

Influencing Organizational Systems and Policies

Applying the Theory

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Introduction

- Session Objectives
 - Introduce concepts from theories about organizational systems and behavior
 - Show how to apply the concepts
- Overview
 - Presentation on concepts
 - Group Activities: Apply to an example
 - Check-In and Summary

Activities to Engage the Material

- Buzz Groups
 - Given topic or question
 - Share thoughts with neighbor
 - 1 minute each
- Activity Groups (= two Buzz Groups)
 - Handout #3 has questions to answer
 - Work with people at your table
 - Record answers and learn from others

What is a Policy?

- Elements of a policy
 - Formal (written) or informal (practices)
 - Plan or instruction to guide future decisions and actions
 - Grounded in authority
 - Continually evolving as needs change
- Reasons for policy
 - Appear rational and consistent
 - Ensure predictable and uniform function
 - Maintain control

Two Types of Policy

- Public Policy
 - An “open” process
 - We have access to influence and change policy
 - Our right and our duty as citizens
- Organizational (Private) Policy
 - Can be “open” or “closed” process
 - Private companies are “closed” (members)
 - Publicly-traded companies are “closed” (shareholders)
 - Government-owned companies are more “open” (e.g., Amtrak, US Postal Service)
 - If closed, influence is limited and may require strategies by an external group of advocates

Glendon (1991), Robertson
(1999), Wallack &
Lawrence (2005),

Organizational Policies/Systems

- Multi-dimensional
 - Formal written rules; procedures; norms of practice
- Focus may be internal or external
 - Internal: affects members (e.g., employee health benefits policy)
 - External: affects the general public (e.g., local EMS policy for prioritizing response to acute stroke or heart attack)

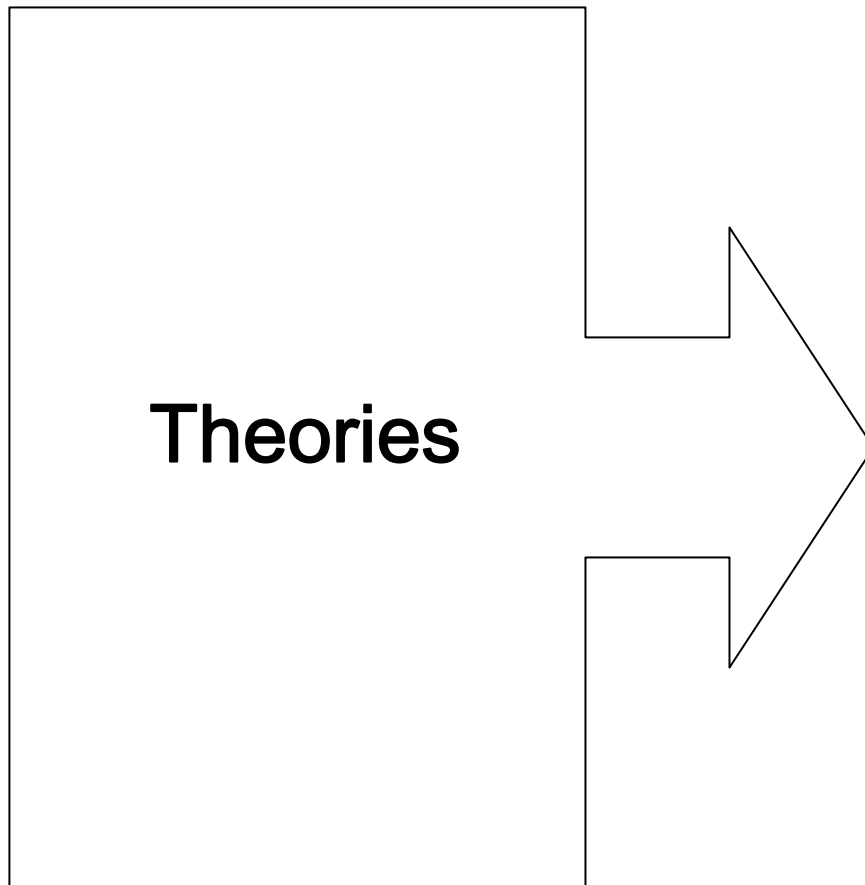
Buzz Group #1

- Describe your experience working on any kind of policy change in an organization and identify whether the focus was internal or external
 - For example: healthcare, hospital, EMS agency, school, worksite, faith organization, neighborhood group.
- If new to policy work, describe what you hope to work on in the future

