Northern Policy Hackathon
Toolkit

THE GORDON FOUNDATION

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What did you like about the event?

> " Very inclusive and action oriented. Clear direction for an output."
>
> - Participant NPH2

> "Opportunity to connect with other stakeholders, this is a rare opportunity."
>
> — Participant NPH3

> " [...] it was nice to create content, come out of the time with something concrete."
>
> - Participant NPH1

Contents

The Northern Policy Hackathon Model and this Toolkit

Although generally associated with computer programmers gathering to develop leading-edge software, the hackathon model has been adapted by public, private and non-profit organizations. This model is used as an effective, creative and collaborative method for engaging various groups and individuals to generate innovative solutions to pressing issues. The popularity of policy hackathons come out of a growing interest to decentralize the policy-making process to ensure the involvement of citizens and to tap into creative ideas outside of government.

Since 2017, The Gordon Foundation has held three Northern Policy Hackathons (NPHs) on the following topics:

1. **Country/traditional food**
2. **Growth of small & medium sized enterprises**
3. **Housing**

The NPH model is a response to northerners' desire to be more involved in developing new federal policies for the North and to provide a pan-northern view of how existing northern policies can be improved. NPHs brings together northerners from the three territories (Nunavut, Northwest Territories and the Yukon) and the other regions of the Inuit Nunangat (Nunavik and Nunatsiavut) to develop made-in-the-North policy recommendations[1] on issues that are important to the North.

NPH2

NPHs allow a diverse/multi-sector group of northerns (e.g. community members, local experts, & policy-makers) to discuss policy issues affecting their communities and develop tangible policy recommendations.

1   The recommendations are designed primarily for the Government of Canada, but can be used by all levels of government.

THE STORY BEHIND THE FIRST HACKATHON

At the first NPH, participants specifically wanted to explore filling policy gaps related to country/traditional food. For example, subsidies for country/traditional foods through Nutrition North Canada (NNC) can only be accessed if the meat is inspected and processed at a federal facility. This requirement for federal inspection also applies to any food that is to be sold.

In southern parts of Canada, this approach for food inspection is effective due to the geographic density of food producers. In the North, with only two such federal facilities (in Cambridge Bay and Rankin Inlet), this inspection and processing model does not work. The cost and time to transport food to these facilities from their harvesting locations is prohibitive, and the requirement for centralized inspection and processing does not acknowledge the local/traditional knowledge that exists regarding food safety and proper handling.

The NPH is also a platform to share best practices, sustain regional collaboration on issues of common concern and build policy capacity across the North.

This toolkit was developed following requests from participants and northern experts interested in using the NPH model in various settings to enhance engagement of their community and students in policy-making. The toolkit aims to provide any audience with information on how to create their own Northern Policy Hackathon.

