Research Engagement Toolkit

Resource and Development eBook

Working with Government and Influencing Policy

2022-23

University of
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Contents

Welcome

This booklet is ***Working with Government and Influencing Policy*** and provides further information and details on ways in which to engage with and influence policy makers and other key stakeholders to maximise the reach and significance of your research impact.

Aims of this eBook:

- Specifically focuses on how to get started with policy engagement, with links
- Provides information about the training & development and internal funding available
- Encourages reflection and self-evaluation throughout the development process
- Sign-posts to useful internal and external resources, tools, tips and techniques
- Promotes goal setting and development of confidence and capability

Essential information at a glance:

We have a dedicated **Professional Services** space on the Staff Hub with further information and resources relating to *Public Affairs* and *Public & Community Engagement* within the Marketing, Recruitment & External Relations and Research & Enterprise areas respectively.

Please go to:

[UoS Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)](sharepoint.com)

Additional links and resources have been provided throughout this booklet to continue your development journey.

Overview: Policy engagement at Salford

Our University has a long-standing reputation for academic innovation, industry collaboration and civic engagement. Our combination of research expertise and engagement with real-world issues produces clear and relevant policy solutions that help to transform lives.

We work with agencies and individuals to produce research that is informed by, and matters to our communities. Our close working partnerships with policy makers, practitioners and the third sector assist us in producing constructive solutions that are meaningful and relevant. We recognise that to impact positively on social issues, our findings must translate into useful recommendations to inform the work of our stakeholders.

Our approach to delivering relevant policy solutions is guided by the following principles:

- Understand and respond to the needs of policy makers and communities in an applied and realistic way
- Rigorously investigate public policy problems through excellent and innovative research
- Engage with our communities to inform the relevance of our research for everyday lives
- Provide stakeholders with clear and constructive messages
- Work closely with our policy and practice partners to find forward-looking solutions that transform and enhance lives

This guide links to information, resources and support to enhance your policy engagement development journey and is split into an ***Introduction*** and ***three key sections***:

1. Section 1: Engaging with policy makers
2. Section 2: Building engagement and evaluation into research project design
3. Section 3: Monitoring and evaluating policy engagement

Additional resources and reading are also provided at the end of this guide.

Tip:

A link to our Public Affairs support can be found on the [Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)](#) under 'Marketing, Recruitment & External Relations'

Introduction: Getting started with Professional Services support

The **Public Affairs team** within Marketing, Recruitment & External Relations supports colleagues across the University in engaging with political stakeholders and policy makers across local, regional and national government. This is done by increasing the understanding of the aims and ambitions of the University amongst key decision makers, from local politicians to national government, often working with partners to further those aims.

Key responsibilities include:

- Communicating with decision makers and opinion formers in local, regional and national government on the work of the University
- Coordinating visits to the University by politicians and policy makers across all levels of government
- Providing advice and intelligence on political and policy matters that could impact on the University, whether at local, regional or national level
- Working with colleagues across the University to manage engagement with external stakeholders
- Coordinating the University's approach to civic engagement.

A **monthly Regional Affairs Update newsletter** provides additional key information on the latest political developments affecting the University at local, regional and national level. If you would like to be added to the distribution list for this newsletter, please contact c.e.morris@salford.ac.uk.

The team is the first port of call in offering support to colleagues looking to engage with politicians and policy makers. Contact details can be found towards the end of this toolkit.

The following sections provide some tips on where to start in planning your policy engagement and working with policy makers, how to build policy engagement and evaluation into your research project design, and finally, how to monitor and evaluate your policy engagement.

Tip:

The online Document Library on the R&E section of the Staff Hub provides relevant templates and guidance to support these activities, as indicated in each of the 3 sections

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Section 1: Engaging with policy makers

Understanding your audience

'Policy maker' is a term that covers anyone involved in formulating or amending policy. Consider which **Government officials or groups** (Ministers, advisers, civil servants, MPs, Lords, All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)) or **opinion leaders** (think tanks, NGOs, charities, businesses) are likely to be able to influence the policies that are relevant to your research. Reflect on how you will be able to make contact with them to effectively deliver your message.

