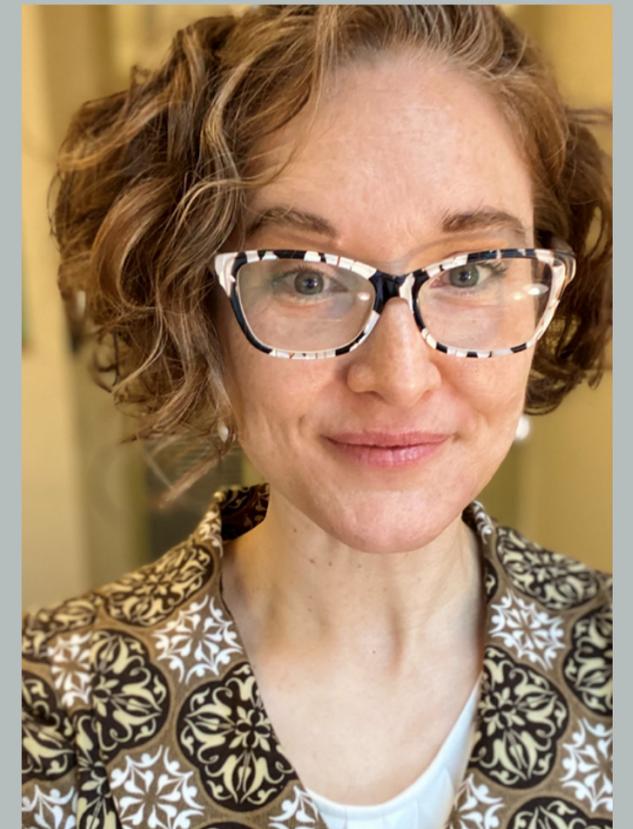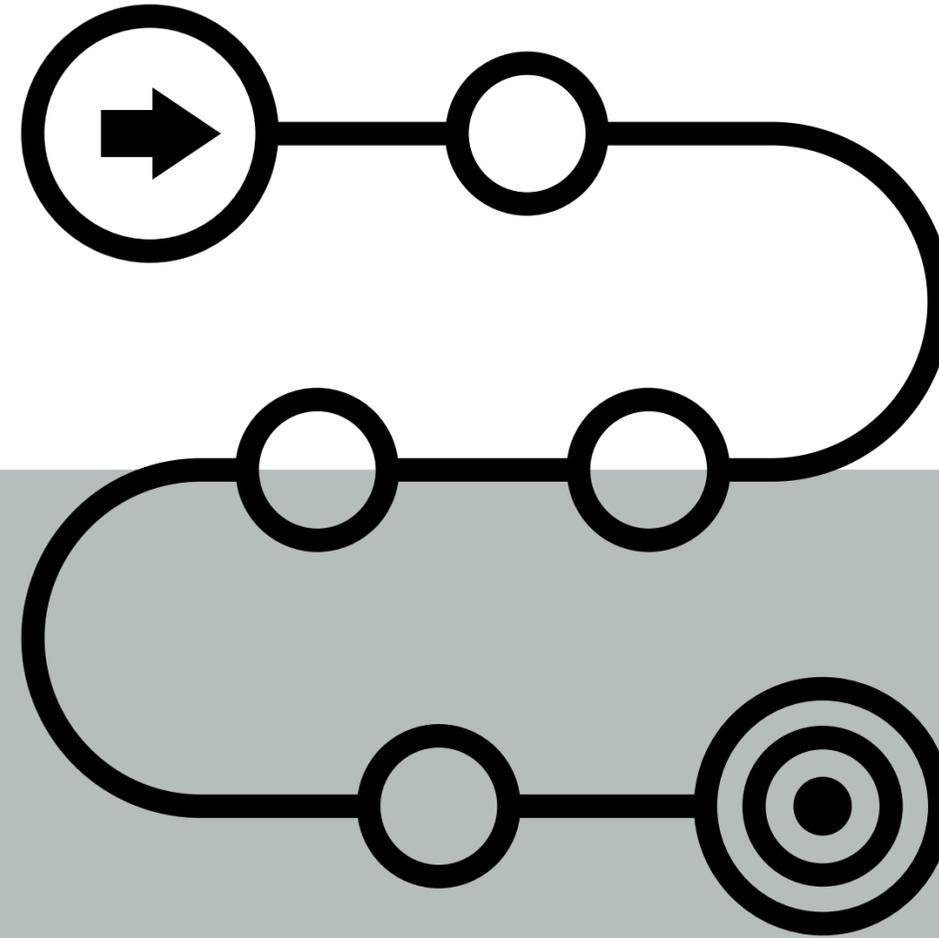# Policy Writing & Implementation with an Equity Lens

