# Building a Trustworthy and Accountable Government

## Summit 250 Report

February 2026

# About the organizers

**The Society of Policy Scientists**—with a legacy rooted in rigorous, multidisciplinary analysis—advances human dignity worldwide. Its members bring decades of front-line experience navigating complex governance challenges. From climate resilience and food security to high-stakes conflicts over natural resources and nation-building, they tackle some of the world's toughest challenges, bringing clarity to problems for purposeful solutions.  (https://www.policysciences.org/)

**For 250 More** promotes public integrity and accountability by promoting independent oversight. As public watchdogs on the inside, the founders of For 250 More served the American people by fighting fraud, waste, and abuse. Now, they work with the American people to build trust by: 1) informing the public about Inspectors General and other accountability mechanisms and why they matter to everyday Americans; 2) providing thought leadership on the future of government oversight; and 3) preserving and advancing the institutional knowledge and expertise of the civil service, by connecting with others to take collective actions. (https://www.for250more.org; also on Substack).

# Executive Summary

*What does it mean to have an accountable government? How do we achieve it?*

These questions guided the discussions at *Summit 250: Building a Trustworthy and Accountable Government*, convened by For 250 More and the Society of Policy Scientists in November 2025.

Summit participants—including current and former federal employees, civil society organizations, academics, and students—engaged in collaborative discussions to identify ways to strengthen independent oversight and government accountability to the public. Panels on the state and future of the civil service and oversight institutions complemented the discussions.

Attendees contributed ideas, concerns, and solutions through facilitated discussions. These contributions were organized into thematic areas representing both foundational values ("roots") and outcomes ("indicators") of trustworthy and accountable governance.

Key themes that emerged include the need for:
- more robust public engagement mechanisms, such as national dialogues to identify common values and priorities;
- stronger whistleblower protections;
- enhanced civic education;
- greater transparency in government operations; and
- structural reforms to reduce undue influence in democratic processes.

Participants emphasized the importance of rebuilding community trust, empowering independent oversight institutions, and ensuring that government actions reflect the common good rather than special interests.



Word cloud developed from an unedited list of hopes, fears, democratic roots, outcomes, and indicators participants listed during the summit.

# Contents

## Contents

# 1. Introduction and Summit Context

People expect consistent application of rules, whether it's during a family boardgame, in a stadium full of fans, or in laws that define how individuals interact in a democratic society. Accountability for adhering to rules does not just happen. It requires clearly defined laws, transparent behavior, people or institutions who identify violations, and consequences for those violations. When the powerful violate rules without facing personal consequences, others pay the price—whether it is fellow contestants, fans, or the broader public that depends on the rule of law.

On November 14 and 15, 2025, *Summit 250: Building a Trustworthy and Accountable Government* convened stakeholders from across sectors to address fundamental questions about government accountability.

The weakening of safeguards to promote accountability and protect the country against the abuse of power that we see in the news today began decades ago. Since at least 2002, political polarization, declining trust in government, the inability to resolve conflict, a growing gap in wealth, and ineffective governance models have threatened the nation's fiscal responsibility, ethical use of technology, and ability to face other complex challenges.[1] A 2019 analysis warned that Congress was underperforming due to gridlock, polarization, and hyper-partisanship.[2] About 80 percent of both Republican and Democratic voters surveyed in 2023 said donors have too much influence on Congressional decisions, and 70 percent of respondents said constituents have too little influence.[3] The Supreme Court granted broad immunity from criminal prosecution to presidents for official acts in 2024,[4] the same

> "Making government more accountable and restoring trust in government were unifying themes at the [summit]. The policy sciences helped participants clarify their preferred end states, but no less important, sharpened their understanding of alternative perspectives, including the lived experience of skeptics of government and of democratic institutions."
>
> *-Matt Auer*
> *Society of Policy Scientists Executive Council member and Dean of the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia*

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[1] Ron Brunner, Christi Colburn, Christina Cromley (Bruner), Roberta Klein, and Elizabeth Olsen, *Finding Common Ground: Governance and Natural Resources in the American West*, Yale University Press, New Haven (2002); and *Adaptive Governance: Integrating Science, Policy, and Decision Making*; Ron Brunner, Toddi Steelman, Lindy Coe-Juell, Christina Cromley (Bruner), Chistine Edwards, and Donna Tucker; Columbia University Press, New York (2005). Some argue that these trends started even earlier, in the 1970s:  K. M. Kruse & Zelizer, J. E. (2019). *Fault Lines: A History of the United States Since 1974*. W.W. Norton & Company.

