Public Policy 101

What is Policy?

- Policies are decisions or roadmaps for action.
- They are made in response to an issue or problem that requires attention.

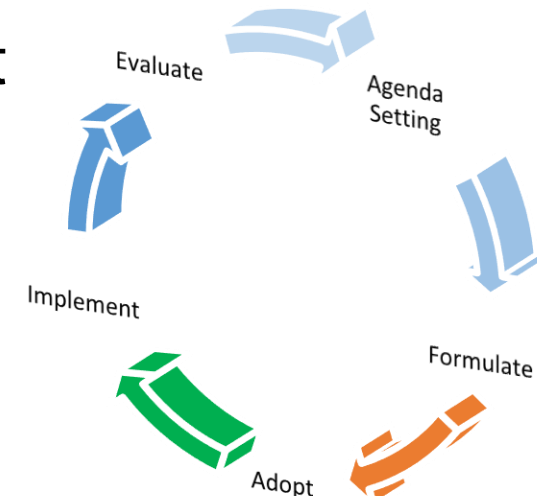**But not all policy is "public policy."**

What is *Public* Policy?

- Public policy is what the **government** does (or does not do) that affects the public.

- Public policy might take the form of **regulations, projects, programs or initiatives** that govern a particular issue or problem.

- Public policy is made by governments, even if the **ideas come from outside government**

What is *Public* Policy?

- Some problems are dealt with by actions taken in the **private sphere** or by our **civil society**.

- Policy-making is an **ongoing process** that continually is re-assessed and revised.

Evaluate

Agenda Setting

Implement

Formulate

Adopt

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City Government and How Decisions are Made

What is *Public* Policy?

Let's take a look at a *simplified, fictional* example of public policy in action:

The Problem: Rising Homelessness in City X

Stakeholders & Engagement:

- Government
- NGO's
- Community Activists
- Residents
- Homeless Population

City X staff consult with stakeholders to come up with possible solutions.

One Solution: increasing homeless shelters in the City

Implementation: create 5 homeless shelters in City X

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What is *Public* Policy?

- *Remember:* the example used *is very simplified* and misses out on a lot of layers, nuance and context.

- The public policy process is frequently not straight-forward, gets messy, and is complicated!

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Public Policy at the City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver's policies come in many forms:

➤ Bylaws and Regulations

➤ Council and Administrative Policies

➤ Reports and Briefs

➤ Projects, Services and Initiatives

1. By-laws and Regulations

Fun Fact: The "by" in bylaw is an old **Norse word** that means "town."

- A bylaw is simply a town, or local law.

- Provincial statutes give authority for local bylaws.

- This makes it possible for municipalities to make rules and regulations about a wide range of issues.

1. By-laws and Regulations

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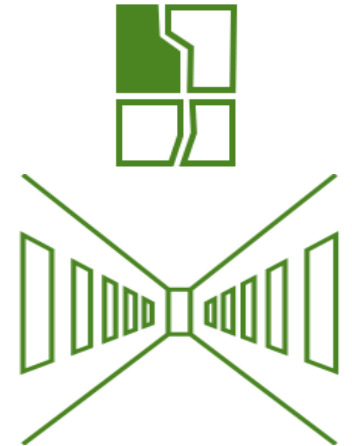
- For Vancouver this statute is the [Vancouver Charter](#).

- Some bylaws are mandatory. Others are required only if a municipality wants to carry out a certain type of activity.

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1. By-laws and Regulations

A particularly important bylaw is the **Zoning and Development Bylaw**. This bylaw establishes regulations for the development of land in the City of Vancouver.

The Zoning and Development bylaw regulates:

- The types of land uses allowed
- Where a building can be located on a site
- The building's maximum height and size
- Other provisions necessary to enable good city building
- These regulations reflect the City's values and goals.

