

# Guide Public-Policy Initiatives to Success

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This article provides a framework for guiding current and future public policy endeavors and for analyzing past and current initiatives. This article also illustrates using the framework to analyze and learn from past endeavors and to shape current and future initiatives.

## Introduce the Framework

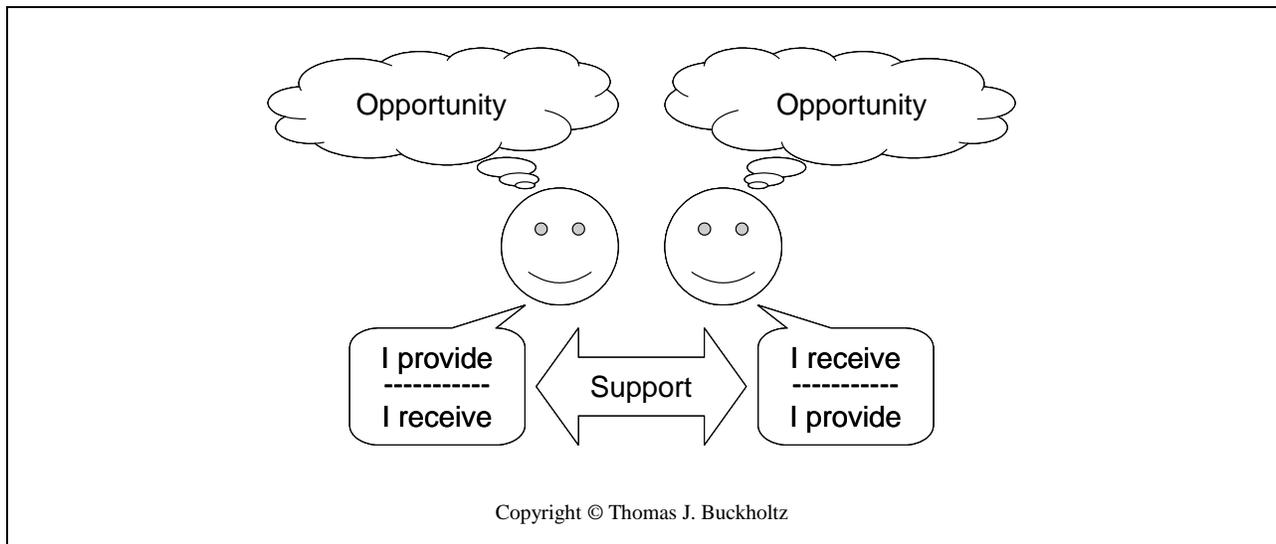
### Exhibit the Framework

The framework features two elements.

- A model – featuring opportunities, coalitions, and support – for endeavors.
- A *Value Spectrum* for anticipating, measuring, and shaping the planned, actual, and perceived value to a client of service provided by a provider.

Many endeavors – including ones associated with public policy – feature two or more coalitions affecting<sup>1</sup> each other's formulating and capturing opportunities. Sometimes, people consider a coalition to be a *client* and another coalition to be a *provider*. Sometimes a person, organization, or other entity belongs to both a client coalition and a provider coalition.

**Figure 1. Endeavors – Opportunities, Coalitions, and Support**



A key event in a public policy initiative is a decision such as the putting in place of a constitutional amendment, a law, or a regulation; the adoption of a policy; or the election or appointment of an individual. Following such a decision, one finds *Implementation* (for example, of a regulation or of a campaign agenda) and *Outcomes* of such Implementation. The decision may be based in part on *Insight* such as principles, goals, plans, and risk analyses. Insight may be based on *Information*, which in turn is based on *Transactions* that capture, synthesize, and propagate data. Transactions are supported by

<sup>1</sup> *Affecting* may include helping and hindering.

*Infrastructure*, including people and computer systems. Also, *Reuse* can occur for aspects of Outcomes, Implementation, Insight, Information, Transactions, and Infrastructure.

For public-policy and other endeavors, Figure 2 provides a spectrum of value and activity.

