



Communicating with Decision- makers: A Workshop for the EPSCoR Faculty Leadership Program

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Today...

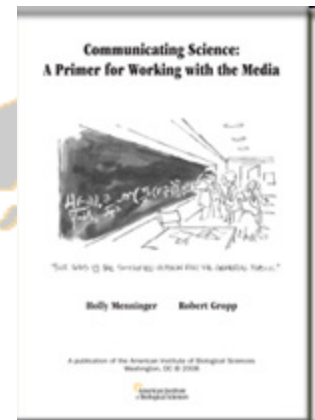
- ✓ Who are the “deciders” and why should you care?
- ✓ News media – target and conduit
- ✓ Talking to policymakers
- ✓ Learn the process, have an impact
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Small group activities
- ✓ Discussion

AIBS Policy Mission

1. Reduce communication gap between science and public policy communities;
2. Build capacity of the biological sciences community to engage in public policy process;
3. Influence development and implementation of policy;
4. Assist AIBS member societies with development of their policy agendas; and,
5. Communicate AIBS and member society policy interests to the public, science community, and policy makers.

Programs, Activities, Services

- Bridge between policy and science – Policy Reports, testimony, briefings
- Advocacy: grassroots & staff
- Media & communications
- Workshops & training programs
- Coalition building
- Policy agenda development



Issues

- Funding for research
 - NSF, USGS, NOAA, research infrastructure (e.g. scientific collections, field stations)
- Research policy
 - Federal policy that impacts the conduct of science... peer review rules, research integrity, open access publishing
- STEM education and workforce policy
 - Especially evolution education
- Climate change, biodiversity



Communicating with Decision- makers

Who are decision-makers?

- Depends...
 - Elected officials
 - Federal program administrators
 - University administrators
 - Editors...journal, news
 - Donors
 - Students
 - Citizens
 - Business

Who, what, when, why, how?

- Different people at different times
- Translate, promote your research or program
- Invest the time and energy to build and cultivate productive relationships
- Help build awareness for you and your work
- Policymakers need timely and accurate scientific information, from trustworthy sources

Today...

- **Members of Congress**
 - If you can communicate with Congress, you can communicate with anyone
 - Need to defend / promote science in Congress
 - 12/09: Senators Coburn, McCain issued report criticizing science and museum projects receiving federal funds...these were peer-reviewed grants...NSF, NIH, etc.
 - 11/10: Reps. Cantor and Smith criticize NSF grants based on title and perception.
 - 12/11: Sen. Coburn issues another report criticizing NSF investments in social and behavioral science and museums.
- **Federal officials**
- **University leadership**
- **Media**

What motivates your decision-maker?



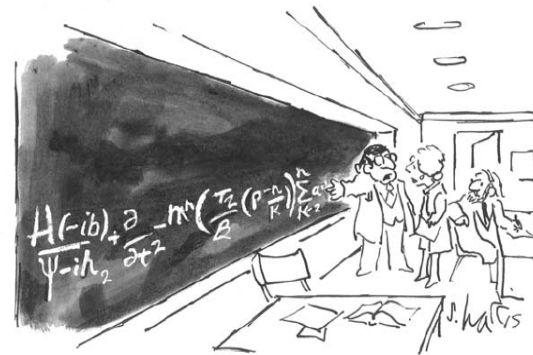


Crafting and Communicating Your Message

Making Your Case

- Techniques and tools for communicating with policy makers, media, administrators, and students are similar

Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media



"BUT THIS IS THE SIMPLIFIED VERSION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC."