[2] Daniel Stid, *The Futures of Congress: Scenarios for the US2050 Project*, The Madison Initiative; The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (March 4, 2019)

[3] "Money, Power, and the Influence of Ordinary People in American Politics," Pew Research Center (September 2023).

[4] *Trump v. United States*, 603 U.S. 1 (2024).

year the U.S. received its lowest score on an international index that measures perception of corruption.[5]

The resulting dysfunction in our systems laid the foundation for widespread upheaval in 2025 across the federal workforce, agency contracting and spending, and daily operations. Through June 2025, nationwide layoffs reached 946,426.[6] The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) accounted for 33 percent of cuts, which impacted more than 314,000 federal, contract, and nonprofit employees, with more than 293,000 coming from cuts to the federal workforce.

This upheaval has threatened checks and balances designed to ensure public accountability. Compromised accountability shows up as the hollowing out of the federal career civil service and institutional capacity, violations of due process and the rule of law, erosion of civil liberties, restricted flow of public data and information, impediment of public input into policy and rulemaking, and weakening of the institutions that provide independent oversight over the Executive Branch.

Against this backdrop of heightened political polarization and declining confidence in government institutions, participants at *Summit 250* sought to explore what we can do collectively to address the erosion of accountability to create a better future for all of us.

## 1.1 Summit Goals

The summit aimed to:

- Provide participants with an understanding of the state of the civil service and independent oversight
- Develop a shared understanding of the values and structures that underpin accountable governance
- Generate actionable recommendations for stakeholders across government, civil society, academia, and the public

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[5] Paolo Confino, "*The U.S. just hit its lowest score ever on an international corruption measure,*" Fortune (February 12, 2025).
[6] Challenger, Gray, & Christmas, Inc., *Job Cut Announcement Report,* October 2, 2025.

## 2. Student Session and Panel Discussions

The summit started by providing a comprehensive analytic framework, information, and an opportunity to engage in dialogue about the current state of democracy through the lens of the civil service and those who conduct independent oversight of government programs and operations.

### 2.1 Student Session on Policy Sciences

Organizers held a student session to introduce participants to the Policy Sciences framework. The session was geared toward students, but the "definition" of student can include anyone interested in solving problems using a comprehensive conceptual framework to identify root causes and alternatives to build a better future.

The Policy Sciences framework draws on law, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and other humanities and social sciences. It is "empirically empty," designed not to generalize by attempting to isolate variables, but rather to be applied to a particular set of facts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem in a particular context to identify creative and long-term solutions.

The Policy Sciences framework is included in the appendix.

### 2.2 Responding Effectively to Lost Intellectual Capital and Institutional Capacity

To provide a common understanding of what is happening to the civil service, *Summit 250* welcomed two esteemed panelists: Max Stier, President of the Partnership for Public Service, and Rob Shriver, Managing Director of the Civil Service Strong initiative at Democracy Forward. They discussed the role of civil servants in delivering public services; public servants' ability to solve problems within a complex landscape of laws and regulations; and the need for greater accountability of political appointees. Key insights from the panel included:

- The federal government lost 300,000 employees to reductions in force, incentives to resign and retire, and shuttering of entire functions and agencies, amounting to a loss of 3.7 million years of experience.
- This loss significantly reduces the government's capacity to solve problems and deliver services, because career civil servants possess unique institutional knowledge to operate the country's most complex organization.
- There is an opportunity to elevate appreciation for federal employees by sharing their stories, expertise, and dedication to serving the public and improving life in America.