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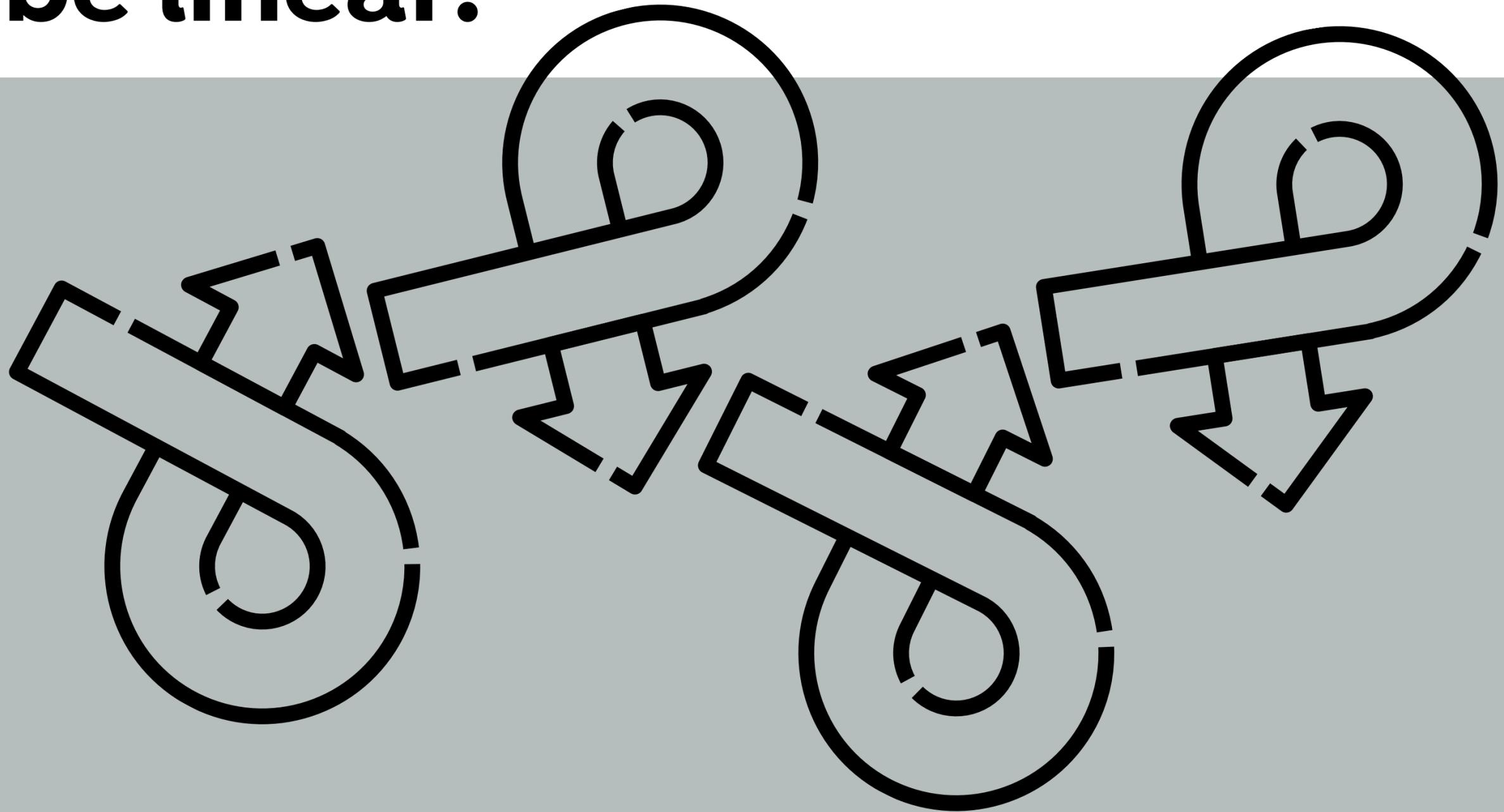
Purpose