Holly Menninger Robert Gropp

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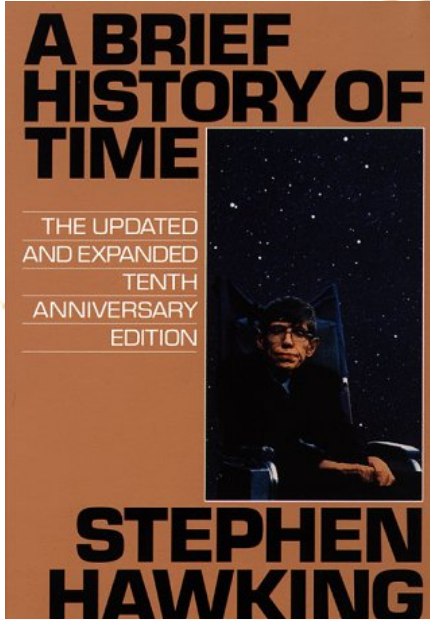
Messaging

The data do not speak for themselves

We live in the information age...lots of noise

- Like you, decision makers are overwhelmed with info
- It is important to communicate your findings in a way that makes sense and resonates – help your audience remember what you want it to know
- Depending upon your area of research, your findings may be unpopular – others will seek to interpret them for you...if presented correctly, you can potentially avoid this problem

Lots of Opportunities



Science Times

The New York Times

S^b ScienceBlogs™

➔ RSS ➔ SEARCH

CHANNELS THE LATEST POSTS ➔ [Adventures in Tenure](#) • [Dynamics of Cats](#) • 37 min

Home >



Phoenix Landing

Last 24 Hours

DARWIN
STAY PLUGGED IN
Honeybee Journeys and More
with **Science PODCAST**
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
American Institute of Biological Sciences

Unique Opportunities



Communications and Messaging

- Why...
 - Build your brand, awareness of your research program
 - Coverage by news media adds credibility to your work
 - You can help inform decisions (policy, business, parents...)
 - S&T R&D and education is largely funded by tax dollars – you are sharing your findings with those who fund your work

Things to Consider

- Who is your audience?
- Why should they know/care about what you have to say?
- Do they know they should care?
- Why are you trying to communicate with/through this individual/group?
- Are you responding to a request for technical information to verify that $x+y=z$ or are you being asked for an opinion?

Crafting Your Message

Media

- Timeliness
- Appeal
- Type of media (print, online, electronic, etc)
- Remember the W' s
 - Who, what, where, when, why

