

There are a variety of theories of the policy process that can be used to develop your evaluation of policy efforts. These theories include innovation and diffusion models,¹ punctuated-equilibrium,² and John Kingdon's policy process theory.³ This guide uses the Kingdon theory for evaluation of policy.

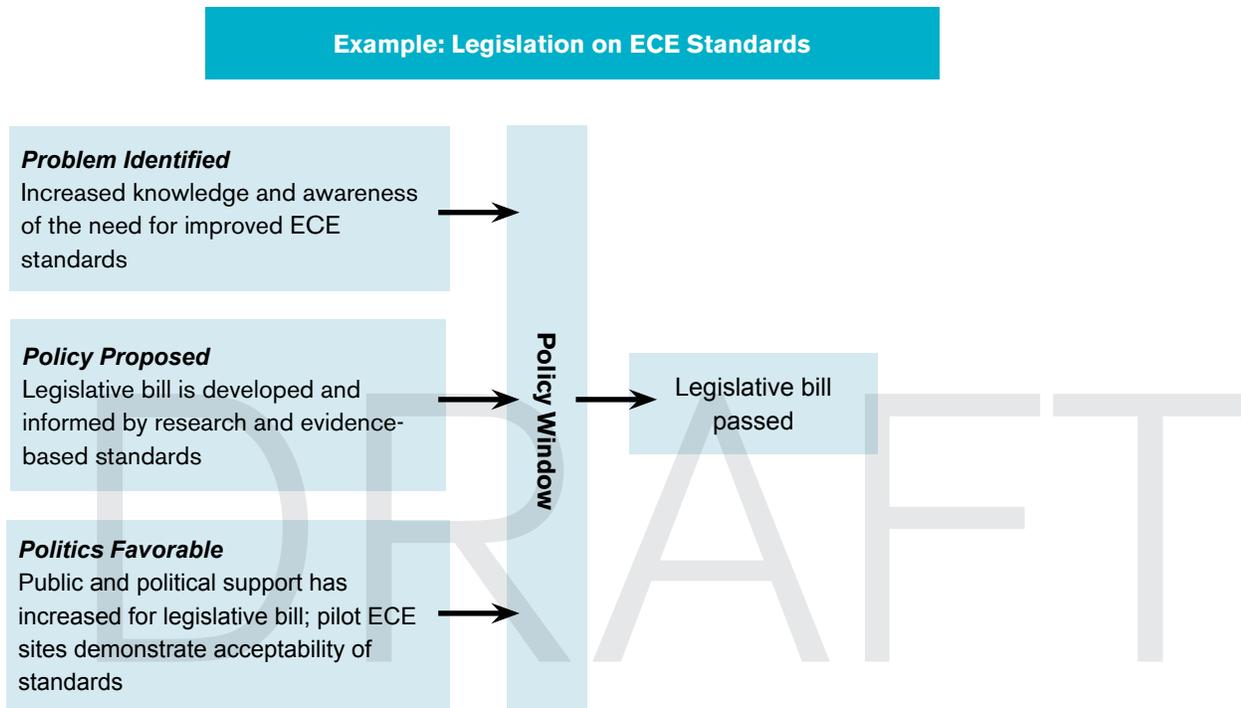
According to Kingdon's theory, agenda-setting is the first stage of the policy process. The policy agenda is a list of issues that government officials and policy makers view as serious and in need of attention, such as legislation or administrative regulations. Moving an issue to a level of importance to be included in the policy agenda involves three processes: *problem*, *proposal*, and *politics*. *Problem* refers to the process of persuading policy makers to pay attention to one problem over others. *Proposals* represent the process by which policy solutions are generated, discussed, and agreed upon. The policy proposals are influenced by organizational culture, including the willingness to make a change and the availability of resources. This process can often present challenges among a diverse group of partners, especially in reaching agreement on which approaches are most appropriate for addressing a particular health problem. *Politics* are the factors that influence political agendas, such as changes in elected officials, political climate, and support or opposition by key leaders, policy makers, and the public.

A "policy window" opens when at least two of the three processes (problem, proposal, or politics) occur at the same time. Successful agenda-setting that results in passing a bill substantially increases if all three processes are linked together. The following are examples of questions related to each policy process.