## 2.3   Independent Oversight and Trust in Government

*Summit 250* organizers were honored to welcome oversight experts to discuss the connection between oversight and effective government. Moderated by former Inspector General Bob Westbrooks, panelists included David Eichenthal, author of *The Art of the Watchdog*; Mark Lee Greenblatt, former Inspector General for the U.S. Department of the Interior; New York State Inspector General Lucy Lang; and former Comptroller General of the United States Dave Walker.

Panelists assessed how independent oversight should function compared to how it is functioning. The discussion highlighted the stakes for the future of democracy:

- Open discussions of public corruption in the United States signal a healthy accountability system—like an indicator species in ecological systems. Oversight leaders must be able to criticize and disagree publicly with an administration—an openness uncommon in foreign countries.
- Dismissals of IGs without cause—or even worse, for being critical of the administration—jeopardize their ability to openly criticize the administration and to fight fraud, waste, and abuse, undermining accountability to the people.
- Lack of public outcry over the firing of IGs suggests limited public understanding of their vital role as a safeguard against corruption and abuse of power. Oversight leaders stressed the importance of making "inspector general" synonymous with democracy.



Credit: Jack Wild, Director of External Affairs at New York State Inspector General

# 3. Participant engagement

Summit participants had three opportunities to provide their perspectives and engage in dialogue. First, *Summit 250* organizers invited participants to write their hopes and fears on sheets that were available throughout the summit. Second, they broke into small groups to answer two questions:

1. If you woke up tomorrow in a future where government was held accountable and public officials act ethically and effectively for the public good, what would it look like?; and

2. What support, information, or resources can facilitate ethics and accountability in government?

And lastly, they were invited to attend a planning discussion on next steps to implement the ideas and learning that occurred at the summit.

Summit discussions coalesced around several major themes that cut across institutional boundaries and policy domains. These themes represent both immediate concerns and long-term aspirations for democratic governance.

## 3.1 Whistleblower Protection and Employee Rights

Participants identified the need for comprehensive guidance on whistleblower protections, including:

- Best practices for collecting, storing, and transferring evidence safely
- Clear articulation of what types of evidence are needed to support claims
- Clarification of employee rights to communicate with members of Congress
- Free legal representation for whistleblowers

## 3.2 Public Participation and Civic Engagement

Participants identified multiple avenues to strengthen democratic participation:

- Enhanced mechanisms for submitting testimony and providing input at hearings
- More robust public comment periods on regulations
- Improved Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) processes
- Community-based listening sessions and research to inform policy decisions
- Open forums for constituents to engage with elected representatives
- Revision of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to enable more authentic co-creation

## 3.3 Oversight and Accountability Institutions

Participants emphasized the critical role of oversight bodies and the need to strengthen their capacity and independence, including the:

- Offices of Inspector General (OIGs)
- Government Accountability Office (GAO)
- Office of Special Counsel (OSC)
- Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)
- Office of Government Ethics (OGE)

## 3.4 Legislative Process and Civic Education

Many participants expressed desire for greater understanding of legislative processes and better tools for civic participation:

- Educational resources on how to translate policy ideas into legislative language
- Guidance on how to comment effectively on proposed legislation
- Comprehensive civics education in K-12 schools
- Resources to help adults become active and informed citizens
- Training for media professionals on understanding government documents

## 3.5 Participant Concerns and Aspirations

Participants expressed concern about limited spaces for dialogue without repercussions, constraints on freedom of speech, and fear of retaliation for those who challenge authority. At the same time, they articulated hope for greater public understanding of the need for civic participation, the creation of safe spaces for discussion, and renewed commitment to democratic norms and institutions.

**The accountability tree participants co-created at *Summit 250***

# 4. Foundational Elements ("Roots")

Participants identified fundamental values, structures, and practices that form the foundation of trustworthy and accountable government. These "roots" represent the deep commitments and institutional arrangements necessary to sustain democratic governance over time.