Need for Theories

- Organizational decisions (policies) often made under challenging circumstances
 - Uncertainty (cannot be sure of effect)
 - Ambiguity (multiple perspectives)
 - Pressure (time, financial, media)
- How do most people make decisions?
 - Common sense or intuition
 - Past experience (status quo)
- Theory provides guidance for understanding and action
 - Used for description and prediction
 - Derived from empirical evidence
 - Can be tested
 - Exposes bias

Framework for Using Theory



Theories

1. What is an organization?
2. Why does policy develop and change?
3. Who is involved?
4. How is policy influenced?

#1) What is an Organization?

- What is an organization?
 - Collection of individuals with personal agendas who perform roles to fulfill a collective mission
 - Dynamic tension between individual and collective interests
 - Competition balanced by seeking win-win
- Multiple theories about organizations
 - Structure (roles) and systems (interdependent relationships)
 - Organizational behavior (group dynamics, climate, culture)

Ways to Understand Organizations

- Organizations are complex and dynamic
- Theories guide our perceptions by emphasizing different aspects of an organization
 - Makes sense of experiences
 - Helps determine appropriate response

Four-Frame Model

1. Structural – goals and hierarchy
2. Human Resource – people and relationships
3. Political – competition for power
4. Symbolic – cultural interplay (ritual and myth)

