

**What advice would you give to senior researchers
on generating policy impact of their research?**

This series of four handouts collates advice from three academic psychologists that may be of interest to students and academics seeking to develop a greater chance of policy impact. The full length interviews by Winnifred Louis with the academics as well as all four handouts are available on <http://www.socialchangelab.net/policy.html> .

Community and Clinical Psychologist Eleanor Wertheim:

- * Ask yourself how you want to make a difference: what exactly needs to change?
- * Approach the existing groups, network to meet people who are advocating or making decisions in the area. Use your prestige to help those groups and provide leverage for them.
- * Build skills to be in the media – go to training offered by universities, search online. Start getting out there to give a voice to the concerns that you have.
- * Sentences need to get shorter, jargon needs to be simplified. Workshop the pitch with the same intelligence as a grant application so you understand what audience understands and welcomes, and use simple clear language to make a point they understand and are convinced by. Fine tune your pitch as you learn what they respond to.
- * Don't be afraid of mistakes – in the media, either you will get across or they will forget you. Keep repeating your key message, or the name of your book. Refine as you go. Don't be afraid of not being expert - who does know more than you? You are as well placed as any to communicate key messages on this point.
- * In my case, a team of us developed a framework for cooperative conflict resolution, which we then disseminated widely in education and government contexts. We were also interested in international reach. One of the team, Connie Peck, approached Gareth Evans, then foreign affairs minister, with a series of proposals, first to conduct research at the UN and then to provide training in peace-making and preventive diplomacy for UN staff and diplomats from around the world. We asked, who do we think are the key people to influence? How do we make a difference in the whole zeitgeist or culture? It is not just through our own research but also by teaching and translating others' work into education programs.
- * In the same vein, in the UN project we created a documenting principles, history, process which further promoted ideas and programs. In [Psychologists for Peace](#), we created tip sheets, posters, advice on how to talk about these issues. Promoted in print and online. Beyond the initial project, use creative, powerful resources to spread the ideas and tools.
- * Reach out beyond the usual funding bodies; you will find non-mainstream projects and contacts. Directly approach philanthropic funders with an idea for dissemination or impact, so that you can develop a proposal. For the book about our peacemaking training we received funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway, which resulted in the book being disseminated widely in the UN and around the world. Mentors will help you to pick people to

approach and to craft messages. Start small. Use initial funds (e.g., \$10k) as leverage for matching funds or to show a track record. Use networking to build endorsement of person A, who then persuades person B.

* It also helps to put the problem in dollar terms - having a health economics person or similar say "this problem costs us x\$ million per year" can be useful.

Environmental Psychologist Kelly Fielding:

* Make time for it, make it a priority.

* Don't shy away from taking on PhD students aiming for industry and government - respect and mentor this career path.

* Create interdisciplinary connections.

Winnifred Louis adds: E.g., Kelly founded NESS, the Network of Environmental Social Scientists: <http://www.nessaustralia.org/about-ness/> - which draws people together across disciplines, across industry and government, with cool events on envt communication.

* Collaborate - get a group of collaborators for your policy work, with shared passions. Fold in PhD students for their energy, for their technology skills.... Mentor this.

* Understand what is topical. E.g., Create a forum : Pick contemporary, attention-grabbing topic that people will relate to as extremely important. Consider off campus venue close to policy makers - e.g., in city, close to parliament. Line up great speakers from collaborators' networks. Publicise event across multiple networks incl interdisciplinary and policy.

* Accept to be on expert panels, working parties, advisory groups - gives insights into organisations and allows input. Need to make the time and prioritise it.

* Develop ecosystem of connections, influence pathways. There is not just one path.

Cross-Cultural Psychologist James Liu:

* There are two pathways, or power bases at a senior level - 1 is broadcasting via mass media, 2nd = inter-connections, networks.

* Using the mass media pathway, you can advocate on a particular issue, but it does need skills. The university may be helpful - workshops, etc..

* Taking the networks path is different and may be more impactful. It creates a mutuality of responsibility and obligation, by forming ethical relationships with community groups and policy-makers.

E.g., after having run a Centre or School, you may form connections with a board of advisors or particular set of stakeholders oriented to areas of academic influence.

* But it is not easy to have a coherent policy agenda for large teams of academics – they are too diverse, and also many will resist different way of thinking – being outside the box is uncomfortable for many academics.

Feedback? We welcome your comments and questions, to w.louis@psy.uq.edu.au or via the comments box at socialchangelab.net .