## 4.1 Long-Term Vision and Planning

Government decision-making must extend beyond short electoral cycles:

- Adopt planning timelines that extend beyond 4-8 year political cycles
- Conduct comprehensive assessments of national conditions, including geographic and demographic disparities
- Correct for myopia, tunnel vision, and self-interest in policymaking
- Recognize that we are always negotiating the public good

## 4.3 Institutional Structure and Constitutional Principles

Strong institutions and adherence to constitutional principles provide the scaffolding for accountable governance:

- Resilient institutions with effective checks and balances among the three branches
- Build government systems with oversight and ability to audit in mind
- Widespread understanding and honoring of constitutional principles
- Respect for precedent in both policy and judicial decisions

## 4.4 Public Enfranchisement and Community Engagement

Meaningful democracy requires robust mechanisms for public input and community participation:

- Public engagement throughout program design, delivery, and evolution
- Community input before decisions are finalized
- Effective systems for public feedback and government responsiveness

## 4.2 Shared Ethics and Values Framework

An ethics and values framework provides the **scaffolding for all other elements** of a trustworthy government, and must include:

- Transparency and visibility in government operations
- Ownership of mistakes and culture of accountability
- Prioritization of human dignity and the common good
- Commitment to civil discourse and respectful disagreement
- Stewardship of public resources
- Equity and fairness in policy application
- Protection of individual privacy

- Direct channels between the public and oversight entities
- Accessible pathways for citizens to communicate with elected representatives

## 4.5 Citizen Knowledge and Civic Education

An informed citizenry is essential to democratic accountability:

- Streamlined access to government information to counter misinformation
- Comprehensive civics education emphasizing civic responsibility
- Public awareness campaigns about what federal employees do
- Redevelopment of K-12 education to emphasize civic knowledge
- Resources to help adults become active and informed citizens
- National Service Act that requires 18- to 24-year-olds to engage in a government service

# 2. Indicators of Good Government

Participants identified measurable indicators and observable characteristics that would signal a return to trustworthy and accountable governance. These indicators provide concrete benchmarks against which progress can be assessed.

## 2.1 Trust and Public Confidence

- Public confidence that officials care about the common interest
- Trust in government institutions (both implicit and explicit)
- Citizens believe government can make a positive difference on issues they care about
- Trust in disagreement—ability to maintain faith in institutions despite policy differences

## 22 Transparency and Access to Information

- Government makes sufficient information available for public and press to evaluate performance
- Government agencies report clearly on outcomes of taxpayer spending
- Transparent budget processes with citizen participation through means such as taxpayers' ability to provide input into budgets and review their execution
- Transparent deliberations on policy decisions
- Information readily available online regarding policy implications
- Efficient processing of Freedom of Information Act requests

## 2.3 Data Quality, Timeliness, and Availability

- Open and valued sharing of data and information
- Reports and statistics (job reports, health data, etc.) released in a timely manner
- Data publicly available for independent analysis
- Recognition and value for federal employees who collect and maintain this data

## 2.4 Accountability and Ethics

- Culture of accountability across all levels of government
- Elected officials held accountable through electoral processes
- Those who act unethically removed from positions of authority
- Actionable consequences for officials who act against the common interest
- Government officials divest from private interests that create conflicts
- Clear guidance and support systems to report and address ethical breaches
- Consistent application of rules across all officials
- Oversight institutions (OIGs, GAO, etc.) function independently and effectively
- Congress exercises its oversight role effectively
- Due process respected in all government proceedings
- Respect for precedent in policy and judicial decisions

- Nonpartisan messaging restored (Hatch Act enforcement)

## 2.5 Workforce Quality and Qualifications

- Qualified officials with relevant education and experience leading agencies
- Officials without criminal records or histories of human rights violations
- Reduction in the number of political appointees; greater reliance on career civil servants
- Federal employees valued and respected for their service
- Performance plans and accountability measures for political appointees

## 2.6 Civic Engagement and Participation

- Citizens understand the purpose and function of government
- Strong civil society infrastructure to assess disparate impacts of federal policies
- Active grassroots movements engaging with policy processes
- Constituent-driven, localized political agendas
- People agree on basic facts despite policy disagreements

## 2.7 Elections and Democratic Process

- Elections are free and fair
- Government promotes democratic values in voting
- Voting Rights Act enforced and strengthened
- No blind following of leaders; critical engagement with all political figures
- All citizens who get a state ID are automatically registered to vote

# 5. Recommendations for Action

Based on summit discussions, participants identified concrete actions that different stakeholders can take to advance the goals of trustworthy and accountable government. These recommendations are organized by stakeholder group.

