




## Framing Your Issue and Developing a Plan

This section will guide you in transforming a problem into an opportunity for political change. It will also provide direction on how to start planning your advocacy. The key components to think about involve framing your issue; identifying how it manifests at the micro, meso and macro level; analyzing the current context and key stakeholders; determining realistic goals; and creating a political platform. The amount of resources you invest in your issue will depend on the outcomes you are striving to achieve. For example, the resources needed for a unit level policy will be less than lobbying for a governmental legislative change. Keep in mind that every step in the right direction is a step forward and all successes should be celebrated.

## Framing Your Issue

Once you have identified an issue that you are passionate about, it is important to frame it as an opportunity that can be improved by political change (Summers, 2012). For example, if your unit is consistently short staffed you could explore why that is by looking at micro, meso and macro factors. For example, is this an issue of lack of funding, insufficient supply of nurses, or lack of organizational support to retain staff? Framing your issue also involves coming up with a solution. You should identify a clear outcome to advocate towards and inspire others with.

<p>Micro Level</p> 	<p>How does the issue present at the local level and what change would you like to see happen?</p> <p>e.g. The elder abuse policy on your unit is outdated and it does not align with the legislation in your jurisdiction. You advocate for a revision of the policy to ensure that staff are responding to abuse appropriately.</p>
<p>Meso Level</p> 	<p>How does the issue present at an organizational level?</p> <p>e.g. You have heard that your organization is considering staffing cuts. The staff are already working extra shifts, several people are exhausted and you are concerned that further reductions in staffing will put older adults at risk for neglect. Together with other staff, you advocate for no further job cuts.</p>
<p>Macro Level</p> 	<p>How does the issue present at a population level?</p> <p>e.g. There is a lack of awareness of what elder abuse is and the forms it can take so you advocate for a population level elder abuse awareness campaign.</p>
<p>(Caldwell and Mays, 2012)</p>	

## Conducting a Situational Analysis

A public health concept that can be applied to develop your plan is performing a situational assessment (Public Health Ontario, 2015). You can consider these assessments to be a “snapshot” of the current environment. These assessments help you consider your issue within the wider social, economic, political and environmental context and levels of change.

### 1. Do your research

Gather as much information as you can about your issue. You may consult academic literature, newspapers, reports, and statistics to gain a better understanding of your issue. Nurses have a strong understanding of issues affecting health, as well as why these issues are occurring in

terms of the political and social factors that create health inequities (Reutter and Kushner, 2010). Ensure that your research encompasses all of the identified factors.

## 2. Examine current trends

Consider current trends related to your issue. For example, you may consider if your issue is occurring in other settings (locally, nationally, or internationally) or if there is an important historical context (Swanson et al., 2012). You may also want to examine what is happening at the four levels of change: individual, network, organization and society (Public Health Ontario, 2015).

## 3. Identify Stakeholders

Identify all of the individuals that are affected by your issue and how they might be influenced by your proposed changes (Hines & Jernigan, 2012). Try and understand who will be supportive of your proposed change and who will be opposed as well as their positions. You may consider consulting those who are supportive or developing partnerships with them. For those who are opposed, try to anticipate what their arguments are and prepare responses to address them in advance. When preparing your responses reference the information you gathered to add accuracy and rigor to your rationale.

## 4. Understand the Political Climate

When planning your advocacy strategy, it is important to gauge what is happening in society. Have a good understanding of what the public perception surrounding your identified issue is (Hines & Jernigan, 2012). You can do this by looking at current opinion polls if available, scanning recent media or connecting with key stakeholders. If you are advocating on a governmental level, you have to determine if your issue falls under the municipal, provincial or federal level or a combination of levels. You should also gain an understanding of the different parties' political platforms and how they may respond to your proposal (Sussman, 2007).

When framing your issue make sure that you have answered the following questions:

1. What is the problem?
2. Who is affected and when?
3. Why is this issue important?
4. How can the problem be solved?
5. What is the public's view on the issue?
6. What obstacles and supports will I be faced with?

## Developing a Plan

Once you have framed your issue and determined your solution, it is important to determine objectives to work towards and outline a plan of action.

