

10 Rules for Policy Brokerage

Sir Peter Gluckman ONZ FRS

Centre for Science in Policy, Diplomacy and Society,
University of Auckland

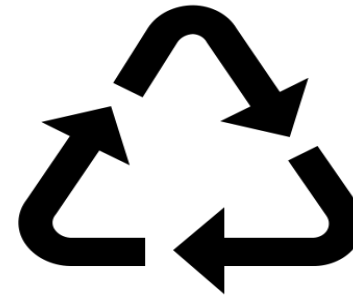
Chair, International Network of Government Science Advice
President-Elect, International Science Council

Universities Policy Engagement Network London June 2019



Policy-making

- It is about making **choices**
 - between different options,
 - which affect different stakeholders in different ways,
 - with different consequences,
 - many of which are not certain
- Virtually all policy making carries **complexity, risk and uncertainty**
 - But perceptions of complexity, risk, cost and benefit vary between stakeholders
- The political perspectives of stakeholder effects, interests, electoral positioning and electoral risk are always present



Questions that the policy audience will always have:

- Why do we have to do something now?
- Why is it a priority?
- Have we got the option that meets our broader needs?
 - Who will it benefit, who won't it benefit?
 - Does it benefit priority stakeholders?
 - What are the risks and to whom?
 - What is the political risk of doing or not doing?
- What will it cost?



Purposes of evidence in informing policy

- To provide explanation of complex (open) systems so options can be explored
- To define options for action to achieve a particular outcome(s) and explore implications of each option
- To address a particular implementation issue or scientific question
- Emergencies/crises
- To define and plan an intervention
- To evaluate the impact and effect of the intervention
- To identify a problem
- Horizon scanning

Lesson 1: Solicited vs unsolicited reports, understand the policy process

- **Always have an interested customer** – Reports that do not have an agreed customer who is actively seeking the information are unlikely to be impactful on the policy process
- If necessary **create the customer**
- It is critical to **understand the policy process and key players** in the particular entity of interest – One can then create the customer.
- **Decide on the nature of the output (s)** – it is a comprehensive report, a policy brief, or some other format.
- **Decide the process** – agree that preemptively with the customer

Lesson 2: Defining the problem is critical

- Too often the question the customer (ie the policy-maker) wants answered is not the the same as the question in the mind of the academic.
- Alignment of intent is critical.
- Reports can have multiple purposes and the authors must be clear what is the intent:
 - Is it to explain a system?
 - To provide options?
 - to address a particular problem?

Lesson 3: **Timing is everything**

- Policy makers have limited bandwidth
- They lurch to problems as they arise
- The policy cycle is often messy, complex
- Externalities can shift priorities rapidly and change the potential for impact

Lesson 4: Remember all of the stakeholders

- Don't underestimate the value of stakeholder analysis
- Understand the impact on each stakeholder and their influence
- Recognize the inevitable cognitive biases including your own
- Recognize the differing perceptions of risk and precaution, cost and benefit

Lesson 5: **Provide practical and scalable options/ways ahead/solutions**

- Policy makers will generally not pick up a problem unless there is a solution.
- It is rare for a problem definition alone to change policy.
- Solutions must be practical; affordable, policy and politically acceptable and, where appropriate, scalable.
- In general this means incremental versus disruptive change.
- But this does not mean sacrificing intellectual integrity

Lesson 6: **Remember who you are writing for**

- Many academic reports never get read
- Too many are written for the benefit of the writers, not for the benefit of the audience
- Consider that most reports will need to have multiple audiences
- Style matters, and graphics can matter a lot
- Think about the power of narrative
- Clarity and avoidance of jargon is critical

Lesson 7: **Be inclusive of scientific disciplines**

- Policy makers need to look at policy issues in a multidimensional way.
- Nothing is purely technical
- Policy makers look at issues through more than one angle
- There is always a values-based and political lens
- Consider the spillover effects: both positive and negative

Lesson 8: Acknowledge the uncertainties

- Admitting to evidence gaps is not a sign of weakness
- Acknowledge where the evidence is less robust
- Policy makers are used to dealing with uncertainty

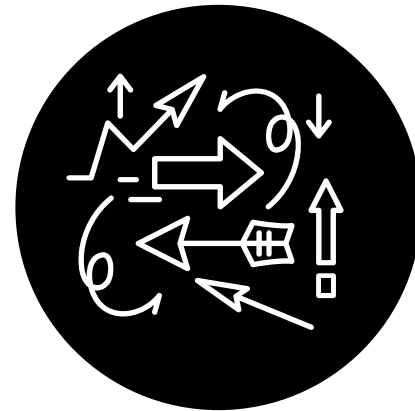
Lesson 9: **Prepare the key audience**

- If there is a key policy maker (analyst, or decision maker, or politician), don't surprise them.
- Keep connected, keep them informed of preliminary direction of any report or project
- Keep checking alignment and understandings between supplier and customer
- Think of the other questions the policy maker will have

Lesson 10: Writing a report is not impact

- Once the report has been submitted there are issues of:
 - ensuring the key audience understands (follow up)
 - Do other stakeholders understand?
 - Is there a need for PR?
 - Is there a need for further actions, report, evaluation?

Lesson 11: Rules don't always work





www.ingsa.org



**International
Science Council**

- » An integral part of the ISC for **science-policy** and **science-diplomacy**
- » Over 5000 members from over 100 countries
- » Secretariat based in Auckland (SciPoDS)
- » Regional chapters: EU, NA, LATAM, Asia, Africa
- » Science international relations and diplomacy division (SPIDER), also hosting FMSTAN
- » Knowledge centre
- » Forum for sharing, coordinating, networking
- » Capacity building activities
- » Open access learning resources
- » Reports and research