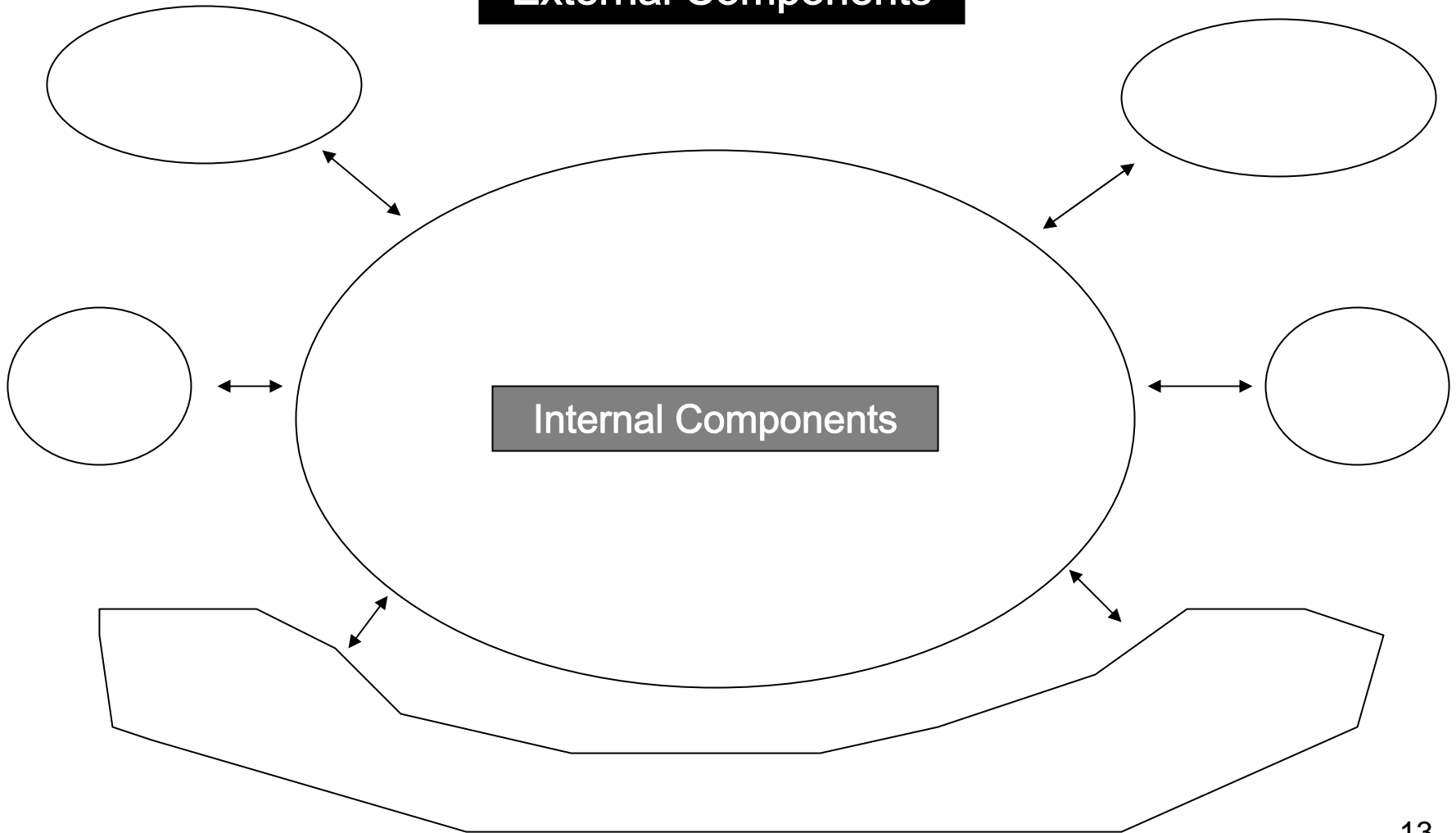
Four Lenses to View Organizations

Frame	Orientation	Central Concepts
Structure	Sociology, Management Science	Goals, specialized roles, formal relationships, rules
Human Resource	Psychology	Needs, skills, limitations, relationships
Political	Political Science	Conflict, competition for power and scarce resources
Symbolic	Social and Cultural Anthropology	Culture, ritual, ceremony, stories, more important than policies.

Bolman and Deal (1997)