**Figure 2. Value Spectrum<sup>2</sup>**

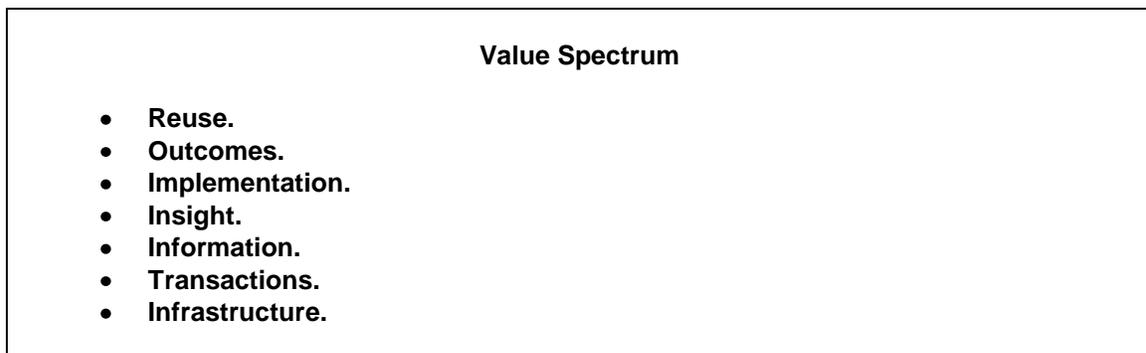
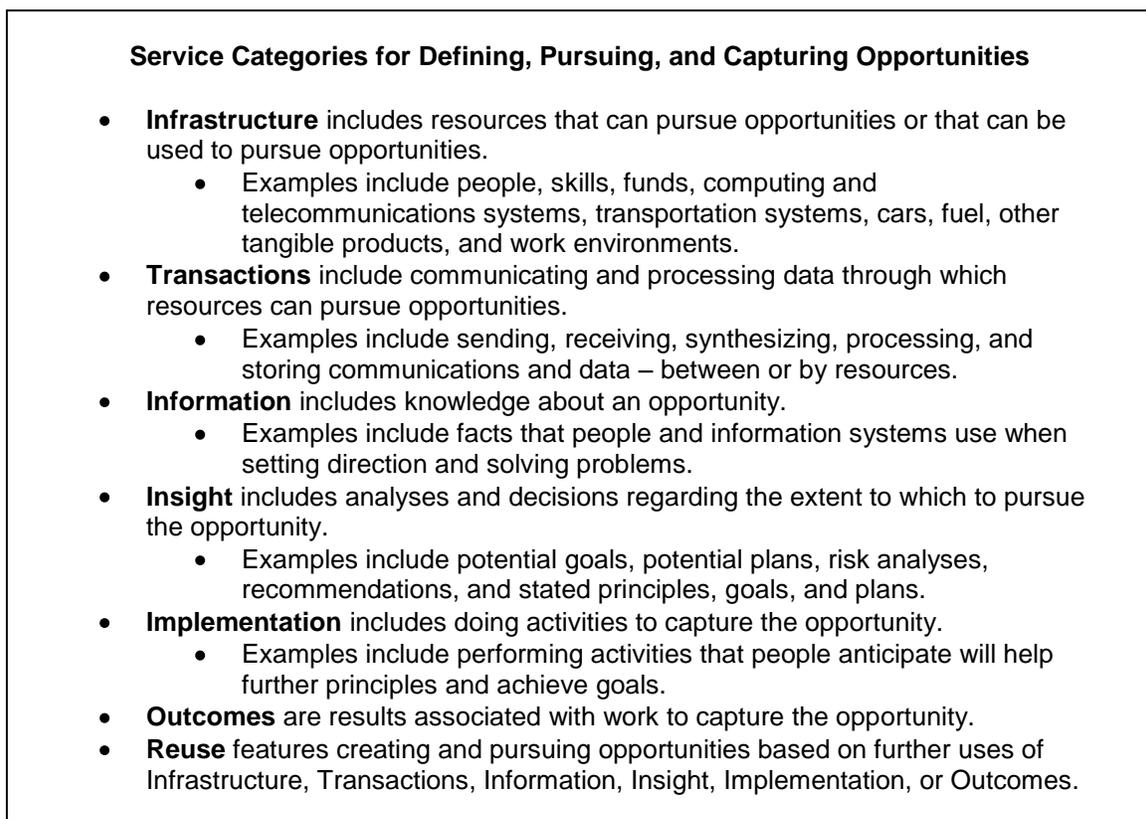


Figure 3 elucidates the spectrum with respect to an endeavor to define, pursue, and capture opportunities.