You also need to have an understanding about **how and when** is best to present the information or evidence that you have from your research to these key stakeholders.

Planning policy engagement

The term *'policy engagement'* describes the myriad ways in which researchers and policy makers can connect and explore common interests, ranging from informal and formal enquiries to consultation and more sustained collaboration. Through engagement researchers work with policy makers to change and improve public policy, informed by their evidence, expertise and experience.

Policy engagement should begin at the **planning stages of a project**, in consultation with key stakeholders. Information on carrying out an initial stakeholder analysis can be found in the separate **Getting Started with Impact toolkit**.

Start by considering the following questions:
- What is the **key message** that you wish to communicate?
- What is the **evidence** from your research?
- What are the **implications** for policy change?
- Who has the **level of influence and power** to make a difference?
- When and where should you **engage with stakeholders**?
- What is the **best form of engagement** with your stakeholders?

Document Library **Key Resources:**

Publics and Stakeholder Analysis template

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Section 2: Building engagement and evaluation into project design

Pathways to impact

'Pathways' or 'routes' to impact involve undertaking activities to engage with your audience throughout your research project and beyond. This is a means of disseminating your findings, gathering feedback and driving further action to achieve your impact goals.

Remember to build the following into your research project design:
- **Early engagement with policy makers** and other stakeholders to shape your research questions to achieve maximum buy-in
- **Careful design of engagement activities** to generate maximum impact
- **Monitoring and evaluation plan** to evidence successful engagement and impact
- **Human & financial resources** needed to carry out policy engagement activities.

Completing an **Impact Project Planning template** can help you to think about your impact goal(s), your target audience, the best tools to use to engage with them, how you will measure this engagement to know that it has been an effective impact pathway, what kind of resources you may need to realise this and the associated timescales for completion.

The most common and effective way of engaging with policy makers is through:

1. Meetings

To hold a successful meeting with policy makers and other stakeholders, it is important to understand **what kind of event** will be appropriate to showcase your research and also **what will work best for your target audience**.

For example, if you wish to present findings, a **short briefing or lunchtime seminar** is recommended, whereas if you require something more exploratory, a **longer workshop format** is a good way to engage stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of your project.

Remember that all meetings should take the form of a **dialogue** and you should be open to hearing the views and expertise of your stakeholders. Their feedback and advice will drive your potential for impact and could improve the quality of your research.

2. Written policy briefs

At the end of a project, a **press release**, **policy brief** or **report** is a good way to disseminate your findings. Social media is a powerful tool to use in reaching different stakeholder groups.

It is prudent to create short written briefs for policy makers to read after meetings and then to follow up in person after a period of time. Remember to keep briefs to no more than 2 pages, make them clear and to the point, use images and highlight your key points and findings.

Links to further resources on how to create policy briefs can be found in the **'Further reading, references and practice'** section towards the end of this toolkit.

Document Library **Key Resources:**

Impact Project Planning template

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Section 3: Monitoring and evaluating policy engagement

How do you know that your research has made a difference?

Once you have started to see the outcomes of your 'pathway to impact' activities and the benefit or change that these are generating, it is important to capture **external (independent) evidence** or 'proof' that this engagement activity has led to genuine policy impact so that you can demonstrate to your funders and stakeholders how and why your research is so significant.

These guiding principles should help you to effectively track and learn from your policy engagement activities:

1. **Strategise from the outset** of your project: a plan for engaging with your stakeholders and monitoring change over the lifecycle of the project is crucial to your impact evidence trail

2. **Invest time in building and maintaining relationships** with your stakeholders: understand who are the key players, how best to reach them and consider whether you need to build broader interest groups or coalitions

3. **Build in time for learning and reflection**: understand whether and how your engagement has been successful in achieving the intended impact outcomes and ensure that any evaluation is fit for purpose.

The strategic importance of evidencing policy engagement for our University

Improving engagement with policy makers can be beneficial to our research: working in this arena can uncover new research possibilities and generate new ideas. By monitoring and evaluating this engagement, researchers are able to maximise research outcomes, while creating real-world policy impact that can be used in future **Research Excellence Framework (REF)** exercises, for example.