## 5.1 Recommendations for Congress

- Increase Congressional staff capacity to write and evaluate bills and address constituent concerns
- Provide education and training for lawmakers on technical and policy matters
- Establish strict policies regarding elected officials' financial conflicts of interest
- Create direct lines of communication between career GS or equivalent federal employees and leadership
- Strengthen oversight capabilities and exercise them consistently
- Obtain impartial oversight and advice, free from partisan pressure
- Include performance metrics requirements in legislation (e.g., application processing times)

## 5.2 Recommendations for Federal Agencies

- Rely more on career civil servants and less on political appointees
- Empower the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) to enforce ethics standards
- Establish clear rules and regulations to enforce transparency
- Adopt restorative justice approaches (correction over punishment) where appropriate
- Develop social media strategies to counter misinformation about government
- Communicate clearly and simply with the public, addressing their values and concerns
- Make government documents more accessible and AI-ready
- Learn from private sector best practices for ethical use of AI and data
- Educate the workforce on the rule of law and proper federal operations
- Return to civility in discourse from senior government officials

The strongest consensus was around **national dialogues** to create spaces for Americans to reaffirm values such as freedom, independence, and ensuring the same rules apply to everyone, and renewing the norms and systems that protect those values.

Please contact **peoplesproposal@federalworkersfordemocracy.org** if you are interested in engaging in National Dialogues organized by the Center for Developing Leadership in Science at UCLA, the Democracy Renewal Group, and Federal Workers Alliance for Democracy.

## 5.3 Recommendations for Oversight Bodies

- Inspectors General develop lines of work to serve as constructive promoters/ storytellers of effectiveness, not only investigators of wrongdoing
- Establish checks on investigations to prevent abuse of power
- Create nonpartisan open forums for oversight officials to share best practices
- Present data to communities with requests for input on priorities

## 5.4 Recommendations for Non-Governmental Organizations

- Promote access to necessary resources for civic participation
- Create opportunities to amplify one another's efforts through coordination
- Facilitate networking and relationship building among advocates
- Connect individuals and groups engaged in similar work
- Provide funding and resources to support continued advocacy efforts
- Support litigation defending employee rights and democratic processes
- Establish mutual aid networks and information exchanges

## 5.5 Recommendations for Universities and Educational Institutions

- Sponsor events and programs on rule of law themes
- Provide research support for policy development
- Contribute academic expertise to inform public debates
- Develop and deliver comprehensive civics education programs
- Train students in communication skills to bridge academic and public discourse
- Conduct research on the public value that federal employees create

## 5.6 Recommendations for State and Local Governments

- Take actions to promote accountability at the state and local levels
- Develop and invest in state-specific policies and programs
- Use local government as proof of concept for federal-level reforms
- Engage in state and local oversight and accountability mechanisms

## 5.8 Recommendations for Policy Scientists

- Engage with Summit 250 organizers and participants on follow up actions, such as national dialogues
- Use Summit 250 as a prototype to respond to today's faster pace, rise in complexity, number of organizations and interest groups, and shifting national and international order.
- Engage with the Policy Sciences Executive Council on using policy sciences in real time, as a consultative function, for guided problem solving to address current undesirable trends in the U.S. government.

## 5.7 Recommendations for Media and Communications

- Develop resources to help media understand government documents (Federal Register notices, system of records notices, etc.)