**Figure 3. Service Categories for Defining, Pursuing, and Capturing Opportunities**



<sup>2</sup> This Value Spectrum is an application of the *Direct Outcomes* tool known as *Achieve Progress*. This and other applications of Direct Outcomes are Copyright © Thomas J. Buckholtz.

## Interpret the Framework

Consider that a client wants to achieve one or more related Outcomes.<sup>3</sup> The following comments illuminate significance of the lowest 6 service categories (Outcomes service, Implementation service, ..., Infrastructure service) in Figure 2.

- Often, the client associates more value with a service associated with a higher-listed category than with a subsidiary service associated with a lower-listed category.<sup>4</sup> In such cases, the client could prefer to be *constructively lazy*, that is to want to receive service that is as close to Outcomes as feasible and that supports as much useful Reuse as feasible. To the extent providers' services completely meet a need associated with a category, the client may be able to avoid dealing directly with supporting activities associated with subsequent categories.
- Needs to obtain results for any category can point to needs for achievement in subsequent categories. Thus, one can *plan downward*.
- Achieving results in any category can support achieving results in previous categories. Thus, one can *work upward* (as is suggested by Figure 3).

## Differentiate Public-Policy Strategy and Tactics

The above framework suggests two measures regarding *strategic and/or tactical*.

- Compared to a public policy initiative with a likely set of Outcomes, another initiative may be considered to be more tactical to the extent its likely Outcomes constitute, at most, Implementation through Infrastructure for the first initiative. People might say that the second initiative represents an *interim step* toward a more strategic opportunity.
- Compared to a public policy initiative that likely impacts a specific set of entities, another initiative may be said to be more tactical to the extent it likely impacts only a subset of the entities affected by the first initiative. The second initiative might be said to address needs of *narrow interests*.

## Analyze Past and Current Public-Policy Endeavors

### Improve Outcomes, regarding Preserving Public Tidelands and Parkland

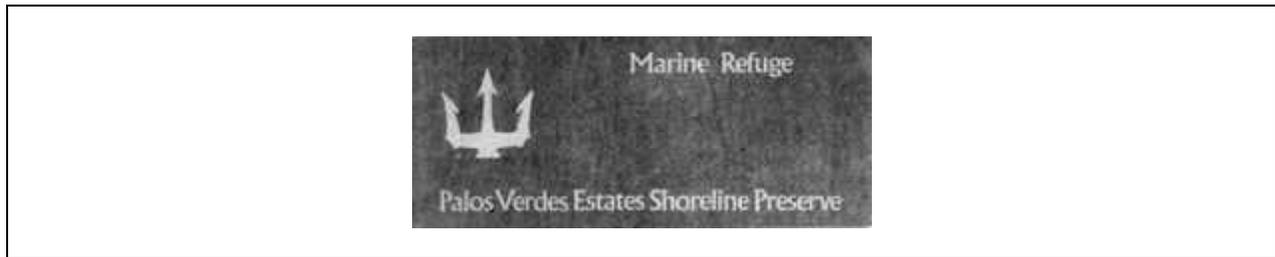
The creation of the Palos Verdes Estates Shoreline Preserve provides an example of the importance of choosing appropriate Outcomes. During the 1950s, people proposed uses – such as boat harbors, parking lots, and a city maintenance facility – for the 7 kilometers of Pacific Ocean coastline and 280 hectares of parkland within the City of Palos Verdes Estates, California, USA. A coalition of citizens persuaded the city council to vote down each proposed development. But, the agenda was being set by pro-development entities and the council's votes were often 3-against-and-2-for. The coalition's Outcomes were defensive and tactical. In approximately 1957, I proposed that the coalition's Outcomes should feature creating a wildlife preserve. With this Insight, the coalition broadened its view of its opportunity. The coalition's continuing reactive work and new proactive work (including helping coalition allies become planning commission members and council members) constituted Implementation toward a durable strategic Outcome. During the 1960s, the State of California granted title for the tidelands to the City and the City established its Shoreline Preserve. Figure 4 shows a draft sign for the Preserve.

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<sup>3</sup> Ignore, for the moment, the Value Spectrum category of Reuse.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptions can occur, for example, if the client derives, from the subsidiary service, value other than the value associated with the higher-listed service. Such other value may be associated with Reuse of the subsidiary service.