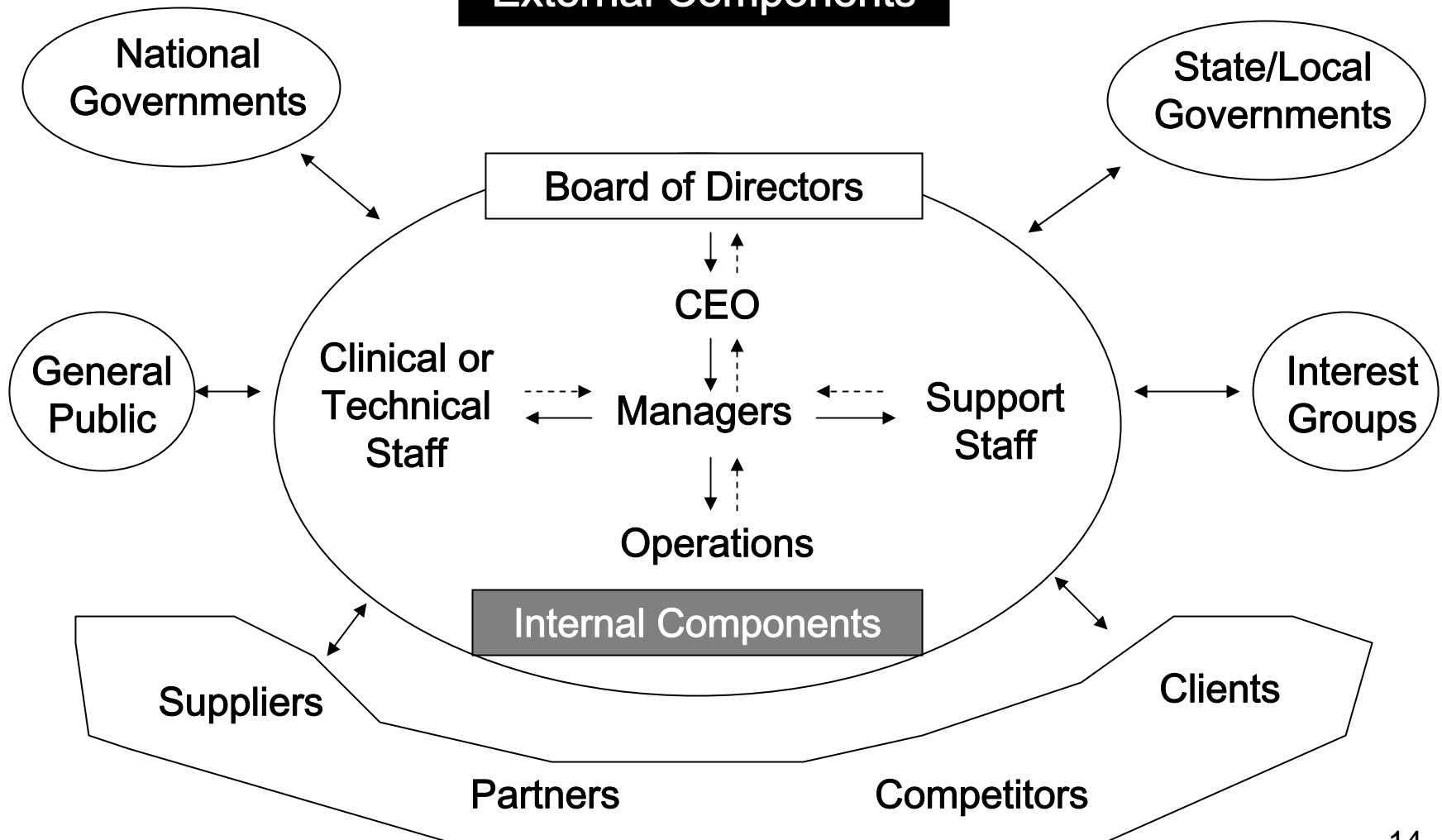
Organizations as Systems

External Components



Organizations as Systems

External Components



Adapted from: Mintzberg (1983)

Our Session Examples

What do you know about efforts to seek these organizational policy changes?

1. Certifying hospitals as “Stroke Centers”
 - Each hospital must decide whether to develop internal policies and procedures to become certified
2. Local EMS protocols for stroke response
 - Use of dispatch systems, and how acute stroke symptoms are prioritized for response

Activity #1

- Work together as a group
- Handout #3
 - Answer questions on page 1

#2) Why does policy develop?

- Organizations are systems with inputs
 - Internal and external forces of change:
 - Issues, problems, requests
 - Events and market changes
 - Advocacy pressure
 - Organizational leaders respond to inputs and make decisions (i.e., policies) that:
 - Adapt
 - Defend
 - Innovate
 - Strive to appear rational and consistent

Models of Decision-Making

- **Rationality** is the ideal
 - Use of logic, reason and data to address the root of the problem
- **Bounded Rationality** is the reality
 - Inadequate information and problem definition
 - Judgment shortcuts (heuristics)
 - First satisfactory solution is used (“satisficing”)
- **Bureaucratic Rationality** used in organizations
 - Decisions evolve from previous decisions, policies, procedures, rules (therefore, little innovation)
 - Resultant change can seem incremental

Decisions are “Bounded”

- By organizational context
 - Division of labor (limits subsystem power)
 - Entrenched positions of expertise
 - Environmental constraints (demands, competition, resources)
 - Time pressures
 - Organizational climate and values
 - Precedent action (internal consistency)

Decisions are “Bounded”

- By fallibility of human thinking
 - “Social space” (who we are) guides our thinking
 - Seek reinforcement within group or team
 - Project our attitudes and values as if unanimous
 - Global (undifferentiated) thinking
 - Dichotomized thinking (either/or)
 - Respond to things nearby in space and time
 - Oversimplify causation
 - Bias toward critical judgment rather than statistics
 - Identify with outside reference groups as allies

