

# Public Policy

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third level

Policy instruments used by governments are now being influenced by:

- Government and Governance : financial and regulatory policy instruments are constrained within a new governance environment (increase in policy networks).

International Influence: environmental policy, taxation and fiscal policy are now subject to international pressure.

These put increasing emphasis on alternative policy instruments, or on policy instruments that complement traditional command and control legislation

- Benchmarking: setting standards for industry
- Co-regulation: allows for considerable industry autonomy under clearly defined parameters set out in a statutory framework. Also allows for greater flexibility and efficiency within the system while offering the same levels of protection afforded by more traditional means of regulation
- Voluntary Codes of Conduct: set out specific standards of conduct for how an industry will deal with its customers. Businesses voluntarily agree to uphold these standards by signing up to the code. Usually there are sanctions for businesses who breach the code, which may include: having to pay a fine, being expelled from the industry association or having to advertise that they have breached the code and explain what they are going to do to resolve a complaint.

- Negotiated agreements: organizations follow negotiated agreements in order to stay part of the community

### Recommendations to Increase the Use of Evidence in Decision Making.

Learn and use public policy language with policy-makers. Policy-makers do tend to use a different language. Read a variety of policy documents to get a feel for their preferred words and phrases, and for what they really mean.

Focus on effective communications to various stakeholders and target audiences. It is important to understand your target audience in order to effectively communicate with them. Use various communication channels (internet, radio, television, print, journals, conferences, etc) to convey the message in multiple ways, and reach various target audiences. Additionally, it is important to provide the information in a way that the target audience can understand and use. Use plain language to effectively communicate information to any audience from policy-maker, to the public, to a scientist. Help the audience understand why the information is important to them, and what they should do now that they know the information .

Strategically align with organizations and agencies that can get the message out in different ways.

Private and not-for-profit organizations/agencies may not have the same communication restrictions as public agencies.

Organizations/agencies within the policy network may be able to advocate a position in a different way in order to affect the policy agenda, another policy cycle stage, or other network member s positions. The use

of visual policy networks can help in understanding the actors within the system .

Be creative and use a variety of tools available. Use new technology and communication channels to connect with the target audience. Or, use tools in a new, unexpected way in order to increase the chance that the target will pay attention to the message.

Evaluate the needs of clients. Understand how stakeholders want data, how they want to receive it, and what they want to do with it. This will increase the reach of your agency, as well as the use of research generated evidence. It is important to understand and respond to the needs of all the actors within the policy network, as each actor can affect policy.

Involve policy-makers in research planning. Policy-makers should be involved from the beginning of the research process. This is one of the KTT best practices as well .

Spend time assessing your present and ideal role (if any) in each of the stages of the policy cycle. Work out where and how you could best contribute and what impact you are likely to have. Sitting on an advisory committee could be a good way of getting into the process and understanding policy s needs and timetables