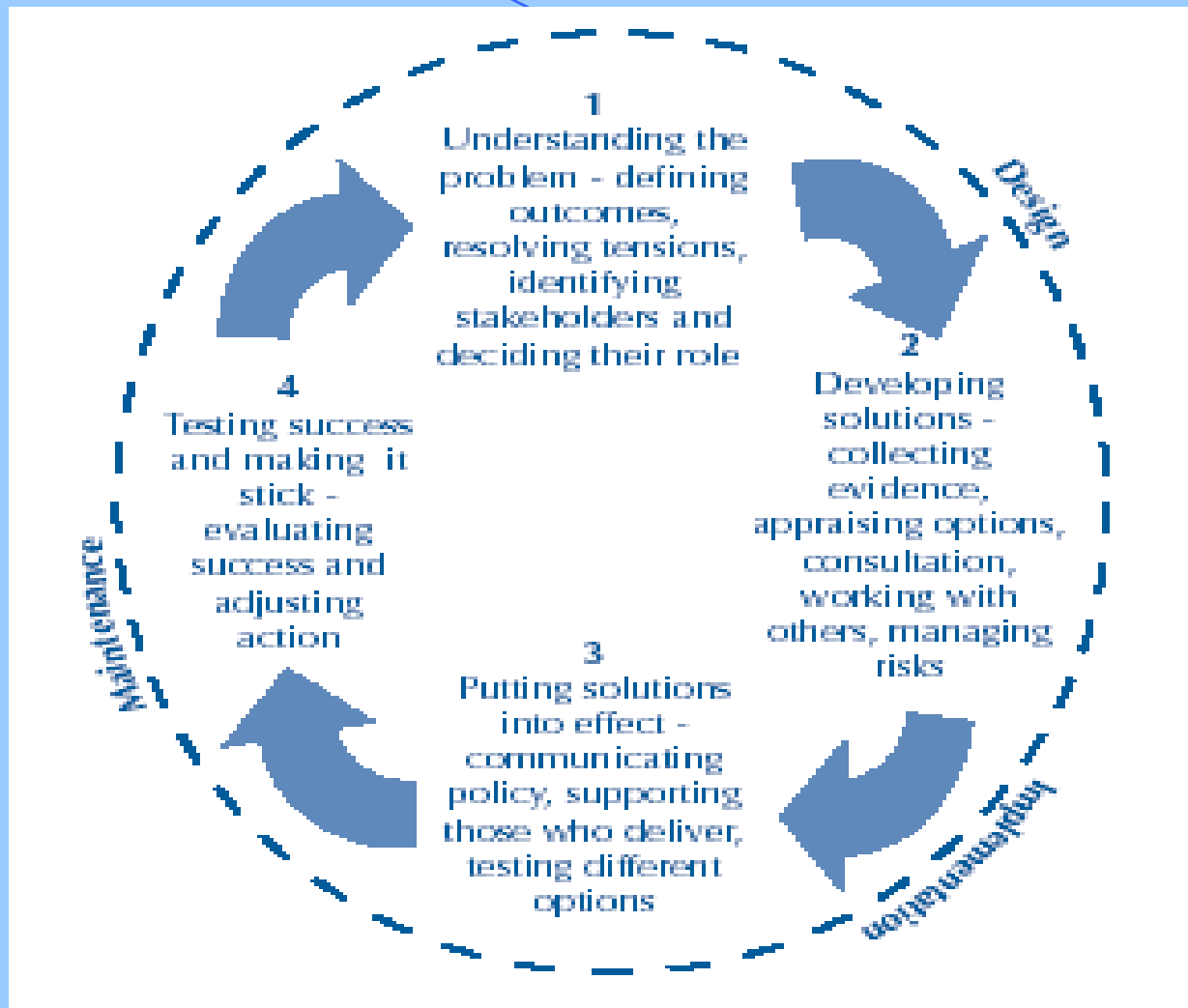# Policy Cycle, building a policy agenda- what