- Is the problem of childhood obesity perceived as a pressing health problem that can be addressed by improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards in ECE licensing and administrative regulations?
- How are proposals promoting improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards in licensing and administrative regulations perceived? Are proposed solutions evidence-based and seen as feasible, of reasonable cost, and appealing to ECE providers and the public?
- How do politics factor in? Is there broad constituency support for improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards in licensing and administrative regulations? Who are the recognized supporters and opponents of the ECE licensing and administrative regulations?
- What is the likelihood that the problem, proposal, and politics will converge to open a policy window? Where are ECE standards to prevent childhood obesity on the general policy agenda? Where are they on the children's policy agenda? What is the likelihood of success and what factors affect that likelihood?

Figure 1 shows how Kingdon's policy processes converge to open a policy window that increases the likelihood of passing a legislative bill to improve nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards in ECE licensing and administrative regulations. This policy process will be explained in more detail in the following policy development evaluation example.

Figure 1. Kingdon's Policy Process Streams



Policy Development and Implementation Logic Models and Evaluation Planning

The stage of development of your policy intervention is critical for determining the appropriate focus for the evaluation. For instance, evaluation of an ECE nutrition and physical activity policy in the development stage should focus on deciding the standards to include in the policy, acceptance and feasibility of the standards by ECE providers and managers, infrastructure to support implementation of the policy, and approval and endorsement of the policy. Evaluation of the implementation of the policy should focus more on the inputs or resources that have been allocated, the activities that are being implemented, and achievement of expected outcomes. Separate logic models and sample evaluation questions are provided for the development and implementation stages of policy efforts.

Example: Evaluation of Policy Development

Evaluation of policy development begins by identifying the purpose of the evaluation and the intended use and users. The following table provides some examples.

Policy Development Evaluation	
Purpose	Intended Users and Uses
<p>Determine the engagement of key leaders and policy makers in the development of the policy. Evaluation can determine the extent to which key constituency support has been built to promote a legislative bill for improved nutrition, physical activity, breastfeeding, and screen time practices in the ECE setting.</p> <p>Improve awareness and build political will. Evaluation can be used to determine the extent to which awareness about the importance of improved nutrition and physical activity standards has increased among key partners and policy makers.</p> <p>Build systems and target communities. Evaluation can be used to determine the extent to which pilot ECE centers demonstrate that implementation of the policy is feasible, of reasonable cost, and appealing to ECE providers and parents.</p> <p>Improve and guide policy development activities. Evaluation can be used to assess achievement of activities so that successful strategies can be supported and replicated and lessons learned can be used to improve the policy process.</p> <p>Provide accountability to funders and partners. Evaluation can be used to provide accountability for achieving results and managing resources.</p>	<p>Leadership can use findings to provide accountability and show progress toward passing the bill. Findings can also be used to determine areas in need of improvement to facilitate the development of the policy.</p> <p>Management staff can use evaluation data to help improve the policy development process and the engagement of key leaders and policy makers in the promotion of the bill.</p> <p>Partnership members can use evaluation findings to support the policy development processes and to advocate on behalf of the partnership.</p> <p>Funders may use findings from pilot ECE projects to support continued funding, to leverage additional funding, and to identify successful strategies to share with other ECE providers for support of the bill.</p> <p>People affected by the standards. People or organizations may use evaluation findings to support and promote awareness of the importance of improved nutrition and physical activity standards.</p>

The policy development logic model in Figure 2 shows how ECE policy development activities converge in the Kingdon policy process—problem identified, policy proposed, and politics favorable—that lead to an “open policy window” and passing of the legislative bill.

