a "good tool that we could use to guide our work." There is a sense that, once "we have a more concise document or guide, it will be a matter of testing out the product ... and developing a solid communications and/or training plan. As people use a more inclusive policy process and are able to talk to its successes (and challenges) it will become the norm." Another civil servant noted that when establishing new standards for developing policy, they have to think about how to include public consultation. This approach recognizes that the policy process itself needs to change, rather than putting the entire onus on communities to change how they try to engage in policy formation as is the case in many interpretations of inclusion.

Constraints

Government representatives pursuing community involvement in policy face a number of constraints.

- Staff cuts are increasing workloads;
- costs associated with supporting community involvement are not recognized as legitimate expenses;
- and a political decision can dismiss months of consultative or collaborative work on a policy design. When the latter situation occurs groups need to "switch into lobbying or advocacy," according to some government representatives.
- There continue to be "different schools of thought" among government staff as to how and if community input is valuable or appropriate, and "turf wars within departments, within programs."
- There is also the sense from community members that a government is "not going to pass a policy that loses them votes."

Public Consultations

In addition, many members of equality-seeking community based groups are disillusioned and skeptical about policy consultations: "people don't believe that they are needed" or that what they say "will ever have any impact." There is a sense that taking part in consultations is futile. Groups are looking for a real process, not only a façade. They want to see evidence of community-based input in the policies that are developed following consultation. The good will of some groups that have tried to be heard or who have historically been excluded has been used up. In some cases there is a need to repair damaged relations: "if you can't listen to my anger, if you can't listen to my frustration, I can't work with you." And, from the government side, some policy staff have "felt like they have no voice because they were government, they were 'bad' and all government is bad, so therefore you couldn't even put the

information that you had on the table so that it could be used.”

Never the less, there is a sense by some government representatives that the diverse voices of excluded people need to be heard. According to one public servant, “we have to make sure that the community groups that participate in the process are the voices of the people who are affected ... you don’t always know who represents who.” If government staff only consult with those they know, they “risk the continuation of excluding those who face barriers to participation.” This is especially important if those at a policy development table are in a position to make decisions, as is advocated for by community-based groups. In the midst of all these constraints, there is no shortage of ideas from both parties on how to improve the community-government policy development process.

III. What is Needed to do Inclusive Policy Work

Substantial input on what is needed to make public policy inclusive was gathered in Nova Scotia for our original report, *Never Give Up: Women Making Policy Change* (1999). In the current phase of our initiative we heard from government and community representatives from across the country on this topic. A number of themes clearly emerge from the input received.

a. Clarify How Public Policy is Made

Both community members and government policy analysts indicate that public policy making processes are not clearly described or describable. There is a need for increased information and clarity at all levels of government on how policy is currently being developed. This information needs to be made accessible to

community-based groups who need “to know where and who makes the decision and where the real influence lies.”

b. Become More Strategic

What is often missing for community-based groups, and likely for government policy analysts as well, is the opportunity to step back and critically analyse and reflect on policy work that they have undertaken. There is seldom time to really review what approaches are effective and which are not. There is seldom time to compare experiences with like-minded organizations and staff and learn from each other’s work. People commented that they would like to access training on how to do policy work and to develop long-term strategic plans for impacting public policy. Such plans would include how to identify and connect

Community-based equality seeking groups need to become more strategic and more innovative when doing policy work, according to the community research participants.

- **They need to get better at framing their issues and doing or using supportive qualitative and participatory research;**
 - **they need to connect and work with other community-based organizations that are working on the same issues;**
 - **they need to identify key decision-makers in government departments and keep them informed;**
 - **and they need to crunch numbers to make their cases, using information that is already compiled, and boil their documents down to one page so that those in government will read it. “How do we take what we know and make it accessible to government?”**
-

with allies in the media, among service providers, within government, and even in the private sector. "Broadening the chorus of voices that are putting forward the same position and broadening it from one organization or one sector ... I think there is some strength if you also have the private sector and different elements of the public sector, all supporting, maybe not from the same optic ... where there is a fair bit of overlap or consensus around both the issue and some of the solutions, then you've got a better chance." A question that comes up repeatedly in discussions of how to be strategic is how to resource any of these ideas. Even the clearly identified need to network or form strategic alliances with like-minded organizations, or staff in the case of government departments, is difficult to act on because of heavy workloads, lack of time and the absence of funds to create the capacity.

The comments of one government employee make the need for strategic advocacy explicit: "I would guess that the number of times that women's groups have been effective in getting a point across and in actually making or ensuring that some kind of substantive change is made are very few, compared with the amount of work that goes into analysing a situation, seeing where the barriers are, making recommendations as to how they could be improved and so on. In the end they don't lead very far."