- Create trusted social media resources for accurate government information
- Develop effective messaging about the role and value of the federal workforce
- Teach Americans what federal workers actually do
- Distinguish between political and partisan activity in coverage
- Tell stories that demonstrate the worth of federal government and its employees

## 5.8 Structural and Systemic Reforms

Participants also identified larger structural reforms that would require broad political support:

- Develop more pluralistic political systems
- Implement ranked choice voting
- Consider term limits for elected officials
- Limit campaign contributions and overall campaign spending
- Work to overturn Citizens United (money is not speech)
- Eliminate or reform primary systems
- Allow independents to vote in primaries
- Prohibit privatized money-making interests in government
- Regulate AI and internet/dark web activities
- Consider universal civil service requirement (not military) for all residents/citizens

# 6. Conclusion and Next Steps

*Summit 250: Building a Trustworthy and Accountable Government* demonstrated both the depth of concern about the state of democratic governance and the breadth of expertise and commitment among those working to strengthen it. Participants brought diverse perspectives from across sectors and levels of government, united by a shared commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability, and public service.

## 6.1 Key Takeaways

Several themes emerged consistently across discussions:

- The need for both immediate protective measures (such as whistleblower protections) and long-term structural reforms
- The importance of uniform ethics and a return to values, civic education, and public engagement as foundations for accountability
- The central role of transparency in building and maintaining public trust
- The necessity of strong, independent oversight institutions
- The value of career federal employees and need to protect and support them

## 6.2 Immediate Priorities

Based on the urgency expressed by participants, several areas warrant immediate attention:

- Develop comprehensive resources on whistleblower protections and employee rights
- Create safe spaces for dialogue on values and ethics, as well as information sharing among federal employees
- Strengthen oversight institutions and ensure their independence
- Improve public access to government information and decision-making processes
- Support litigation and advocacy to defend democratic norms and employee rights

## 6.3 Long-Term Vision

Rebuilding trust in government and ensuring accountability requires sustained effort across multiple fronts. The recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for action by diverse stakeholders. Success will require:

- Sustained coalition building and coordination across sectors
- Commitment to long-term vision beyond short political cycles
- Investment in civic education and public engagement infrastructure
- Protection and empowerment of those who serve the public interest
- Ongoing dialogue and adaptation as challenges and opportunities evolve
- Resources for start-up groups led and staffed by former federal employees
- Resources for groups working to preserve institutional knowledge

## 6.4 Call to Action

This summit was a beginning, not an ending. The ideas and recommendations captured here require translation into action. Summit participants and readers of this report are encouraged to:

- Share this report with colleagues, constituents, and stakeholders
- Identify recommendations that align with your organization's mission and capacity
- Develop implementation plans with concrete timelines and accountability measures
- Build coalitions with others working on related priorities
- Engage with the public to build support for accountability reforms
- Document and share successes and lessons learned
- Reach out to us if you want to partner on something!

The work of building trustworthy and accountable government is ongoing and requires the sustained commitment of citizens, civil servants, elected officials, advocates, and all who care about the health of our democracy. The recommendations in this report provide pathways forward, but only collective action can bring them to fruition.

Together, we can rebuild trust, strengthen accountability, and ensure that government truly serves the public interest.

## 6.5 Resources to Continue Learning and Engaging

- **Become a member of the Society of Policy Scientists**
  Learn more about the Society and the policy sciences, become a member, or stay informed about future Annual Institutes at https://www.policysciences.org/.

- **Join with other Office of Inspector General alumni**
  If you worked in an Office of Inspector General and would like to stay engaged, contact christinafor250more@pm.me or take the survey at this link https://tinyurl.com/knzr6kt7 to express what you would like to contribute or get out of an alumni network.

- **Organize or participate in national dialogues**
  Contact peoplesproposal@federalworkersfordemocracy.org if you are interested in helping to hold or engaging in National Dialogues organized by the Center for Developing Leadership in Science at UCLA, the Democracy Renewal Group, and Federal Workers Alliance for Democracy.

