DEFINITIONS

Education
- Providing unbiased information to the general public or public officials about an issue and / or information about specific legislation.
- e.g., provide support and about evidence-based prevention programs
- e.g., information about legislation, but make no recommendation for action

Advocacy
- Speaking in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.
- e.g., ask for support of evidence-based prevention programs

Lobbying
- A specific type of advocacy activity that seeks to influence the enactment or defeat of a pending or proposed federal, state, or local legislation.
- e.g., asking a legislator to vote a certain way

While ALL lobbying is advocacy, NOT ALL advocacy is Lobbying.
WHY BOTHER?

RESEARCH TRANSLATION!
WHY SCIENTISTS SHOULD BE ADVOCATES

1. The act of telling our policymakers how to write and change our laws is at the very heart of our democratic system.

2. Your expertise is helpful to policymakers.

3. Others will shape policy decisions without critical information you can provide.

4. We often represent marginalized populations who are underrepresented in the policy arena; therefore, we must advocate for marginalized populations if their best interests are to be represented.

5. It can increase an organization’s visibility.
USE OF RESEARCH IN POLICY

BARRIERS

• Absence of personal contact
• Lack of timely, relevant research
• Mutual Mistrust
• Lack of access to research / poor dissemination

FACILITATORS

• Personal Contact and relationships
• Timely Relevance
• Inclusion of summaries with policy recommendations
• Research synthesis
• Collaboration

Choi et al., 2005; Oliver et al., 2014
RELATIONSHIPS WITH DECISION MAKERS

Trust and Respect
- Overcoming the perception of scientific arrogance and self-interest
- Providing objective, timely and relevant information
- Different decision making cultures

Communication Challenges
- Complex information and caveats
- Data is not always presented in useful form
- Stories resonate more than numbers

Combatting Information Overload
- Policymakers have many and growing demands
- Few make time to review reports in detail
- Policymakers may “read people”, not reports

*We will talk more about correspondence with legislative offices after lunch

Brownson et al., 2006; Oliver et al., 2014
RULES AND REGULATIONS

SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING SPECIFIC LEGISLATION
**Lobbying**
- Attempting to influence specific legislation.
  - Advocating for the adoption or rejection of legislation.
  - Writing lobbying materials
  - Preparing arguments in support of your position
- **Direct lobbying**
  - Contacting legislative staff in support or opposition to specific legislation
  - Preparation and planning for lobbying contacts
- **Grassroots Lobbying**
  - Urging the public to contact legislative staff supporting or opposing specific legislation
  - Strategy meetings to coordinate lobbying with others

**NOT Lobbying**
- Sharing nonpartisan research
  - best practices and success stories, including model legislation
  - Discussing broad social or economic problems
- Technical assistance or advice to legislative body in response to a written request
- The "self-defense" exception - regarding matters which might affect the existence of the organization
- Updating an organization’s members on the status of legislation
- Coalition building

**SPECIFIC, EXISTING LEGISLATION?**
Lobbying EXAMPLES

• Contacting your legislator to ask them to fund *Medicaid*. (direct lobbying)
  • Preparing for meetings
  • Scheduling

• Asking a group to contact their legislator to fund *Medicaid* (grassroots lobbying)
  • Preparing a call to action
  • Coordinating action among others

• Preparing persuasive materials encouraging *Medicaid* funding

NOT Lobbying EXAMPLES

• Contacting your legislators to provide information about healthcare issues

• Updating a group on the status of legislation to fund *Medicaid*

• Preparing nonpartisan analysis regarding healthcare

• Technical assistance on implementing changes to *Medicaid* (per request)

• Drafting model legislation stemming from evidence-based recommendations
CITIZEN RIGHTS

You have the **right** to actively participate and advocate with your elected officials
– **When you’re not on paid time**

**Freedom of Speech** - 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution

*Congress shall make no law… prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

**Can Scientists be Advocates?**

“I shutter when I think about the implications of stripping scientists – those who might know more about some given topic than anyone else – of their citizenship… I can hardly imagine anything more undemocratic, unhealthy, and un-American than knowingly stripping someone of their citizenship, or knowingly giving it up. When scientists reject advocacy as a principle, they reject a fundamental aspect of their citizenship.”

- **Michael Nelson**, associate professor of environmental ethics and philosophy at Michigan State University
NONPROFIT 501(C)3

Have the right to advocate on behalf issues they believe in. Only when advocacy for/against specific legislation is limited by IRS "Substantial Test" 501(c)3 statute is not specific about limits on lobbying

501(h) Election

- **SPECIFIC** expenditure restrictions for direct and indirect lobbying
  - Estimate employees’ time spend on lobbying
  - Report the *pro rata* share of their salaries and related expenses
- Voluntary lobbying is not restricted unless it’s supported with resources (e.g., paid travel)
- *Note:* the H election is not widely known among nonprofit organizations and the IRS does little to promote its use.

Must also abide **funders’ policies:**

- No federal funds can be used for lobbying
- Many foundations do not allow lobbying

**Nonprofits must remain strictly nonpartisan**
EXAMPLE: NPSC

Has elected into the 501(h) designation. This means that:

1. Unpaid volunteer/committee members have no restrictions on lobbying

2. Paid staff for the NPSC will be asked to report the number of hours spent on lobbying every quarter

Example 1: A volunteer spends 40 hours writing materials that endorse the JJDPAA.
Lobbying? Yes.
Because this is a volunteer, it is not included in our Lobbying Expenditures report.

Example 2: A staff spends 10 hours distributing materials that endorse JJDPAA (website, e-mails with legislators)
Lobbying? Yes.
Every month the staff must estimate how many hours were used on lobbying to calculate a pro rated salary for the Lobbying Expenditures report.