### Developing Objectives

One way to craft your objectives is to use the SMART framework (MacLeod, 2012):

<b>S</b>	Specific	Having specific objectives ensures that the time and resources invested into a strategy are working towards achieving the overall solution.
<b>M</b>	Measurable	While it is difficult to quantify political action it is important to develop a way to track what you have accomplished to achieve your objective.
<b>A</b>	Achievable	It is important to evaluate how much time, talent and resources are available to work towards an objective, so you set realistic goals and can feel a sense of accomplishment.
<b>R</b>	Relevant	When determining an objective it is important to focus on actions that work towards overarching goals and make an impact. Otherwise you may invest your resources into a project that makes a low impact.
<b>T</b>	Time-Bound	Advancing political action does require a level of discipline. Establishing clear deadlines for your objectives will help maintain the issue as a priority and facilitate time management.

**Example of a Non-Smart Objective:** Increase awareness of elder abuse in Ontario.

**Example of a Smart Objective:** Write a letter to MPP regarding the need for a provincial system to monitor the prevalence of elder abuse in Ontario within the next 4-6 weeks.



### Creating a Platform

You will need to plan an approach to spread your message in a strategic way. Every action creates opportunity, so you need to stay current on the issue and take advantage of new chances (Rutten, Gelius & Abu-Omar). For example, if you are advocating for increased funding to hire more RNs or NPs at your organization, you could plan activities to coincide with budgets being developed. Similarly, a change in management style or leadership could strengthen your political action. You should also take advantage of sentinel events related to your issue (e.g. initiation of a government taskforce on elder abuse). You can keep track of these events by scanning the media and staying current on the issue (Summers, 2012). In the case of elder abuse, if there was a newspaper article about elder abuse you could use the exposure to advocate for and educate others about your issue. Similarly if events which are related to your issue are happening, think about how you can piggyback on the momentum. Within the context of elder abuse, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) happens annually on June 15<sup>th</sup> and is a great opportunity to be vocal at a local level.

## ➔ Example: Creating a Platform

In this case, an announcement of funding for an Elder Abuse Initiative occurred on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). Timing the announcement with WEAAD has more impact since the topic of elder abuse is already being highlighted and talked about on that day. You could take advantage of the announcement to raise awareness regarding why more money and awareness is necessary. Similarly, on June 15<sup>th</sup> you could put up posters or do some campaigning to raise awareness of elder abuse or wear purple to show your support.

### Elder Abuse Prevention

The Hon. Alice Wong, Canada's Minister of State for Seniors, visited the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) on Friday, June 15, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, to announce funding for the development of a Best Practice Guideline (BPG) on elder abuse.



The Honorable Alice Wong, Minister of State for Seniors announces Federal funding for RNAO to develop a best practice guideline on elder abuse prevention.

The financial support is being provided as part of the *New Horizons for Seniors Program*, a pan-Canadian elder abuse initiative.

#### **See video from the event**

Federal funds were also doled out in 2011 to fuel the association's *Prevention of Elder Abuse Centres of Excellence (PEACE)* project, which aims to educate health-care workers and the community about elder abuse, intervention strategies, and the rights of long-term care residents.

The government also announced earlier this year that it was planning on introducing amendments to the Criminal Code that would impose stricter sentences for individuals convicted of elder abuse.



Do you know that June 15<sup>th</sup> each year is designated as  
**WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY?**

The United Nations (UN) has officially recognized World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) as an International Day!

*My World... Your World... Our World - Free of Elder Abuse*

## References - Framing Your Issue and Developing a Plan

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## Framing Your Issue Work Sheet

### Issue

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### Research

*List the key documents, papers, statistics, etc related to your issue.*


### Current Trends

*Identify trends at individual, network, organization and societal level.*

Individual – What are you experiencing?	
Network – What are your colleagues experiencing?	
Organization – What is happening at your workplace?	
Societal – What is happening at the governmental/ public level?	



### Stakeholders

*Identify individuals or groups that may be affected by the issue and what their positions are.*

Person/Group	Position

### Political Climate

*What is happening in society? What is public opinion?*

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### Objectives

*List your SMART objectives.*

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### Creating a Platform

*What events are occurring or have happened that you can use to promote your issue?*

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### Context

*What barriers and facilitators do you expect related to your issue?*

**Barriers** are factors that would block progress in achieving your goal; for example insufficient human resources.

**Facilitators** are factors that would advance progress in achieving your goal; for example funding.

Barriers	Facilitators