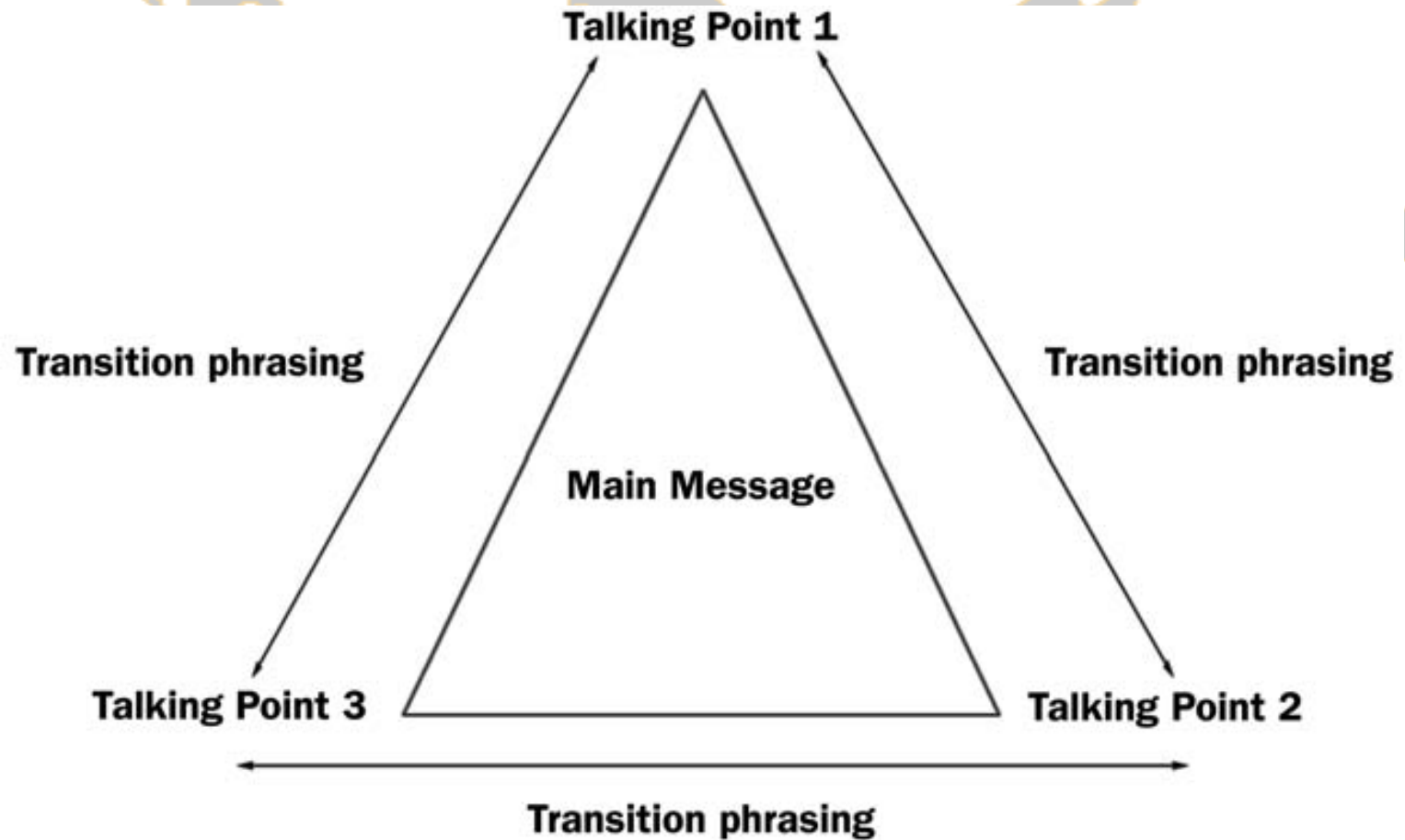
Policy

- Jurisdiction...is the person you are able to speak to the right one?
- Problem or solution?
- Do you know the policymaker personally or professionally?

Keep It Simple

- Worry about communicating your message, not demonstrating how much you know
- Prepare bullet / talking points that convey the most important elements of your message
 - The big picture
 - The local significance
 - The data
 - The implications and impact

And your point is...



Delivering Your Message

- Once you have your talking points...learn them, live them, love them....be comfortable with them and able to move between them with ease.
- Don't ramble to interesting side points – stick to the talking points you developed.
- Transition statements – think of and become familiar with transition statements that you will use to draw your audience back to your message

Message Presentation

AGRICULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES: INVEST IN TOMORROW -- SUPPORT RESEARCH TODAY

Research: Opportunities & Benefits

An increased and balanced federal investment in all, not a few select, R & D fields is necessary to address looming challenges and fully capture the benefits of new tools and technologies.

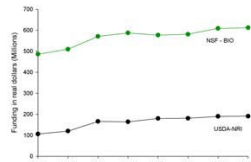
Agricultural and biological research, funded by USDA and NSF, contributes to the development of sustainable and cost-effective solutions for society's greatest challenges - protecting the environment and human health, conserving biodiversity, developing wise resource use and management strategies, ensuring food safety and security, alternative energy development, and forecasting and minimizing the dangerous effects of global climate change.

Innovation

Global leadership in agricultural and biological sciences has only been attained with significant federal investment in research. As a result, research has yielded significant economic growth, leading to increased productivity, new industries, and improved lives.

Global Change

Our planet is undergoing unprecedented change as a result of human activities. Federally funded research is required to understand and address challenges including climate change, invasive species, habitat loss, and emerging infectious diseases.



Security

Federal investment in biological and agricultural research programs and its supporting infrastructure has secured the protection of people, plants, and animals, equipping the nation with the ability to prevent, detect, diagnose, and recover from an agro- or bio-terror attack.

