



Toolkit #1

Why Policy? Understanding the Critical Link Between Research and Policy

Developed by

Fostering Policy-Relevant Psychological Research project team members:*

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This toolkit was designed to complement the first webinar in the five-part webinar series on Fostering Policy-Relevant Psychological Research. To download this toolkit, other toolkits, and to watch all of the webinars as they are released, visit:

www.spssi.org/CODAPARpolicyseries.

COMMISSION

Commissioned through a 2022 Committee on Division/APA Relations (CODAPAR) grant awarded to:

Division 8	The Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP)
Division 9	The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI)
Division 27	The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA)
Division 44	The Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity
Division 45	The Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race

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WHY POLICY? UNDERSTANDING THE CRITICAL LINK BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY

This toolkit complements a one-hour webinar that illuminates for psychologists the importance of research in informing policy and practice. Through this webinar, learn why you should care about policy and how to make your research useful to policy makers. Access a recording of the webinar by visiting:

www.spssi.org/CODAPARpolicyseries.

Panelists:

- **ROBERT CIALDINI, PhD**, Regents' Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing, Arizona State University
- **MARYBETH (BETH) SHINN, PhD**, Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair and Professor, Department of Human and Organizational Development, Vanderbilt University
- **RUSH HOLT, PhD**, American scientist and Member of the U.S. House of Representatives (NJ-12) from 1999-2015

WHY PSYCHOLOGISTS SHOULD CARE ABOUT POLICY

Policy provides psychologists with opportunities to translate their work into practical solutions. The research that we do can help inform policymakers about the potential impact of their decisions. These resources highlight the importance of incorporating psychological research into the realm of policymaking.

- The American Psychological Association's [Stand for Science Campaign](#)
- A blog of the Consortium of Social Science Associations called [Why Social Science?](#)

**“If not you, then who?
Legislators and their staff hear
from constituents, interest
groups and professional
advocates every day. As an
expert and a constituent, your
input is incredibly valuable too.”
(APA’s Stand for Science
Campaign, 2017)**

INTRODUCTION TO POLICY FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

These readings provide primers on policy, policymaking, and translating research for policymakers. Most are written for psychologists, by psychologists.

Books

- Bogenschneider, K., & Corbett, T. (2010). *Evidence-based policy making: Insights from policyminded researchers and research-minded policymakers*. Routledge.
- Maton, K.I. (2016). *Influencing social policy*. Oxford.
- Tropp, L.R. (2018). *Making research matter: A psychologist's guide to public engagement*. American Psychological Association.

Articles

- Scott, J.T., Larson, J.C., Buckingham, S.L., Maton, K.I., & Crowley, D.M. (2019). [Bridging the research-policy divide: Pathways to engagement and skill development](#). *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 89(4), 434–441.
- Shinn, M. (2007). [Waltzing with a monster: Bringing research to bear on public policy](#). *Journal of Social Issues*, 63(1), 215–231.

- Tseng, V. (2012). [The uses of research in policy and practice](#). Society for Research in Child Development.

**“Research does not speak for itself, nor does it have definitive implications for particular problems of practice or policy.”
(Tseng, 2012)**

HOW-TO GUIDES

There are many ways for psychologists to better link their research to policy. This includes not only designing and conducting policy-relevant research, but also translating that research for policy makers and educating the general public. These resources will help you get started.

Advocacy Guides for Scientists and Practitioners

- [Advocacy Handbook for Social and Behavioral Science Research](#), created by the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
- [Community Advocacy: A Psychologist's Toolkit for State and Local Advocacy](#), created by APA Divisions 17, 27, 36, and 45
- Address by COSSA Executive Director Wendy Naus at SPSP 2023 entitled [A Guide to Advocacy for Personality and Social Psychologists](#)

Translating Research for Policymakers

How to write a policy brief:

- Wong, S.L., Green, L.A., Bazemore, A.W., & Miller, B.F. (2017). [How to write a health policy brief](#). *Families, Systems, & Health*, 35(1), 21–24.
- [SPSSI's Policy Resources webpage](#), which includes brief-writing guides and brief exemplars

How to develop relationships and communicate effectively with policy makers:

- RESULTS's "[Lobbying How To's](#)"

Translating Research for the Public

How to write op-eds:

- The [Op-Ed Project's Tips and Tricks](#) for writing op-eds
- [Duke's Communicator Toolkit](#)

How to write letters to the editor:

- The [Community Toolbox's Writing Letters to the Editor Guide](#)

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

For many students and psychologists alike, policy work can seem intimidating. Here is a short list of opportunities that incorporate varying levels of mentorship on how to incorporate a policy lens in your work or fully engage in policy work.

