

Course objectives

The course entitled “Setting Agendas and Developing and Implementing Policies” has three main objectives.

The first is to **develop participants’ knowledge about how governments can respond to the unique characteristics of healthcare, and of the factors that influence agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation**. This includes developing an understanding of: 1) the unique characteristics of healthcare and how governments can respond to these characteristics; 2) questions to ask about agendas, policy development and policy implementation including the types of agendas, policies and approaches to implementation and the factors that influence agenda setting, policy development and implementation; and 3) the types and sources of information needed to answer these questions. Those in the ‘to work’ stream will also learn questions to ask about when and how to intervene in the policy process.

The second objective is to **enable participants to examine the attitudes that are supportive of using frameworks to understand how governments can respond to the unique characteristics of healthcare and the factors that influence agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation**. These attitudes include: 1) looking for the ‘big picture’ in how governments have responded to the unique characteristics of healthcare; 2) using established frameworks to structure your efforts to understand agendas, policy development and policy implementation; and 3) being systematic and transparent in finding and using available information to understand agendas, policy development and policy implementation.

The third objective is to **enhance participants’ skills in examining how governments have responded to the unique characteristics of healthcare and the factors that influence agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation**. These skills include: 1) examining how governments have responded to the unique characteristics of healthcare; 2) describing agendas, policies and approaches to policy implementation; 3) examining the actors that influence agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation; 4) identifying opportunities to intervene in the policy process; and 5) communicating the insights from analyses of agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation to support interventions in the policy process.

Course streams

The course provides participants with the opportunity to engage with course material in two different ways: through a ‘to learn’ stream and a ‘to work’ stream. Those in the ‘to learn’ stream will primarily focus on learning the first three kinds of knowledge outlined above by engaging with a subset of the course material, and on examining the attitudes that are support of using frameworks to understand how governments can respond to the unique characteristics of healthcare and the factors that influence agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation. Those in the ‘to work’ stream will engage with the full range of course material in order to obtain this same knowledge plus additional insights about intervening in the policy process, and will also examine the same attitudes. Those in the ‘to work’ stream will also engage with additional course material to enhance their skills in examining how governments have responded to the unique characteristics of healthcare. There is also a third ‘to master’ stream that covers all of the same content, but puts participants in a position to lead others, through supplementary course content that designed in consultation with the course instructors. For more information contact forum@mcmaster.ca.

Course structure and curriculum

The course utilizes a mix of pedagogical approaches, including instructor-led videos and demonstrations, a range of within-module activities and quizzes, and many task sheets that supported a structured approach to particular activities, as well as survey-based evaluations.

The table below provides a brief overview of the course curriculum as presented in the online-only module, with indications about whether and how the material pertains to each of the streams. Note: Those taking a combined online and in-person course will cover all of the same material, although there will be additional in-depth discussion of the concepts with the course instructor(s), opportunities for hands-on work in which the instructor can provide feedback in real time, and course activities tailored to the needs and current work projects of participants.

The course is available in multiple formats, which can be customized to suit your individual and organizational needs. Popular formats include the online course, alone or in combination with a customized in-person workshop, and Forum-hosted training workshops. For more information, please visit www.healthsystemslearning.org or contact us at forum@mcmaster.ca.

Course unit	Description of unit	Stream	Pedagogical approach (with differences between streams noted*)
Introduction	Provides an overview of the course, including the different goals that participants can pursue, the course objectives and structure	All streams	Videos (1)
Section 1: Understanding the big picture			
Responding to healthcare's unique characteristics	Introduces participants to the ways in which healthcare differs from many other goods and services, the ways in which governments can respond to these differences, and how select governments have responded. *Participants in the 'to work' stream will also become familiarized with the paths through which select governments have responded to these characteristics, and be expected to describe important policy developments in their own country or province/state that helped set the boundaries of what was possible when opportunities for change arrived.	All streams	- Videos (3 for 'to learn', 4 for 'to work') - Within-module activities (2) 1a >> Task 1 1b >> Task 2 1c >> Task - Task sheets (2 for 'to learn', 3 for 'to work')
Section 2: Understanding the policy process			
Agendas and the factors that influence agenda setting	Introduces participants to concepts related to government agendas and what is on them, and familiarizes participants with what and who influences agenda. *Participants in the 'to work' stream will also practice determining whether an issue is on the governmental or decision agenda, and identifying the factors/processes that explain why.	All streams	- Videos (3 for 'to learn' and 4 for 'to work') - Within-module activities (3 for 'to learn' and 5 for 'to work') 2c >> Task 4 - Task sheets (1 for 'to work')
Policies and the factors that influence policy development	Familiarize participants with policy development, and the institutions, interests, ideas and external factors that influence policy development. *Participants in the 'to work' stream will also observe examples of determining the likelihood policy being developed at a particular time, and conduct an assessment of the prospects for introducing an identified policy in their own country, province/state.	All streams	- Videos (4 for 'to learn' 5 for 'to work') - Within-module activities (3) 3a >> Task 5 5b >> Task 6 3c >> Task 7 3d >> Task 8 - Task sheets (3 for 'to learn', 4 for 'to work')
Approaches to policy implementation and the factors that influence policy implementation	To become familiarized with approaches to policy implementation, and the factors that influence policy implementation.	All streams	- Videos (3) - Within-module activities (1) 4a >> Task 9 - Task sheets (1)

Section 3: Intervening in the policy process			
Identifying opportunities to intervene	Introduces participants in the ‘to work’ stream to the stages in the policy process where intervention may be needed, and familiarizes participants with the opportunities to intervene in agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation. Prompts participants to consider an achievable goal in their own country or province/state for intervening in the policy process.	To work	• Videos (3) • Within-module activities (1) ○ 5a >> Task 10 • Task sheets (1)
Conclusion	Provides participants with a brief summary of the course, prompts them to consider whether their own personal goals were met, and suggests options for pursuing additional personal goals.	All streams	• Videos (1) • Activities conducted outside of the module (1 self-assessment and 1 course evaluation) ○ 6 >> Task 11 • Task sheets (1)

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