Most community-based equality seeking groups are "missing the staff capacity ... to engage in policy development." "We don't have a culture of including [policy review] in our work." Funds for this can be written into project funding proposals, but transitory funding allows for little in the way of long-term advocacy strategies. It was proposed, for a more sustainable solution, that "all the women's organizations get together

and have one policy person, all the settlement organizations get together and have one policy person, all the youth programs," and so forth. How can resources and expertise be pooled to maximize the impact of scarce resources? How can we "develop a critical mass of

Assets of Community-based groups

Part of being strategic is also learning to recognize and use one's strengths.

- Members of the public support an agency "because they believe in the mission of the agency ... the sustainability of a community-based group lies with the community – it doesn't lie with government."
- Government departments "find that they can't do without their community partners in a lot of ways ... they don't have either the expertise or the resources internally to do" our work and, "frankly, how many people are interested in working with the kind of client group that we work with?"
- "While it's important to do policy work and look at research, you also have to look at what we in the field can bring to that, the personal, the human face, the experiences, the stories – those are very powerful.... A lot of the people [in government] have not had that experience at all."
- And a further point is that non-governmental service providing organizations are very cost effective.
- Many community-based organizations operate on a determinants of health model and thereby increase the overall resilience of the community where they operate.

people with some comfort in this kind of work?" Another idea that has been put forward in Alberta is "to create a chamber of charities" as a place "where we can all go, kind of hash it out among ourselves and then say, okay this is the message we want to go to the government."

c. Develop an Inclusive, Accessible and Participatory Public Policy Process

The feeling of respondents is that "policy is going to have a better chance of success if it has built in and legitimized inclusion" at all stages, not just the consultation stage. They want a participatory and inclusive process at the design stage, the implementation stage, during monitoring and in evaluation. This inclusion has to entail a shift in power, not just in language. Such a shift would recognize the resources needed by all parties to be able to co-develop policy on a more equal footing, although still recognizing different roles and responsibilities. Such resources would include adequate time, information and training in negotiation skills. It would include capacity building resources at the community level to identify shared issues and to see policy as something that can be influenced. These needs are identified by both government and community participants in the research. The current *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* (2000) goes into extensive detail on what is needed to create an equitable bi-sector policy development process.

A more proactive system could reduce the frustration and marginalization experienced by members of community-based groups, and by government staff who are seeking community input into policy development.

Research participants find "that we tend to engage with policy makers either after a crisis ... or around a particular project ... but there isn't a proactive, for example, twice a year this department meets with us so we always know it's coming.... Then you'd have a chance to engage in a conversation overtime rather than it being just a reaction ... there may be some ways to build that conversation in."

"We react to a policy, we react to something that's already there and reacting is always not as creative as actually being on the forefront." It may also contribute to a more thorough understanding of existing policy and what may already be in place but has not been acted upon or enforced.

d. Build Cross-Sector Trust

A clear theme voiced by community activists and civil servants is the need for building trust and solid working relationships between individuals in these two sectors. If public policies are to be more responsive to and reflective of the realities experienced by members of equality-seeking community based groups, alliances between like-minded people within and outside of government need to be achieved. According to one participant, "unless we have champions on the inside the policy gets watered down and you end up with something that's so far from what we said when we had the consultations." "We need to be making more alliances with women who are within the various levels of government and we need ways of supporting and enhancing those partnerships in a way that is respectful to both." "You need to have feminists at different places in the government process to be able to help." "We have tended to see ourselves on sides ... and then you come to meet the people and that isn't always the case ... you begin to see the edges of people and where you can influence them."

Based on previous experiences, some members of the community-based equality seeking sector are highly cynical about public consultation efforts. For example, for one participant, "it's like each public servant ... needs to say that he or she has consulted organizations and made a committee ... we have so many committees, it's too much!" "They consult a lot about everything but at the end, where does it count?" If one does not participate it can have an impact on funding because "if you are not there people are not aware of what you're doing." There is a sense among some equality-seeking groups that the term "citizen engagement" denotes the fact that they really don't know what they're talking about, that it's more just an idea up there that they're struggling to find. Because they don't do it, they don't know what to call it that makes sense. "We can talk about inclusion but the power still hasn't shifted." A "heightened sense of isolation and powerlessness ... currently often results from working with government and confirms the futility of consultation, just the opposite to what is supposed to be achieved."