The purpose of this webinar is to share ways to approach policy writing as a process rather than a product.
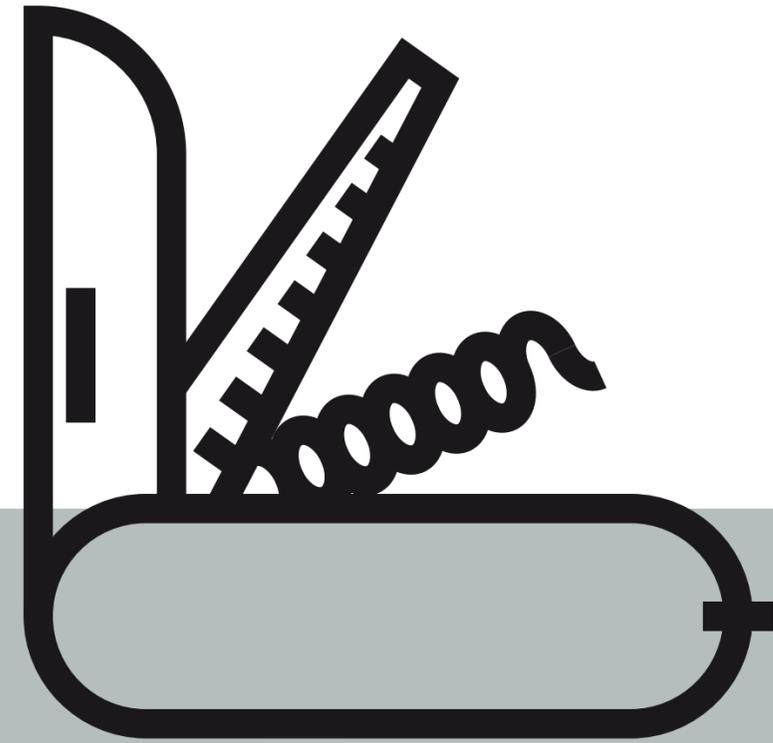
And by process, I mean it might not be linear.

It may be circuitous.

It may be difficult.
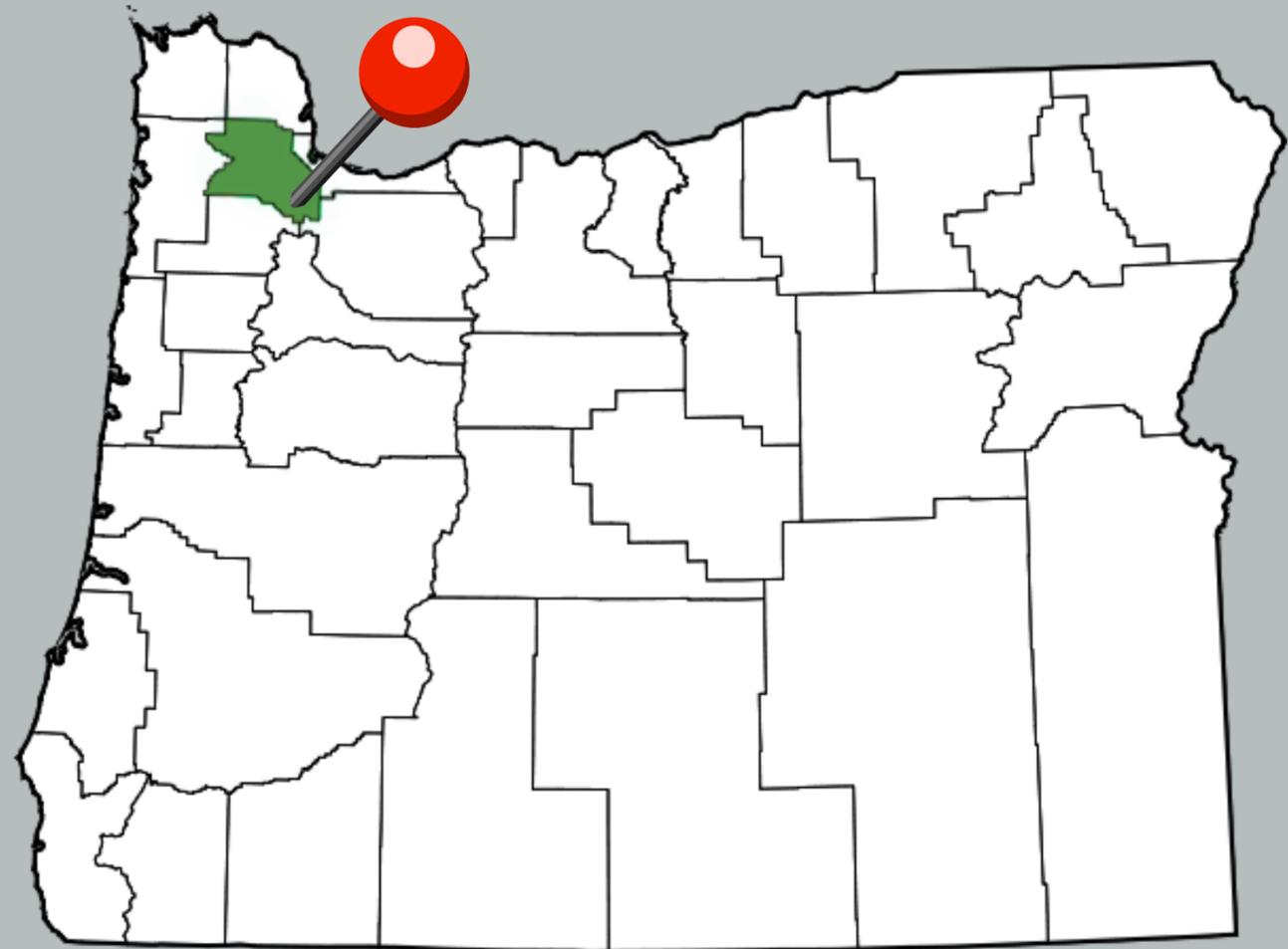
You'll need endurance.