The toolkit includes four sections:
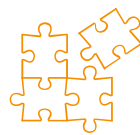
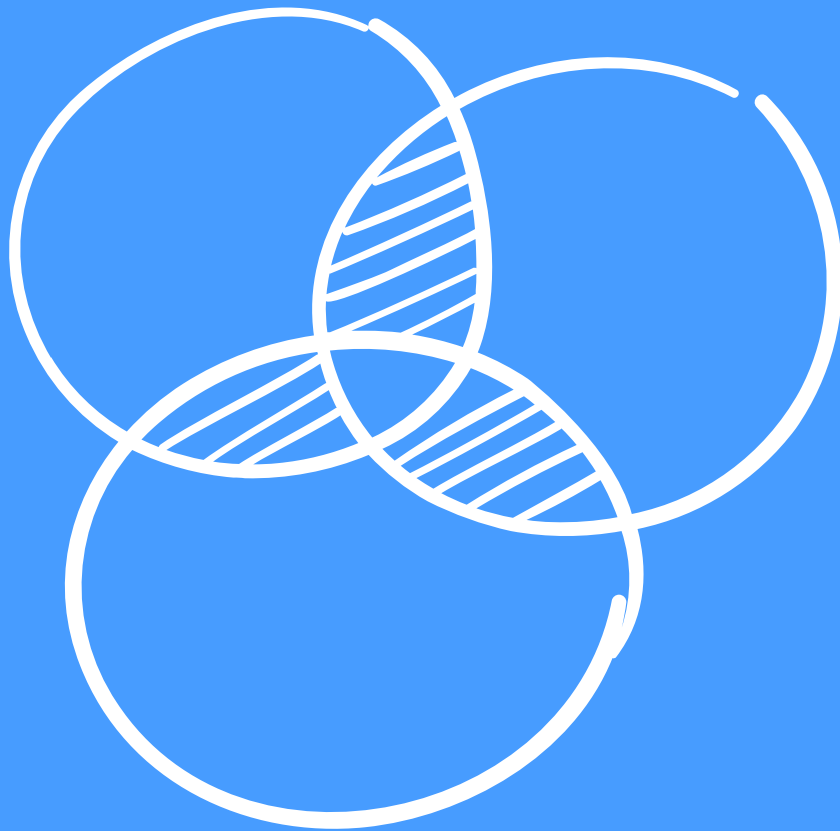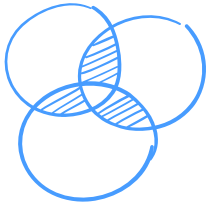| SECTION 1	SECTION 2	SECTION 3	SECTION 4
Identifying an Issue & Building out the Policy Question	Logistics of a Policy Hackathon	Running a Policy Hackathon	Disseminating the Recommendations & Influencing Policy Change

The appendices provide documentation used during the three NPHs.

IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE & BUILDING OUT THE POLICY QUESTION

Identifying an Issue & Building Out the Policy Question

ASK STAKEHOLDERS:

1. **What are some of the most pressing issues?**

2. **Who cares about these issues and why?**

3. **Within those issues, what are the main areas that need attention?**

4. **Have you run into policies (federal/ territorial/regional) that prevented you from doing your work in this area?**

5. **What is the reality on the ground?**

6. **Who else should we speak to?**

One of the most important pieces of building a successful policy hackathon is identifying a timely issue/theme and properly framing the policy question within the overarching issue/theme.

Identifying the issue/theme can be done by researching current issues in the news, government mandates and existing government policies, and by speaking with several key stakeholders from government and across the North (federal, territorial, provincial and local government, Indigenous leadership, and key groups and individuals). This step, which involves speaking with stakeholders, will ensure that the issue/theme is timely and has a wide degree of interest so the recommendations will be considered. These conversations will also guide the development of a policy question as key stakeholders will have thoughts on which areas to focus on within a wider theme.

The policy question is what will guide participants throughout the Hackathon process. The policy question should be specific enough to allow people to delve into the issues, but broad enough to allow for some flexibility when developing the recommendations.

POLICY QUESTION EXAMPLES:

NPH 1

How do current federal policies impact country/traditional food?

NPH 2

How can the federal government support northern Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) in growing locally and internationally?

NPH 3

What federal policies are required to ensure that northern housing meets the needs of northerners in the coming decades?

The next step is developing the background information, also known as the **Hackpack**. Background information provides context for the participants and is useful for building out the issues to be discussed at the Hackathon. The Hackpack is shared with participants prior to the event.

The Hackpack can take on a variety of forms. During the first NPH, the Foundation developed a short document that was designed to outline the relevant government policies and provide information on regional differences. During the second and third NPHs, the Hackpack included existing federal policies, recommendations and identified gaps. The Hackpack also includes an agenda, potential themes for the breakout groups and a participant list.

While developing the Hackpack, it is important to identify **breakout group themes**. Within a breakout group, the participants will delve deeply into one issue within the larger policy question. These breakout groups should come out of the conversations with stakeholders and the research. Participants will have the final say on the breakout groups during the Hackathon, but it is best to prepare some options in advance. See Appendix E for a detailed example of a breakout group theme.

