Proposed Title:
Turning research into recommendations: An interactive workshop on bringing research findings to decision makers

Organizers
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Description of Workshop
This workshop offers participants the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with engaging decision makers as academic researchers. We explore a range of possibilities for engagement, according to the philosophy and time commitment of participants, and offer practical tips to turn your research into something useful – and used by! – decision makers. This workshop is intended to be interactive and will provide participants plenty of time to discuss issues and try out the tools we discuss. Here is an overview of the workshop:

- **Introduction**
  There is a fine line between engaging in the policy process and engaging in politics or advocacy. We will explore the balancing act it takes to offer insights and speak in a nonpartisan manner about your subject, while stopping short of direct advocacy for specific policies. This interactive discussion will offer you the chance to think about your context and the way in which you may might engage with policymakers.

- **Written communication**
  The coin of the realm for many policymakers is the 2-pager. This is a product that provides the key context and takeaways of your research and details on how to get the full report/paper/dissertation. We will discuss practical tips for creating effective 2-pagers and other written resources, such as literature reviews and “101s,” for sharing with decision makers.

- **Presentations**
  For those considering presenting your work to decision makers in a variety of formats, including over the phone, in a one-on-one meeting, or even a formal hearing, we bring practical tips for making your work accessible, interesting, and most of all helpful for policymakers.

- **Data visualization**
  A picture can be worth a thousand words when it’s done right. We will work with you to think about how to leverage that concept to communicate key findings in your research, introducing a variety of tools ranging from a simple table to a complex map.

- **I’m in! Now what?**
  In the final segment of our time together, we explore best ways to accomplish your goals of communicating with decision makers. We identify potential avenues for getting the word out about your findings at the local, regional, state, or national level and introduce you to some practical tools to get started. This includes a look at websites that show which decision makers are working on your topic and how to contact them, how to use search
engines to find opportunities for public comment and proposed rules or legislation on your topic, and where to find organizations that can help connect you or who can act as intermediaries to get your findings to the right people.

The primary goal of this workshop is to increase the use of scientific evidence in decision making at local, regional, state, and federal levels in the US by encouraging and empowering academic researchers to effectively engage in the policy making process. We anticipate reaching this goal through the following objective:

1. To encourage academic researchers to think and talk about sharing their research findings with decision makers in a variety of ways, according to the level of engagement that matches the time commitment and style most appropriate to them.
2. To help academic researchers develop products that are accessible for intelligent people who know nothing about their topic and do not speak academian.
3. To provide academic researchers with the confidence to engage with decision makers in a variety of written and oral methods.
4. To give academic researchers tangible tools they can go home and use right away to bring research findings to decision makers.
5. To introduce academic researchers to online and other existing resources to identify decision makers, intermediary organizations, and key topics to help tailor their message and engagement.

Expectations of participants:

- We request that participants come to the workshop ready to interact with the group and with us.
- We ask that participants bring a specific research project or academic product (article, paper, etc.) to work with in the hands-on sections of the workshop.
- We ask that participants bring real questions, concerns, and ideas about engagement.

**Statement on how the workshop can benefit PAA 2020 attendees**

In the current political and social environment that disputes facts as ‘fake news’ and characterizes scientists as having a liberal political agenda, it is more important than ever that academics are willing and able to communicate effectively and in a nonpartisan way with decision makers. While academic researchers have taken a deep dive into their subject matter and have valuable information to provide, City Councilors, County Commissioners, State Legislators, Members of Congress, Senators, and many others have only a moment to peek in the window of any given topic on which they must vote. The current academic environment largely perpetuates a system in which academics publish findings for each other, in academic publications, behind a paywall, and in stylized jargon, and many researchers have neither the skills nor support to engage with policy makers. In this workshop, we open a conversation about what academics might do differently to get valuable findings to those who need them and provide practical tools that participants can utilize immediately.
**Description of target audience and estimated number of participants**

Our target audience is academic researchers at any stage of their career who are curious about engaging with decision makers. We hope for a candid conversation about the benefits and pitfalls of this type of work, and a discussion about a range of options for engagement that might fit different time commitments and engagement philosophies.

Our ideal number of participants would be between 10 and 40. We would like to set up a room that would allow us to both speak to the whole group and while allowing easy engagement in groups of four or five to brainstorm and try out ideas. A smaller group would allow us to dig more deeply into the specific context and research topics of the participants; a larger group would allow participants to benefit from more ideas and general suggestions.

**Preferred workshop day(s):** Tuesday, April 21

**Proposed workshop duration, format, activities, and schedule**

We propose a 1-day workshop, five segments of an hour to 90 minutes each. Segments will include introduction and instruction from us, interactive discussion with the group, and an opportunity to discuss and brainstorm in small groups. Small groups will have time to talk among themselves about their specific projects and bring back ideas to the larger group with a debrief to close out each segment.

**A/V needs beyond what is provided**

We will need access to the internet to show online tools such as how to find information about proposed legislation, opportunities for public comment, and how to contact decision makers; ability to project PowerPoint; and tools like flip charts and markers for participants to brainstorm in small groups and bring ideas back to the whole group.

**Short biographical sketches of presenters. Please include a link to a current CV**

**Emily J. Wornell** is an Assistant Professor of Research with the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Center for State Policy in the Indiana Communities Institute at Ball State University. As a rural sociologist and demographer her areas of specialization are inequality and population change in rural communities, specifically immigration and assimilation, the effect of automation-related job loss on families and communities, and household livelihood strategies in rural communities. She regularly works with local- and state-level policymakers to address issues of alternative community and economic development strategies and population change. Emily received a dual-title PhD in rural sociology and demography from The Pennsylvania State University in 2017. Her dissertation examined the role of informal work in the assimilation process of immigrants in new, rural destinations in the US. She graduated with a Master’s of Public Policy from Oregon State University in 2012.

[https://www.bsu.edu/academics/centersandinstitutes/indiana-communities-institute/staff-directory/wornellemily](https://www.bsu.edu/academics/centersandinstitutes/indiana-communities-institute/staff-directory/wornellemily)
Misty Mason Freeman is a nonpartisan analyst with the Legislative Policy Research Office for the Oregon State Legislature. In her work, she supports legislators by arranging and facilitating committee hearings and providing policy research, measure summaries, and background information about bills. Misty holds a Master’s and Ph.D. in Public Policy with a Minor in Rural Studies from Oregon State University, as well as a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from California Coast University. A policy generalist, Misty has applied her toolkit to a variety of fields, including health and human services, natural resources and environment, housing, land use, and more. In her free time, Misty enjoys reading, exploring the outdoors, and photographing everyday beauty to share on Instagram.