



Enhancing your public engagement and impact

Understand the policy landscape

Map out the key policy sectors and stakeholders to whom your research is relevant. Understand who you want to engage with, when you want to do so, and how you might do it.

Appreciate the policy process

There is no defined policy cycle in which to find a point of engagement, and no single route for engagement.

Appreciate that policy development is complex, messy, happens on many different levels and occurs at many different timescales – this can help you to

spot opportunities and know when, where and how to engage.

Showing policymakers that you understand the complexity of the process and some of the common barriers to engagement (e.g. different professional cultures, different language, different timescales, different incentives and priorities) can help to build productive relationships.

Be aware of how evidence and research is used in policy development

Evidence can inform, but not determine, policy. It is one of a number of factors that policymakers take into consideration when developing their thinking and making decisions, which also include ideological, technical, financial, social, moral and political matters.

Build links and networks

Most effective policy engagement is developed from personal links and happens serendipitously on the basis of being in the right place at the right time. Personal relationships also help to establish trust and credibility which are key factors for effective policy impact.

Make your communication meaningful and accessible

Don't use academic jargon or technical language and be as clear as possible. Put your research into the policy context: be aware of why it might matter for public policy and what stakeholders might be interested in.

Be open to opportunities and interaction

The more you can participate in policy and public activities (e.g. events, meetings, articles) the more you will be exposed to policy stakeholders and develop your understanding of the policy landscape. The stronger your networks of policy stakeholders, the more likely opportunities for engagement are to present themselves.

Be proactive

Don't just wait for opportunities and policymakers to come to you but seek to engage them, particularly at an early stage of research. Be clear and targeted about key stakeholders that you might involve through co-production or ongoing engagement.

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