NPH2

LOGISTICS OF A POLICY HACKATHON

Logistics of a Policy Hackathon

Important logistical pieces to consider when developing a Northern Policy Hackathon:

1. WHO IS THIS HACKATHON FOR?

Identify a target group of participants for the Hackathon as well as a target audience for the recommendations. Answer the following questions to help you with this step:

    i.   What is the main issue being dealt with in this Hackathon?

    ii.   Is this Hackathon going to be local, regional or federally focused?

    iii.   Under whose jurisdiction does this overarching issue fall?

    iv.   Does this issue impact all the regions across the North?

For the first NPH the answers were:

i.   **Food security in the North**

ii.   **Pan-Northern**

iii.   **Food security falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.**

iv.   **Yes**

2. HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL ATTEND THE HACKATHON?

Include the right number of participants to ensure the event is manageable, connections are built and recommendations are developed in time. With too many participants, building connections may be difficult. It is recommended to have a smaller group with up to 25 participants. Consider the following questions:

    i.   How many people can this Hackathon reasonably accommodate?

    ii.   What number will provide a wide array of expertise in this area?

    iii.   Do I have the technical/physical capacity to accommodate this number of people?

3. WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Identifying participants takes place once the theme/issue and policy question are identified. Some factors to consider:

Experience

Participants should have on-the-ground experience related to the theme/issue. On-the-ground experience could mean a range of things, and this variety of experience is part of what makes the Hackathon a success.

Perspective

There should be a diversity of participants in terms of sector, region, gender, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and age. The NPHs usually include an Elder as a participant.

Composition

Participants should include various levels of government who can explain how policy recommendations are written for success and answer questions around existing policies. *The Foundation recommends inviting both high-level and lower-level government bureaucrats.*

4. HOW LONG SHOULD THE HACKATHON BE?

Hackathons held in a community with only community members could be shorter than ones bringing together experts from across a wider region who need time to connect and build relationships. *The Foundation recommends 2.5 days, 7 hours/day.*

The third NPH on housing brought together experts on: building houses, running social housing and real estate investing. All participants had experienced challenges with housing and were aware of potential solutions.

NPH3

5. WHAT IS THE INTENDED OUTCOME OF THE HACKATHON?

Usually, the outcome of a Hackathon includes a report with policy recommendations that is finalized at the event. Other deliverables could also be developed during the event, including a distribution plan for the recommendations and strategy for follow-up. Consider the following questions:

    i. What is the desired outcome of the Hackathon?

    ii. Will participants have time to write out recommendations during the event?

    iii. Is there capacity to finalize the recommendations after the event, or will it be completed during the event?

    iv. Are there other deliverables?

There are also several smaller logistical pieces to think about:

FACILITATION

There should be one main facilitator guiding the entire event, providing guidance to all breakout groups and directing conversations in the wider group. If possible, there should also be a facilitator within each of the smaller breakout groups to make sure groups are staying on track. Some ideas for ensuring opportunities to share thoughts and feel heard:

    a. Keep it positive. When it comes to policy development, it is easy to focus on the challenges. Although discussing challenges is important, the focus should remain on the solutions and existing successes/best practices.

    b. Ensure the participants are aware of how much time they have left for each activity.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN HIRING A FACILITATOR:

1. What is your preferred style of facilitation?
2. Have you ever helped develop policy recommendations?

TRY THIS:

PASS A MICROPHONE TO EVERYONE IN THE CIRCLE
Provide everyone with an opportunity to share their thoughts and feel heard.

USE THE "PARKING LOT"
When someone mentions an idea that should be recorded, but is not relevant to the conversation at the time, put it in the "parking lot."

NOTE-TAKERS

It is best to have two types of note-takers in each of the breakout groups: one note-taker will take detailed notes on the group discussion; the second note-taker will write out the high-level information on the whiteboard or chart sheet .

INTERNET

Access to the internet is helpful as participants may want to do some research. If internet is not reliable, provide printed copies of relevant materials such as:

    a. Examples of policies relevant to the theme/issue.

    b. Related recommendations that previous organizations have published.

    c. Any other relevant government documents (e.g., pamphlets, 2-pagers, etc.).