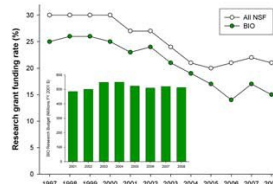
The Issue: Declining funding for basic agricultural and biological research.

Research is not a short-term expense; it is an investment for the future.

Federal support for the competitive, peer-reviewed grant programs that fund this research - NSF's Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) and USDA's National Research Initiative (NRI) - has been stagnant and insufficient.

BIO provides 67% of federal grant support for fundamental biological research conducted at our nation's universities and other nonprofit research centers. Research grant submissions have increased 50% since 1997, yet BIO appropriations, when adjusted for inflation, have remained flat.

Consequently, the average research proposal has only a 15% chance of being funded, and research with the potential to transform our understanding of life has gone unfunded.



BESC/COFARM

AGRICULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES: INVEST IN TOMORROW -- SUPPORT RESEARCH TODAY

Congress can help!

The steady decline in federal funding for agricultural and biological research could have detrimental effects on human and animal health and the nation's economy.

Approximately 75% of emerging infectious diseases affecting humans are zoonotic (of animal origin). Each year, foodborne pathogens cause an estimated 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the United States.

The NRI is the USDA's competitive, peer-reviewed, extramural research grant program. NRI funds research in food safety and security, animal diseases, plant and soil sciences, economics, alternative fuels, and the environment, ensuring the nation's safety and security and protecting the environment and human health. This research produces tangible returns on federal investments.

The benefits offered by agricultural and biological sciences can only be realized with increased funding for key programs that support investigator-driven, peer-reviewed, competitive grant programs, such as those at NSF and USDA.

*Fund NSF at \$7.326 billion for FY 2009, the funding level authorized by the America COMPETES Act. This would provide NSF with the necessary funding to provide BIO with a 19% increase, placing it more on-par with the trajectory of other research directorates.

*Fund NRI base programs at \$210 million in FY 2009, increasing NRI 10% over FY 2008. This would enhance overall funding to important programs and restore purchasing power eroded by inflation.

We appreciate the broad, bipartisan support for basic research Congress has demonstrated in the past. We ask for your continued support in FY 2009.



Contact Information



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BESC/COFARM

Communicating Your Message

- **Be brief** – Use short words and sentences, avoid fillers. Don't ramble.
- **Be conversational** – Avoid scientific jargon. Explain things as you would to your grandparents. Speak slowly.
- **Be memorable** – Clever and colorful sound bites. Use helpful analogies or visuals.

How Reporters/Polycymakers Get Info From You

- Put you at ease
- The silent treatment
- Leading questions
- Pretend to have inside information
- Ask you about something outside of your expertise or knowledge

You Have Some Control

- Stay on message early and often.
- Be assertive with your talking points.
- “Repetition is the key to being heard.”
- Answer questions and bring focus back to your main points.

Questions?



Small Groups

Group 1

Scenario: You are the program managers and staff for a summer STEM education program conducted at ABC State University. Your program, which is funded by the University (50%), donations (40%), and student registration fees (10%), serves high school students from across the state.

Challenge: The University budget has tightened and administrators may terminate support (\$75,000 per year) for your program.

Group 2

Scenario: You are the faculty leadership team for a natural science collection at XYZ State University. Your collection is used for education (undergrad & grad), but also supports research and management decisions by state agencies (e.g. fish and game). Your budget is overwhelmingly from the University (90%), with the balance from grants (8%) and donations (2%). You do not have a public education (exhibit hall) program.

Challenge: To help reduce a budget deficit, the University is proposing a 25% cut to your budget. This would necessitate the elimination of two student positions, one curator, and reduced support for faculty teaching and research.

Small Groups

Group 3

Scenario: You are the primary investigators on an \$82,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) grant investigating how chemicals influence sexual behavior in pigeons.

Challenge: A national newspaper has quoted two U.S. Senators who have issued a statement describing your research as emblematic of widespread government waste. The Senators have announced they will offer an amendment to appropriations legislation to terminate funding for your project and 11 others they have identified as wasteful.

