# Organisational Readiness Assessment

The first challenge in many research-based organisations is creating a culture-shift away from low-impact supply-led information provision to strategic, audience-led influencing messages. The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's handbooks on Lobbying and Advocacy for Non-profit Organisations (www.wilder.org/pubs/workshts/pubs_worksheets1.html?261lah) recognises this and provides a series of worksheets and tools designed to assess readiness and commitment to take on public policy issues (see box below). It reviews existing champions and initiatives, helps focus goals and begins the planning process. A series of six meetings is outlined to kick-start the planning process and create a workplan.

**Public influence readiness assessment for your organisation**
There are two parts to this assessment. **Part A** looks at the substance of your organisation's public policy objectives. **Part B** looks at your organisation's current capacity to do the work.

*Part A: Public Policy Objectives*

- List your public policy issues: in the context of our mission, goals, and existing work what issues can be furthered by engaging in public policy and legislation debate?
- List existing programs, services, research, outreach, lobbying and advocacy work where experience and expertise has been demonstrated in these issues you most want to influence.
- Identify which parts of government your core issues decided and debated. Further identify core arenas for influence which can shape policy decisions.
- List the desired policy changes you want, specifically with respect to laws, budgets, ordinances etc.
- Decide whether you will be proactively proposing new policy change, or reactively responding another group's efforts.

*Part B: Organisational Capacity for Public Policy Work*

1. List the organisational champions of public policy work and measure the depth of the organisation's commitment to public policy change.
2. Commit to developing a public policy plan.
3. List who's been designated to do what and when, with respect to co-ordinate the planning process, clearing with the board, clarifying staff roles, creating a rapid response team, forming an advisory committee.
4. Clarify the systems in place to educate, inform, and mobilise members, partners and constituencies.
5. Review understanding of legislative processes and structures.
6. List resources that will be committed to policy influence work.
7. Clarify media preparedness. Are you camera ready?
8. If you are a not-for-profit organisation, clarify rules with respect to lobbying in your country.

*Six Meetings to Action*
Once a discussion has been launched, approval given to start a planning process and a planning team selected, the Handbook suggests that six meetings should cover the main requirements to create a policy influence plan for the organisation, as follows:

1. Prepare the planning team and articulate visions and goals.
2. Establish criteria for which issues to take up, and decide on the issues.
3. Decide on target arenas of influence to work on.
4. Choose strategies and tactics to achieve these and design organisational infrastructure (staff commitments, resource allocations etc).
5. Create the workplan, with specific actions, targets and dates.
6. Present the workplan to the whole organisation.

*Source*: Adapted from Avner 2002 Chapter One and Worksheet 1, p58-66

Further support on organisational structure, staff roles, finance, information systems, training and using advisory committees is given in Wilder Ch 3, p86-91, worksheet 13, IV and worksheet 14, p219-222.