it all about
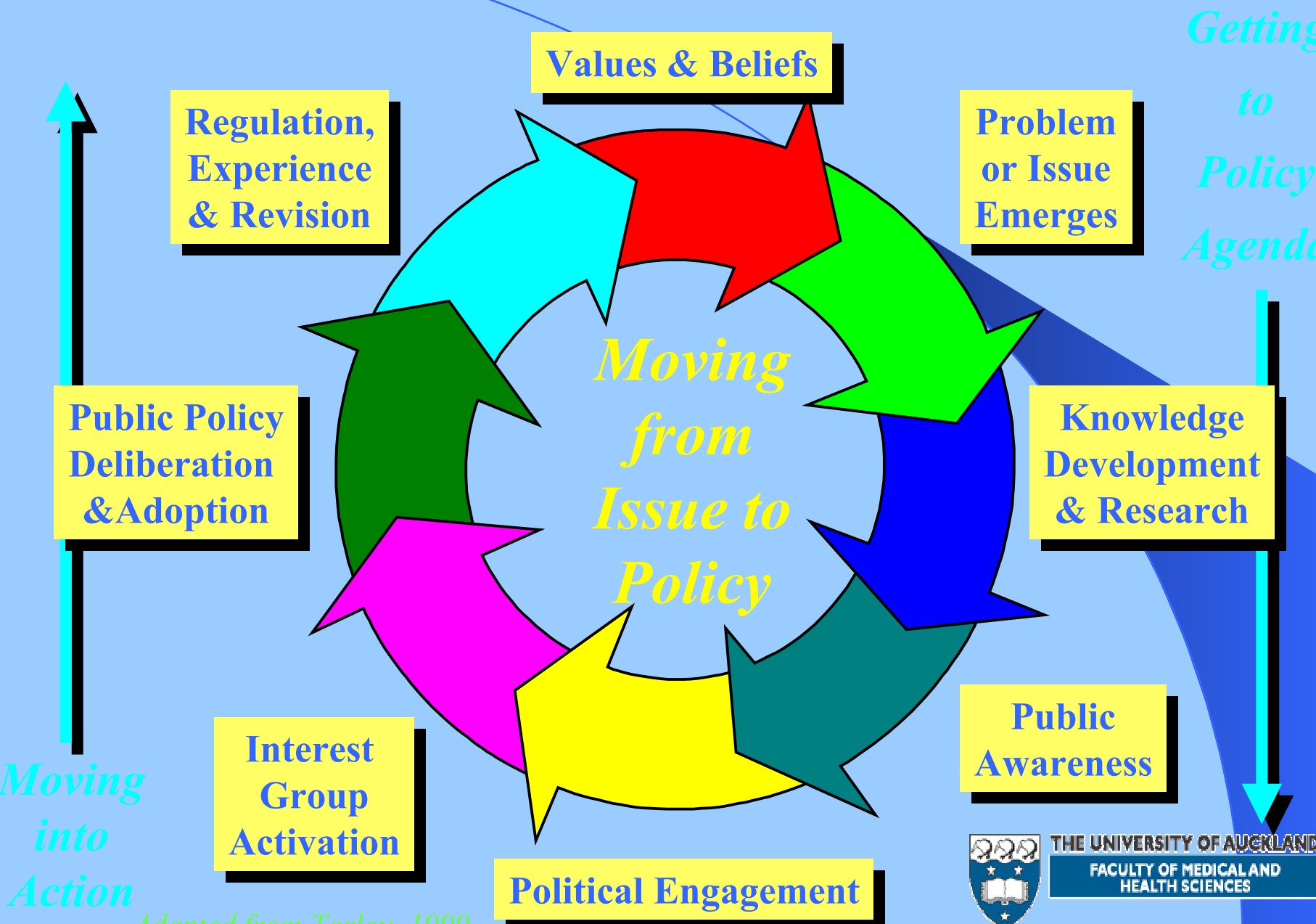
Dr Frances Hughes, RN, D.Nurs