If community input is valued it needs to become clear how it is valued. What is the evidence? Currently consultations are a drain on community-based groups' resources: "if you're always out, you are not in your centre doing the work that you are supposed to do."

There is also recognition of the need to better integrate the role of research into policy development. There is a need to "build up the trust again between community-based agencies and university researchers," and for government policy analysts to broaden their use of research to include the community-based research that has policy implications.

e. Barriers to Community Involvement in Public Policy

The issues discussed above clearly comprise barriers to groups being effective in impacting public policy. Some barriers require long-term sustained efforts to overcome. Barriers arising from belief systems and values require a different approach than those related to a shortage of resources in one form or another. For example, there is a lack of value given to community-based knowledge: "The wisdom of the community is oftentimes viewed by government, especially, as not quite professional." This is not an outlook that can be readily turned around. Similarly, "if you've got a government policy-maker who just doesn't want to get it or has personal issues that are going to run counter to what you're trying to advocate for, you're going to get blocked."

Barriers to inclusive public policy that are perhaps resource related, but still not readily negotiable, are also challenging. Some government representatives identify a problem in connecting to populations that have no organization, and that are outside of middle-class organizations. This situation can perpetuate the exclusion of certain populations even from a public policy development process that appears to be more equitable. Further, community groups may not see the value or impact of policy development. Another situation that undermines the possibility of affecting policy is staff cuts: with cuts there are fewer people to provide services and more people in need. "That political context really almost swallows policy because people are so focused on survival, but it's actually the point at which we need to take policy on even more."

f. What Works Among Efforts to Affect Public Policy

A clear message received in this research from community-based participants is that what works are processes in which all parties are included from the beginning and that take the needed time. "Real" inclusion involves "actually meeting people where they are and coming to get them to include them in the process from the beginning." There needs to be "a marriage between the university, the government and the communities, and the people who are living the issues, and everybody who's impacted, so that there is actually, from the time you ask the question to the time you're ready to put an action together, you actually have all the voices. ... when the process was respected and accepted, the actions that came together were unbelievable and they worked."

Both community-based and government-based participants advocate for bridging the sectoral divide. One avenue towards this is through both parties committing to use particular resources or tools designed to help ensure that all parties are included from the beginning of a policy development process. Both parties, when working across sectors, need to "realize that you can do part of the road together ... but you will not be able to do everything and you have to have some respect about it." There will still be distinct roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* is a work in progress that is trying to bridge the divide by providing a framework for inclusive and equitable public policy development.

3. Assessing the Steps Document

The research participants, through questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, were asked to comment on how they have used *Steps*, the strengths and benefits of the document, and how *Steps* can be improved. The responses were detailed, concrete and extensive. Many participants found the document has been useful in their work. Considerable input also provided clear direction as to how *Steps* can be reworked to address many of the issues identified in Section 2 (III) What is Needed to do Inclusive Policy Work.

I. Strengths of the Existing Document

The Format

Participants in this research have found various aspects of *Steps* to be useful. In general the format is found to be

accessible and useful:

- "by breaking it down into little bits and pieces ... it feels doable and achievable" and demystifies the whole process.
- The checklist format makes it "easy to pull out whatever piece you're at."
- It is also useful because it takes "the viewpoint of governments and the voluntary sector partners and what their responsibilities were. So it was very clear, very precise ... you don't usually get that."

A Generic and Inclusive Tool

Several community and government participants emphasized the importance of keeping the document generic and non-governmental. As a generic tool (not relating to a specific issue) it can be adapted to fit the needs of any public

policy area. As something that has been developed outside of the public sector, but integrates government input, the document is considered valid and representative by community-based groups and by advocates for inclusive public policy within government departments. Further, "issues regarding race were brought forward by participants in the original research." These issues have continued to be addressed in each phase of the WIPP Initiative.

Ways it has Been Used

Some research participants and previous members of the WIPP initiative have used *Steps* as a reference document for writing proposals: "it makes you think of things that you may not ask yourself if you're actually just starting from scratch." "It helped us focus on what impact the project could have." And it is used by a funder receiving proposals: "when we get a proposal and there's obviously a policy implication there, then I want to make sure that the group is aware of the document and takes that into consideration in developing the specifics of what they may actually do." For another contributor, "the amount of time I've used it on educating bureaucracy, I was a bit surprised. I hadn't had any plans to do it, but it works."