Note: The NPSC must also abide by the expenses allowed by it’s funders
EXAMPLE: NPSC CONT’D

We do NOT explicitly endorse or oppose specific legislation.
This was an internal decision even though we have the 501(h) election.
This avoids reporting procedures and possibly upsetting funders.

Work arounds:

1. Make it about the issues, not the legislation.
2. When you refer to legislation, describe it objectively (not about your opinion).
3. Describe how evidence does or does not align with specific legislation.

Example 1: The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act includes regulations the incarceration practices among juveniles, including deinstitutionalizing status offenders. Research shows that incarcerating low-risk offenders is related to higher recidivism rates.
RESEARCHERS RECEIVING FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING

Do’s

- Share your research and implications outside academia
- Share best practices and success stories with lawmakers
- Share evidence-based policy approaches or model legislation
- Make clear you are speaking as an individual scientist as opposed to formally representing a scientific organization
- Lobby as an individual citizen on a voluntary basis

Don’t use appropriated funds or resources for…

- Lobbying regarding pending or proposed legislation, resolution, appropriation, or measure.
- Pressuring government officials in relation to pending or proposed legislation
- Supporting activities that take a position on pending or proposed legislation
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

• The Anti-Lobbying Act does not prohibit government employees from participating in lobbying activities while they are on personal time.

• Employees retain a constitutional right (as recognized by 5 USC Section 7211) to petition Congress under personal capacity (i.e., not part of official work)

• Provide a disclaimer to indicate that one’s views do not necessarily reflect the position of the individual’s employing agency.

• Cannot use government resources (e.g., computer, phone, fax or other supplies) to conduct personal lobbying activities, even when on personal time.

• Under the Anti-Lobbying Act, government employees as part of their official work MAY communicate publicly and/or with legislators in support of Administration or Department positions.
PLANNING

• Specific goals and timeline
  o What strategies address the goals?
  o Target audience – “everyone” is insufficient

• Resources (e.g., volunteers)

• Strategy and tactics
  o Combining tools for a cohesive strategy
  o Effective messaging

• Beware of being seen as a “stealth issue advocate”
  o Hiding advocacy behind a façade of science
  o Pathologically politicizing science
  o Gives scientists as advocates a bad name
PERSUASION

• Relevance
  o Is it motivating to the target audience?
  o Target audience values

• Minimize Outgroup Perceptions
  o Outgroup member will not be very convincing, no matter how strong the message
  o Triggers strong negative emotions
    → outgroup message dismissed

• Emotional appeal
  o Reinforce (don’t challenge) underlying values and beliefs
  o Focus on the positive
  o Endowment Effect

(Tobias, 2009 - SPSSI)
PERSUASION

• Keeping up with the Joneses
  o Social pressure
  o Leveraging norms

• Instant gratification
  o Long term is less appealing
  o Small wins toward big problems

• Feel good factor
  o Positive Mood → Positive Response
  o Helplessness → Overwhelming

• American values
  - Equality
  - Hard work
  - Freedom
  - Fairness

(Tobias, 2009; Wollman et al., 2000 – SPSSI)
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

• Straightforward language
  o Avoid jargon like positive relationships or “meta-analysis”
  o Simplify caveats but don’t eliminate limitations

• One page policy briefs
  o Bullleted lists
  o Highlight key points
  o Graphs or charts

• Narrative storytelling – “real people”
  o Personally relevant; practical information
  o Provide examples of real trends

Strike a balance!
INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

• District **constituents** have greater influence (i.e., power of the vote)

• Share your story

• **Contacting elected officials** (really, their staff)
  - Phone calls
  - Letters
  - Office visits (schedule in advance)
  - Emails
  - **Tip Sheet (APA)**

• Media Advocacy (next)
MEDIA ADVOCACY

• Traditional
  o Op-ed
  o Letter to the editor
  o Interviews with reporters
  o Research-Media Partnerships
  o Communicating Science

• #Electronic is democratizing our media coverage
  o Blog
  o Social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)
  o Sharing trusted resources
  o Scientists sharing information with the public (Pew Research Center)
WHY SCIENTISTS SHOULD TWEET

• Information exchange
  o Brevity means more info with less words (140 characters)
  o Search tools for interest areas
  o Follow other scientists to find snapshots of info on their research
  o More immediate than any other communication channel

• Visibility
  o Telling people about your work
  o Scientists who tweet have higher h-index (publication influence)

• Dissemination
  o Open-access: Communicating science to non-scientists
  o Viral spread of information on pertinent topics (i.e., re-tweeting)

Bonetta, 2009
HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY VOICES?

INFORMATION OVERLOAD
A NETWORKED APPROACH

• Networks are more effective than individuals
  o Enhances visibility of an issue
  o Power of a unified voice
  o Amplifies the message via dissemination
  o Collective efficacy

• Getting involved with advocacy groups
  o Stronger ties to the community
  o Interest groups may represent voter segments
  o Considerations
    ▪ Reputation
    ▪ Who they represent
    ▪ Political capital
    ▪ Membership engagement
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 10 Reasons Nonprofits Should Lobby
- Why scientists should be advocates
- NIH regulations
- Nonprofit regulations by Independent Sector and the National Council of Nonprofits
- Nonprofit Limitations by the Center for Association Leadership
- Nonprofits in an election year
- Advice from a government agency
- IRS definitions of lobbying and election
- Legal perspective on nonprofits and lobbying
- Advice for Nonprofits by Community Action Program Legal Services
- Advocacy Network for the Society for Neuroscience
- States’ legislative ethics and lobbying laws
- Lobbying (How to) Guide for Nonprofits
- State lobbying thresholds for orgs working at the local level
- Dealing with the Media (Science Magazine)
- Research-Media Partnerships (Canadian Institutes of Health Research)
- Media Toolbox (Global Development Research Center)