You can access the bylaw document library **here**.
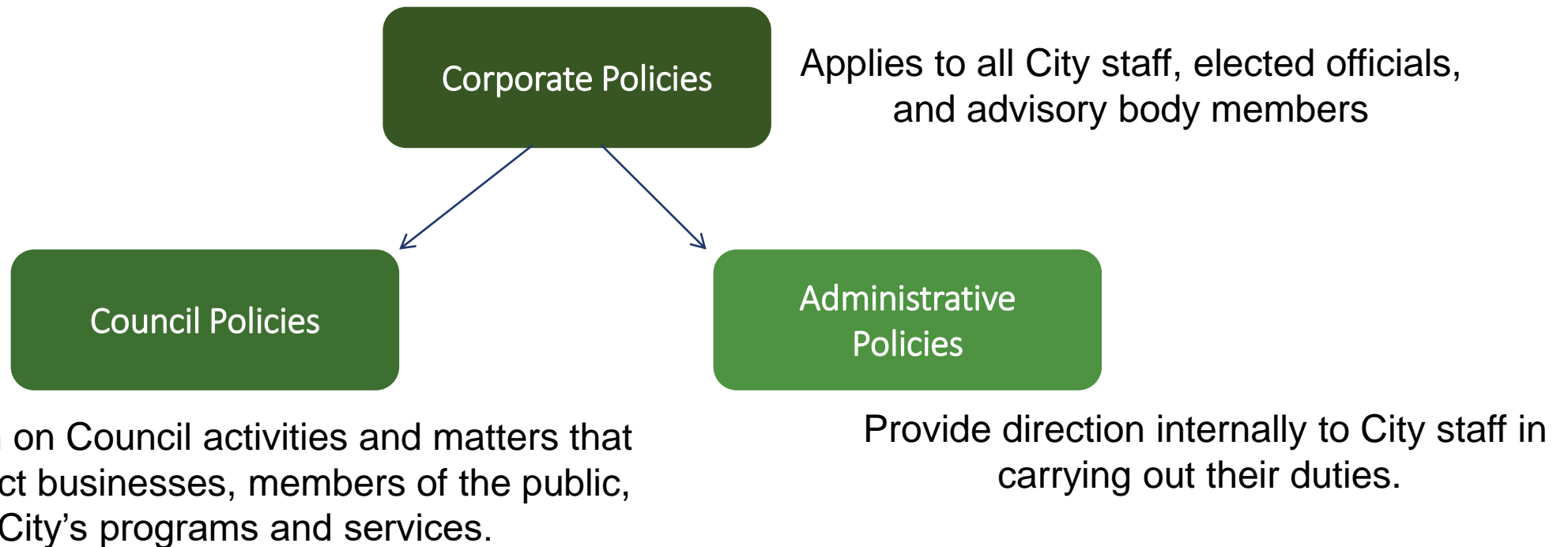
1. By-laws and Regulations

The City of Vancouver's **most referenced bylaws** include:

the Animal Control Bylaw, Fire Bylaw, Graffiti Bylaw, Noise Control Bylaw, Parking Bylaw and Parks Control Bylaw. To find a bylaw click **here**.

2. Corporate Policies

Our City Council and administration (staff) have established **corporate policies** and procedures to govern how the City works. These policies are categorized as either **Council or Administrative**.

Corporate Policies

Applies to all City staff, elected officials, and advisory body members

Council Policies

Administrative Policies

Provide direction on Council activities and matters that may directly affect businesses, members of the public, and the City's programs and services.

Provide direction internally to City staff in carrying out their duties.

2. Corporate Policies

Council and Administrative policies apply to issues including:

- Access to City services without fear
- Community Relations
- Diversity of Advisory Bodies
- Emergency Preparedness
- Ethical Purchasing
- Media Relations
- Special Events

And much more!

To learn more or search for a policy click **here**.

3. Reports and Briefs

City reports and briefs include a wide range of topics including:

- Financial report and information
- Planning priorities and policy analysis
- Reviews and updates of City Services
- Proposals for new projects and initiatives
- Responses from staff to City Council Motions
- Intergovernmental and International collaboration
  (i.e. UN Safer Cities Study)

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4. Projects, Services and Initiatives

Public Policies also take the final form of Projects, Services and Initiatives.

- One example of such a service is the "Street Outreach Program" that has staff at Carnegie Hall working to support homeless and local populations in the Downtown East Side.

- Another example is the "Zero Waste Solutions" initiative that the city is doing in partnership with Metro Vancouver.