Numerous uses of the *Steps* document were identified:

- When designing a policy intervention the "document really becomes a foundation ... we can feel relatively confident in what we're doing."
- In another contributor's experience, "when the principles outlined in the document were followed it helped alleviate misunderstanding or miscommunication."
- A public sector participant noted: "I

have found the entire *Steps* work itself informative and useful as a guide to working within cross-sector work projects, particularly the importance of clarifying and respecting roles and respect for areas of expertise. The potential for productive collaboration is enhanced by integrating many of the principles collated in the document. I am involved in a number of community-government coalitions on policy issues and the journey has been easier because of the time spent with this project."

- "The [*Steps*] process itself really reinforced for me ... the importance of dialogue, community dialogue, and of time for dialogue, and enough time to develop an understanding... as I recall the tool talks about being hard on ideas and soft on people, and it takes time, actually to develop a process that works that way, because ... if you've got some participants who are just out and out angry about how they've not been included or they have not appreciated the way in which they've been included, it becomes very hard to move forward until they've had a chance to at least voice that."
- The recognition of the importance of allowing for adequate time to collaborate on policy development is key: "It takes time to actually make sure that all aspects of an issue have been looked at, have been discussed ... so that people are feeling that they're all on the same page."

While some government divisions are interested in testing a revised version of *Steps*

in their public policy development, other government representatives indicate that it could be used to evaluate a public consultation process.

- “It could be used to help government be self-reflective about their process and challenge them to look at their process and learn from it. We need to evaluate outcomes of our processes, including levels of frustration.”

It was also suggested that the corporate sector would find using *Steps* beneficial when they do “public consultations”:

- “it is better for their bottom line because then they don’t have any kind of ... problems.”

II. How to Improve *Steps*

Re-Work the *Steps* Document

The suggestions as to how to improve *Steps* range from general recommendations to very specific detail changes. The input provides comprehensive direction for how to re-work *Steps* into a highly relevant and effective tool for inclusive, equality-based public policy development. Overarching recommendations are to simplify and shorten the steps that are listed in the document, to separate out the assumptions and the actions identified in the document, and to make it clear that the resource is intended to be used selectively in order to suit the needs of each particular policy related activity: it is not a formula to follow diligently from start to finish. Users can draw out what they need to develop their own specific action plan. The current document is detailed to the point of putting people off using it as they cannot possibly follow the entire process. It also gives the sense that policy development is a linear process, which is not the case, so a different title and layout may be more appropriate.

The WIPP Initiative needs “to think of the significant role of ‘others’ in the process, including researchers and service providers,” and how the experience and knowledge of these parties is integrated into a comprehensive and inclusive public policy process. As it stands there is a sense that the document is designed to appeal more to community organizations. According to a government representative, “one of the reasons that I think it’s not useful in the public policy process is that you would never have a public policy process declare that it was going to be grounded in women’s grassroots experiences... for the policy process, that would no longer be a position neutral, so I think there’s some cultural differences in the ways in which community groups do their work and the ways in which public policy people do their work ... I don’t think that you can meld those or blend them to the point that either one of them disappear in the process.” What is needed is “a respect for one another’s roles.”

According to public sector participants there would need to be more attention to “government assumptions, activities ... in order to sell this to government,” and there is a need to distinguish between the roles of bureaucrats and politicians. “It would be really helpful to have government guidelines as well ... and part of the government piece was that there has to be an expectation that government has some responsibility to fund, that a public policy process that involves community people, or communities, costs money, and that there is a requirement for funding. There’s a requirement for resources around having enough infrastructure or money to make sure that people have the information and are able to do whatever research is necessary, so that people come to the table with some of that power being equalized, certainly the power of knowledge.”

Add a Users' Guide

In addition to producing a simplified, more visual, less detailed plain language document, it is recommended that a training component, workshop or users' guide be added to identify how the tool can be used to meet a specific group's or department's needs. It would also help people assess the timing and feasibility of pursuing a particular policy initiative. It needs to be made more user-friendly and to relate to people's lives so that it does not require translation. It needs to be clarified as to why this tool exists. It needs to be made explicit that involvement in policy development is a very resource intensive undertaking. There may be other resources already in circulation that could be matched with *Steps* to produce a more accessible tool.

Add New Information

A number of additions to the document are also recommended.

- There needs to be an explanation of what is public policy, how policy is made, and how policy relates to people's lives. This should include an understanding of what are the principles of inclusive, equality-based public policy.
- *Steps* should include guidance on how to "open doors and get to the right people," how to determine who are the decision-makers in government.

- It could include information on techniques for getting one's message across.
- Participants would also like to see a list of resource people who have worked for non-profits around policy issues, and to have included success stories, techniques or models that demonstrate best practices in equality-based public policy development.
- An additional piece needed is guidance on how to build public support and alliances with other equality-seeking organizations regarding a particular issue or cause. Without public support there may be little political interest in addressing an issue.