SUPPLIES

Pens, paper, post-it notes, markers, chart sheet paper and stands, etc. If possible, each note-taker in the breakout group should have access to a computer.
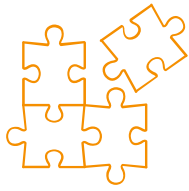
RUNNING A POLICY HACKATHON

Running a Policy Hackathon

DAY 1 (MORNING)

The first half of day 1 is dedicated to introductions, story-telling and providing context:

1. Begin with an opening from an Elder, followed by an introduction to the event.
2. Next, participants introduce themselves and their expectations of the event.
3. Finally, have a presentation on policy-making and how to develop policy recommendations. The presentation can be done jointly with government representatives (regional/territorial/federal) who can provide insights on the internal processes for policy-making and how to be successful in influencing policy.

DAY 1 (AFTERNOON):

Select themes for the breakout groups:

1. Present participants with 3-5 options of breakout themes and provide time for them to add or remove themes.
2. Ask participants to write on a piece of paper their top three choices for which breakout group they will join. The organizer then attempts to ensure the participants are in a group of their first or second choice, while also balancing expertise in the groups.

Participants meet in their breakout groups for the first time and work on the following:

A. Share stories and provide context.
Ask: what is the current reality of this breakout group theme?

B. Create a list of issues within the policy theme. Identify 3-5 key issues that could be solved with changes to policy.

The larger group meets and each group presents their ideas (responses to A. B., above). Other participants have the opportunity to add their thoughts and provide feedback to each group.

DAY 2

1. Participants draft the recommendations. They start by working in their breakout groups to:

   a. Brainstorm solutions for addressing these issues

   b. Choose one or two main issues and build out the recommendations.

2. Each group presents their ideas to the larger group. Everyone has the opportunity to provide suggestions.

3. The groups meet again to integrate feedback from the larger group and start finalizing their recommendations.

4. Before the end of day 2, the larger group meets again and all groups present their recommendations and receive suggestions.

DAY 3 (HALF DAY):

1. Participants have the half-day to finish their recommendations and present them to the larger group.

2. All participants work together to finalize the recommendations.

3. Include time for participants to discuss a timeline for publishing the report and next steps, such as distribution of the recommendations (by whom, to whom, and the means of distribution).

COMPLETING THE HACKATHON RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned, it is important to think about the desired outcome of the Hackathon. How far along should the recommendations be at the end of the actual Hackathon?

The Foundation experimented with the above question:

For the first NPH, participants came up with recommendations. Then, an Indigenous policy expert who attended the two-day event compiled the recommendations into a comprehensive document. During the third NPH, the Foundation provided participants an additional half-day to finalize the wording of the recommendations.

Ensure that detailed notes are taken during each of the breakout groups and wider group discussions. These notes will be beneficial for whichever approach you take regarding the Hackathon outcomes.
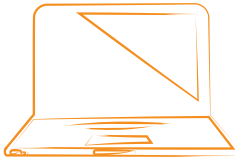
Moving the Policy Hackathon *Online*

When face-to-face meetings are not possible, online video conferencing is a popular alternative. With a combination of video conferencing and other web-based tools, policy hackathons can also be held entirely online. Below is our overview of an online policy hackathon and the tools and technology you could use, followed by a brief examination of the unique opportunities and considerations for hosting an online policy hackathon.

OVERVIEW

To help you visualize an online policy hackathon, we will take you through it step-by-step. We will reference what happens at an in-person hackathon and then describe the online equivalent.

1. **In-person, facilitators and participants come together in one main room for the event.** Online, a video conference application (or app), such as those offered through Zoom, Google, WebEx or Skype, allow participants and facilitators using a computer, tablet or smartphone to see and hear everyone on their screen at the same time. They will need a webcam, speakers and microphone for it to work, but these days, laptops and tablets have them all built-in. A steady internet connection is also required for video conferencing. If there are participants without access to the necessary technology, some video conference apps will allow them to join for audio-only by calling into the meeting on their phone.

2. **In-person, breakout groups take place at separate round tables or rooms.** Online, breakout groups split from the main video meeting into smaller video meetings. Some video conference apps allow the meeting host to create breakout rooms and move participants in or out (and back into the main meeting room) at any time. Breakout groups can even be taken offline, where participants connect by phone (conference call) and reconnect to the video conference at a specified time. An option for offline breakout groups is essential when participants have limits on internet usage.