**Figure 4. Draft of a Sign for the Palos Verdes Estates Shoreline Preserve**



### **Create Opportunities, regarding Governmental Service to the American Public**

The creation of the early 1990s United States nationwide grassroots coalition to improve governmental service to the public exemplifies the importance of focusing on broad concepts of coalitions and impacted entities.<sup>5</sup> In America during the 1980s, thousands of federal, state, and local government agencies provided services to the public, with various agencies and constituencies focusing on specific services. In 1989, Frank McDonough, a deputy commissioner in the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), proposed that – starting with the community of federal chief information officers (CIOs)<sup>6</sup> – the nation could build a coalition to make *service to citizens* (or *governmental service to the public*) a topic and to catalyze widespread improvement.<sup>7</sup> By early 1993, the nation was benefiting from projects, research, and a grassroots coalition – of academic, news-media, private-sector, and local-, state-, and federal-government employees and organizations – that pursued vital opportunities. Later in 1993, the federal government labeled some of its initiatives as *reinventing government*. Current *e-government* (at all levels of government) and *simplified permitting* (for building permits from local government) illustrate Outcomes from this endeavor.

### **Articulate the Essence of the Information Age, for Business and Government**

This example uses the Value Spectrum to analyze an attempt to state *the essence of the Information Age for business and government*.

In 1980, the Paperwork Reduction Act established *information resources management (IRM)* as a field of practice within the federal government.<sup>8</sup> In today's parlance, IRM combines knowledge usage and services, records management, computing, and telecommunications.

In 1989, the United States General Services Administration's Information Resources Management Service (IRMS) fulfilled roles including the following.<sup>9</sup>

- Co-chief information officer (co-CIO) for the federal Executive Branch, co-leading the practice of IRM.<sup>10</sup> This role included reviewing the performance of some Executive Branch CIO-led organizations<sup>11</sup> and overseeing much Executive Branch procurement<sup>12</sup> of information resources.

<sup>5</sup> McDonough, Frank A. and Thomas J. Buckholtz. "Providing Better Service to Citizens with Information Technology." *Journal of Systems Management*, Volume 43, Number 4, April 1992, pp. 32-40.

<sup>6</sup> The terminology at the time was *Designated Senior Official for Information Resources Management*. The terms *chief information officer* and *CIO* were not yet prominent.

<sup>7</sup> As Frank's boss, I became a champion and spokesperson for this initiative.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/laws/paperwork-reduction/>

<sup>9</sup> Collectively, these roles represented 3% of the demand side and 0.4% of the supply side of the world information-technology marketplace.

<sup>10</sup> The other co-leader was a group in the Office of Management and Budget.

- Supplier (as a GSA business unit) to federal entities (in all three Branches) of \$1 billion per year of telecommunications and information-technology-professional services.
- CIO for GSA.
- Supplier of information to the public.

In late 1989, GSA was doing strategic planning. IRMS needed a mission statement. The following are three candidate themes, each with an image the theme might convey (to the community of perhaps 4,000,000 federal employees that IRMS served) and with an assessment of corresponding value (based on the Value Spectrum).

- *Information Proficiency* – Using information to make and implement decisions. (Implementation and Insight)
- *Information-rich Environment* – Useful information. (Information and Transactions)
- *Quality Products and Services* – Computers and telephones. (Transactions and Infrastructure)

Previously, IRMS had developed an *information-rich environment* theme, which I found momentarily compelling and then, thinking of *information overload*, not satisfactory.<sup>13</sup> I devised and IRMS adopted the following.

- Mission statement:
  - *To help clients achieve information proficiency. Information proficiency is the effective use of information to achieve a person's job or an organization's mission.*
- Operational themes:
  - *Proficiency with information to make decisions and thereby set goals.*
  - *Proficiency through information to communicate and implement decisions and thereby achieve results specified by goals.*

By adopting a mission statement that is close to *clients achieve appropriate Outcomes*, IRMS provided clients with a useful, attractive vision of support for doing their work well and provided a gamut of providers (CIOs, members of CIO-led communities, and information-technology-and-services suppliers) with useful guidance regarding what clients actually need and want.<sup>14 15</sup>

### Rethink “Who are the Clients?” of Procurements

This example features establishing new information-technology-and-services procurement practices.