Enhance the Distribution

An additional shortcoming of the current version of *Steps* has been its distribution. There is a need for much more strategic and extensive dissemination of the document. We need to be sure that we are "getting the results into the hands of the right people" so that the work reaches those who need it and does not get overlooked. Both community and government participants strongly recommended seeking endorsements of *Steps* as a way of increasing its profile and credibility as a legitimate process and document. If *Steps* "doesn't have some weight or cache behind it, it becomes empty."

4. Recommended Actions

Women in Public Policy Initiative participants and National Advisory Committee members are looking for ways to continue the initiative to ensure that the reflection and advice offered regarding *Steps* can be implemented. A clear need for a document and process along the lines of *Steps* is identified by our current research. Many parties based in the community and the public sector are finding the tool to be useful. On the basis of our research, it is recommended that the WIPP Initiative

- develop a multi-sector working group to re-work *Steps* and any accompanying documents or processes as advised by all those who contributed to this present research. The feedback we gathered indicated a number of ways in which *Steps* can become a more accessible and useable document.
- ensure more strategic and extensive dissemination of the resulting materials through key networks and sources of information on policy development.
- work with departments or divisions that are interested and prepared to either endorse or test the *Steps* process.
- seek endorsement from appropriate equality-seeking organizations.
- ensure that a regional or national equality-seeking organization houses future phases of the initiative to ensure greater stability. This current phase involved primarily virtual contact among National Advisory Committee members; this is a difficult status to maintain effectively.
- address the loss of momentum and relevance to participants that results from a time lapse between phases due to project-funded status.

There are additional supporting areas of work that also need to be addressed. For example, there is a need to develop

- some sort of criteria or method for indicating to public policy staff and to each other who in the community is representing a group and who is speaking for herself or himself;
- a network or secretariat of community-based equality seeking organizations that provides an easy source of information on who is involved/interested/has expertise in certain areas; which policy areas are currently being worked on/reviewed; how policy is made; how to strategically engage in the development of public policy, and so forth. This network could enhance the ability of like-minded organizations to work together to reach larger audiences;
- a clear definition of inclusive, equality-based public policy development that can be widely circulated and used;
- workshops for government policy makers and members of community-based organizations that focus on developing a shared understanding of how policy is made and how the two sectors can work together to meet the needs of both parties;
- a collection of success stories, models or best practices that demonstrate how community-based equality seeking groups have succeeded in having their perspectives reflected in public policy development.

A further recommendation is to

- encourage government funding agencies to integrate into their policies and practice relevant outcomes of the research they fund.

5. Conclusions

Over the past decade, policy change is increasingly being viewed as a route to achieving greater equality for groups that experience discrimination. This route is pursued by community activists and organizations, and by equality advocates within government. Numerous groups and some government representatives are trying to devise the most effective ways for expertise from the community level to become integrated into policy formation. They recognize that including perspectives beyond the usual elite and advantaged groups makes for more socially responsive and more widely supported policy (Mains, 2000).

Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process is all about creating a better process and, thus, more socially responsive and responsible public policy. But for the *Steps* system to achieve its goals there needs to be a willingness among public policy staff, their supervisors, and the politicians, to share their decision-making power with all those taking part in the process, including those impacted by the policies in question. There is much work to be done to achieve this acceptance, and a variety of approaches to pursue.

An initial approach is to keep the Women in Public Policy Initiative momentum going

and to improve the mechanism we are developing for conducting equality-based, socially responsive public policy development. In this phase of our work we have also maintained and gained the interest and support of several departmental policy staff who would like to try using the *Steps* process in their policy work. These trials will provide evidence to other government departments and civil servants that engaging in inclusive, equality-based policy development results in increased public confidence in government consultation. But is it realistic to expect that much change in how governments develop public policy to result from a few trials of one tool? The question is, how can socially responsive, equality-based inclusive public policy development become systemic? These questions frame the work of the WIPP Initiative. It is on the basis of these questions that we may be able to develop partnerships and linkages that complement our specific focus on a public policy development method. Broad public support is needed for this approach to public policy to gain generalized use. Underlying the WIPP Initiative, like equality-seeking organizations, is the goal of building public support for equality issues. It will be key to the future work of the WIPP Initiative to combine this goal with the more focused work of developing an inclusive, credible policy development system.