Professor & Director of Centre for Mental Health, Research, Policy and Service Development. Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences

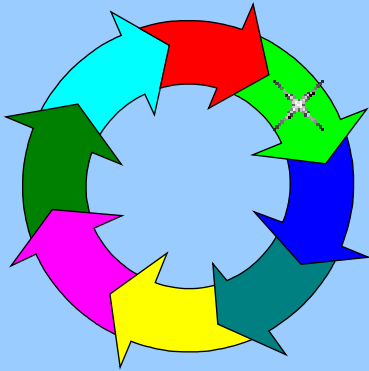**University of Auckland**

Traditional Policy Process

1
Understanding the problem - defining outcomes, resolving tensions, identifying stakeholders and deciding their role

Design

2
Developing solutions - collecting evidence, appraising options, consultation, working with others, managing risks

Implementation

3
Putting solutions into effect - communicating policy, supporting those who deliver, testing different options

4
Testing success and making it stick - evaluating success and adjusting action

Maintenance

Source: National Audit Office (2001) p23

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From Talk to Action

Values & Beliefs

Problem or Issue Emerges

Regulation, Experience & Revision

Getting to Policy Agenda

Knowledge Development & Research

Moving from Issue to Policy

Public Policy Deliberation &Adoption

Public Awareness

Interest Group Activation

Political Engagement

Moving into Action

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Adapted from Tarlov, 1999

Building the Policy Agenda

Problem or Issue Emerges

Health of Nurses, Health of Workplaces

- Downsizing ➝ Workload
- Nursing shortage…acute in some clinical areas
- Growing absenteeism
- Dissatisfaction and low morale
- Increased ratio of part-time and casual employment
- Reduced access for patients
- Recruitment and retention

Building the Policy Agenda

Knowledge Development & Research
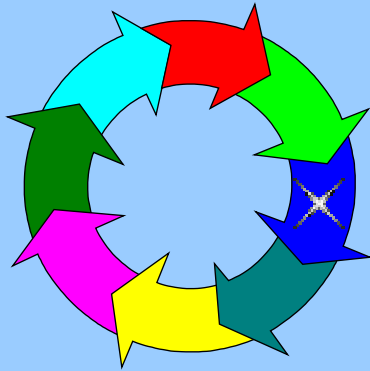
Knowledge Development requires critical thinking

- Between 1995 and 1998, an international panel of expert nurses from nine countries: Brazil, Canada, England, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Thailand, and 23 states in the U.S. participated in a study to examine **critical thinking** in nursing .

Scheffer, B. K., & Rubenfield, M. G. (2000). A consensus statement on critical thinking in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Education, 39*(8), 52-359

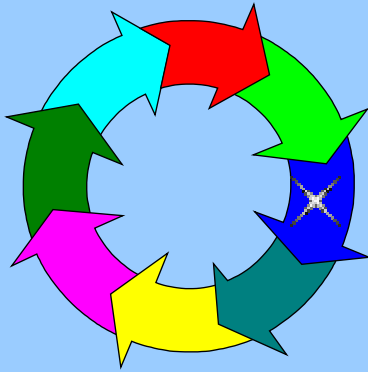# Building the Policy Agenda

Knowledge Development & Research

What do we know ?

- *IANS, Hospital Authority reports, International* Labour Force Surveys

- Research is needed . . .

- . . . but it is just as necessary to make messages about existing results accessible and compelling

- Created broad-based awareness of critical pieces of information (tight, succinct, repeatable, emotionally engaging facts, such as absenteeism statistics)

Building the Policy Agenda
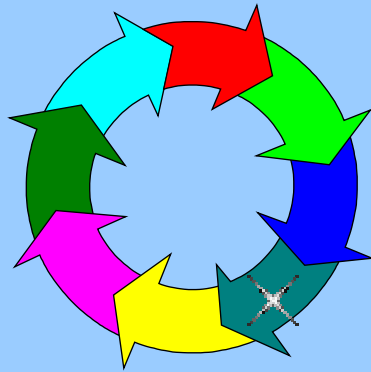
Knowledge Development & Research

Verify information in as many ways as possible, and with as many stakeholders as possible

- *What are your Universities researching?*

- *What is international research telling us? International Study of Hospital Outcomes*

- Synthesis Paper

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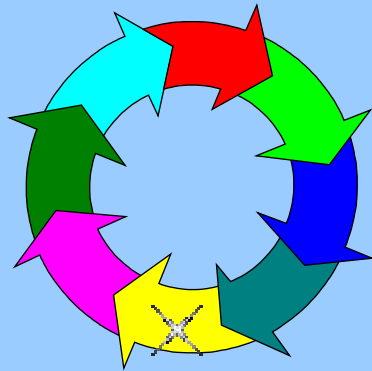
Building the Policy Agenda

Public Awareness

Broad-based awareness

- Nursing public
- Other care providers
- Employers
- Unions
- Politicians (government, opposition)
- General public
- Broadcast media
- Print media (newspapers, novelists, magazines)