Policy: Result of Decision-Making

- Types of organizational policy decisions
 - Goals and objectives (*outcome*)
 - Strategies and procedures (*process*)
- Direction and Importance of the policy
 - Target: internal or external (public)
 - Focus: general vs. specific content
 - Scale: number of people affected
 - Duration: how long the change will last

Activity #2

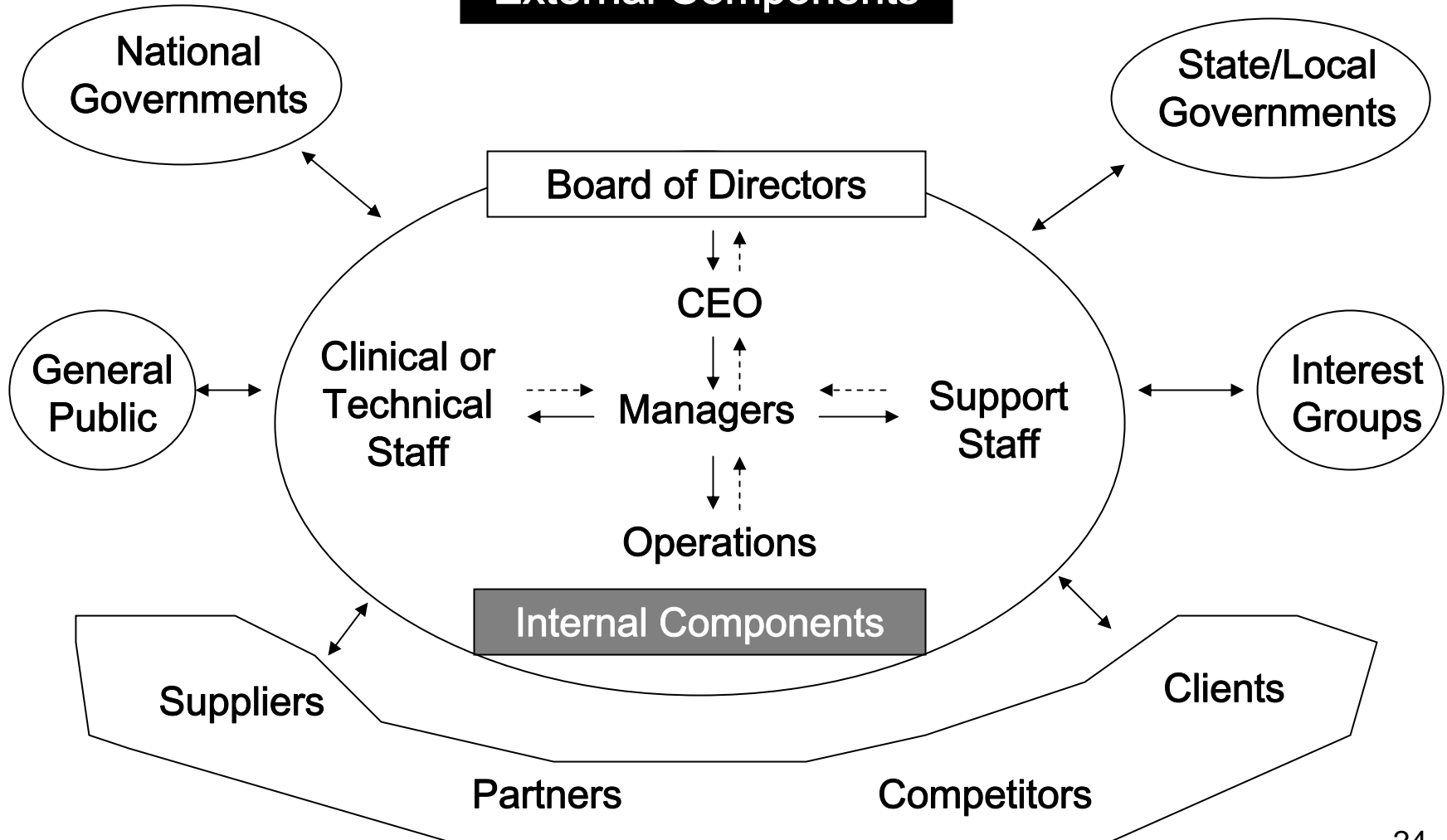
- Work together as a group
- Handout #3
 - Answer questions on page 2

#3) Who is involved?