Appendices

A. Background to the Women In Public Policy Initiative

The first phase of the project set out to document the experiences of women involved in community-based equality-seeking groups in Nova Scotia that were trying in some way to impact public policies. It documented the types of approaches taken, the barriers experienced and the levels of success and progress made by those involved in policy related activities. The findings of this research are compiled in *“Never Give Up” Women Making Policy Change*. Over 100 women took part in interviews and focus groups facilitated by researchers from their own communities (immigrant communities, African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, people with disabilities, Acadian, lesbian, women in poverty).

This initial research found that many community-based organizations in Nova Scotia engage in public policy in some manner: from communities building their own recognition of shared interests, rights and issues (capacity building); to writing policy briefs and conducting community-based research; from informing to protesting when the former is found ineffective.

“Never Give Up” provides an extensive profile of the experiences, questions and recommendations of diverse NS women who have tried in some way to make public policy reflect and improve the realities of their lives. The focus on one province resulted in a level of detail that reveals common trends, concerns and recommendations, as well as issues specific to particular groups.

The questions, issues and the recommendations put forward by the participants in this preliminary research formed the basis of the national WIPP Sharing Our Strengths Workshop (October 1999) held four months after the research portion was completed. The goal of the two-day workshop was to bring together stakeholders in public policy processes – community members, public policy staff, researchers and politicians – to identify actions and assumptions that would ensure community knowledge is an integral part of public policy development processes. Over 100 participants from across Canada came to the workshop.

Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process is the workbook produced as a result of combining the information received through the Nova Scotia-based research and the national workshop. *Steps* takes a practical, problem-solving approach that can be adapted to each situation in which it is used. It is designed as a framework for joint action by key stakeholders, particularly members of the public who are often silenced by inequality and discrimination – women. It is intended as a tool that can be drawn from as each specific policy issue goes through a unique set of steps and contortions.

Steps is divided into six sections to capture the relationship building, resource allocation, action planning, implementation and evaluation necessary to have a credible and inclusive public policy process. It is intended to be used as a checklist. It can be drawn from as needed to assist parties – particularly equality-seeking women’s groups and various levels of government – in their efforts to develop inclusive, responsive public policy. It is designed to be useful to a broad range of community-based equality seeking groups, policy staff at various levels of government and researchers backing-up the work of either of those two parties.

B. Related Initiatives

Voluntary Sector Initiative

The Women in Public Policy Initiative is just one of a number of current activities that would fall under the rubric of increasing public involvement in policy development at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. The most extensive federal program in this vein is the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI). A number of elements of this multi-year initiative are relevant to the WIPP work, such as projects designed to increase women's equality-seeking groups' involvement in social policy processes, or to provide policy development experience (see Status of Women Canada – VSI projects) for women. A further element of the VSI that is relevant is the Policy Internship and Academic Fellowship (PIAF) that sees cross-sector internships between voluntary sector organizations and government departments as a method of increasing knowledge and understanding of how both sectors operate (see <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/> and select Joint Tables). Some participants in the PIAF program and the VSI generally have been involved in this phase of the WIPP Initiative.

Government Departmental Initiatives

Other WIPP participants from municipal, provincial and federal departments identified work that complements the WIPP Initiative. For example, there are efforts within the Population and Public Health Branch of Health Canada “to change the culture of government to be more inclusive of community.” Health Canada is also in the midst of its “Voice in Health Policy” undertaking (www.projectvoice.ca). In the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services efforts are underway “to develop a client handbook ... and engaging the community with the Department on what that should look like ... ultimately trying to develop a structure that makes it safe ... and makes it meaningful for community and client voices to be heard at the table of policy development.” In both of these cases, and others, we see the work of the WIPP initiative contributing to and gaining from cross-fertilization. It is important to draw from multiple sources and experiences in our pursuit of “best practice” for a policy formation process in which a dispersion of power accompanies the inclusion of voices currently on the margins of policy making.

FemJEPP

The WIPP Initiative also continues to be informed by the ongoing work of FemJEPP. Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy have recently produced resources such as “Good Policy for Women: A FemJEPP Workbook” that includes “Developing An Impact Assessment.”

Other government and community-based resources and initiatives are listed in this report under List of Public Policy Tools and References. WIPP is linked to a number of related efforts, and to analysis of public involvement in policy processes, through the members of its National Advisory Committee (see Appendix E) as well as through the research participants.

C. Profile of Research Participants

Interview participants and questionnaire respondents (a total of 31 individuals) were asked to complete the following questions:

The size of your group/organization:

1 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 30	31 - 40	41 – up
6	1	4	4	3

The constituency that your group represents:

Women;immigrant women; feminists; business women; abused women; African Nova Scotia women; sexually active heterosexual women; researchers; offenders and their families; environment and health; government.