3. **In-person, there are note-takers in the break-out groups writing on chart-paper for everyone to see.** Online, most video conference apps have a screen-sharing feature that allows all participants to see a document open on the note-taker's computer. Alternatively, participants can use a shared document, such as Google Docs, allowing everyone in the group to see (and edit) the text typed by the note-taker in real-time. These tools can also be used when the breakout groups share their results with the other participants.

4. **In-person, participants connect and build relationships during meals and activities during the event.** Online, ice-breaker activities are used to help participants get comfortable and learn more about each other. Hosts can create smaller breakout rooms for two or three randomly selected participants to spend a few minutes responding to questions about themselves or the policy topic. Guided movement breaks (stretching, dancing, etc.) also help foster a relaxed environment where people feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Plus, the break from sitting in front of a screen is great for the mind and body!
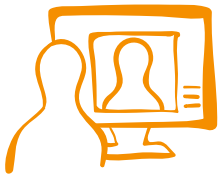
ABOUT VIDEO CONFERENCING

We like to reference Zoom as an example of a video conference app because it has features that we find useful in this context (including those mentioned above), but there are many other options available and new ones constantly being developed. While Zoom requires a paid account to host a meeting longer than 40 minutes, participants can join your meetings for free and they are not required to setup an account.

> **If you are interested in using Zoom, there are many video tutorials available here:**
>
> https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials

Research the other video conference apps available to you, but before you decide on one, be sure to do a short test run with some volunteers. Use your test run to make sure the app has all the features you need and is simple for your participants to access. Regardless of your choice, we recommend having at least one "co-host" to help facilitate the technology side of things throughout the event, allowing the other facilitators to focus their support on the event content with the participants.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While meeting face-to-face has many benefits, an online policy hackathon creates many new opportunities. Being able to dedicate several full days to a policy hackathon is challenging for both an in-person or online event. Participants who are connecting from home may have other obligations and distractions during the event; however, an online policy hackathon can be flexible in timing and organization. If needed, divide the event into shorter segments and spread them out over a week. Consult with the facilitators and participants in advance and find a schedule that works best for everyone.

Ensuring all participants have access to the skills and technology needed for a video conference meeting is an important consideration, and the opportunity for capacity building is exciting. Early on, ask each participant about their access and comfort level for video conferencing – give yourself enough time (and budget) for responding to any needs you identify. If some participants are unable to connect over video, find a video conference app that allows them to call into the meeting from a phone. It is a good alternative and allows participants with limits on internet usage to switch over when needed.

Whether they are joining through video or audio, bringing the policy hackathon into this online space requires new considerations for building relationships between the participants. Using online ice-breaker questions or other activities in groups or pairs can help foster relationship-building. Online policy hackathons also create an opportunity to bring together participants from across large regions where meeting in-person would be restricted by the time and financial costs of travelling. Participants are connected to a wider network, and because these new relationships are being forged online, they are already primed for staying connected in a remote manner.

Help the participants prepare by sending them important materials at least one week before the event, including:

- A detailed schedule
- Instructions for connecting to the video conference and the note-taking tools
- Background information about the topic
- Any presentation slides you plan to show during the event
- A document with photos and bios of all facilitators (and of the participants, if possible)

DISSEMINATING THE RECOMMENDATIONS & INFLUENCING POLICY CHANGE

Disseminating the Recommendations & Influencing Policy Change

It is advised to have the participants determine who should receive the recommendations and who will deliver them in-person.

YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

   i. How do participants want to be recognized as a group?

   ii. How do they want to be involved in disseminating the recommendations?

It is important to ensure participants are comfortable with the way the final recommendations are being presented and how they are being represented.

WAYS TO DISSEMINATE THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO A WIDER AUDIENCE:

1. **In-Person Meetings/Presentations:** The most effective way of sharing the recommendations and building relationships for policy change is to present the recommendations in-person. Who these meetings are with will depend on the topic of your recommendations and the policy scope.