Group 4

Scenario: You are part of an interdisciplinary research team working to translate findings from plant photosynthesis into new solar energy devices. Your team includes a botanist, engineer, economist, and others.

Challenge: Your work is being slowed by a lack of R&D funding and a lack of commercial interest in your efforts. You think these problems could be resolved by a new, competitive grant program. You want the federal government to allocate at least \$5 million per year to making at least five grants to help convert our understanding of photosynthesis into commercially viable solar energy projects.

Task 1

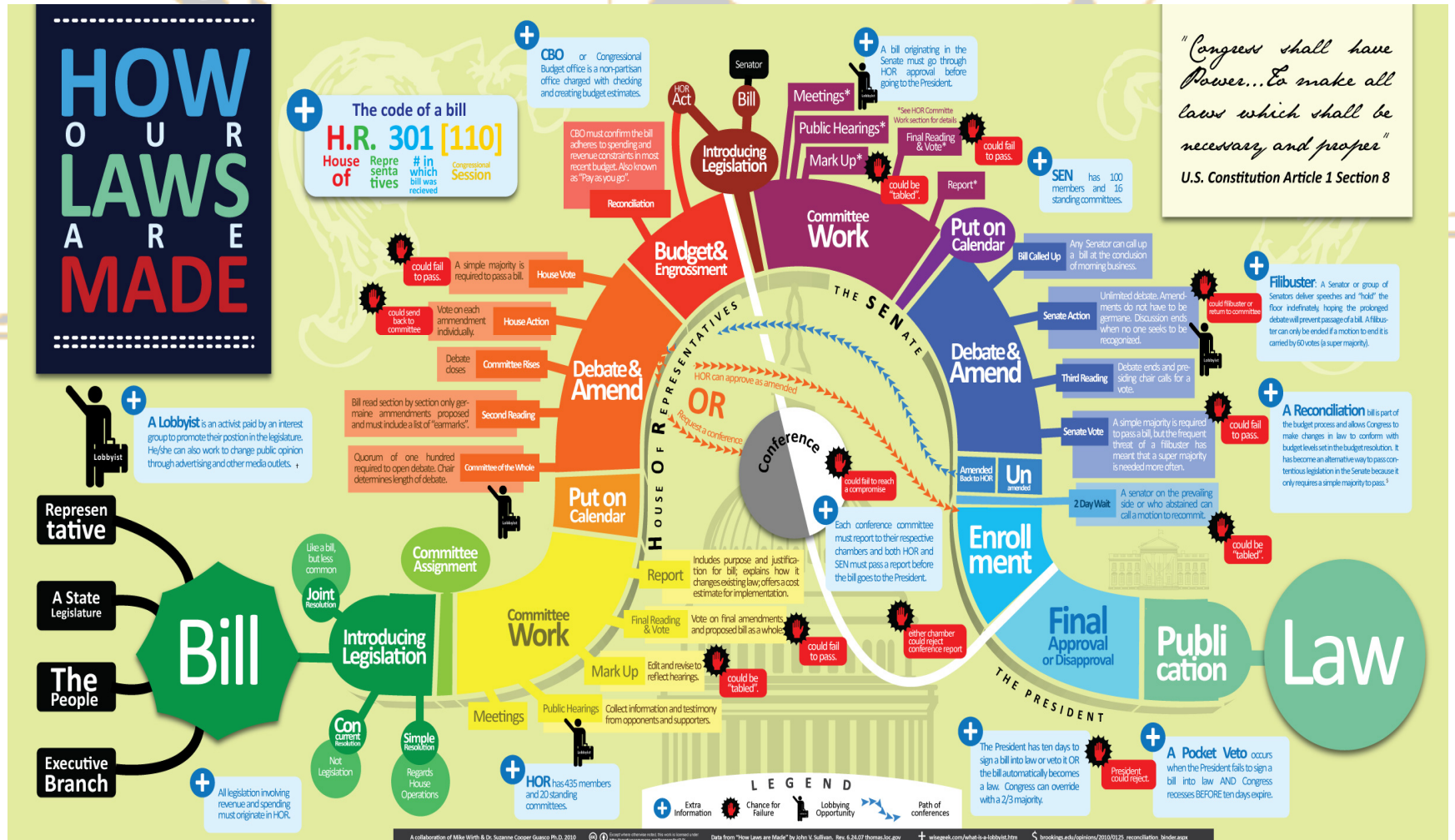
- Identify the audience(s) you should engage or influence.
- What message(s) should you communicate?
- Which individuals, organizations, etc, need to receive the message(s)?

