



## Recommendations for improving science-policy communication at the level of organisations

### The brief in brief

The actions and commitments of individuals across the science and policy sectors are undeniably essential for improving science-policy communication. However, any individuals' ideas, actions and opportunities are shaped and constrained by factors beyond his or her control. Therefore, to produce widespread and lasting improvements in science-policy communication, major shifts are required at a higher level. Organisations ranging from universities and research institutes through to policy departments may consider implementing the following recommendations to improve the effectiveness of science-policy communication. It is important to note that these recommendations are also relevant to funders of scientific research, who hold key power in shaping research activities.

### Recommendations for research organisations

Some scientists have an aptitude and appreciation of the need to communicate beyond their peers, but in general science-policy communication cannot be assumed to automatically occur. However, through training, organisations can encourage their employees to firstly understand the need for communication, and secondly equip them to contribute confidently to communication. These same skills are often thought relevant to supporting interdisciplinary research (which in itself is thought important for addressing topics of societal relevance) so encouraging interdisciplinarity may also be indirectly supportive. Training should happen throughout scientists' careers: although there is a growing emphasis on training early career researchers, established scientists are just as likely to need training or advice to improve their skills for working at the science-policy interface. In addition, learning about relevant policy processes may help better engagement with policy. In general, organisations should support staff who wish to learn about policy processes and those who wish to focus on interfacing with policy. Unfortunately, communication and interaction with policy and society are often seen as 'bonus' activities or not carried out by 'proper' scientists. Addressing this may entail officially recognising the value of science-policy communication through alternative career structures and providing more incentives to take part in the science-policy interface. For example, performance rewards and promotion could be linked to evidence of policy engagement, rather than just academic paper outputs, teaching, or income generation. In order to align an emphasis on communication with existing career priorities, publications could be assessed for evidence of wider engagement and scientists could be encouraged to publish in or establish journals aimed at policy.

### Overview of recommendations at high level

<b>Science</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Research and fund training for communication skills and understanding of policy processes for scientists.</li> <li>○ Explore potential for broader assessment of impact, and create and publish in journals aimed at policy.</li> <li>○ Encourage scientists to get acquainted with policy processes and support those who wish to operate at the science-policy interface.</li> </ul>
<b>Both science and policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promote general understanding about science and its role in society.</li> <li>○ Provide incentives (monetary and career) for interaction between science and policy.</li> <li>○ Promote discussions about career structures and motivations.</li> <li>○ Fund and support interdisciplinary research.</li> <li>○ Fund training or resourcing for “linker/broker/facilitator” individuals and “linker” events to build science-policy relationships (do not just focus on tangible “Knowledge Exchange outputs”).</li> <li>○ Develop, and regularly revisit, a communication strategy to help identify and prioritise audiences and partners.</li> <li>○ Provide funding for networking events.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promote transparency and wider understanding (e.g. through training course) of policy and decision-making and implementation processes.</li> <li>○ Explore if and why science is valued compared to other forms of evidence.</li> <li>○ Liaise with funders to ensure funded projects (i) are clearly aware of policy priorities, and (ii) encourage communication e.g. enforce clearly written summaries from tender stage.</li> <li>○ Liaise with funders to develop projects that allow flexibility for interaction between science and policy.</li> </ul>

### Recommendations for policy departments

Just as science organisations must find ways to encourage staff to engage in communication, so policy departments must encourage their staff and processes to support engagement with the scientific community. In particular, as well as making time for specific learning, a wider policy awareness of the nature of science and the scientific process could help to underpin science-policy communication. Promoting this awareness could be achieved through training courses, specific group events, job-shadowing or work placements. Subsequently, this learning should be used to prompt reflection and communication on whether and how science is valued and used versus other forms of evidence and influences on policy-making processes. Communicating about these policy processes is particularly important since there is often little accessible available information about the realities of policy-making processes. However, if scientists better understand policy decision-making and implementation processes, this could help them to identify where and how their knowledge can appropriately feed in. Liaising with science funders can promote this indirectly, by encouraging research topics that clearly take policy priorities into consideration and research processes that allow flexibility for interaction between science and policy.

### Recommendations applying across science and policy

Communication will only improve if encouraged by career structures and organisational recognition of its importance. Not every scientist and policy maker should entirely or

even partly devote themselves to communication. However, organisations should consider a greater diversity of career structures to appropriately value communication (e.g. explicitly designate “broker” or “facilitator” career paths). Communication and networking efforts do not always deliver immediate or tangible benefits, but this does not mean that it is inefficient or wasteful to commit individual careers or organisational activities to communication.

### Looking for more information on science-policy interfaces?

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This brief is a result of research and interactions within and around the SPIRAL project. This brief was written by Kerry Waylen (JHI) and Juliette Young (CEH).

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