It is also good practice to monitor and evaluate engagement in order to secure further external funding, especially for those calls with an emphasis on impact and co-creation with external partners. Setting aside time to build this into your project design improves the chances of success in attaining future funding.

If your research is demonstrably achieving real-world impact, an **Impact Case Study template** can help you to document the external changes, the evidence to support this and the research outputs that underpin this.

Document Library **Key Resources:**

Impact Case Study template

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Other resources

Internal funding

Internal opportunities to apply for funding to assist with engagement activities that seek to influence policy and generate impact are available to staff throughout the year:

Research Impact and Public Engagement (RIPE) fund

Up to £5K in funding can be applied for to support research impact for an existing project, research development or research dissemination and public engagement activities, including policy engagement (e.g. through creation of policy briefs).

Applications should align to one or more of the following themes:
- **Strengthening interaction** – seeking to nurture and build upon relationships with non-academic partners, aligning with the University's Industry Collaboration strategy
- **Broadening research** – expanding the reach and influence of research outcomes, in addition to introducing greater partner contribution into the design of future research
- **Promoting social benefit** – demonstrating how the application of research-based knowledge might lead to practical and focussed solutions at a range of scales.

There are two funding calls per year, in September and January.

Policy Support Fund

Ad hoc funding is available from Research & Enterprise (R&E) to support researchers whose projects have a clear link to policy development and change. Priority is given to research that is likely to generate policy impact that can be showcased within a future REF submission.

Funding is discretionary and ad hoc. Monies are administered through R&E.

Impact and engagement training

A comprehensive schedule of training and development activities is delivered through staff and PGR programmes and managed through Research & Enterprise.

All staff training activity is linked to the **Academic Career Framework**, supporting academic staff to progress in their careers at Salford.

Training and support covers these main areas:
1. **Developing grant proposals** - from initial ideas to submitting a grant application
2. **Disseminating your research** - publishing and open access for dissemination
3. **Research impact and engagement** - ensuring your research has real-world benefits
4. **Ethics** - ensuring ethical compliance in your research and engagement activities
5. **PGR supervision** - ensuring our students receive the highest quality support
6. **Enterprise & working with business** - realising the commercial benefits of research and exchanging our knowledge with the business community

Tip:
Links to all current funding and training, for example Parliamentary engagement workshops and bespoke policy sessions, can be found on the Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)

Examples of Salford's public affairs engagement

Salford Untold

The Public Affairs team worked with colleagues across MRER, as well as the wider University, to produce a **social and economic impact report** to tell the untold story of our impact on Salford, Greater Manchester and beyond.

Further information on the report can be found at:
https://testlivesalfordac.sharepoint.com/sites/MRER/SitePages/Public-Affairs.aspx

Civic University Agreement

As an institution we have signed up to the **Greater Manchester Civic University Agreement**, which was launched in September 2021.

The Agreement focuses the efforts of the five Greater Manchester universities on improving the lives of GM's 2.8 million residents to drive social, economic and environmental change in our city-region. Support is provided in six priority areas: Education & Skills; Reducing Inequalities; Jobs & Growth; Digital Economy; Net Zero; and Creative & Cultural Economy.

Further information on our participation in this agreement can be found at:
https://www.greatermanchesteruniversities.org/

Innovation Greater Manchester

Innovation Greater Manchester is the most developed blueprint in the country for levelling up through innovation. To ensure investment reaches the right areas, this new arrangement is backed by and designed with businesses, investors, R&D organisations, and local and national Government. It is delivering a range of projects and initiatives to build a world-class ecosystem in our city-region.

This includes Salford Crescent, which links with MediaCityUK and Salford Royal to form the **Salford Innovation Triangle** and is home to new facilities, including Energy House 2.0 and the North of England Robotics Innovation Centre (NERIC).

Further information on our involvement in this area can be found at:
https://gmlep.com/innovation-gm

Tip:

Links to further examples of our engagement can be found on the Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)

Contacts

Research and Enterprise

For all general engagement enquiries, please contact:

Emma Sutton (REF, KEF and Impact Manager, R&E) at
research-impact@salford.ac.uk

For more specific policy and engagement training enquiries, please contact:

Davina Whitnall (Researcher Development Manager, R&E) at
d.c.whitnall@salford.ac.uk

Stephen Ling (Researcher Development Officer, R&E) at
s.m.ling@salford.ac.uk

Marketing, Recruitment and External Relations

The Public Affairs team supports colleagues across the University in engaging with political stakeholders and policy makers across local, regional and national government.