The main activities of your group/organization’s work:

Advocacy	Research	Program Delivery	Government Service
7	9	7	3

Other: coalition building; information and education; political analysis; counselling

The policy area(s) most frequently worked on:

Health	Social Services	Justice
12	7	6

Other: Accreditation; women’s issues;gender equality;accessible transport

Your location re: rural or urban:

Rural	Urban	Both
6	11	2

The province you are located in (all research participants):

BC	YK	NWT/Nunavut	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	NB	PEI	NFLD	NS
2	0	0	17	0	1	3	2	2	1	0	34

Total focus group participants: 29

Total number of participants in this research phase: 60

D. Members of the Following Groups took part in the Research

(Those who agreed to be listed; participants are not necessarily speaking on behalf of their organization or department)

Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre
 Alberta Network of Immigrant Women
 All Nations Theatre Society, AB
 Association Madelaine LeBlanc, NS
 Association of Black Social Workers, NS
 Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
 Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
 Bryony House, NS
 Canadian Women's Health Network
 Coalition for Equal Access to Education, AB
 Cybersoildaires, PQ
 Digby County Family Resource Centre, NS
 Elizabeth Fry Society, AB
 Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action/L'Alliance canadienne féministe pour l'action internationale (FAFIA), PQ
 Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy, NS
 Halifax Regional Municipality
 Hope Centre, NS
 John Howard Society
 John Howard Society of Ontario
 La Fédération des Femmes de Québec
 Maritime School of Social Work, Dalhousie University
 Metro Immigrant Settlement Association, NS
 Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, NB
 Northern Women's Wellness Information Centre, BC
 Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
 Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
 Nova Scotia Department of Health
 Nova Scotia Environmental Network
 Pono Consultants International, NS
 Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada
 Prairieaction Foundation, AB
 Preston Women's Empowerment Association, NS
 Resolve Alberta
 Self-Help Connection, NS
 Status of Women Canada
 Transition House Association of Nova Scotia
 Tri-County Women's Centre, NS
 University of Calgary
 Women's Health Clinic, MB

E. List of National Advisory Committee Members

Phase 3: 2002 – 2003

Contact: Anne Webb, WIPP Coordinator webjacob@web.ca

Name and Province	Organizational affiliations
Barbara Anello North Bay, Ontario	DisAbled Women's Network Ontario, Acting Chair Canadian Women's Health Network, Director Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, Regional Chair Brain Injury Association Network, Founder, Chair Ontario Women's Network on Child Custody and Access Assaulted Women's Helpline North-Bay Network for Social Action
Rina Arseneault Ontario and New Brunswick	Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Currently on leave from the Centre to take a position in the Immunodeficiency Clinic, Ottawa Hospital Past Co-Chair of the Minister's Working Group on Violence Against Women, for the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Yvonne Atwell Halifax, Nova Scotia	Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Policy Advisor http://www.medicine.dal.ca/acewh
Georgia Barnwell East Pennant, Nova Scotia	Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy Women in Public Policy Initiative, Phases 1 and 2 co-Chair
Madeline Boscoe Winnipeg, Manitoba	Canadian Women's Health Network, Executive Director www.cwhn.ca Women's Health Clinic, Advocacy Coordinator, www.womenshealthclinic.org Member of Advisory Board, Gender and Health Institute, CIHR
Dianne Crowell Yarmouth, Nova Scotia	Women in Public Policy Initiative, Phase 1, Researcher Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy Tri-County Women's Centre, Executive Director
Theresa Healy Prince George, BC	Adjunct professor in Women's Studies, University of Northern BC Northern Women Wellness Information Centre
Mary-Jane McCallum Winnipeg, Manitoba	University of Manitoba, Faculty of Dentistry, Aboriginal Dental Health Programs
Wendy McKeen Halifax, NS	Maritime School of Social Work, Professor
Doreen Paris New Glasgow, NS	Pictou County Women's Centre Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Chair

Kamal Sehgal, Co-Chair Calgary, Alberta	Alberta Network of Immigrant Women, Provincial Coordinator National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada
Pat Skinner Antigonish, Nova Scotia	Antigonish/Gysborough Black Development Organization, Chair Congress of Black Women of Canada
Linda Snyder, Co-Chair Halifax, Nova Scotia	Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Social Inclusion Project http://www.medicine.dal.ca/acewh
Charlotte Thibault Montreal, Quebec	Canadian Women Foundation, co-President www.cdnwomen.org Fafia, steering committee, http://www.fafia.org/ Cybersolidaires, President www.cybersolidaires.org
Lee Tunstall Calgary, Alberta	Prairieaction Foundation, Executive Director Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary, Adjunct Assistant Professor

