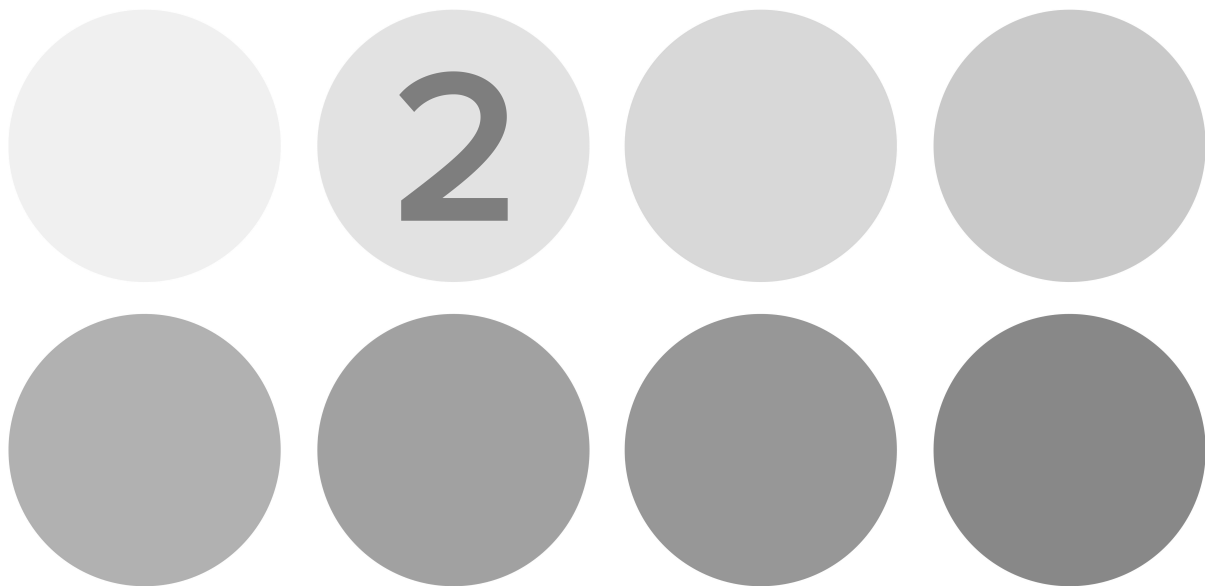


A Guide to Health Reform

Eight Practical Steps

Step Two: Creating a Health Reform Team



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Step Two: Creating a Health Reform Team

Designing, gaining approval for, and then implementing your health reform is a massive endeavor. As *GHHR* notes, health reform is a team effort. It requires assembling a group of people with diverse skills and connections to focus on a single mission: pushing your health reform forward. *GHHR* calls this group the “change team” while in this Guide we call it “the Health Reform Team.”

GHHR states: “The change team requires, not only technical capacity for policy design, but also the political capacity to mobilize relevant groups and individuals” (pp. 140-141). The size and nature of your team will depend on the scope of the reform you are proposing. Furthermore, different steps in the health reform process require different kinds of skills and expertise, so the Health Reform Team may need to add new members periodically, and may spin off other teams to focus on certain key tasks (such as assessment in Step Three or implementation in Step Seven).

The following steps will guide you to build your core Health Reform Team:

Key actions in Step Two:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Using the policy cycle, sketch out a preliminary health reform process
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Using your policy cycle sketch, identify the key skills and areas of expertise you need on the Health Reform Team for each step
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Identify and recruit a small group of people with the necessary skills and expertise to start as the core group of your Health Reform Team
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Position and provide resources to the Team
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Support the Team to develop a shared mission, effective methods of communication and collaboration, and strategies for managing the rest of the health reform process steps
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Support the Team to create technical and advisory groups, network with partners and stakeholders, and engage consultants to fill gaps and bolster support for the proposed health reform

Create a team appropriate for the policy cycle stage

In order to decide on members for your Health Reform Team, you need a sense of the activities they will need to undertake. That requires a basic understanding of what is required at different stages of the policy cycle. Figure 2-1 shows the stages of the policy cycle: problem definition, diagnosis, policy development, political decision, implementation, and evaluation. As discussed in Chapter 2 of *GHRR*, the policy cycle is a model for how public policy gets developed, adopted, and implemented. The policy cycle is also the conceptual basis for the Eight Practical Steps of this Guide.