- **Visit For250More.org or sign up for Substack newsletters to stay informed**
  For 250 More (For250More.org) maintains a resource library and publishes Substack articles on topics relevant to oversight and accountability on its eponymous Substack For 250 More. https://for250more.substack.com/about

## Appendix. Policy Sciences Framework

## "Rule of Law"
"The rules are but the legal system's surface; formal agreements and textual statements alone do not constitute law; rather, **habitual behavior and the flow of words reveal the law: control is revealed in the lawmakers' actual participation in making the decision and enforcing it.**[7] If decision implementation does not exert control because **functionally it is not followed with sanctions or rewards, then it does not qualify as "law"** in the New Haven sense.[8] Unwritten practice may ignore the authority a written constitution or law formally provides or totally redefine it.[9]"  (Taken from *The Global Culture of Bullying*)[10]


## The Problem Orientation
*(adapted from Susan G. Clark, 2011, The Policy Process: A Practical Guide for Natural Resource Professionals)*

The Problem Orientation provides a guide to understanding the context of problems. This background information on the problem helps you gain better understanding stakeholders' perspectives, which can help you create and evaluate different interventions.

| Tasks | Questions to ask |
|---|---|
| Clarifying goals | What goals or ends, both biological and social, does the community want? Are people's values clear? |
| Describing trends | Looking back at the history of the situation, what are the key trends? Have events moved toward or away from the specified goals? |
| Analyzing conditions | What factors, relationships, and conditions created these trends, including the complex interplay of factors that affected prior decisions?  What models, qualitative or quantitative, might be useful at this stage to explain trends? |
| Projecting developments | Based on trends and conditions? What is likely to happen in the future? Project several scenarios and evaluate which is most likely. Is this likely future the one that will achieve goals? |
| Inventing, evaluating, and selecting alternatives | If trends are not moving toward a goal, then a problem exists, and alternatives must be considered. What other policies, rules, norms, and institutional structures, and procedures might move toward the goal? Evaluate each in terms of the goals. Select one or more. |

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[7] Charles H. Norchi, *Law as Strategy: Thinking Below the State in Afghanistan*, 95 Int'l L. Stud. 362, 388 (2019).
[8] W. Michael Reisman, Siegfried Wiessner, & Andrew R. Willard, *The New Haven School: A Brief Introduction*, 32 Yale J. Int'l L. 575, 577 (2007).
[9] *Id.* at 324.
[10] Carol Castleberry, *The Global Culture of Bullying.* Routledge, India (2023).

# Mapping the Social Process

*(adapted from Susan G. Clark, 2011, The Policy Process: A Practical Guide for Natural Resource Professionals)*

The social process helps us understand how people, values, and institutions interact in a conflict or decision. By breaking the case into participants, perspectives, situations, values, strategies, outcomes, and long-term effects, we can see not only *what is happening*, but *why*, and how more effective and equitable solutions might emerge.

| Social Process Element | Questions to guide your thinking specifically from the point of view of one specific stakeholder |
|---|---|
| Participants | Identify who is involved in this case (individuals, groups, and institutions), who wants to be involved, and who is trying to influence decisions or gain access to the process. |
| Perspectives | Describe the viewpoints of those involved (and those who want to be involved), including what they want (demands), what they assume will happen (expectations), and who/what they believe they represent (identifications, such as cultural meanings, values, symbols, or community identity). |
| Situations | Explain where and when interactions occur, including the ecological and geographic setting, historical context, institutional setting (laws, policies, norms), and whether the situation reflects conflict, crisis, or ongoing management. |
| Base Values | Describe the resources and capacities participants use to pursue their goals<br>　　*Power* is to make and carry out decisions<br>　　*Enlightenment* is to have knowledge<br>　　*Wealth* is to have money or its equivalent<br>　　*Well-being* is to have health, physical and psychic<br>　　*Skill* is to have special abilities<br>　　*Affection* is to have family, friends, and warm community relationships.<br>　　*Respect* is to show and receive deference<br>　　*Rectitude* is to have ethical standards |
| Strategies | Identify the main approaches participants use to pursue their goals (e.g., negotiation and collaboration, communication and ideas, economic incentives or resources, legal or regulatory approaches, advocacy, or direct action). |
| Outcomes | Explain what results from interactions among participants, including who gains or loses access to key values (e.g., land, cultural rights, ecological benefits). Describe any changes in practices, relationships, or institutions. |
| Effects | Describe the long-term changes to systems, practices, and institutions that result from this case. Then explain whether new norms or structures emerge, whether old ones persist, and what forces support or limit lasting change. |

