

Research to Policy Boot Camp

A COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR RESEARCHERS

To make a difference in today's policy ecosystem, scholars must think beyond the academic journal. With funding often contingent on real-world influence, many academics and organizations know they must modernize but don't know how.

The Urban Institute is pioneering new ways to communicate and sharing what we've learned in a research to policy boot camp. Known for our world-class scholarship in social and economic policy, Urban does more than build knowledge. We translate it, share it, and apply our fact-based insights in the real world, from neighborhoods to state capitals and the halls of Congress.

This workshop teaches researchers how to navigate the fragmented media and policy landscape by making their insights accessible to diverse audiences, forming a narrative, developing an outreach plan, and putting it into action. Our experts share strategies on data visualization, digital engagement, and media relations to help attendees gain the skills and tools they need to communicate in modern, sophisticated ways.

TOPICS AND OBJECTIVES

- **Why should research live beyond the academic journal?**

Participants explore the how and why of disseminating research to a wider audience.

- **Why should researchers invest in developing policy insights and solutions?**

Urban Institute experts demonstrate why different communication efforts matter and how analysts and researchers can implement such strategies in their own work.

- **Which policymakers matter?**

Attendees are prompted to think carefully about their target audience and how to best reach them and meet their needs.

- **How is a policymaker convinced to pay attention to the research?**

Attendees are instructed on how to devise a communication plan that will help reach their target audience.

- **What problem does the research seek to solve?**

By defining the goal of the research and the target audience for that research, participants will be better able to communicate their work and reach their desired outcomes.

SAMPLE AGENDA | DAY 1

1:30–2:15 P.M.

Welcome and Introductions

2:15–3:00 P.M.

Overview: Why Reaching Policymakers Matters

In a moderated panel discussion, Urban Institute researchers and communications experts discuss why and how researchers can communicate with decisionmakers and policymakers.

3:00–4:00 P.M.

Insider's View: Policymakers

Current and former leaders from Capitol Hill, the administration, and local government share how they consume information, what they need to make decisions, and what researchers do right and wrong.

4:00–4:15 P.M.

Break

4:15–5:00 P.M.

Exercise: Role-Play with Policymakers

Role-play demonstration between an Urban researcher and policymaker, followed by a group discussion.

5:00–6:30 P.M.

Reception

SAMPLE AGENDA | DAY 2

8:00–8:45 A.M.

Breakfast and Networking

8:45–9:15 A.M.

Overview: Why Reaching the Public Matters

Understand the philosophy of presenting research to general audiences and why you should identify goals and audiences beyond journals and relevant scholars in your field.

9:15–10:00 A.M.

Social Media and Blogging

Learn how to effectively communicate research via digital platforms and how to engage influential people and participate in sophisticated policy conversations online.

10:00–10:15 A.M.

Break

10:15–11:00 A.M.

Core Principles of Data Visualization

Learn how to use data visualization to more effectively communicate by creating graphics that result in effective and accurate perceptions of your data.

11:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.

Panel Discussion: Insider's View: Media

Current and former print, radio, and television reporters explain what the media wants and what researchers and experts do right and wrong when they interview.

12:00–1:15 P.M.

Working Lunch: Pitching a Reporter

Reporters will join the small tables and ask attendees to pitch them on their work and expertise.

1:15–2:15 P.M.

Create and Develop a Successful Policy Impact Plan

Bring concepts together to create a seamless dissemination and outreach strategy for your research. Emphasize themes and messages across various media platforms to shape the audiences' understanding.

2:15–2:30 P.M.

Break

2:30–3:45 P.M.

Deep Dives

Go deeper into any of the day's subject areas. Work directly with the experts for an on-camera media training session, receive a personalized tutorial on Twitter, learn data visualization tips in Excel, or engage in a follow-up conversation with a policy professional.

3:45–4:00 P.M.

Concluding Remarks

TESTIMONIALS

"The Urban Institute Policy Boot Camp provided an invaluable opportunity for MacArthur Foundation research grantees to understand how to make their work resonant, relevant, and approachable. This type of training is essential to making sure the work we have funded isn't just research for research's sake but rather bridges academia to practice and actively moves the field toward policies that improves lives."

-Ianna Kachoris

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

"Thanks for inviting me to the Boot Camp. You are to be congratulated on a brilliant concept, well-executed."

-Cynthia Guy

Annie E. Casey Foundation

"I just wanted to thank you profusely for the incredibly informative and engaging presentation. Our group really benefited from your insights."

-Ellen Meara

Dartmouth University

"Thanks so much for a wonderful and really valuable experience. Really well done. I especially appreciated all of the very specific advice I received from Urban."

-Anonymous

▶ TAKE THE NEXT STEP

If you're interested in improving how you, your teams, or your grantees share fact-based insights with your audience, contact the Urban Institute at jschwabish@urban.org.