

Steps in the Government of Jamaica Policy Development Process

For the purposes of the Policy Development Process, national policy is defined as *“a course of action to be taken by Government to resolve a given problem or interrelated set of problems. The policy is contained in a document which is subject to approval by the Cabinet and is tabled in the Houses of Parliament”*.

The five (5) steps in the Policy Development Process are provided below:

1. *Development of a Concept Paper*

Each Ministry must develop a Concept Paper (the “Paper”) which provides information on the nature of the problem to be addressed by the policy and what approach is being contemplated to resolve it.

The Paper should include any initial research or consultations, i.e., the evidence on which the policy will be based. The Concept Paper should also include an Action Plan, which outlines timeline and resources, for development of the policy. Two key aspects of the Action Plan are:

- (i) The proposed Policy Steering Committee
- (ii) Identification of stakeholders and methods to facilitate their participation in developing and reviewing the policy document.

Clear terms of reference must be developed for the Policy Steering Committee. This should include its mandate, membership, functions, reporting responsibility and frequency of meetings.

The Policy Steering Committee should:

- report to the highest level of the organisation, which operationally is the Permanent Secretary (It is recognised that the Minister has portfolio responsibility for the matter so a communication channel to this level is expected from the Permanent Secretary) ;
- be composed of key stakeholders, i.e., representatives of various Ministries, Departments, Agencies and the community, particularly those who may be affected by the policy proposal;
- direct the policy development work and then may also co-ordinate the communications, implementation and evaluation of the policy. Delegating some of these functions to other groups will involve more persons and provide the added benefit of lightening the workload of the committee.

If the Concept Paper meets the criteria set out it will be routed to the responsible Cabinet Committee for consideration. The Cabinet Committee will determine whether to recommend that Cabinet approve the development of the policy.

2. *Policy Preparation and Analysis*

The Ministry should prepare a draft policy document for consideration by the responsible Cabinet Committee. It is important that Ministries ensure that the draft policy specifies accountability responsibilities and also points to an implementation plan.

The Committee may decide to recommend that Cabinet approve the document for public consultation or recommend changes which must be resubmitted to the Committee and/or Cabinet for final approval of the document.

In preparing a draft policy, it may be useful to peruse the policies of other Ministries. The Government of Jamaica Policy Register provides a listing of national policies and as such can be starting point for identifying policies that can be perused. It can be accessed at the Cabinet Office's website www.cabinet.gov.jm.

3. *Public Consultations (Green Paper)*

Once the draft policy document is ready for consideration, it must be submitted to the responsible Cabinet Committee for endorsement as a Green Paper. The Green Paper should be tabled in the Houses of Parliament after it has received Cabinet's approval.

This document will be used as the basis for meeting with stakeholder groups, inside and outside the Ministry, to garner feedback. All consultations must be guided by the **Consultation Code for the Public Sector** which sets out the standards for such activity (See the Cabinet Office's website www.cabinet.gov.jm.)

4. *Point of Readiness (White Paper)*

The draft document must be revised in keeping with the feedback obtained from the consultative process. Once revisions are incorporated, the Ministry may want to go back to key stakeholders with the revised inputs for the policy.

Once the consultation process is concluded the final document should be prepared and submitted to the responsible Cabinet Committee for consideration. Any recommendations for changes that arise from consultative process may be included in the final document. The Cabinet Committee may decide at this point to recommend that Cabinet approve the tabling of the document in Parliament as a White Paper or recommend further changes to the final policy document.

5. *Final Tabling in Parliament*

After securing Cabinet's approval for the policy (now a White Paper), the Ministry should ensure that it is tabled in the Houses of Parliament.