In 1990, a typical large Executive Branch information-technology procurement featured one agency (for example, the Department of Justice) conducting a procurement (for personal computing) that allowed only that agency to make purchases, up to a limit (\$0.5 billion). During 1991 or 1992, I proposed gaining more value from such endeavors. For a *Government-Wide Acquisition Contract*<sup>16</sup> (GWAC), Justice might conduct a similar procurement with a \$550 million cap and the provision that only non-Justice entities could use the other \$50 million of *procurement authority*. Vendors got more business more easily.

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<sup>11</sup> Each 3 years, IRMS reviewed the CIO functions of 27 agencies, including (separately) the Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, Department of the Army, and Department of the Navy.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Public Law 89-306 (Brooks Act), enacted in 1965.

<http://www.itl.nist.gov/History%20Documents/Brooks%20Act.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> My tenure as the GSA commissioner leading IRMS began in October 1989, during this strategic planning. I served as a political appointee.

<sup>14</sup> In this case, *close to Outcomes* is appropriate. An Outcomes theme might be *IRMS or the IRM community accomplishes 4,000,000 jobs* and would have been inappropriate.

<sup>15</sup> Buckholtz, Thomas J. “Evaluating the CIO.” *Computerworld Leadership Series*, Volume II, Issue 2, March 18, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> The terms *Government-Wide Acquisition Contract* and *GWAC* were established after my leaving (in January 1993) government service.

Agencies had more choices of what to buy and how much to pay. In effect, contracts competed with each other. The government acquired more-appropriate technology and services, at better prices. By early 1993, agencies were pursuing 24 GWAC procurements. A January 2006 article alluded to a then-current total of \$290 billion in GWAC activity (procurements that were being planned, were out for bid, or had been awarded and were still in use).<sup>17</sup>

I also proposed that agencies use the procurement practice that eventually became known as the *Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Multiple Award Contract (IDIQ/MAC)*.

While *procurement* was – and remains – an often discussed facet of public policy, it appears that people are reluctant to propose reform, possibly in fear that reform implies new laws, new regulations, and increased work. Establishing the GWAC and IDIQ/MAC entailed no new law or regulation.<sup>18</sup> Agencies' use of the practices was voluntary. However, by now, specific law and regulations are evident.<sup>19</sup>

## Shape Current and Future Public-Policy Initiatives

### Rearticulate the Role of Government

Perhaps it is time for America to rearticulate the role of government.

A framework for American society positions individuals and *society* (as a whole) as entities seeking Outcomes including *having satisfying existences* and effecting Implementation/Insight/etc. including *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*. In the sense of Figure 1, individuals and society are clients of a provider government that society establishes and sustains to help ensure freedom and opportunity.

The Value Spectrum provides a basis for discussing, from clients' perspectives, governmental services. For example, ...

- Government-supplied information provides individuals and organizations with Transactions-value. A client determines the extent to which to treat information as being Information useful for the client's endeavors.
- Government-supplied funds provide Infrastructure.

Distinguishing client from provider and calibrating levels of service provide bases for addressing public policy challenges.

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<sup>17</sup> Gerin, Roseanne. "New dawn for GWACs." Washington Technology, Volume 21, Number 02, January 2006.

[http://www.washingtontechnology.com/print/21\\_02/27841-1.html](http://www.washingtontechnology.com/print/21_02/27841-1.html)

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, during my service, IRMS reduced the *Federal Information Resources Management Regulations (FIRMR)* from 120,000 to 40,000 words.

<sup>19</sup> For example, regarding the IDIQ/MAC, see Rector, Richard. "Acquisition reforms ring in the new year," Washington Technology, Volume 23, Number 01, January 14, 2008, page 10.

[http://www.washingtontechnology.com/print/23\\_01/32091-1.html?topic=infotech-rector](http://www.washingtontechnology.com/print/23_01/32091-1.html?topic=infotech-rector)

## Develop a Framework for Improving Healthcare

People can use this framework to provide vital context for *healthcare*. A key client entity is an individual and a key Outcome is *wellness*.<sup>20</sup> Providers can include the individual, family and friends, and healthcare entities. The following items exemplify stratifying providers' services.

