

Taking the Measure of *Role* And *Contribution*

A Mixed Methods Approach to
Policy Evaluation

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First 5 LA



Champions For Our Children

- Child advocacy organization
 - \$871 million in grants since 1998
 - First 5 commissions in every county
- Serving children ages 0-5 & their families

2007-09 public policy agenda

22 policy goals





ADVARSEL!

Fare for skred.

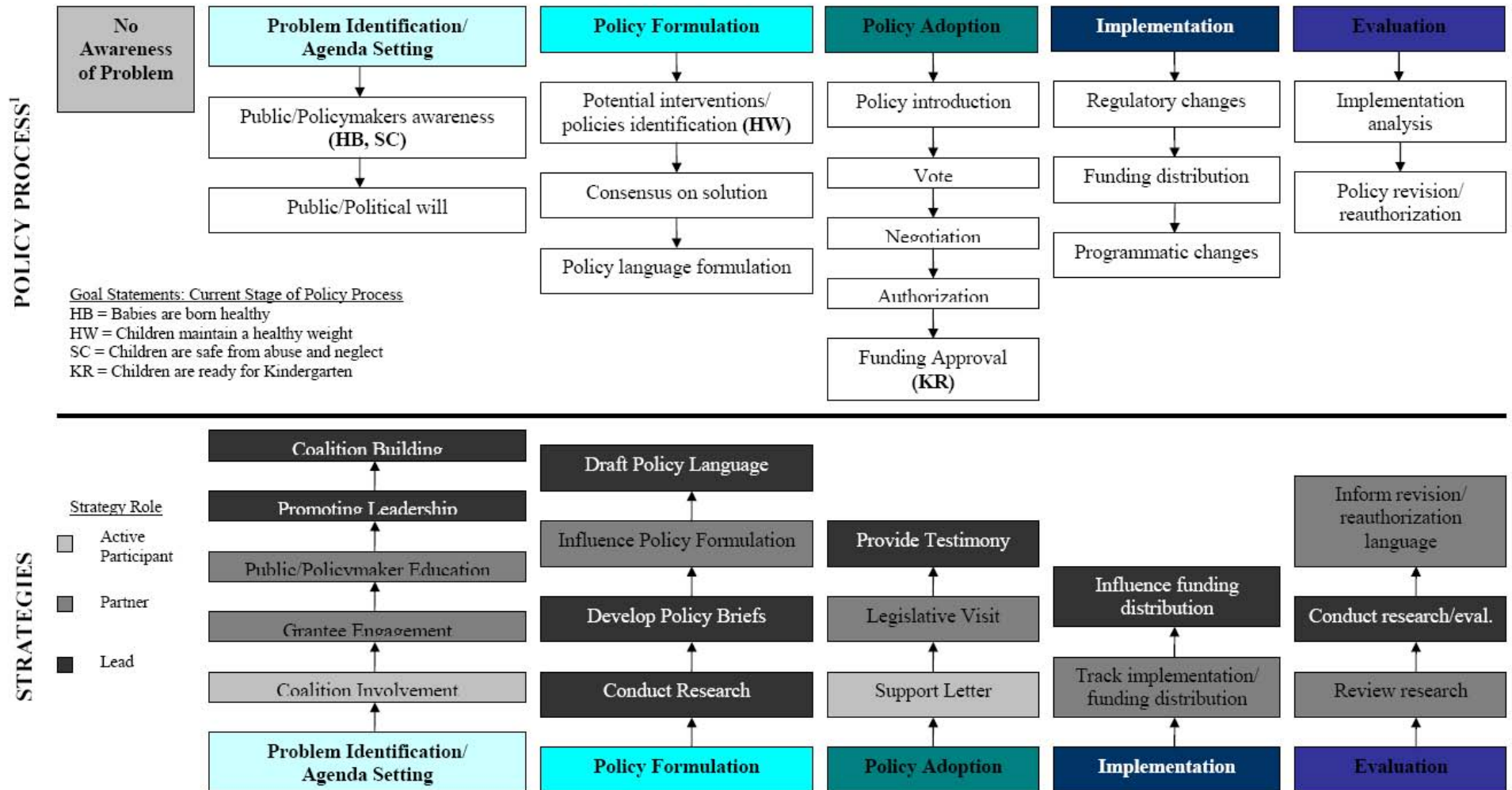
Færdsel langs skrænten frarådes.