# The Decision Process: The Temporal Slice

*(adapted from Susan G. Clark, 2011, The Policy Process: A Practical Guide for Natural Resource Professionals)*

The decision process examines how collective choices are made, implemented, and evaluated. It includes six key functions initiation, estimation, selection, implementation, evaluation, and termination, that reveal how values, power, and accountability shape outcomes. By asking focused questions at each stage, we can assess performance, improve transparency, and design more effective governance.

| Decision Process Activities | Questions about the decision process |
|---|---|
| Initiation | Who Initiated the process? <br> What are they saying? <br> Why are they saying that? <br> Who benefits from the initial problem definition? |
| Estimation | Which groups (official or unofficial) urge which course of action <br> What values are being promoted? <br> Will new decisions and programs harmonize with existing rules by which organizations and actors operate? <br> What rules are being set? Are they binding (e.g., written down)? |
| Selection | Is implementation consistent with the design of the program or policy? <br> Who should be held accountable for the rules set for the program or policy? <br> Who will enforce the rules? <br> Will people with authority and control resolve disputes? |
| Implementation | Do government agencies succumb to the selfishness of the private sector? <br> Were initiation and estimation failures evident in the application? <br> Is coordination adequate? <br> Are appropriate organizational agreements in place? |
| Evaluation | How do people interact and affect one another? <br> Who is served by the program and who is not? <br> Is the program evaluated fully and regularly? <br> Who appraise one's activities? <br> Who is responsible and accountable for success or failure? |
| Termination | What are the decision rules for termination? <br> Who should stop or change the rules? <br> Who is served, and who does the end of a program harm? <br> How will the values of people affected by the program or policy be addressed? |

# The Decision Process: The Analytical Slice
*(adapted from Harold D. Lasswell, A Pre-View of Policy Sciences 1971)*

The functional analysis of the decision process can be sliced differently to identify risks of malfunctions (i.e., limitations, distortions, etc.) of how policies are made, and the often over-looked political aspects of each function. Identifying malfunctions is key to efforts to reform the policy process: "constitutive policymaking".

| Decision Process Activities | Questions about the decision process |
|---|---|
| Intelligence (similar to estimation) | Who is gathering, analyzing, and conveying policy-relevant intelligence? What are the biases or gaps? Is the analysis based on poor problem definitions (e.g., mis-identifying a means as an ultimate end)? |
| Promotion | Who is trying to influence the objectives of policy and/or the policy content? Is this influence skewed in favor of particular participants? Are the promotional activities inappropriately polarizing, thereby reducing the chances of a widely embraced policy? |
| Prescription | What formal process—if any—is involved in formulating the laws, regulations, or other rules? Are some stakeholders excluded? Are the decisions rushed? Do they ignore relevant intelligence? Are they inappropriately anchored in no longer appropriate precedents? |
| Invocation | Does the decision to select a law, regulation, or other rule (when more than one is plausibly applicable) as the basis for an action reflect a commitment to the public good? Does the process of challenging such a decision undermine the effectiveness of its application because of biased judgments, inappropriate delays, or other distortions when appeals are considered? |
| Application | Is the concrete implementation of a policy undermined by low administrative capacity (e.g., limited funding, lack of expertise), inappropriate deliberate modification of what is implemented, and/or excessive delays? Are the applications appropriately adapted when special circumstances call for flexibility? |
| Termination | Are policies or programs terminated because of ineffectiveness rather than because new leaders are motivated to demonstrate their distinctiveness from predecessors? Are policy or program terminations timed such that participants who invested good-faith efforts under the expectations of the existing policy or program are not unfairly treated? |
| Appraisal (similar to evaluation) | Are appraisals (ex-post evaluations or assessments) objective in the factual bases of the appraisals, still allowing for different criteria to govern the selection of the factual basis? Are appraisals shared widely enough such as the public and decisionmakers can consider opposing appraisals? |