F. Project Questionnaire

Questionnaire sent to 230 past WIPP participants and used to structure 11 telephone interviews

Women in Public Policy

Contact information: c/o Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, PO Box 3070 Halifax NS B3J 3G9; Coordinator: Anne Webb webjacob@web.ca Tel:(902) 470-7805, <http://dawn.thot.net/wipp.html>

Questionnaire

The Women in Public Policy initiative started as a research project in Nova Scotia involving 126 women involved in trying to make public policy changes. The second phase of WIPP was a national workshop involving over 100 community-based women, researchers and government employees working toward the same end. We are now seeking to evaluate how our efforts to affect public policy (1) are being assisted by *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process*, and (2) are affecting our organizations. We would greatly appreciate it if your responses to any of the following questions could be put in the mail or faxed to us by December 23, 2002.

Organizational profile

In order to help us situate the information you provide, please could you tell us:

- The size of your group/organization _____
- The constituency that your group represents _____
- The main activities of your group/organization's work
 - Advocacy Research Program delivery Government service
 - Other _____
- The policy area(s) most frequently worked on
 - health social services justice Other _____
- Your location re: rural or urban (circle one)
- The province you are located in _____
- In the report on the findings from this questionnaire we would like to list the organizations/groups/departments that participated. If you'd like to be included in this list, please provide your group/organization/department name: _____

Part 1

The following questions ask how and if the *Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process* document has had an impact on your policy-related work in any way:

1. Were you involved in contributing to the development of the *Steps* document (through the initial research that resulted in the report: "*Never Give Up*" *Women Making Policy Change*, the national Sharing our Strengths workshop held in Halifax in October 1999, and/or WIPP committees)?
 - Yes No

2. Do you have a copy of the *Steps* document?

Yes. No

If so, through what source did you receive it?

3. Have you made use of the *Steps* document in any way?

Yes No

If yes, please explain:

a. For what purposes have you used *Steps*?

b. What aspects are useful, and in relation to which situations/activities?

c. Have you found that any sections or aspects of the document met any of your needs, was helpful regarding a policy-related initiative? Please describe how.

d. Has the *Steps* document had any impact on your group's ability/capacity to intervene in the public policy process (for example, increasing inclusive input or in accessing policy decision-makers)? Please provide examples.

e. How has the *Steps* document affected your group's approach to influencing policy?

f. In what unintended ways have you found *Steps* to be useful?

g. Have you found any other avenues, tools, initiatives that have been effective in affecting public policy? Please describe.

Part 2

4. If you have not made use of the document, please explain

a. what aspects of the document make it unsuited or not applicable to your work, needs, community initiatives, the issues you work on, etc.

b. What are some of the barriers to making use of such a tool?

5. In what ways do you think *Steps* could be changed to be more suitable for use?

6. Is a guide or resource covering different information needed? Please explain.

7. What else is needed to increase the uptake of community-based input into public policy development?

8. Have you encountered any situations in which the *Steps* document has been used as a self-assessment tool for government policymakers and their public engagement processes? Please explain.

9. What do you think are the existing barriers and obstacles to community-based knowledge becoming a key ingredient in public policy development?

Part 3

The following questions ask for information on how your organization/group/department has been affected by being involved in any aspect of public policy development or reform.

10. What factors brought your organization/group to the decision to take up policy-related activities?
11. In what ways does working to affect public policies impact the types of projects your group does and how you do them? Please consider such aspects as your autonomy, unity, identity, and politics.
12. In what ways has your group's/department's capacity been impacted by your work on policy-related activities?
- a. What has been the impact on the use of time and resources, as well as access to resources?
 - b. How has your sustainability been affected?
 - c. Has your organization/group/department's structure been affected by the work you are involved with concerning policy?
 - d. Has your access to charitable status been affected by your policy-related work?
 - Yes. Please explain
 - No
13. How have your goals, strategies, how you see a problem, the language you use and/or ways of working been affected by working with government departments and other organizations (allies) on policy?
14. Have the issues you address, the allies you identify and work with and/or the spokespersons you identify been affected by working on policy-related initiatives? Please explain.
15. Please identify any other issues or goals that have received less attention than you intended as a result of your work on policy issues.

If you are government employee responding:

16. From a government department perspective, how has your policy-related work with community-based groups impacted those groups?
17. From a government department perspective, how has input from community-based groups impacted your work on public policy? What kinds of input have you been able to integrate into your departmental policy recommendations?

G. List of Public Policy Tools and References

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