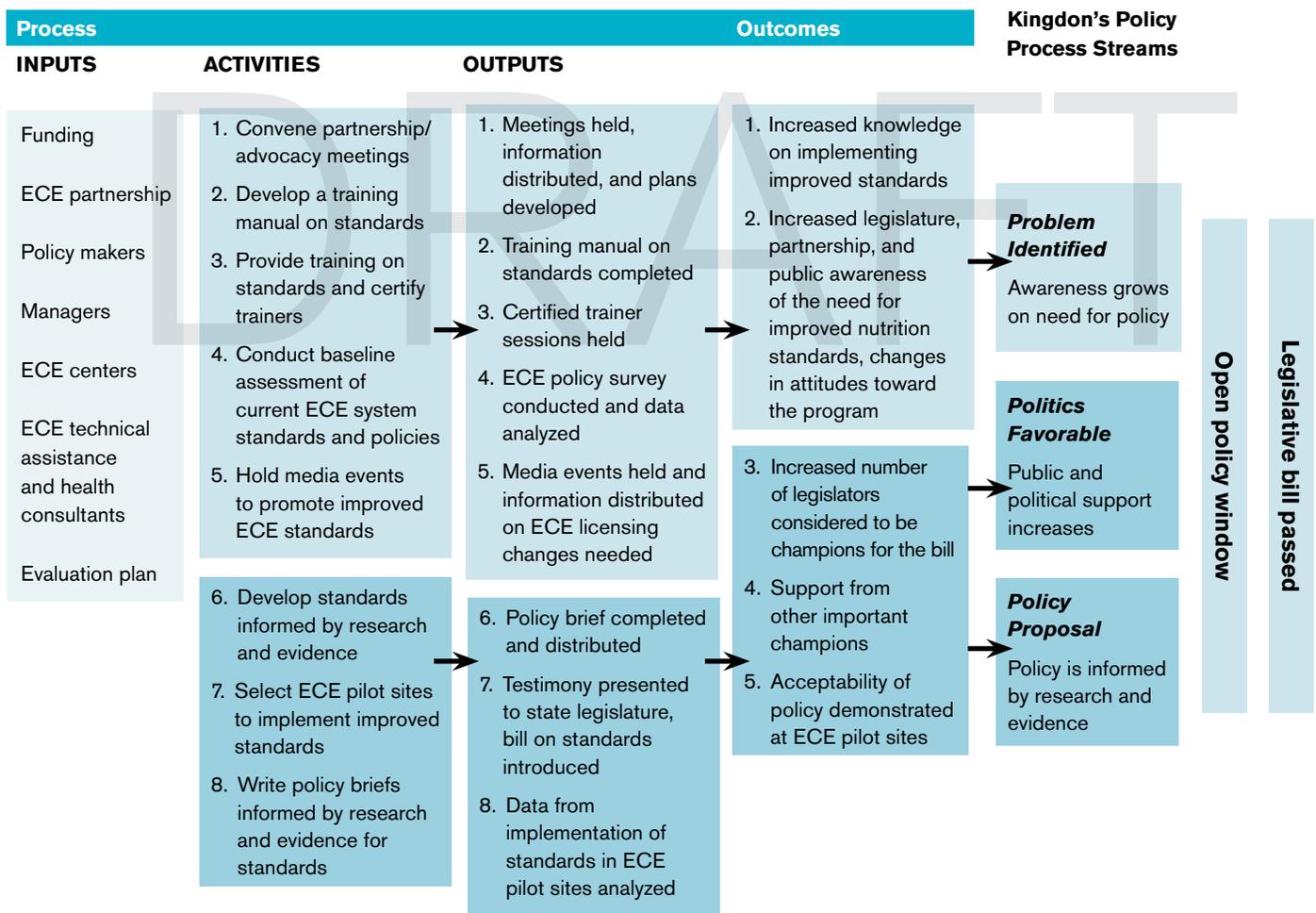
In this example, the state ECE partnership is responsible for developing a bill to amend the ECE licensing regulations to include standards that result in improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices in the ECE setting. The state ECE partnership is a steering committee made up of diverse individuals and organizations who work together to accomplish the program’s goals. The members of the partnership meet regularly and provide input on the program’s course toward achieving this goal.

The activities that define the problem and increase the awareness for improved standards include the development of a nutrition and physical activity manual, free training to certify trainers statewide, a survey of current ECE center policies, and promotion of the need for improved standards. Activities related to the development of the policy proposal include developing the policy informed by evidence-based standards, testifying to legislature and introducing the bill, and implementation of standards in pilot sites to demonstrate feasibility of the standards.

The outputs include training and media events to promote awareness of the standards, distribution of the bill, success stories from pilot ECE sites that implemented the standards, and partnership efforts to support the bill that resulted in increased public and political support, which created more favorable politics and increased likelihood of the bill passing.

This logic model that highlights Kingdon’s policy process can be used to guide development of the evaluation questions and demonstrate the links between the workgroup efforts and the expected outcome to pass a bill.