- Think of a city service, program, project or initiative you have seen the City do over the years. *That can also be public policy!*

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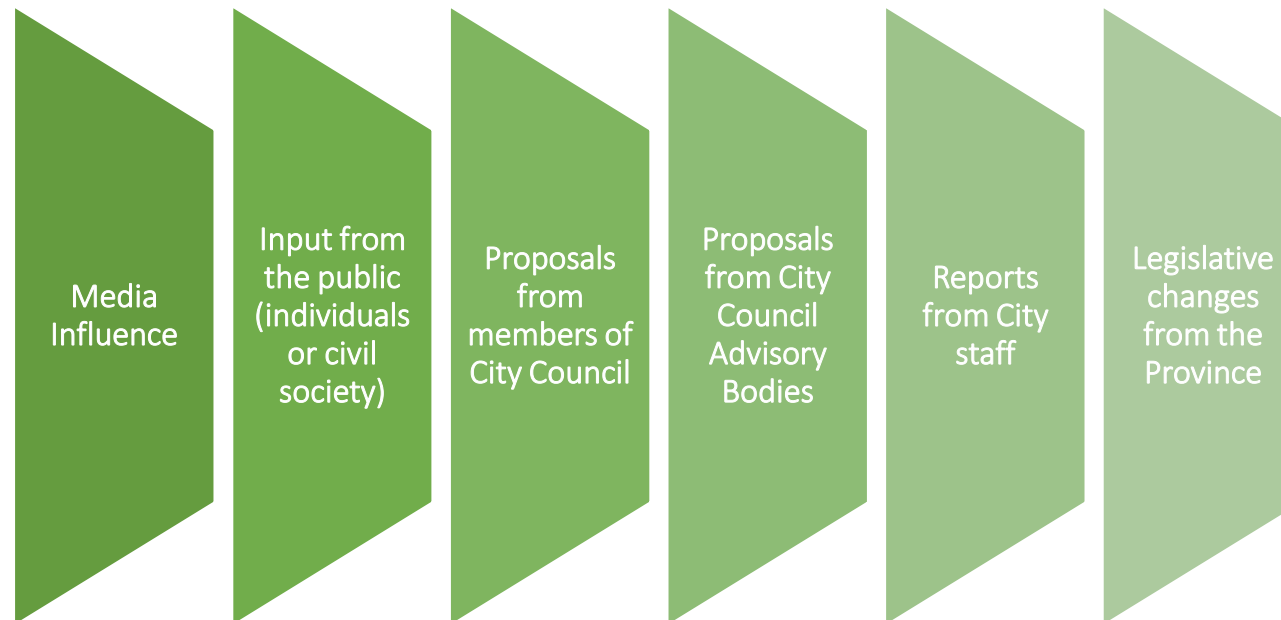City Government and How Decisions are Made

Now What?

Now What?

Now that we understand some of the characteristics of public policy, let's explore how an issue find its way onto the political agenda.

How Decisions Are Made
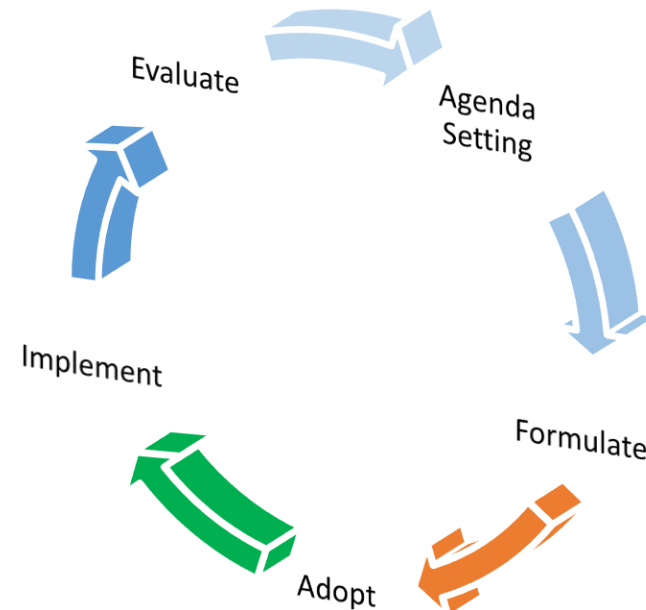
Issues can be brought to City Council's attention in a number of ways. This is known as "Agenda Setting." These include:

Media Influence

Input from the public (individuals or civil society)