WARNUNG!

Erdrutschgefahr.

Abstand von der Böschung halten.

POLICY PROCESSES AND POTENTIAL STRATEGIES



¹James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking*, 5th Ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin)



Qualitative

Criteria	1) MHSA funding allocation	2) Perinatal depression screening	3) Funding for ECE
Policy area	Health	Safe children and families	Early learning
First 5 LA involvement level	Partner	Active participant	Partner / Active participant
Starting location on policy process chart	Implementation	Agenda setting	Policy formulation
Policy decision-making level	County & state	Organizational & county	County & federal
Has First 5 LA funded grantees to work on this issue?	No	Yes (COF)	Yes (Matching grants)
Likely to be on 2010-15 agenda?	No	Yes	Yes (in a different form)
Policy environment	Moderate	Challenging	Hopeful

- Document review
- 22 interviews
 - 14 external stakeholders
 - 8 internal staff
- Interview notes coded (Atlas.ti)
 - *A priori* codes
 - Inductively developed codes

Quantitative

“Level of policy change”

1. Movement on the policy continuum
2. Perception of policy change
 - 1-3 = minimal change
 - 4-6 = moderate
 - 7-9 = significant
 - 10 = policy goal achieved

Variable	Options	Subjective (y/n)
Policy plan category	Early learning, Safe children or Health	No
Policy environment - start point	Hopeful, Modest, Mixed, Awful	Yes
Policy environment - end point	Hopeful, Modest, Mixed, Awful	Yes
Agency role	Active participant, Partner or Lead	Yes
Agency level of involvement	Minimal, Moderate or Significant	Yes
Policy staff level of involvement	Minimal, Moderate or Significant	No
Type of policy legislation	Federal, State, County, or City (or multiple of those)	No
Goal timeframe	Short, Medium or Long Term	Yes



Policy progress: Qualitative

- LA County set aside 65% of funds from the **MHSA** for the 0-25 population. Programs for children 0-5 were proposed in each sub-county regional plan
- “**Perinatal Mood Disorders** Month” declared by the LA County Board of Supervisors
- First 5 LA provided matching funds for ARRA grants to support **ECE programs**

Policy progress: Quantitative

- Median change on policy continuum = 1
- Two measures of policy change not correlated to each other
- More change in Early Learning & Health categories than Safe Children

Agency role

- First 5 LA played multiple roles: leader, participant, supporter
- Stature in community stems in large part from grantmaking
- Other organizations use First 5 LA materials & name to promote their goals
- Work supporting policy agenda takes place throughout agency

Staff role

- Policy staff involvement not associated with more movement on continuum
- Greater Policy staff involvement predictive of more change on subjective scale
- More departments beyond Policy involved = more change
- Board of Commissioners play a crucial role

Perceptions of First 5 LA

- Flexible funding a plus
- External communications a strength
- Building unexpected partnerships
- “Do more”

Limitations

- Internal evaluation
- Qualitative & quantitative not well integrated
- Small number of cases
- Many variables defined by perception
- Short time period for policy agenda

Recommendations

- Integrate policy into planning & grantmaking
- Match policy workload to staff
- Do more – or maybe not
- Streamline publication process
- Engage Commissioners
- Integrate policy agenda items into flexible funding opportunities
- Continue to build partnerships and linkages

What happened next?

- Policy continuum being used with policy grantees
- Ten policy goals on the new agenda
- New Policy Department
- New policy grantmaking program
- Evaluation staff providing training to policy grantees

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