Figure 2. Example: Development of State-Level Policy Logic Model



Policy Development Evaluation Questions and Methods

Process Evaluation Questions	Potential Method
How were the nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards determined? Which standards were recommended?	Key Informant Survey
How did the partnership influence the standards that were recommended?	Key Informant Survey
What hindered/facilitated development of the standards?	Key Informant Survey
What were lessons learned from developing a state-level ECE policy for nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards?	Key Informant Survey
Short-Term Outcome Evaluation Questions	Potential Method
To what extent did the training on the standards increase the awareness of the need for improved standards?	Survey of partnership
How did the media events, legislative testimony, and policy briefs increase awareness of the need for improved standards?	Survey of partnership
Was a legislative bill passed with improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards in ECE licensing regulations?	Documentation of legislative bill introduced or passed

Example: Evaluation of Policy Implementation

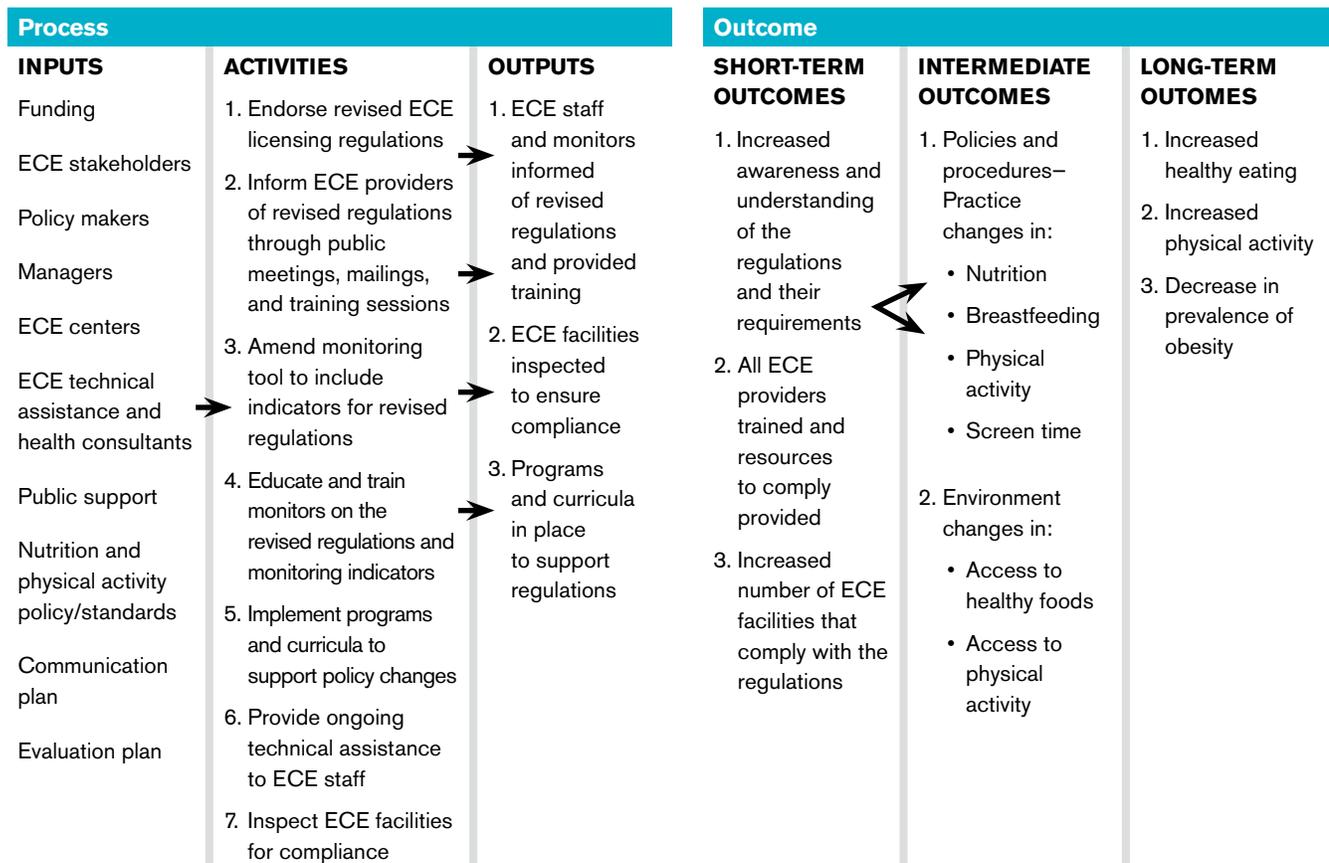
The goal of evaluating policy implementation is to understand how state-level policy was implemented, what lessons were learned from implementation, and how the results of the evaluation can be used to further mobilize efforts to support compliance with the policy. As with evaluation of policy development, evaluation of policy implementation begins by identifying the purpose of the evaluation and the intended use and users. The following table provides examples of purpose, users, and uses of a policy implementation evaluation.