Proposals from members of City Council

Proposals from City Council Advisory Bodies

Reports from City staff

Legislative changes from the Province

How Decisions Are Made

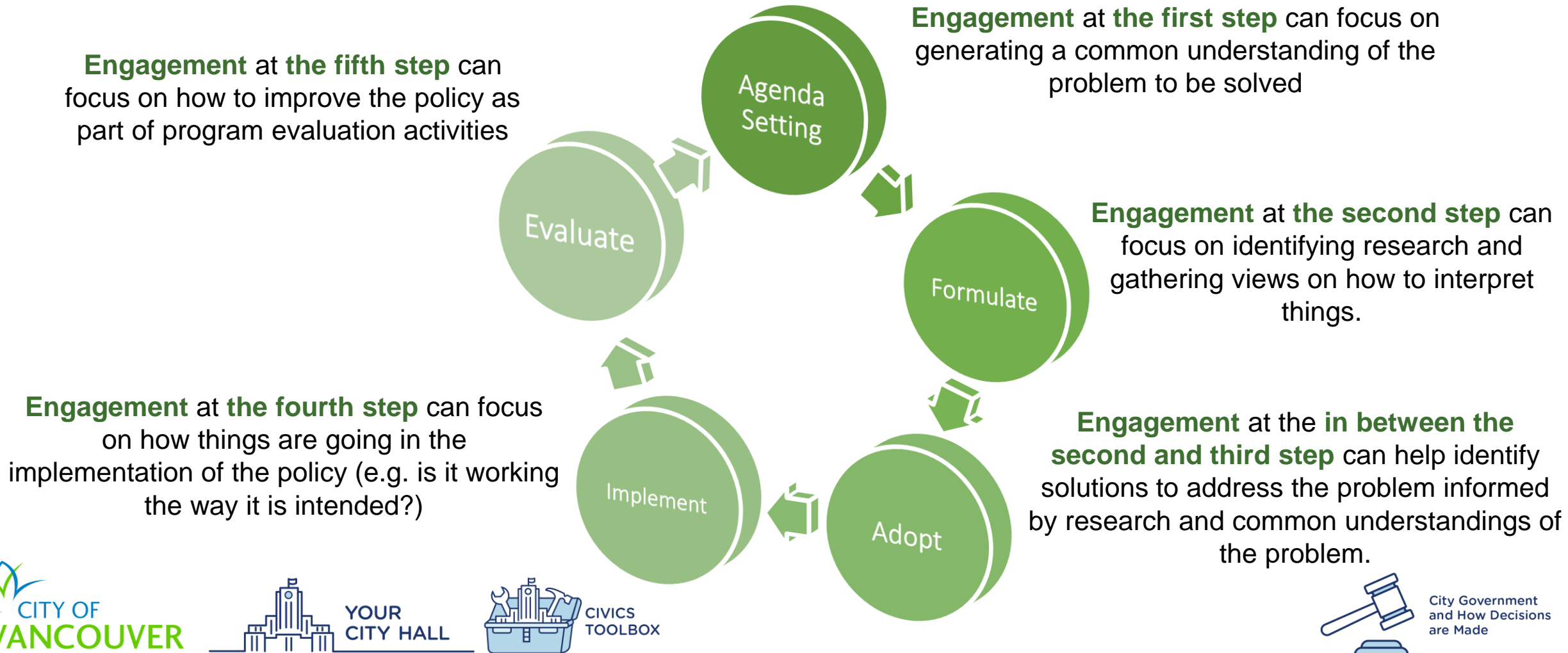The process followed is sometimes referred to as a *"policy cycle."* The policy cycle isn't the same in every case but has five primary phases:

1. Agenda Setting
2. Policy Formulation
3. Policy Adoption
4. Policy Implementation
5. Policy Evaluation

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How Decisions Are Made

Engagement at **the first step** can focus on generating a common understanding of the problem to be solved

Engagement at **the second step** can focus on identifying research and gathering views on how to interpret things.

Engagement at the **in between the second and third step** can help identify solutions to address the problem informed by research and common understandings of the problem.

Engagement at **the fourth step** can focus on how things are going in the implementation of the policy (e.g. is it working the way it is intended?)

Engagement at **the fifth step** can focus on how to improve the policy as part of program evaluation activities

Agenda Setting

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City Government and How Decisions are Made

Getting Involved in Policy Decisions

You can get involved in influencing public policy in many ways!

