ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION TO POLICY MAKERS

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Declarations

Current Advisory group memberships
• BC Physical Activity Collaborative
• Healthy Weights Initiative
• Childhood Obesity Foundation Board

Past Advisory group memberships
• Heart and Stroke Research Advisory Committee
• BC Physical Activity Strategy and early years sub-committee
• BC Healthy Eating Strategy and early years sub-committee
Early Career Researcher Workshop

• What do we mean by advocacy and communication?
  – (what are you/researchers hoping to achieve)
• Who actually is a policy-maker?
• Why engage?
• How to engage
• Barriers & Benefits
Advocacy

• “...any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others”

Source for Defn: www.allianceforjustice.org

For what:
- programs
- policies
- approaches
- funding
What is communication?

• “an act or instance of transmitting information
• communicated : information transmitted or conveyed
  b : a verbal or written message
• a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior - personal rapport
• communications plural a : a system (as of telephones, or computers) for transmitting or exchanging information
• communications plural in form but singular or plural in construction
  a : a technique for expressing ideas effectively (as in speech)
  b : the technology of the transmission of information (as by print or telecommunication)”

Source: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication
Communication as Knowledge exchange

Boundary Processes Linking Decision-Makers and Scientific/Technical Expertise:

Boundary processes facilitate knowledge flow

Decision-Makers
Managers
Stakeholders

Boundary Processes

Boundary Processes

Resulting In

Effective Outcomes

Knowledge
Legitimacy
Credibility
Relevance

Scientists
Technical Experts

Lead authors: R Moss, Joint Global Change Research Institute, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, University of Maryland, P.LScarlett, The Nature Conservancy
Who are these policy-makers we are talking about?

- Politicians
  - National, State/Province, Community/Municipal, District/local level
    (i.e. parks boards, local community associations, school boards)
- Bureaucrats
  - National, State/Province, Municipal, District level
- Decision-makers in major not-for-profit organizations
- Staff of not-for-profit organizations
Policy

- “Collective, ethical, decision-making”
  - Dr. Charlotte Waddell, Make BC Healthier4Kids – A Policy discussion, May 30th, 2017, Vancouver BC

- “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party”
  » http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/policy
Advocacy/Communication with policy-makers – some choices

- VERY indirect
- Indirect
- Direct

High engagement

Low engagement
Advocacy/communication type activities:

*Including:*

- Address the research agenda
- Gather, network, share information with each other
- Educating politicians, bureaucrats, decision-makers
- Educating/mobilizing the public/media
  - Special reports, panels
- Lobbying
For you – why engage?

- What current problems and issues are affecting the population in your community, jurisdiction?
- Are you passionate about them?
- Is there a clear solution?
- How does/can your research support/address the issues/advocacy efforts?
  - Educate, evaluate the impact of potential solutions, collaborate to build the evidence-base and to advocate
Key steps
(Adapted from www.policiesforaction.org)

1. Build a relationship
   - Who do you want to build a relationship with?
   - Spend time
     • Ask what they are working on, what do they need, what questions do they need answered
   - Walk a mile in their shoes
     • Learn their language, understand their issues, connect to the underlying values and principles
   - Invest - put skin in the game
2. “Get on the radar”:

BEGINS WITH: Quality, relevant research
• Invites to speakers, research unit events
• Requests to meet and discuss the issue
• Attend when asked to policy rounds or special events
• Create an event with them in mind
• Speakers bureau
• Participate in advisory committees
• Join and serve in organizations that represent your field
3. Maximize your time by using your basic toolkit to communicate

Arrive with:

• Evidence
• Powerful stories (what does it mean to a ‘real’ person)
• Proposed actions “the ask”

(Key Steps Adapted from www.policiesforaction.org)
Barriers for policy-makers: Money, time & staff to find, analyse and understand the evidence

2.5 MILLION+
The number of academic articles published every year.

Just 12% of those articles are published in open access journals.

Want to make your research

Why decision-makers aren’t using your research.

For elected officials and other policymakers, discovering, reading, and understanding your research can be
Four communication questions from www.policiesforaction.org:

- What language are we using to communicate our evidence in?
- What format are we using to communicate our evidence?
- What platforms are we using to communicate our evidence?
- Are we using the full range of resources available to us?

Source:
http://www.policiesforaction.org/blog/turning-research-into-action-a-dialogue-decision-makers-part-two
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS AND BENEFITS OF THIS TYPE OF WORK?

Quick group brainstorm
Barriers to this type of work:

- Promotion and tenure
- Training
- No connections or relationships
- Concerns about scientific integrity
- Conflicting priorities
- Funding/Location
Benefits to this type of work

• Alignment of values and work
• Demonstrating ‘real world’ IMPACT
• Public health
• Visibility of academia/your University/your research as a public benefit
• Connection to community