- Internal influencers
 - Individuals at different levels and functions
 - **Internal coalitions** of members (employees)
- External influencers
 - Government agencies
 - Suppliers, partners, competitors, clients
 - Interest groups (lobbyists, advocates, professional associations)
 - **External coalitions** of other organizations

Internal and External Influencers

External Components

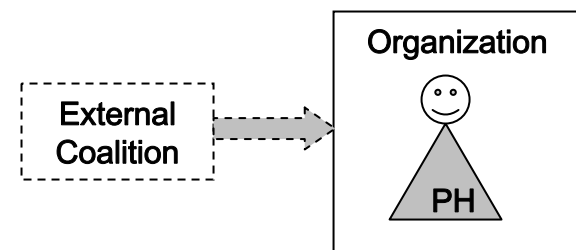


Adapted from: Mintzberg (1983)

Public Health as Change Agents

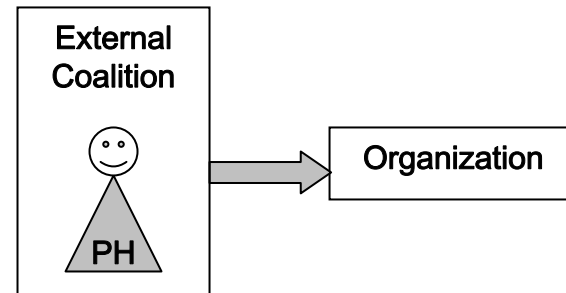
How do public health professionals contribute to changing organizational systems and policies?

1. Work in an organization on an Internal Coalition

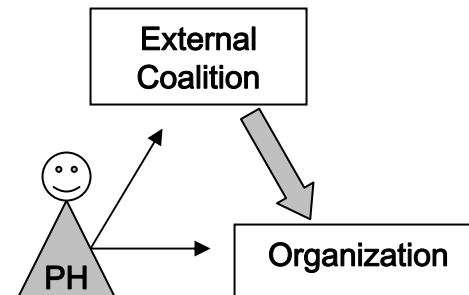


Public Health as Change Agents

2. Work outside of an organization as a member of an External Coalition



3. Work outside of an organization and provide advice to both External and/or Internal Coalitions



Internal Advocacy is a Response

- Organizational leaders make decisions
 - Policies, procedures, practices
- Organizational members have three options for response
 1. Leave
 2. Stay and support the status quo
 3. **Stay and be a voice for change**

Hirschmann (1970)

Internal Coalition: Potential Members

- CEO
 - Authority, knowledge, power, political skill, ideology
- Managers
 - Authority, information, political skill, expertise
- Technical/Clinical
 - Expertise, bureaucratic controls
- Support
 - Political will, limited expertise
- Operations
 - Expertise, political will

Adapted from: Mintzberg (1983)

Assessing Internal Coalition Dynamics

Intention or purpose of members

- Support formal authority of upper management
- Defend the rules and regulations (bureaucracy)
- Support or change the mission (ideology)
- Follow the lead of credible experts
- Support the political influence of powerful members

Assessing External Coalition Dynamics

- Dominant
 - One powerful group dominating the issue outside the organization
 - Strong external influence can weaken internal influence
- Competing
 - Two or three groups competing for influence
 - External conflict may limit internal influence
- Multiple-Dispersed
 - Multiple groups result in dispersed influence
 - External influence is minimal, internal influence is stronger

Adapted from: Mintzberg (1983)

External Coalition Strategies

- Meetings and presentations
 - Meet with organizational decision-makers to informally advocate on issue (need a “guide”)
- Communications and Media Advocacy
 - Influence broader social norms
 - Most common; surrounds the organization
 - Launch “pressure” campaigns
 - Focus on one issue
 - Use when cannot access a closed system
- Policy Advocacy
 - Change public policy
 - Official, legally imposed (usually constrain)
 - Frequently combined with sanctions

Adapted from: Mintzberg (1983)

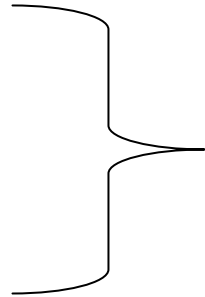
Activity #3

- Work together as a group
- Handout #3
 - Answer questions on page 3

#4) How is policy influenced?