For all policy engagement-related enquiries, please contact:

Charlotte Morris (Corporate & Regional Affairs Manager, MRER) at
c.e.morris@salford.ac.uk

Ciaran Roche (Prospects and Political Research Officer, MRER) at
c.t.roche@salford.ac.uk

Tip:

A comprehensive list of professional support staff in R&E and MRER can be found in the Professional Services area of the Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)

Further reading, references and practice

A range of external resources can be accessed to provide further advice and guidance on engagement with policy.

UK Parliament

For further assistance with developing policy engagement and impact through UK Parliament, a dedicated area of the UK Parliament website has been created. This provides resources including 'how to' guides (e.g., creating policy briefs), information on how and why to engage with parliament and training and events.

Parliament's flagship report, the POSTnote, is a four-page briefing that reviews emerging areas of research and is a good source of information and inspiration.

More detailed information is also available from the **Knowledge Exchange Unit (KEU)**, which seeks to support the exchange of information and expertise between researchers and the UK Parliament.

The KEU provides the following support and resources:

- A first point of contact for any researcher wishing to work with or find out more about UK Parliament
- Online training through a series of webinars for researchers and knowledge mobilisers
- Twitter platform, bringing together opportunities, information and advice for researchers and providing a means to interact with teams across UK Parliament
- Online resources about why and how to engage with UK Parliament

All information can be found at: https://www.parliament.uk/ and search 'Research Impact'.

National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)

The NCCPE dedicates part of its website to 'understanding audiences' and more specifically, to understanding and engaging with policy makers, which can be an effective 'pathway to impact': policy makers often have the influence and opportunity to use research evidence to develop or change policies and have a mandate to work with and listen to the research community.

The web pages provide definitions about policy, policy makers and policy making and give useful advice on how to get started and top tips for creating policy briefs.

There is also a range of resources available from external bodies regarding policy audiences and creating an impact.

All information can be found at: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/ and search 'Policy Makers'.

Further reading, references and practice (cont'd)

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

The ESRC, one of the seven Research Councils that sits under the umbrella of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), has developed an **Impact Toolkit for Economic and Social Sciences**.

The toolkit is aimed at social science researchers applying for and receiving funding from the ESRC. It is split into a number of key sections, including: How to demonstrate support for impact; How to hold effective public engagement; and How to influence policy makers.

The guidance on **How to influence policy makers** covers public affairs – the process by which you can influence policy makers. It highlights the role that research has in public policy-making and gives advice on how best to present your case. It also explains key aspects of the UK policy-making processes and provides links to other information sources.

All information can be found at: https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/impact-toolkit-for-economic-and-social-sciences/how-to-influence-policymakers/

Fast Track Impact

The Fast Track Impact consultancy run by Professor Mark Reed provides a range of resources for researchers, students and research professionals to help develop impact in their work, and has a dedicated section on **Influencing Policy**.

Resources include a number of podcasts on how to get your research into policy, as well as training slides and materials from Professor Reed's Research Impact Handbook on engaging policy makers and developing policy briefs.

A chargeable training course is also available to book through the website and provides the latest guidance on how to get research evidence into policy.

All information can be found at: https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/

Tip:

A link to external public engagement with policy resources can be found on the Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)

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Exercise: 5 minutes to focus on your goal

Reflect on your goal
Consider what you want to do and why? What are your next steps?

What I need to think about……

People to talk to…….

Things to do……….

Key dates and deadlines

We encourage you to explore the training and development opportunities on the Staff Hub Development Calendar and on the Advantage booking system. Please consider any forthcoming milestones, deadlines and PDR dates to help target or progress your development. This space has been provided to identify a list of the key dates, deadlines and development opportunities to help you focus on and move closer to your goal.

Date	Details

Stay in touch….. for further information and contacts, please go to: **Staff Hub (sharepoint.com)**