

Policy-engaged research and extension: Why it matters

UCANR has a long history of providing research that informs, builds and strengthens policy related to agriculture, natural resources, nutrition, family and youth development, and community development. Public policy is essential for supporting, governing, funding, and evaluating work taking place in the agricultural, natural, and social sectors in which ANR personnel work. Research is an essential ingredient in designing good public policy, and ANR is a key player in generating, translating, and disseminating results of rigorous peer-reviewed research.

Based on a study of successful UCANR research-to-policy projects (Gupta and Campbell 2016¹), this fact sheet provides key strategies for policy engaged research and extension.

Situating your policy work

- Understand where your work can or does fit into one or more of the various stages of the policy process (Fig. 1)²
- Become aware of the differences between informing policy and advocacy (see A. Megaro govt. relations factsheet)

Examples of effective ways to design research for maximum policy impact

- Target information gaps in the policy process and craft research questions accordingly.
- Conduct summary analysis (i.e. literature reviews) that synthesize data on policy-relevant topics
- Develop “proof of concept” projects that research the empirical basis for a proposed policy or to provide an experimental basis for developing future policy

Effective policy engagement strategies

- Build strong outside relationships and partnerships throughout the research process (from design to end use)
- Develop and/or tap into strategic networks for maximizing project impact (e.g. to build the project team, to seek support in dissemination or implementation, and/or to leverage financial resources from non-ANR sources)
- Ensure scientific language is translated to lay terms for public communication

***There is no single model for doing policy-engaged research, but the information provided here suggests starting points for thinking about designing and conducting research that is policy relevant. The most successful ANR projects build on longstanding research trajectories and networks of relationships that Specialists and Advisors have built over time. ***

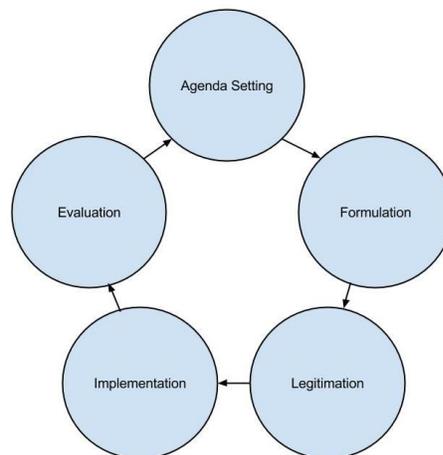


Figure 1. Policy process stages

Interested in more? Join the Research-to-Policy Program Team!
<https://ucanr.edu/sites/researchtopolicy/>

¹ Gupta, C. & Campbell, C. (2016). Assessing the policy impact of the ANR Competitive Grants Program: findings and recommendations. Department of Human Ecology, UC Davis.

² Adapted from Jones CO. 1984. *An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.