- (Implementation) The individual eats and drinks food, thereby obtaining nutrition and pleasure.
- (Insight) The individual makes lifestyle decisions regarding diet, menus for specific meals, exercise, and choices of disease treatments.
- (Information) The individual and a doctor decide which food-value, disease-treatment, or allergy information is relevant.
- (Transactions) Entities provide data about the nutritional value of foods, efficacy or drugs, licenses held by healthcare providers, and quality-control reviews of providers.
- (Infrastructure) Someone produces agricultural products useful as ingredients in food. An insurer pays for part of the cost of a healthcare service.

This structure supports rethinking and improving society's approach to wellness and, within wellness, healthcare. Included in such endeavors can be productive dialogue and change regarding the roles of government. The above framework permits *solutions* – or combinations of solutions – as diverse as the following.

- *Free-market healthcare* – The role of government is limited to containing some risks, such as ones associated with services by unlicensed providers or with treatments based on unlicensed drugs.
- *Socialized medicine* – Government offers lifetime healthcare at little or no cost to clients.

Use of the framework likely leads, for example, to a conclusion that unduly forcing a correlation between an individual's healthcare providers or healthcare-insurance providers and the individual's current or former employers is unlikely to be optimal for the individual, providers, or employers.<sup>21</sup>

## Develop a Framework for Improving Education

Society can gainfully deploy similar reasoning regarding *education*. Here, the clients include individuals, teams, and society. An improved vision of an objective, compared to education, might be *learning, in support of potential client Outcomes*.

Instead of paralleling the above wellness/healthcare discussion, the following discussion uses the Value Spectrum to address the question of *what do individuals, teams, and society need to learn?* Parents can use the technique when selecting schools or designing homeschooling curriculum for their children. Academics can use the technique to develop curricula, including for public-policy programs. Employees, employers, and their customers can use this method to specify *training*.

People need skills throughout the Value Spectrum. For example, people need to be able to ...

- Create opportunities from previous and on-going endeavors and results. (Reuse)
- Measure, recognize, and appreciate achievement. (Outcomes)
- Follow and reinforce principles. Achieve goals. (Implementation)
- Perform analyses, make decisions, establish principles, and set goals. (Insight)

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<sup>20</sup> One can also consider the wellness of families and society.

<sup>21</sup> I used the word *unduly* so as not to deemphasize, for example, an injured worker's immediate need for treatment during a workplace emergency or a wounded soldier's immediate need for treatment during a battle.

- Learn information. Determine, situation by situation, the extent to which to use and trust specific information. (Information)
- Find, synthesize, store, retrieve, and communicate data. Communicate with colleagues. (Transactions)
- Marshal and deploy tangible resources. (Infrastructure)

People can use the Value Spectrum to envision current and future needs and to implement programs so that individuals, teams, and society are best able to create, identify, and capture opportunities to learn and thrive.

### **Develop a Framework for War**

The effectiveness of a *war against [something]* or a *war on [something]* can depend much on the clients, Outcomes, and providers being considered.

A war against [something] features attempts to disrupt, distract, disable, dislodge, or dissolve coalitions, governments, or military capabilities. To the extent such a war is considered Implementation toward greater Outcomes, opportunities for desired, durable results increase. The early 1990s Persian Gulf War provides an example. A key Outcome was the restoration of a government in Kuwait. Dislodging Iraqis from Kuwait represented an Implementation step. However, to the extent military victory is considered paramount among Outcomes, opportunities for creating problems increase.

The notion of a war on something like poverty or drugs has proven suboptimal. Haphazard Implementation without a vision of reasonable, practical Outcomes leads to problems. Better behavior starts by envisioning clients, Outcomes, Reuse<sup>22</sup>, and providers. Subsequent vital steps feature propagating a positive vision, such as *increase opportunity and hope* or *win hearts and minds*.

### **Choose Effective Vocabulary**

Even when the word *war* is avoided, considerable opportunity exists for improving public policy effectiveness by choosing appropriate wording. For example, assume hypothetically that one can emphasize only one of the following themes. Consider which theme to choose.

- Counter global warming.
- Reduce concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

### **Disentangle Taxation and Social Policy**

Today's American coupling of *taxation* and *social policy* features confusion, micro-legislation, and societal overhead, to say nothing of suboptimal results. A family's *need* for financial assistance may be rather independent of the extent to which the family pays taxes. Society can simplify taxation and improve results. Note that ...