Figure 2-1 The Policy Cycle

Source: GHRR, p. 22.

In order to move your proposed reform through the policy cycle, you need people on your Health Reform Team with expertise relevant to each step. You may decide to start with a small team of trusted experts and advisors, for example, with expertise on the policy process and on health system assessment; then gradually expand the team as you move forward.

[Worksheet 2-1](#) provides an outline you can fill in as you identify the skills and expertise you want on your Health Reform Team. The worksheet is intended to generate a sketch, not a definitive picture, as your strategies will change and expand as your reform effort progresses. However, this initial exercise can help you begin to identify the kinds of skills, expertise, and networks you will need. As you consider the other seven Steps, use the worksheet to note the tasks and functions that will be needed—and to explore what kinds of team members would fulfill those needs.

Build a team with the right skills and areas of expertise

The key questions in Step Two are: Which are the most important skills to have represented on the Health Reform Team at the start of your health reform journey? Who is appropriate and available from your own organization? And which skills do you need to obtain externally, from consultants or partners?

It is important to have a multi-disciplinary Health Reform Team, but it works best when the team remains small enough to have excellent internal communication and collaboration. The group needs to work *as a team*. Use the worksheet to highlight the skills and experience that you need on the Health Reform Team and focus on recruiting people who match those requirements.

In addition to their professional background, it is also important to consider the social connections of potential Health Reform Team members. That is: do members of your Health Reform Team have effective access to both the experts you need as advisors and the decision-makers whose support the reform needs?

The types of expertise you select for your team will vary depending on your intended reform and local context, as well as the stage in the policy cycle. In general, you need people with the following sets of skills:

- Understanding the technical requirements of the proposed reform. This person (or people) will be responsible for determining how the proposed policy reforms would lead to the intended outcomes. This person may be directly involved in designing the details of the reform, or may delegate some functions to technical working groups that this person coordinates. However, the technical expert(s) must be able to lead the process of evaluating all proposed components to consider whether they would achieve the intended effects.

People with this type of expertise may be found working as health policy professors, researchers at think tanks, or analysts working in health care delivery systems, health care companies, and government health agencies.

- Assessing the political landscape and building support for the reform. As will be discussed in depth in Step Six, if you wait until all the technical details are worked out before you consider the political landscape, your health reform is likely to fail. Most successful health reforms efforts begin negotiating with key stakeholders early on—to ensure that their perspectives are understood and to build core support. These stakeholders may include, for example, representatives of the legislature, sub-national governments, the national medical association, the pharmaceutical industry, and labor unions. Your team political expert(s) should be involved from the outset to guide the team on assessing political feasibility and proactively engaging a wide range of stakeholders for their input and support.

People with this type of expertise typically include the staff of successful politicians, professors of political science, journalists who cover politics, and lobbyists and staff of advocacy organizations.

- Communicating effectively about complex topics. Health reform is complicated, which sometimes makes it difficult or overwhelming for non-experts. And inherently, health reform aims to change the status quo—this can make it hard or even frightening to imagine. It is therefore important to consider from the beginning how you will promote and communicate about your proposed reform. In order to do this, you should have

communications/public relations expertise on the Health Reform Team to guide the group on how to present your work to key stakeholders and to the wider public. The communications expert(s) can also coordinate communications consultants and work with supportive stakeholder groups to determine the types of messages they would find useful.

People with relevant expertise in policy communication may be working for media outlets, in corporate public relations, in politics or in education.

- Leading and coordinating the Health Reform Team. Every team needs a leader—your Health Reform Team leader may or may not be you. In many cases, the person who initially comes up with an idea for health reform may have significant technical expertise or a vision for a more equitable and just society, but they may not have the strategic or managerial skills (or the interest) to lead a team.