Online discussion
- Circulate or repost political information on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter
- Use email or instant messaging to discuss a social or political issue
- Blog about a political issue
- Participate in an online group about a social or political issue
- Sign up to speak to an issue at Council Meetings or send in comments!

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Getting Involved in Policy Decisions

Offline discussion
- Discuss a social or political issue face-to-face or on the phone
- Write a letter to the editor about a political issue
- Make a public speech on a political issue
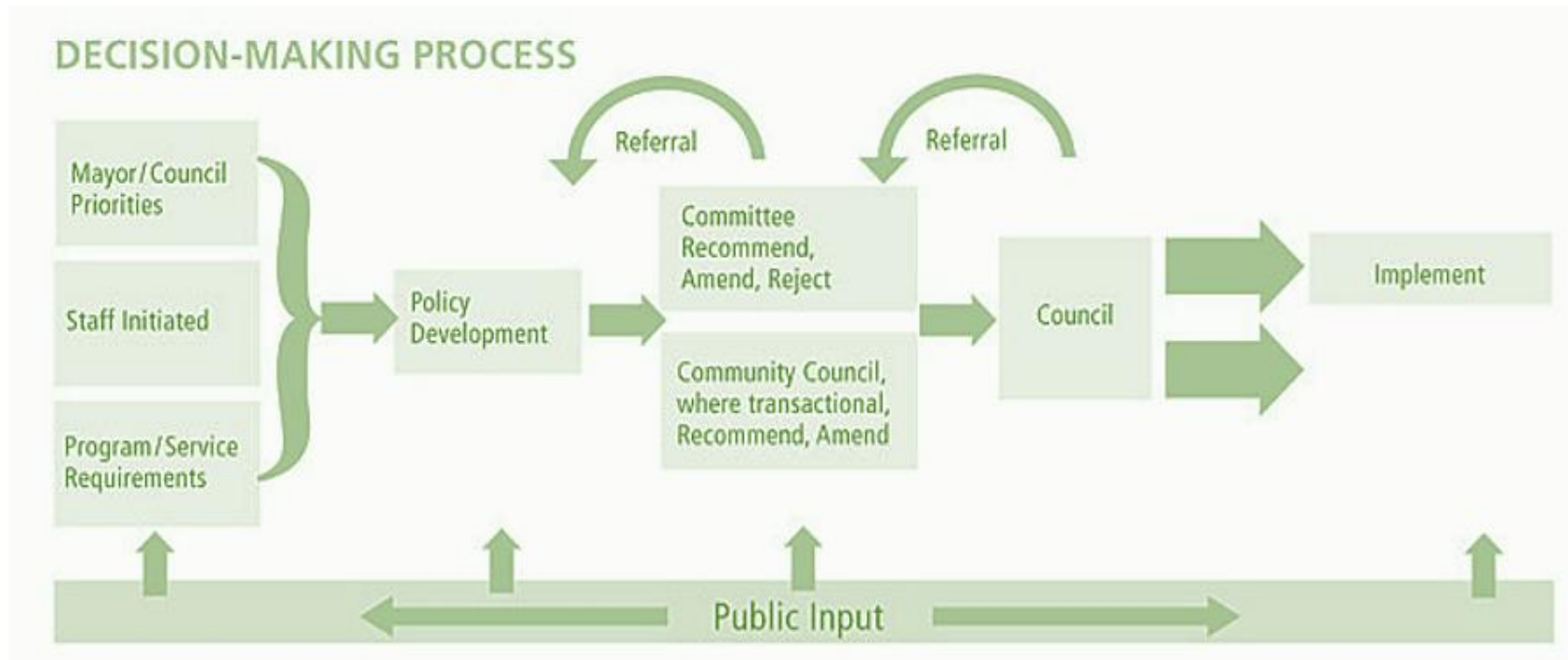- Organize a public event or meeting about politics

Activism
- Sign a petition
- Boycott or "buycot" a product
- Take part in a peaceful protest
- Educate yourself on policy issues in your City
- Network with individuals and organizations
- Join an Advisory Committee

Getting Involved in Policy Decisions

Now It's Your Turn!

There are several activities that go along with this presentation, or you can make up your own.

You can find the activities on the Civics Toolbox website

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