Outcomes

Over these 45 minutes, I will share concrete tips and conceptual approaches for policy writing and implementation.

Table of Contents

- Prologue
- Equity & trauma-informed lens
- Process & pitfalls
- Know your _____
- Research, writing, feedback loops
- Holistic approach & final thoughts
- Questions

Prologue: My context

Equity & Trauma-Informed Lens

- Actively dismantle systems of oppression
- From neutrality to antiracism
- Create physical & psychological safety
- Communities and individuals are struggling

We're doing this work with reduced capacity and a stronger need.

Questions to ask

- Are your organization's values reflected in your policies? How can you improve?
- Who does this policy serve? Who is not served?
- Whose voices contributed to the policy? Whose voices are missing?
- Who has the power? Can it be distributed?

More questions

- Who has the the most influence over enforcing the policy? Do they have the knowledge and skill needed to do so fairly?
- What stress and burdens are there in using the current policy? How can you alleviate that?
- Might it trigger past traumas, biases, or judgments? How can this be avoided?

Even more questions
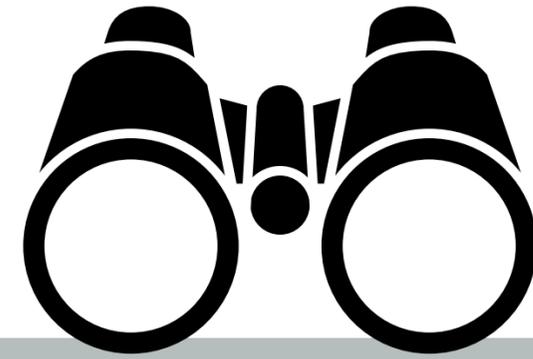
- Is the policy accessible? What about any appeal processes or further inquiries?
- Where does this policy live in our work? How big or central is it? Let this guide the level of effort you put into it.
- How can we build scaffolding around the values and protocols expected?

Let's set up our scaffolding.

Training ideas

- EDIA & social justice
- Trauma-informed services
- Local social services
- Mental health & suicide prevention
- LGBTQIA+ affirmation & inclusion
- Disability awareness
- Intellectual freedom skills

More training ideas !

- De-escalation techniques
- When to call police, what happens when you do
- Self-defense & active shooter
- Narcan, CPR, & First aid
- Scripts, role plays, cheat sheets

Empathy in enforcement

- How consistent are we with enforcement?
- Do people get second chances equally?
- Is the process to request a reconsideration accessible? Is it welcoming?
- Are we reducing biases in our reporting?
- Be familiar with behaviors correlated with dementia, autism, brain injury, etc.
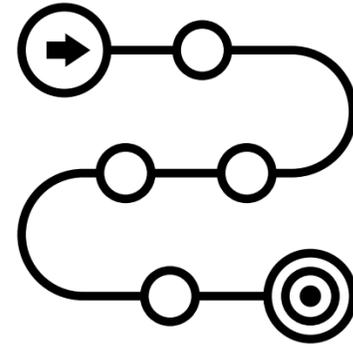
Tools to support the work

- Cloud-based behavior log & form
- Exclusion letter with positive tone & path to returning. Allow curbside and online services.
- Request for reconsideration form ready, and not on the website.
- Request for reconsideration scoring matrix
- Translated policies and forms

Process...