The Health Reform Team leader needs to be able to keep big picture goals in mind, lead the creation of a strategy to achieve the goals, and inspire and manage the team to implement that strategy, with practical problem-solving skills. It is also critical that the team leader has a strong and trusting relationship with a political leader who can champion the health reform effort.

People with these skills and relationships may include political strategists, chiefs of staff, chief executive officers and others with high-level management experience.

Create a structure, budget and office for the Health Reform Team

Once you have gathered team members and selected a leader, you need to bring the group together under a structure that enables them to actually do the work. In *GHHR* the authors note: “the composition, location, incentives and power of the change team can make a critical difference in the changes for successful health-sector reform” (p. 141).

Deciding where the team sits (literally) is a key decision. The closer you can locate the team in relation to key decision-makers, the more visibility the health reform can have throughout the process of developing it. In Step Five you will determine which key decision-makers you are targeting; this is done in part to strategically situate your team. If you need legislative approval, who are the key legislators you can work with? If you need executive approval, can the team sit within the President’s or Prime Minister’s office? However, remember that it may make it difficult to operate efficiently if the team is constantly supervised and micro-managed. Finding the right balance is important.

You also need to ensure that the team gets the budgetary, administrative, and material resources they need to undertake their work. This necessitates thinking about how long the health reform effort will take, what it will cost to pay the salaries of the health reform team, what activity costs you can anticipate, whether you need to hire consultants and what contracting mechanisms you can use, and, in general, where funding can be found for all of these costs.

Placing the team in a well-funded, well-run, and prominent office within a ministry or administrative department can be helpful. While this might be in the health ministry, it also might not. In some cases it may be more strategic and more effective to place the Health Reform Team at, for example, the finance ministry or the vice president's office, depending on whose support you need and can secure. In some situations, it may be better to locate the Health Reform Team outside of an existing bureaucratic agency in order allow for more independence, creativity, and capacity to change existing structures.

Bring in other expertise as needed

As mentioned above, while you want to have a robust team, you also want to keep it lean in order to be both focused and manageable. Consultants and consulting companies can be hired to do specific tasks as needed. Further, there are various options for structures you can use to widen the range of expertise available to the Health Reform Team, including:

- **Advisory groups:** AGs are generally made up of high-level experts who meet periodically to review and provide high-level guidance on your proposed strategies. You may wish to create, for example, a Political Advisory Group, a Communications and Outreach Advisory Group, and a Policy Advisory Group that can advise the relevant team members.
- **Technical working groups:** TWGs typically include people with deep technical expertise who meet regularly to hash out details on one area of the proposed reform. They are most likely to work directly with your team's technical lead.
- **Stakeholder groups:** As you identify the range of stakeholders who will be affected by your proposed changes (see Steps Six and Seven and *GHRR-Chapter 4*), you can create platforms to invite their input on relevant elements of the reform. Proactively engaging with stakeholders will both enhance the analysis your team can do and help built wider support for the reform.

Summary

Creating, locating, motivating and protecting a strong Health Reform Team is a critically important part of doing health reform successfully. *GHHR* presents examples of change teams in three Latin American countries, leading to the conclusion that “the creation of a change team thus represented a significant political strategy in itself” (p. 141). Finding the right people to join your Health Reform Team, building the team's capacity and focus, and providing them with the resources to get the work done is an important foundation for a successful reform.

References

Roberts MJ, Hsiao W, Berman P, Reich MR. 2004. *Getting Health Reform Right*; Chapter 3: Judging Health-Sector Performance: Ethical Theory. New York NY: Oxford University Press.

World Health Organization. 2022. Global Competency Framework for Universal Health Coverage. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240034686> .

Worksheet 2-1: Sketch your reform process to identify skills and expertise needed on the Health Reform Team

	1: Decide to do reform	2: Create a team	3: Assess performance	4: Diagnose performance problems	5: Decide on reform package	6: Conduct political analysis	7: Manage implementation	8: Evaluate impacts
Key tasks								
Expertise areas								
Competencies/skills								
Stakeholders								
Candidates with expertise, competencies and/or stakeholder access								