

BRIDGING THE RESEARCH-POLICY INTERFACE



Why the need to bridge the gap?

- Policy-makers need scientific input in order to make informed political decisions and to address current challenges;
- Researchers have to engage with policy-makers in order to produce the required scientific input.

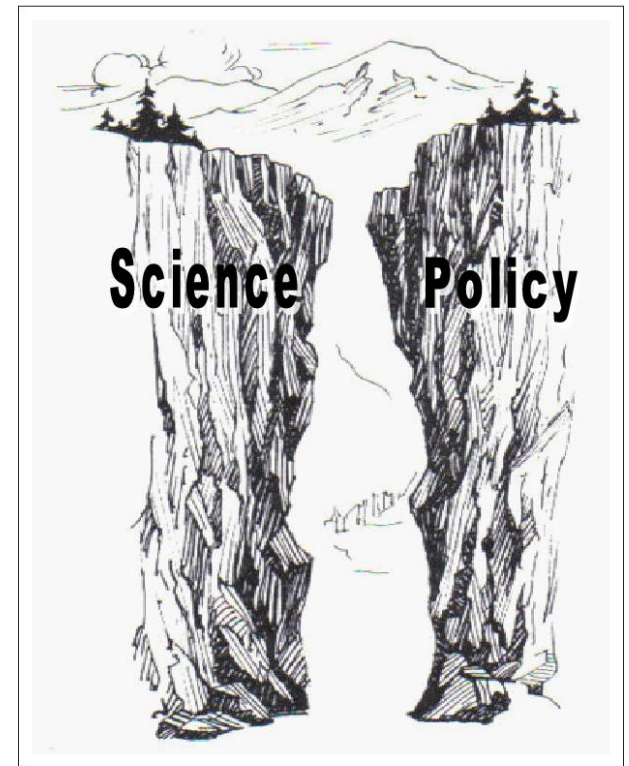


FIGURE 3
The science-policy chasm

What are some of the key issues?

- **Poor comprehension** of policy process and unrealistic recommendations
- **Ineffective communication** of research
- **Lack of incentive** for applicable and policy-oriented research publications



What are some of the key issues?

- **Inadequate capacity**, as well as inadequate supply of, and access to, relevant information
- **Ignorance** or anti-intellectualism of politicians or bureaucrats; research is deemed unimportant, censored or controlled and some ‘ways of knowing’ are seen as more valid than others



What are some of the key issues?

- **Politicisation of research**, using it selectively to legitimise decisions
- **Language that is not always appropriate** for the intended target audience
- **Gaps in understanding** between researchers, policy makers and public
- **Different time-horizons**, time lag between dissemination of research and impact on policy



	Scientist	Policy Maker
Target (3 P's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Publications •Patents •Professorships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Policy •Practice •People
Language	Greek letters, mathematical symbols	Acronyms, which are defined by other acronyms
Time perception	The longer time to research, the better the quality	Answers are always needed instantly

Source: Choi BCK, Pang T, Lin V, Puska P, Sherman G, Goddard M, Ackland MJ, Sainsbury P, Stachenko S, Morrison H, Clotey C, 2005. Can scientists and policy-makers work together? *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 59: 632-637

Conversation with a Policymaker

My research tells you what to do. This is an important issue.

I can't understand these data tables and I have about 20 important issues on my plate.

Researcher

Disappointed mutual expectations.

Policymaker

Solutions



At what point should we consider transdisciplinary to also include stakeholders from the beginning of the research/policy project - engage in co-creation of research, co-production of terms of references

- Needs to be regular and open communication of all sides involved throughout the entire duration of a project – a good stakeholder relations plan
- Training on creating policy relevant outputs
- Training on how to access and utilize scientific evidence (eg ACCESSlabs);

Solutions



- Knowledge brokering,
- Doing science within government,
- Grant funding requiring dissemination, strategies and policy-relevance,
- Rewards for positions papers as well as standard peer reviewed journals,
- One page policy briefs

Why do it



<https://www.publicpolicy.cam.ac.uk/pdf/policy-impact-guide>

- Promote the value and usefulness of your research
- Strengthen the case for research funding
- Shape further research needs and priorities
- Showcase yourself and your institute
- Strengthen links with other researchers
- Understand how to make your research more impactful
- Make your role more interesting and challenging



How to do it

<https://www.publicpolicy.cam.ac.uk/pdf/policy-impact-guide>

- **Target** Identify the policy-makers where your research might be relevant, and learn the basics about what their agendas are and how they use research. And keep this knowledge up-to-date. Agendas can change quickly.
- **Timing** Understand the policy-makers' process, and align the timing of your contribution to it.
- **Tailor** Make your input relevant and digestible. Do not “dumb down” – but assume that you are dealing with a non-technical audience. Help them “join the dots” to see how and why your research is relevant to them.

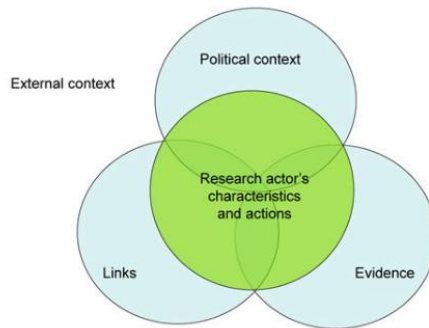
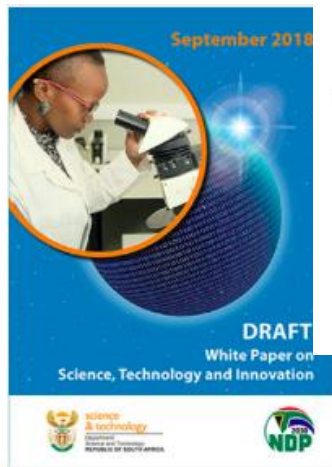
Useful Tips:



<https://www.publicpolicy.cam.ac.uk/pdf/policy-impact-guide>

- Try to **understand the motives and objectives of policy makers**
- Think about contributing to a government body (committee, department) as a **specialist adviser**
- Do some background reading in order to **understand the policy process** better
- **Case studies show how varied impact can be**; remain open-minded as to different approaches and processes
- **Develop your networking skills and contacts, as the policy-making system is complex**
- **Talk to other researchers, NGOs and practitioners about your policy issue – be visible and persevere**

How can you start



South Africa's MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Ensuring a sustainable future for all.

WHAT IS AN MPA? EXPLORE



Thank you



References

- The Interface between Research and Policy-Making in South Africa - Exploring the institutional framework and practice of an uneasy relationship. Grimm et al., 2018
- Bridging the science-policy interface : a new era for South African research and the role of knowledge brokering : research article, Godfrey et al, 2010
- <https://www.publicpolicy.cam.ac.uk/pdf/policy-impact-guide>