Let's talk about the policy pipeline.

More Process...

- Who recommends, approves, and adopts policies?
- Your board is your think tank (or do you need a steering committee?).
- Review values, ethics, and best practices annually.
- Communicate about trends and risks.
- Share behavior issues in aggregate.
- Share informal complaints about the collection.

Create calm urgency.

Process... continued

- What new policies might be needed?
- Staff engagement in policy evaluation.
- Think about what training supports your own skills and what training your staff will need.
- Reach out to advisors.
- Consider consultants, interns, and AI.
- Find your advocates, allies, and accomplices.

... & pitfalls

- Be ready to be bipartisan.
- Think about when your budget is due and who approves it.
- If you can't be in the room, write the memo.
- Be aware of the balance of transparency and over-sharing procedural detail.
- If it gets messy, that doesn't mean you should stop.

Know your _____.

- chain of command
- approval / adoption requirements
- legal requirements
- community, local politics, school board issues
- stakeholders
- work priorities and deadlines
- end goal

Let's begin.

Choose one policy.

Make it better.
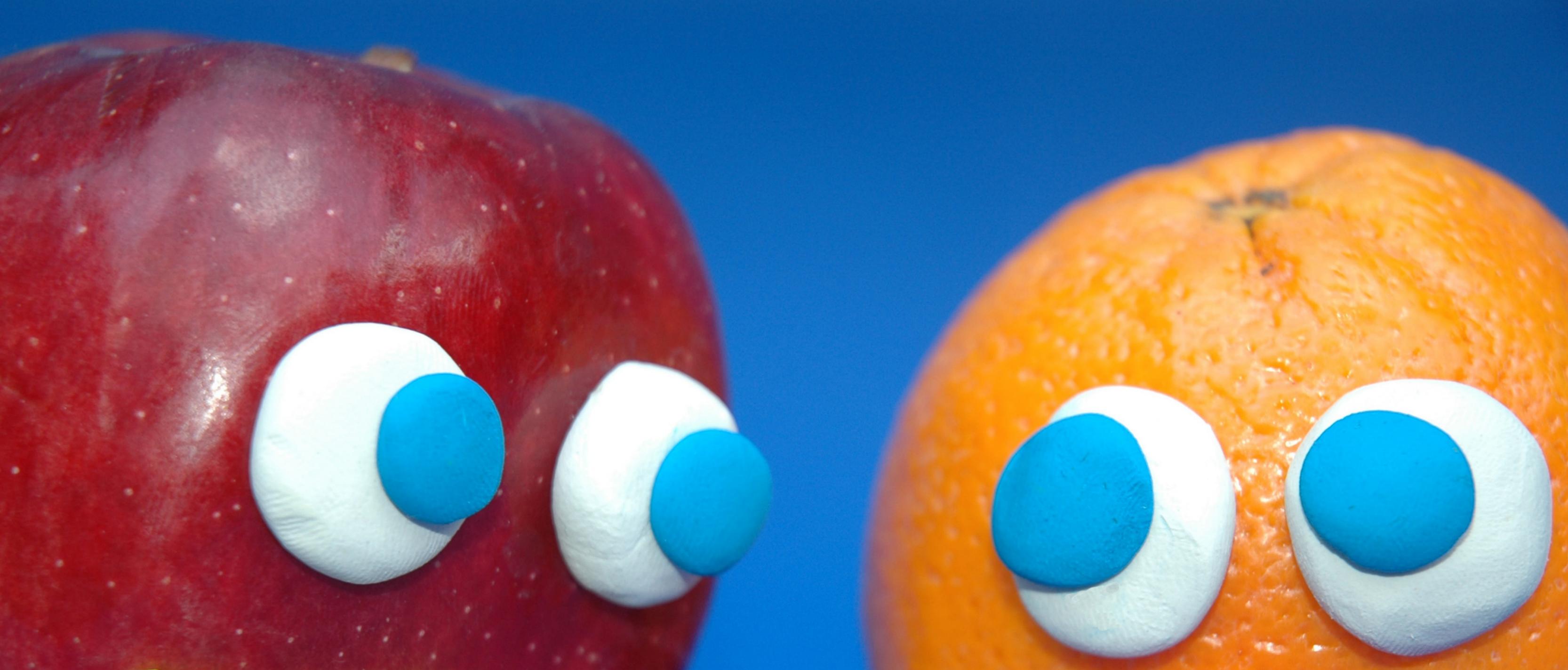
Research, writing, feedback loops

