

4. CHECKLIST FOR POLICY REFORM

4.1 Contextual factors in the policy environment to consider

The following points synthesise key questions for policymakers leading major reforms to consider operationalising SLO to support greater likelihood of effective reform processes.

Who we need to build licences with

- Are there **different licences needed for different groups**? These could be within communities, the public service, the political sphere or private sector.
- Are there groups with **different expectations** of reform that need to be balanced?
- What is the **current level of public awareness** and understanding of the issue?
- What capacity exists to have a **public conversation around reform**? Might an incremental approach generate less risk of polarisation?
- What is the **capacity of communities to participate** e.g. time to attend townhalls, cultural diversity considerations, etc?

The social environment

- **Are there known or potential areas of mistrust**? If so, can governments work with trusted boundary spanning individuals or groups (without compromising the third party's credibility)?
- **What is the cultural context**? Are there sensitive and polarising issues? Is a cultural mandate necessary to build SLO?
- Are there perceived or actual issues of **fairness or equity** associated with reform i.e. some benefitting more than others.
- How might **disinformation** be used to erode SLO at each policy phase?

The nature/context of the policy domain

- **What components of reform require acceptance**? Need for reform? Particular solutions and their cost?
- What is the **commitment** to support public service capacity building?
- Is it possible/necessary to **partner** with credible trusted non-government actors? E.g. where there is existing mistrust of reform in the community
- Is **independent expert evidence/advice** needed to inform reform and build legitimacy?
- How much **control over reform is in hands of administrators**? To what extent is the reform politically enacted?

Elements of reform that can be politicised

- Are there **perceived or actual areas of polarisation** related to reform in the community that can be politicised?
- Is their **policy stasis** related to perceived or actual community acceptance of reform? **Could building a social licence support a political licence** for reform?

4.2 Actions to strengthen and maintain reform muscle

The following are a set of rules of thumb for policymakers planning to build social licence(s) for reform to consider.

Setting aims for achieving social licence(s)

- Identify what components of reform require **acceptance** and consider goals beyond acceptance such as trust.
- **Work from the bottom up** with communities to build SLO - electoral mandates don't trickle down.
- Consistent performance of governments in line with community expectations to build and maintain **trust**.
- **Monitor and maintain** social licences – they can be withdrawn with changing circumstances.

Actions to build social licence(s)

- Adopt **participatory processes** for transparency and to build trust only when the available mechanisms for them to inform policy are clearly understood and agreed to by participants.
- Facilitate **boundary-spanning** across government agencies and levels of government via clear governance arrangements and agreed mechanisms of coordination at appropriate levels of seniority.
- Use appropriate, **evidence** that has credibility among stakeholders to inform reform to build trust and legitimacy. This can be developed via advisory groups with transparent mandates.
- Develop long-term **communication strategies** that consider public awareness of reform, potentially conflicting social licences required, and areas of mistrust or polarisation prone to disinformation.
- **Consistent messaging and conversations with communities** that incrementally make the case for change and reform options.

Managing internal factors to achieve social licence(s)

- **Commitment and capacity to work genuinely with communities.**
- **Understand communities:** the level of community knowledge of the policy domain, the different licences required, actual or perceived disparities in benefits and burdens associated with reform, etc.
- **Build/maintain technical competence of public service** to a) work with communities and credible non-government actors and b) make recommendations to governments about how to build SLO.
- **Manage politicisation of reform by demonstrating SLO and processes to maintain it.**

Managing for external factors to achieve social licence(s)

- **Be prepared for crises** by having several reform options that have been socialised and transparent processes to facilitate timely implementation of preferred options.
- **Avoid embedded opposition to reform** that becomes part of the social fabric or identity of a place.
- **Build capacity to manage disinformation** during reform as this is a key mechanism undermining trust.