- Organizations are political arenas

- Power
- Politics
- Influence



The Dirty Secret: Even the most rational decision process can be derailed by powerful and politically aware people who know how to influence decision-makers.

- Uncertainty Triggers Political Behavior

- Unclear objectives
- Vague performance measures
- Ill-defined decision processes
- Strong individual or group competition
- Any type of change

Two Major Types of Power

Position Power

1. Coercion – ability to punish or ridicule
2. Reward – ability to reward or praise
3. Legitimate – are the designated authority

Personal Power – strongest and most stable

4. Expert – perceived knowledge; quality of info
5. Referent – identify with because socially desirable

People Respond to Power

Five bases of power

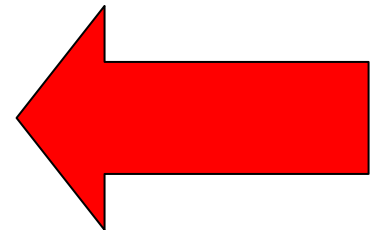
Response

Position Power

Coercion	→	Resistance
Reward	→	Compliance
Legitimate	→	Compliance

Personal Power

Referent	→	Commitment
Expert	→	Commitment



French and Raven (2001)

Buzz Group #2

- Describe a person from your organization who uses Position Power and how you typically respond.
- Describe a person from your organization who uses Personal Power and how you typically respond.

What is Organizational Politics?

- Attempts to influence others while protecting self-interest (even if threatens self-interest of others)
- Politics happens outside the rational processes
 - Disregards the communications hierarchy and established lines of authority
- People who must deal with uncertainty and change are usually political (e.g., managers)

Understanding the Landscape

Three considerations:

1. Legitimacy of the political action
 - acceptable or threatening behaviors
 2. Direction of the attempted influence
 - vertical or lateral in the organization
 3. Where the political activity takes place
 - internal or external to the organization
- Organizational politicking most often
 - *Legitimate*
 - *Vertical*
 - *Internal*

Vertical and Lateral Politics

- Vertical political behaviors
 - Mentoring relationships
 - Complaining to a supervisor
 - Skipping the chain of command
 - Withholding information
- Lateral political behaviors
 - Exchanging favors
 - Forming a coalition
 - Withholding information

Farrell and Petersen (1982)

Internal and External Politics

- Internal political behaviors
 - Exchanging favors
 - Including or excluding from meetings
 - Seeking reprisal
 - Obstructionism
 - Symbolic protest
- External political behaviors
 - Whistle-blowing
 - Lawsuits
 - Leaking information

Nine Techniques to Influence Others

- Positively perceived
 - Rational persuasion
 - Inspirational appeal to values
 - Consultation
 - Ingratiation
 - Personal appeal to friendship or loyalty
- Negatively perceived (“unfair”)
 - Exchange of favors
 - Coalition advocacy
 - Pressure with reminders/threats,
 - Legitimizing by referring to rules
- Possible responses
 - Commitment, compliance, resistance

The Lesson for Coalitions

- Internal Coalition
 - Need to assess members' power (expert/referent)
 - Consider direction and legitimacy of political action
 - Carefully select techniques to influence
- External Coalition
 - Benefits from internal members to serve as “guides”
 - Assess the guide's power (legitimate, expert, referent are best)
 - Assess the guide's political “reputation”
 - Carefully select techniques to influence

Activity #4

- Work together as a group
- Handout #3
 - Answer questions on page 4

What You Learned Today

- You've thought about:
 - Organizations and how to understand them
 - Why policy develops in organizations
 - Who is involved in organizational policy
 - How policy is influenced in organizations
- Concepts from several organizational theories
 - See Reference List for more information