   It is important to remember that changing policy takes time. One in-person meeting alone is not likely to change policy; however, these meetings should be seen as relationship-building, which is the cornerstone of starting policy changes.

   Relationship-building should be done throughout the preparation for the Hackathon, which will help prepare for scheduling these meetings. Some of the key stakeholders to whom you reached out for identifying the theme should be people you invite to the event and/or receive the recommendations.

   Another way to bring forth the recommendations to a wide audience is to present them at various conferences.

2. **Traditional and Social Media:** Another way to share final recommendations is through both traditional media and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). It is recommended to tag relevant stakeholders in your social media posts to draw attention to the work.

3. **Sending the Recommendations to Other Interested Parties:** When the final recommendations are complete, send out hard copies and an electronic link to all key stakeholders, as well as a few copies to participants to distribute. It is recommended to send the document to Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies and local government officials with a letter explaining the event. See Appendix B for a sample of this letter.

The best time to promote your policy recommendations depends on the timing and process of government decision making.

CONSIDER THESE THREE CYCLES:

ELECTORAL CYCLE

Pushing for changes may be easier earlier on in a government's mandate.

BUDGETARY CYCLE

Decisions will have been made by late fall and winter; therefore, June to September is usually the best window for influencing activities.

LEGISLATIVE CYCLE

Plan to push your policy issues away from scheduled legislature or council meetings.

See Appendix E for a more detailed explanation.
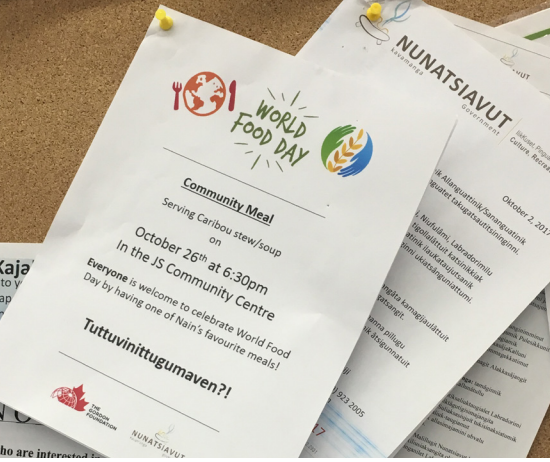
Conclusion

The Northern Policy Hackathon model is an effective way to convene diverse experts to tackle complex issues and develop concrete solutions. It also provides the unique opportunity to engage people in the policy-making process who may not otherwise be able to get involved in this way. It is important to note that the policy hackathon is only a small part of the entire policy process. Making any type of policy change does not happen overnight, building strong relationships with stakeholders and policy-makers is a key component for long-term change.

If you are holding your own Policy Hackathon, The Gordon Foundation would be interested to know. Feel free to reach out with any questions: info@gordonfn.org.

RESOURCES & APPENDIX

Recommendations and Background Research from NPHs

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1   **NORTHERN POLICY HACKATHON ON COUNTRY/TRADITIONAL FOOD:**

http://gordonfoundation.ca/resource/recommendations-from-the-first-northern-policy-hackathon/

2   **NORTHERN POLICY HACKATHON ON SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES:**

http://gordonfoundation.ca/resource/recommendations-from-the-second-northern-policy-hackathon/

3   **NORTHERN POLICY HACKATHON ON HOUSING:**

http://gordonfoundation.ca/resource/background-research-on-northern-housing/

Example of Letter for MPs

Dear **Recipient**;

The (**insert your organization/government**) would like to present to you a copy of *The Recommendations on Country/Traditional Food from the Northern Policy Hackathon*. These recommendations were put together by a pan-northern group of experts during The Gordon Foundation's first Northern Policy Hackathon in Nain, Nunatsiavut in October 2017.

The overarching theme of the event was to discuss federal policies that impact country/traditional food. The focus of the conversation was broken into four sub-themes: selling, sharing, supporting the collection of, and other means of support.

The aim of these Recommendations is to provide a pan-northern view of how policy surrounding country/traditional food can be improved. The realities of living in the North are different than those in the South; therefore, it is important that made-in-the-North solutions are heard and implemented. These Recommendations recognize that this issue is cross-jurisdictional, but also see the overarching regional view.