Policy Implementation Evaluation	
Purpose	Intended Users and Uses
<p>Determine the impact of communication, orientation, and training on the standards. Evaluation can determine the impact that communication, orientation, and training has on the implementation and monitoring of nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards.</p> <p>Build capacity and infrastructure. Evaluation can determine the extent to which staff infrastructure, resources, strategies for increased access to healthy foods and physical activity, and programs to support implementation of the standards are available.</p> <p>Improvement of implementation of standards. Evaluation can be used to assess achievement of activities so that successful strategies can be supported and replicated and lessons learned can be used to improve the policy process.</p> <p>Impact of implementation of standards. Evaluation can be used to determine to what extent ECE facilities have implemented the standards, which standards may be easier to implement, and which may be more difficult.</p> <p>Cost of implementation of standards. Evaluation can be used to determine to what extent the implementation of standards has resulted in additional costs to ECE facilities.</p>	<p>Leadership can use findings to provide accountability and show progress toward achieving outcomes. Findings can also be used to determine areas in need of improvement to implement the standards.</p> <p>Management staff can use evaluation data to help improve the implementation of the standards and the engagement of partners in building capacity to implement the standards.</p> <p>Partnership members can use the evaluation findings to support their participation in implementing the standards and to advocate for additional resources to comply with standards.</p> <p>Funders may use findings to support continued funding, to leverage additional funding, and to identify successful strategies to share with other ECE providers.</p> <p>People affected by the standards. People or organizations may use evaluation findings to support continued implementation of standards and promote awareness of the importance of improved nutrition and physical activity standards for obesity prevention.</p>

Evaluation of policy implementation should focus more on the inputs or resources that have been allocated, the activities that are being implemented, and achievement of expected outcomes. Outcomes are typically expanded into three groups: short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. Short-term outcomes include increased awareness and understanding of the nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time regulations and their requirements; increased capacity to implement the policy, including increased certification and training related to nutrition and physical activity standards; and increased number of ECE facilities that comply with regulations. Intermediate policy outcomes include improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time practices and increased access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities in the ECE setting. Long-term policy outcomes are related to behavior changes including increased consumption of healthy food and beverages and increased physical activity that result in decreased prevalence of childhood obesity.

In this example of evaluation of policy implementation (see Figure 3), a legislative bill was passed with improved nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards in ECE licensing and administrative regulations. A baseline assessment of ECE practices before implementation of the revised standards was collected among ECE facilities. Before the revised regulations were enforced, ECE directors were informed of the changes in three ways: 1) a public meeting in each county, 2) mailings sent to ECE center directors, and 3) briefings from state staff who regularly visit the ECE facilities. Regional training sessions were provided for ECE directors on the revised regulations, along with programs and curricula that provide support for policy implementation. Education and training was provided to monitors on the revised nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards. Monitors conducted visits to ECE centers to determine compliance with the standards. For compliance with physical activity requirements, monitors examined the center’s daily schedules to see if adequate time is allotted for movement. To assess compliance with nutrition regulations, monitors reviewed menus and examined kitchens.

Figure 3. Example: Implementation of State-Level Policy Logic Model



Policy Implementation Evaluation Questions and Methods

Process Evaluation Questions	Potential Method
How many ECE centers were inspected to ensure compliance with nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards?	Compliance monitor report (observation)
Which ECE centers are implementing the state-level policy to improve nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards?	Compliance monitor report
Which ECE centers have received training and technical assistance (TA) on these nutrition and physical activity standards?	ECE provider training and TA logs
To what extent did technical assistance make a difference in the implementation of these standards?	Compliance monitor report ECE provider training and TA logs
To what extent did training make a difference in the ability of compliance monitors to accurately assess the implementation of recommended standards?	Compliance monitor training and TA logs
What tools, resources, and trainings did centers need to implement the standards?	ECE provider focus group
Which trainers provided which trainings and/or technical assistance to the ECE centers?	ECE provider training and TA logs
How were sites supported to implement the standards?	ECE provider training and TA logs
What hindered and/or facilitated implementation of the standards by ECE centers?	ECE provider focus group Key informant Interview
Short-Term Outcome Evaluation Questions	Potential Method
Which nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, and screen time standards were adopted? By which centers?	Compliance monitor report
How many children were affected by the statewide adoption of standards by ECE centers?	Compliance monitor report
How did the state mobilize efforts that support the statewide expansion of the standards in ECE centers?	Key informant Interview

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