For undergraduate and graduate students:

- [African American Policy Forum's Fellowship Program](#)
- SPSSI's [Dalmas A. Taylor Memorial Summer Minority Policy Fellowship](#)
- MDRC's [GSP Undergraduate Internship](#)
- [Research-to-Policy Collaboration Internships](#)
- [Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship](#)

For postdoctoral professionals, full-time:

- [APA Congressional Fellowship](#)
- [APA Executive Branch Science Fellowship](#)
- [Jacquelin Goldman Congressional Fellowship](#)
- [Springfield LGBTQIA+ Policy Congressional Fellowship](#)
- [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellows](#)
- American Association for the Advancement of Science ([AAAS](#)) [Science & Technology Policy Fellowships](#)
- Society for Research in Child Development ([SRCD](#)) [U.S. Policy Fellowship Programs](#)
- SPSSI's [James Marshall Public Policy Postdoctoral Fellowship](#)

For postdoctoral professionals, part-time:

- [Research-to-Policy Collaboration Internships](#)
- [Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship](#)

CONNECT WITH APA DIVISIONS AND OTHER INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

One way to get started in bridging the gap between research and policy is by meeting with other psychologists and researchers in your content area. Intermediary organizations, such as APA Divisions, can provide support. Below are brief descriptions of and links to the organizations involved with the development of this webinar series.

Division 9: The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues welcomes psychologists and allied social scientists who share a common concern with research on psychological aspects of important social issues and social subjects to bring theory and practice into focus on human problems of the group, the community, the nation, and the increasingly important problems that have no national boundaries. Learn more at www.spssi.org

Division 8: The Society for Personality and Social Psychology seeks to advance the progress of theory, basic and applied research, and practice in the field of personality and social psychology. Members are employed in academia and

private industry or government, and all are concerned with how individuals affect and are affected by other people and by their social and physical environments. Learn more at www.spsp.org

Division 27: The Society for Community Research and Action: Division of Community Psychology encourages the development of theory, research, and practice relevant to the reciprocal relationships between individuals and the social system which constitute the community context. The Division supports 23 regional groups promoting communication among community psychologists in six U.S. regions, Canada, Western Europe, and the South Pacific. Learn more at www.scra27.org

Division 35: The Society for the Psychology of Women provides an organizational base for all feminists, of all genders and of all national origins, who are interested in teaching, research, or practice in the psychology of womxn. To demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity of feminists of diverse genders, the presidential trio have chosen to describe the division's purposes and activities using the term "womxn." The division recognizes a diversity of womxn's experiences which result from a variety of factors, including ethnicity, culture, language, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation. The division promotes feminist research, theories, education, and practice toward understanding and improving the lives of girls and womxn in all their diversities;

encourages scholarship on the social construction of gender relations across multicultural contexts; applies its scholarship to transforming the knowledge base of psychology; advocates action toward public policies that advance equality and social justice; and seeks to empower womxn in community, national and global leadership. We welcome student members and affiliates. Learn more at <https://www.apadivisions.org/division-35>

Division 44: The Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity focuses on the diversity of human sexual orientations by supporting research, promoting relevant education, and affecting professional and public policy. Division 44 has task forces on accreditation, bisexuality, professional standards, public policy, youth, families, ethnic/racial issues and science. The Division supports the Maylon-Smith Award for student research and presents the annual Distinguished Contribution Awards. Learn more at <https://www.apadivisions.org/division-44>

Division 45: The Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race encourages research on ethnic minority issues and the application of psychological knowledge to ethnic minority issues. The division promotes public welfare through research and encourages professional relationships among psychologists who share these concerns and interests. Learn more at www.division45.org

In addition to these divisions, psychologists may turn to other intermediary organizations. For example, the **Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)** is a nonprofit advocacy organization that promotes the social and behavioral sciences in federal policymaking. Headquartered in Washington, DC, COSSA serves as a united voice for organizations, institutions, communities, and stakeholders who care about a successful and vibrant social science research enterprise. COSSA's policy experts work with a broad network of advocates to ensure sustainable federal funding for social and behavioral science research and the widespread use of our sciences in policymaking. Learn more at www.cossa.org

“In order to have an influence, research has to be available when policymakers need it... The fact that timing matters means that researchers committed to bringing their own work to bear on social policy sometimes need to be ready to answer the questions policymakers want answered at the moment, rather than the question that follows most naturally from theoretical and empirical developments in the field.” (Shinn, 2007)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Often it can be difficult to obtain funding for policy work, particularly as early career scholars and graduate students. However, opportunities do exist! Here are some to consider.

- [Washington Center for Equitable Growth](#) (Graduate and Postgraduate)
- [Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Research Scholars](#) (Graduate)
- [MDRC GSP Doctoral Fellowship](#)
- [Center for Engaged Scholarship Dissertation Fellowship](#)

ABOUT THIS WEBINAR AND TOOLKIT SERIES

This five-part webinar and toolkit series on **Fostering Policy-Relevant Psychological Research** covers five topics:

1. Why Policy? Understanding the Critical Link Between Research and Policy
2. How Do You Get Started Doing Research That Is Useful to Policy Makers and Practitioners?
3. How Do You Make Your Research Matter to Policy Makers and Practitioners?
4. How Do You Manage Your Presence to Non-academic Audiences if Your Research Is Relevant to Policy and Practice?
5. Creating a Policy-Relevant Psychology: Best Practices for Research and Mentoring

To access webinars that have already been recorded and toolkits that have already been created, visit:

www.spssi.org/CODAPARpolicyseries.