Building the Policy Agenda
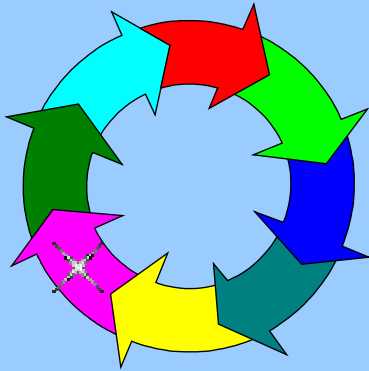
Political

Engagement

Person-to-person contact (right target, right contact, right route)

- Customize the message
- *Initiate the ripple effect*
- Encourage other complementary initiatives…
- Connect those with interest, information, passion and/or influence regarding the topic
- Professional nursing organizations,

Building the Policy Agenda
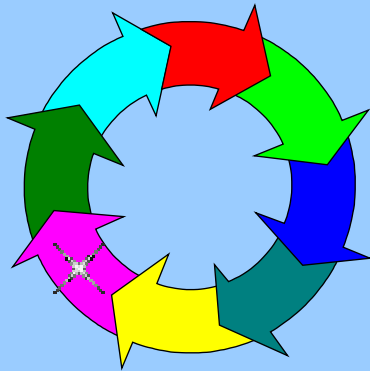
Interest Group Activation

Exploit every opportunity to repeat the message . . . build the ripples to a *tidal wave*

- Direct mail from office
  - "Here is the basic message . . . please spread and respond"
  - Invitation to send input regarding activities happening on the ground
- Publications
  - Newsletters
  - Columns in other nursing and health publications (regular & special request)

Building the Policy Agenda
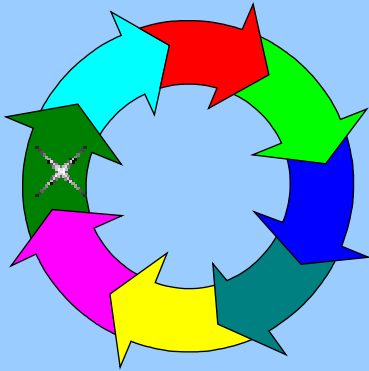
Interest Group Activation

- Word of Mouth
- Speeches
- Visits, interviews
- Formal and informal gatherings/meetings
- Bring people together (*National Stakeholder Consultation Meeting*)
- Proceedings of Meeting . . . . send out drafts, invite input, share results
- Engage professional nursing organizations.

Building the Policy Agenda
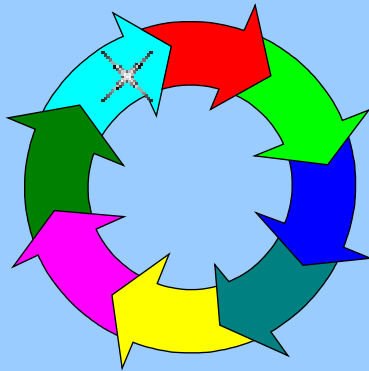
Public Policy Deliberation & Adoption

This is where we are now

- The issue is on public and government agendas
- Ministers' Meeting
- *Part of Hospital Authorities Annual Plan- incorporated in 5 strategic directions.*
- Part of *Health Services Accreditation or Certification*

Building the Policy Agenda

Regulation, Experience, & Revision

- Policy becomes law
- Issue becomes a new value or "norm" in the culture, and is experienced and revised
- Cycle repeats constantly
- . . . until the next issue comes along

Central to policy
making is an individual

- who could be you -

the Policy
Entrepreneur

Policy Entrepreneur

Without the presence of an entrepreneur, the linking of the streams many not come together.

- Good ideas lie fallow for lack of an advocate.

- Problems are unsolved for lack of a solution.

- Political events are not capitalized for the lack of inventive and developed proposals.

John W. Kingdon, 1995

Policy Entrepreneur

Kingdon also uses the analogy of a surfer, waiting on the board to catch the wave.

Policy entrepreneur

"They bring several key resources into the fray: their claims to a hearing, their political connections and negotiating skills, and their sheer persistence. Items' chances of moving up on an agenda are enhanced considerably by the presence of a skilful entrepreneur." John W. Kingdon, 1995

Nurses as Policy Entrepreneurs

- 'Surfers' of policy domain - watching the waves and watching the time
- Exhibit a wide horizon of choice
- Coupling and softening-up processes
- Create agenda items
- Create linkages & couplings - problems, policy and political streams
- Engaging and constantly responding to change

For most people change is uncomfortable or even threatening. For entrepreneurs change is normal and healthy… they have an uncommon alertness to opportunity and a more creative, risk pattern of response.

Hughes, 2003