This document is not only meant to further discussions around the country/traditional food policy, but are also designed to help governments make tangible changes to current policy. We welcome any thoughts on how to best promote the use of these Recommendations as we make it available to citizens, organizations, local and Indigenous governments, and federal government officials. If you are interested in hard copies of this document, please reach out to (**insert organization**).

If you have any questions regarding the Recommendations or the Northern Policy Hackathon, please feel free to reach out to (**insert contact name**).

Yours sincerely,

(**Name**)

(**Position**)

(**Organization/Government**)

Example of Template for Developing Policy Recommendations

1. **Theme:** What area of policy do you hope to change?

2. **Issue Statement:**

   ❑ What is the problem or opportunity that needs to be addressed and what federal government action is required?

3. **Background:**

   ❑ What is the background of this issue?

   ❑ What can we learn from other jurisdictions, research, etc.?

   ❑ What are some options to change the situation?

   ❑ What are the advantages/disadvantages of the options?

4. **Recommendations to the federal government:**

   ❑ Provide clear and specific recommendations

5. Next steps:

❑ Provide details on how to achieve the recommendations

WHO
(involved in the next steps)

WHAT
(action / activity)

WHEN
(timeline)

Example of Breakout Group Sheet from 2ⁿᵈ NPH

TRADE

As the world becomes more connected, the exchange of goods, services and trades becomes increasingly possible. This theme will explore the priorities and potential of northern Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) regarding trade.

THE DISCUSSION ON THIS THEME COULD BE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What are the trade priorities for northern SMEs?

2. What are some regions of interest for northern SMEs? (Interprovincial, interterritorial, national and/or international trade)

   a. For international trade, with which areas of the world should the North be building connections?

   b. Should the focus remain on regionally close countries, circumpolar countries, or potential new markets?

   c. Should trade with the European Union remain a focus, or the creation of a Pan-North American Arctic Agreement be made, or should relations with other countries such as China and Singapore be explored?

3. What are negative impacts of trade? What role does the federal government play in preventing these impacts?

4. Do the trade priorities of the federal government match northern priorities? (see below)

5. And, are the existing government programs appropriate for the North?

6. What is the role of the government in promoting northern SME's goods for interprovincial, interterritorial, national and/or international trade?

7. At what stage of SME development should the government focus its trade support?

8. Should there be a Northern Trade Commissioner? What would be the roles and responsibilities? Where should the position be based?

Policy Primer

WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?

Public policy can be defined as the intentions, decisions, or actions of government. It sets out what is to be done and how and may be conveyed through laws, procedures, regulations, or expenditures.

Types of policy:

- Broad policy – Government-wide direction
- Specific policy – Direction for a particular sector (the economy) or issue-area (child welfare)
- Operational policy – Policy instrument, guides decisions on programs and project selection (legislation, regulations, and programs)

Who can influence public policy?

Anyone can provide their views to influence public policy. You do not need to be an expert to have impact. You will need some facts, an understanding of policy development, and knowledge on how to develop recommendations.

Why should you influence public policy?

- Governments may be planning changes that can impact you.
- Governments do not have all the answers.
- You have valuable experience and insights that can improve the effectiveness of government decisions and actions.
- Governments want to hear from you; they are looking for knowledgeable and reliable partners who are close to real problems and willing to work on solutions.
- You can advance your cause and build public trust.
- If you do not express your views, someone else may not.

How do you influence public policy?

1. **Identify the issue, goals and desired outcomes. Find support.**
    - Define the issue and what you want to achieve.
    - Explore if there is a role that government can play to help you achieve your goal.
    - See if others are interested in this issue.
    - Consider building support by creating a committee or group.

2. **Decide whether it makes sense to involve government.**

   - Are existing government policies and programs a barrier or a help? Are new programs and policies needed?

   - Is there government legislation or regulation that helps or prevents your work?

3. **Identify government priorities.**

   - It is easier to influence an issue that is already on the government's radar.

   - You need to know the government's priorities and find a way to align your issue with them.

