Policy Prioritisation
Workshop Plan

Deciding which policies and processes you need first

Time

A day, depending on the number of participants and of proposed policies/processes.

(If you're crunched for time and have a team of 8 or fewer, you might want to try the quick-and-dirty 'Policy Prioritisation Bullseye' tool, which usually takes under an hour.)

Audience

An existing group of up to 20 people, who would like to decide which of their internal policies and processes need to happen, and in what order.

Needs

Flip charts, post-it notes, dot stickers, pens, Policy Prioritisation Plan, regular breaks!

In-person/online

Either.

Prep requirements

- Facilitator(s) familiar with the workshop plan
- 'Motivations' table on flip chart or digital slides
- Editable Policy Prioritisation Plan table doc visible on wall/screen
- Collective agreement on 'Now / Soon / Later' criteria for prioritising particular policies or processes (and any amendments included in PPP)
- Projector or shared slides or pre-prepared flipchart of the discussion template

Outline

Timings	Activities	Aims
10–30 mins (depending on participant numbers)	**Check-in** Go round in a circle, taking it in turns to answer question(s): *What's your favourite policy (it can be any type)?* *OR* *What group or org policy has most stuck with you?* *OR* *Do you have any examples where a policy has messed you up or saved you in a situation?*	To encourage the team to start thinking about policies in a more detailed way.

25-30 mins	**Brainstorm sesh**	To get a comprehensive list of potential policies and processes and to agree to any that are less-immediately relevant.
	'Think of every policy or process that your group might need to have at some point.'	
	Encourage everyone to write each potential policy or process on an individual post-it note (or digital post-it, if online) and pool them in the centre of the group (or on the same slide). 5 mins.	
	Once everyone has added theirs, do some grouping with everyone's input to consolidate duplicates and assess if some related ideas could be part of the same policy or process (ie - long-term sick policy and disability policy, may be related enough to justify thinking of them together, or 'staff pay' and 'freelance pay' could both be part of a wider 'pay policy'). Check-in with participants while making suggestions, as there may be good reasons to put things together or keep them apart that others are able to spot. 10 mins.	
	Shortlist dot-voting question: 'Which of these policies do you think are likely to be needed in the next two years?'	
	All participants are allocated two dot stickers to cast their votes, knowing that any policies/processes without any dots allocated, will be deprioritised. 5 mins.	
	After voting, check if anyone feels there are any policies/ processes that have not received a vote (to indicate that they need to be a priority in the next two years), but which should. Check if the group agrees with any additional suggestions to add a dot to, and give those policies/processes a dot. 5–10 mins.	
	Any policies/processes that still have not received a dot will still be kept in the [Policy Prioritisation Plan](#) table, but will not be included in the exercises that follow.	
60 mins (minimum)	**Motivation:** **Values / Pressures (internal & external) / Consequences**	To get the group to identify the factors that make some policies/ processes more-pressing than others
	Create a table on flipchart (or slides) with each remaining policy/ process down the left hand column, and the following four 'motivation' headings along the top row: Values (what we believe in), Pressure (internal), Pressure (external), Consequences (of not having the policy/process) (10mins)	
	E.g.	

	Values	Pressure (internal)	Pressure (external)	Consequ-ences
Parental leave policy	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Decision making process	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Sick leave policy	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx

Divide up the total number of policies/processes on the table, by the number of groups of 3 that could start by looking over them (i.e. If there are 18 people in the workshop and 24 policies/processes, there would be 6 groups of 3 who would each have 4 policies/ processes to look at, initially). Don't worry if the numbers don't divide perfectly and there are slightly different numbers of policies/processes in each group!

Give each group a set amount of time to fill in the different motivations under each of the 4 columns for each of the policies/processes they have been assigned on post-it notes (or directly in the table, if online) (e.g. 4 mins per policy/process x 4 policies/processes = 16 mins).

[Facilitator prompt: Use the examples below if people are struggling to imagine some possible answers.]

Example #1:

Parental leave policy

Values:
- We believe that parents should be supported to be active members of the team, on terms that are realistic

Pressures (internal):
- Someone on the team is currently pregnant
- There is no plan in place for when this person needs to stop working

Pressure (external):
- Statutory requirements

Consequences (of not having policy/ process):
- Shafting a team mate

Sick leave policy

Values:
- We believe illness should not create financial insecurity

Pressures (internal):
- People get sick - some people (based on wider factors, such as disability, or parenting) get sick more regularly
- Not everyone on the team is PAYE staff

Pressure (external):
- The law says we need one as an employer

Consequences (of not having policy/process):
- Fines?
- Freelance team members are disadvantaged by lack of policy, as statutory requirements only apply to PAYE staff

After each group of 3 has finished filling in their rows (i.e. policies and processes) in the table, rotate the groups so each one is looking at a different set of policies and processes (which has already been filled in by the previous group).

Give each group of 3 a further 10 mins to look over the next group of policies/processes, to add anything that they feel might have been missed by the first group. This shouldn't take as long, since the first group looking at each policy/process will hopefully have identified the main motivations for each.

Bring the full group back together and give everyone a chance to say if they think there are any missing motivations on any of the policies, or because they don't agree with any of the motivations that have been added by others. This may be a quick 'thumbs up' from everyone, or may need some deeper group discussion, if anyone is unhappy with what has been included/not included. (Up to 20 mins)

If there isn't as much need for discussion, give the group 10 mins to get more familiar with the range of motivations linked to each potential policy or process.