Set the stage ▶

- Create your bubble.
- Slow librarianship.
- "When I'm done with this, I *get* to work on that policy."
- When there's no deadline, make one. Plan your year around board meetings.
- Get a lot of samples. Not ALL the samples.
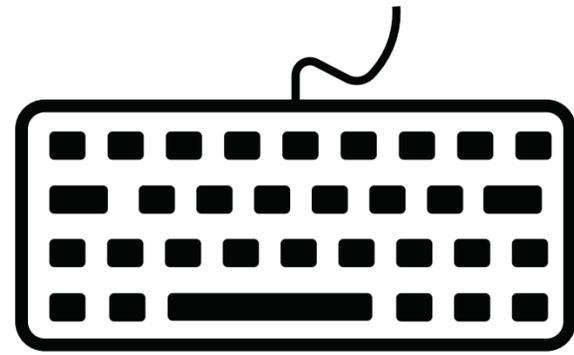
Two types of policy writers

Two types of policy writers

Research

- Be aware of various names for similar policies.
- State Library
- Other libraries, listservs, clearinghouses
- ALA policy
- State Library Associations
- Whole books and articles on the topic
- Standards for _____ Libraries
- OLA EDIA toolkit.

Writing

- Embrace the dirty draft.
- Make an editable copy and name it Draft 1.
- Turn on track changes.
- Start highlighting and adding comments.
- Spend 20-30 minutes doing this. Repeat.
- Add citations from your early research.
- Add questions you don't have the answers to.

Feedback loops ⟳
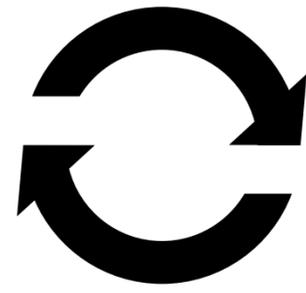
- Give your board the original and "preview" ideas.
- Follow expectations for your organization.
- Share Draft 1 with core staff who do the work.
- Use synchronous and asynchronous discussion.
- Incorporate feedback into Draft 2.
- Research, edit, repeat.
- Share with all staff.
- Take Draft 3 (or later) to your board for feedback.

Feedback loops

- Consider a consultant review if you haven't yet.
- Iterative process timed with board meetings.
- Seek legal review, especially if there is a risk of litigation or appeal.

Governing body communication
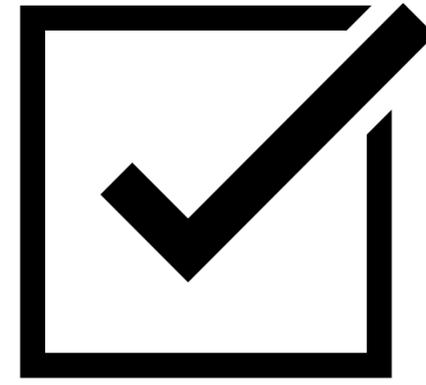
- Memos
- Small group discussions (without a quorum)
- Work session presentation (no voting)
- Presentation, Q&A at a public meeting
- Consent agenda
- Write the resolution and staff report

Recommend

Approve

Adopt

Holistic approach & final thoughts

Resources

- Balzer, C. (2022, January 3). Uptick in First Amendment Audits. https://tinyurl.com/firstaudit
- Barski-Carrow, B. (2018). When trauma survivors return to work: Understanding emotional recovery. University Press of America.
- Doman Calkins, A. (2022). Approaching the Library Behavior Policy with Justice and Access at the Forefront. OLA Quarterly, 27(2), 32–39. https://doi.org/10.5399/osu/1093-7374.27.02.7
- Farkas, M. (2021, October 18). What is slow librarianship? Information Wants To Be Free. https://tinyurl.com/slowlibrary
- Office for Intellectual Freedom. (2021). Intellectual freedom manual. American Library Association.
- Oregon Library Association. (2020.) Equity, diversity, inclusion & antiracism toolkit. https://tinyurl.com/y6ttnm82
- Sherwood Public Library policies. www.sherwoodoregon.gov/library/policies
- Tolley, Rebecca. (2022). A trauma-informed approach to library services. ALA Editions.

Questions?

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