- Much social policy emphasizes *needs for support* (as somehow determined) of clients (of government) such as individuals and organizations.
- Some taxation-based social policy emphasizes *abilities to pay* (as somehow determined) of providers (to government) such as individuals and businesses.

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<sup>22</sup> People might consider a decrease in, for example, poverty to be a Reuse of other Outcomes.

Disentangling support-payment policies and calculations from taxation policies and calculations can make it easier to identify and meet needs, minimize moneys paid to non-needful entities, and reduce societal overhead.

## Disentangle Budgeting and Revenue Estimating

Governments for which *balanced budgets* are required often exhibit difficulties regarding actually containing expenditures so as to not exceed revenues. Some difficulties may be attributed to over-optimism regarding future revenues. Other difficulties may be attributed to over-entanglement regarding *government as a client* and *government as a provider*.

The following practice for constraining *year-3 expenditures* can, absent *overrides*<sup>23</sup>, constrain *spending beyond means*.

- During year 1, the government collects revenue.
- During year 2, the government tabulates its year-1 revenue and passes a year-3 budget that does not anticipate spending during year 3 more than the amount of year-1 revenue.
- During year 3, the government spends no more money than it received in year 1.

## Focus Decision-making regarding Privatization

American dialog regarding *privatizing* governmental functions features ideological positions. The Value Spectrum provides other bases for discussing such *outsourcing*.

For specific governmental Outcomes, one can discuss Value-Spectrum levels for which work should be outsourced to other government entities, the private sector, or automation.<sup>24</sup> Discussions can feature questions of *where or how high, starting with Infrastructure, should a function be outsourced?* Factors to consider regarding outsourcing can include the potential for government entities to ...

- Improve or degrade services.
- Gain or lose touch with clients, other government entities, and the public.
- Integrate or isolate potentially related endeavors and lesson-learned from those endeavors.
- Gain or lose flexibility regarding potentially changing mission, work focus, or practices.
- Gain or lose currency regarding new developments in specialty fields.
- Gain or lose capability to manage procurements, vendor relations, and related risks.
- Reduce or increase costs.

## Simplify and Succeed

American society can improve its public policy thinking and simplify its rules. Clarifying *who the clients are* and *who the providers are* can prove pivotal. Using models, such as the Value Spectrum, can improve and simplify the generating of useful insight.

Figure 5 provides suggestions for using the Value Spectrum. Figure 1 and Figure 3 provide context and definition. Figure 2 provides a basis for *planning downward* and *working upward*.

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<sup>23</sup> An example of an override is *suspending the practice, based on approval by a legislative supermajority and the executive*.

<sup>24</sup> My GSA colleagues and I discussed federal employees' work's making a transition from *clerical* (Transactions) to *analytic* (Insight). Technological advances provide for automated services that progress – sometimes on time scales of decades or centuries – from Infrastructure toward Outcomes.

**Figure 5. Tips for Using the Value Spectrum**

**Develop Win-Win Relationships  
or  
Co-create Value**

Perform the following activities. Feel free to backtrack or otherwise deviate from the sequence.

- Note who are the constituencies for an opportunity.
  - Consider including entities such as clients, providers, facilitators, regulators, and so forth.
- For each constituency, use a hierarchy of value to develop a list of needed results.
  - Consider using the Value Spectrum as the hierarchy.
  - Consider starting from or near the top of the hierarchy and not including items for which the constituency need not have direct involvement.
- For each constituency's list, develop a table in which – for each needed result – people can note the following.
  - The entity in charge of ensuring the result is achieved.
  - Each entity expected to contribute to achieving the result.
- Use the tables to generate agreements between constituencies for win-win (or *value co-creating*) relationships. The following items provide advice.
  - If an entity is in charge of a result (call the result the *primary result*) and is the only major contributor to the result, consider eliminating from a list *other results* that support only that primary result, especially to the extent other entities do not contribute significantly to the other results. (Such other results likely lie, in the Value Spectrum hierarchy, *farther from Reuse and closer to Infrastructure* than does the primary result.)
  - Consider iterating until each party feels appropriately comfortable with the value it receives, the work for which it is responsible, and the work it needs to do.
  - Consider not going into so much detail that creativity and flexibility are put at too much risk.

People can use such techniques to frame issues, rally coalitions, pursue opportunities, solve problems, and succeed throughout the gamut of public policy endeavors.