	Now / Soon / Later Place 3 sheets of flipchart on the wall (or 3 columns in a slide etc. if online) labelled 'Now,' 'Soon' & 'Later'. Now = in the next 6 months Soon = 6–12 months from now Later = 12–24 months from now Suggest a set of shared criteria for assessing if a policy or process belongs in each category. The criteria below can be proposed, but it can also be adapted (_ideally in advance of the actual workshop_) to fit the needs and values of your group. **_NOW criteria: If we don't prioritise this…_** 1) _We will be <u>severely</u> impacting someone in our group/ community for the worse_ 2) _We are <u>likely</u> to end up in serious legal or financial trouble_ 3) _We <u>will</u> continue to <u>fundamentally</u> undermine our own values_ **_SOON criteria: If we don't prioritise this…_** 4) _We <u>may</u> be broadly undermining some of our own values in the future_ 5) _It is <u>likely</u> to build up into bigger tensions within the group_ **_LATER criteria: If we don't prioritise this…_** 6) _Someone in the group is likely to be negatively impacted in a <u>potential</u> future situations_ 7) _We <u>may</u> face a <u>manageable</u> fine or other sanction_ Write each of the policies or processes from the table onto their own post it note (or digital post-it). _[Facilitator prompt: Remind everyone that there should be roughly as many policies/processes in the 'Later' category, as in the 'Now' and 'Soon' categories, combined, unless there is reason to think there is going to be much more capacity in the first year of work, than the second. The 'Now' category should also be the smallest, as it is likely to take time to create the first policies, especially if team members are new to doing so.]_ One by one, as a full group, take volunteers to place each policy or process on the piece of flip chart that they feel it	To reach consensus around which policies and processes should happen in which order

	should go on (Now/Soon/Later), based on the 'motivations' information in the table and the agreed criteria above. The volunteer placing it can explain to the group why they think, in the context of all the other policies and processes, it should go where it is. Some of these may go very quickly, some of them may take more discussion. The aim is to reach consensus about which policies should happen when. [Facilitator Prompt: Make sure notes are being kept in the 'Policy Prioritisation Plan' (including rationale for the agreed level of prioritisation) for each of the policies or processes that have been discussed.]	

~60 mins	**Reality Check**
	
	Allow a few minutes for the group to take in the spread of policies/processes across the Now/Soon/Later flip charts. 5 mins.
	
	Using the 'Bottomliners #1 + #2' headings in the Policy Prioritisation Plan table, invite the group to suggest themselves as one of the two people who might lead on the process of researching/creating/adapting each new policy or process. 20 mins.
	
	[Facilitator prompt: Useful to do a reminder here about how much work may be involved in some policies and processes, compared to others. While there won't be absolute clarity about how much work will be needed on each policy or process, it is worth asking everyone to check in with themselves about their imagined process and what might be realistic to think through the various steps in a participatory approach to creating or adapting a policy or process.]
	
	Ask the group if anyone has any concerns about:
	   a) The number of policies/processes in the 'Now' flipchart
	      OR
	   b) The number of policies/processes any individual has put their name next to.
	
	If the issue is that there are too many planned in the 'Now' slot, ask the group for suggestions about policies or processes that could be moved to 'Soon' or 'Later' (or the wider list of 'policies that don't likely need to happen in the next two years.'). Adapt the PPP as needed. 10 mins.
	
	If the issue is that one or two people have put their names next
		To test if the prioritisations agreed in the last activity are realistic with group capacity, via agreeing responsibility for leading each process.

	to lots of policies/ processes, ask the group if there are any others who might be able to take on any of those commitments or at least move themselves up into 'Bottomliner #1' if they were in 'Bottomliner #2'. Adapt the PPP as needed. 10 mins.

If there are <u>still</u> too many policies/ processes on the 'Now' flip chart, give the group a chance to do dot voting ('everyone can pick their Top 2') on those in the 'Now' category, to establish an order within the category, based on the policies/ processes with the most dots (everyone gets 2 dots to vote for their top priorities and anyone with their names next to priorities that haven't been prioritised, can add their names to supporting any of the policies/processes that have been, until those have been completed.') Adapt the PPP as needed. 15 mins. | |
| 40–60 mins | **Planning the processes ahead**

Encourage paired conversations between all of the Bottomliner #1 + #2 combinations in the 'Now' category policies or processes, so those working together on the group's more pressing policies/processes can begin to plan their next steps together. If people are in more than one pair, encourage them to split the time with the two pairs they are in. 20–30 mins, depending how many people have 2 pairs to meet with.

Questions might include:
- What is a realistic timeline for developing this policy/process?
- Who needs to be involved and at what stages? (Research? Scoping? Feedback? Decision making?)
- On the spectrum between 'we research and draft a policy and share it with the team for approval' and 'we facilitate the whole team defining the remit of the policy, agreeing the direction and feeding back on several drafts,' what do we think is realistic with timelines/ capacities and appropriate for the policy itself?
- What do we need to do FIRST?

  [Facilitator prompt: Encourage each pair to keep notes for their own processes.]

Feedback: Each pair to feedback to the full group and adapt the PPP as needed with discussion feedback.
10–15 mins. | To turn the individual commitments into work plans and timelines for making each policy happen. |

~20–30 mins	**Wrap-up**	To collective tie up/plan for any outstanding concerns that team members haven't had a chance to express.
	Closing go-round:	
	What is a worry you have about the plan that has been outlined today?	
	AND	
	What is a potential solution or answer to a worry that someone else in your team has expressed?	
	[Facilitator prompts: Take notes of each worry and leave space for several positive responses to add under each worry.]	
	20–30 mins.	