     » Check out Departmental Plans and the Minister's Mandate Letter
     » Listen to the news
     » Talk to your MLA and MP

4. **Analyze your issue.**

   - Conduct research to find out as much as you can:

     » Check for information on the Internet
     » Look for media reports
     » Consult with public officials

   - Ask the following questions during your research:

     » Why is this a problem?
     » What makes it an issue?
     » What needs to be done?
     » What can be done about it now?
     » What will it cost to address it?
     » What's the cost of doing nothing?

5. **Create key messages**

   - Identify the specific actions you want to see taken and develop your arguments.

   - Explain clearly and concisely what you want.

   - Explain what the benefits would be to you and to others.

   - Provide suggestions on how to make change.

   - Explain what you want decision-makers to do.

6. **Identify Decision-Makers**

   - You need to know who makes the decision, who can influence it, and what they can and cannot do for you.

   - Start with your Member of Legislative Assembly and Member of Parliament.

   - Ask people you know who make the decisions.

   - Meet with a senior government officer, program manager, or people inside government that you think will be supportive.

   - Seek out existing opportunities to work with policy actors directly (e.g. organize a seminar).

7. **It's all about TIMING**

Understanding the timing and process for decision making will help you determine the best time to intervene.

ELECTORAL CYCLE:

Governments tend to take risks earlier in their mandate and are less likely to do so closer to an election. If there is an election in the near future, political leaders may not want to consider controversial changes and risk backlash to their party fortunes or political careers. *Pushing for changes may be easier earlier on in a government's mandate.*

BUDGETARY CYCLE:

Most new initiatives need to go through cabinet decision-making and then the budgeting process before they can proceed, unless existing resources are being used. Decisions made by cabinet then proceed to the Treasury or Management Board made up of selected ministers who review and decide on the detailed budget plans. Decisions will have been made by late fall and winter; therefore, *June to September is usually the best window for influencing activities.*

LEGISLATIVE CYCLE:

When federal and provincial legislatures or municipal councils are meeting, competition for a politician's time is greater. Their schedules are less predictable as the events of the day may require them to make last minute changes. *Plan to push your policy issues away from scheduled legislature or council meetings.*

Checklist

- ❑ Develop a timely theme
- ❑ Develop a policy question
- ❑ Vet the theme/question with key stakeholders
- ❑ Create a Hackpack
- ❑ Draft breakout group themes
- ❑ Write a draft Agenda
- ❑ Decide the scope of the Hackathon
- ❑ Decide how many participants you want to invite
- ❑ Decide where the Hackathon will be held
- ❑ Decide the length of the Hackathon
- ❑ Create a list of potential participants
- ❑ Identify a target audience for the recommendations
- ❑ Find a space that can reasonably accommodate the amount of participants
- ❑ Find a caterer for the event
- ❑ Create a room block at a hotel
- ❑ Decide the desired outcome of the Hackathon
- ❑ Find an Elder who will be able to attend the Hackathon
- ❑ Reach out to various youth and see if they are interested in participating
- ❑ Find a facilitator
- ❑ Print various examples of:
    - ‣ Policies relevant to the theme
    - ‣ Publications/reports
    - ‣ Previous recommendations on the theme
    - ‣ Relevant government documents
- ❑ Reach out to various media to pitch the Hackathon story
- ❑ Create and print policy drafting sheets
- ❑ Prepare a presentation on how to draft policy recommendations
- ❑ Collect supplies needed for the Hackathon: post-it notes, pens, paper, chart sheets, etc.
- ❑ Finalize participant list
- ❑ Plan group dinners/events during the evenings
- ❑ Ensure participants have booked travel
- ❑ Hold the Hackathon
- ❑ Discuss next steps with participants
- ❑ Discuss how participants want to be involved and recognized in dissemination
- ❑ Compile the detailed notes from various breakout groups
- ❑ Finalize recommendations
- ❑ Schedule in-person meetings
- ❑ Share final recommendations on social media
- ❑ Draft a letter to include with Hackathon recommendations
- ❑ Send out Hackathon recommendations to interested parties
- ❑ Conduct follow-ups if necessary