Task 2

-- Should you use the media, have a media campaign?

-- If so, who, what, why, how, when?

How a bill becomes a law...



Factors Influencing Policy

- Politics and power
- Importance...need – often tied to emergency
- Economics
- Concerted, persistent advocacy campaigns
- Individuals...personalities, influence, access
- Public perception
- Cost
- A viable solution

Some Key Players – Federal Policy

Congress

House and Senate

Authorizing and Appropriations Committees

Executive Branch

White House / Office of Management and Budget,
OSTP, CEQ, etc

Federal agencies

Non-governmental

Advocacy groups

Scientific societies

Think-tanks

Business

Understand the Process: Federal Budget and Appropriations



Quiz

Can anyone name a “mandatory spending” program in the federal budget?

A mandatory program is one with funding that is set aside by permanent law and spent automatically

Answer

- Social Security
 - Medicare
 - Interest on the national debt
- Mandatory spending accounts for 2/3 of the federal budget

The Remainder

Discretionary programs are funded from the remaining 1/3 of the federal budget

From this, all other government programs are funded...including:

- Defense
- National Parks
- All government salaries
- Research grant programsNIH, NSF, DOE, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NIST, NASA

How is discretionary funding allocated?

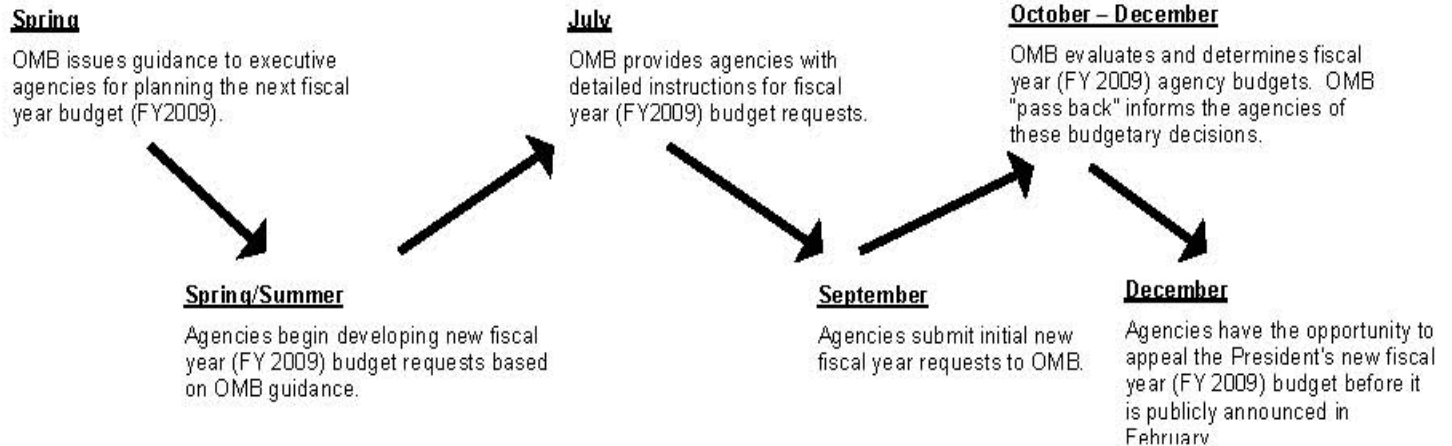
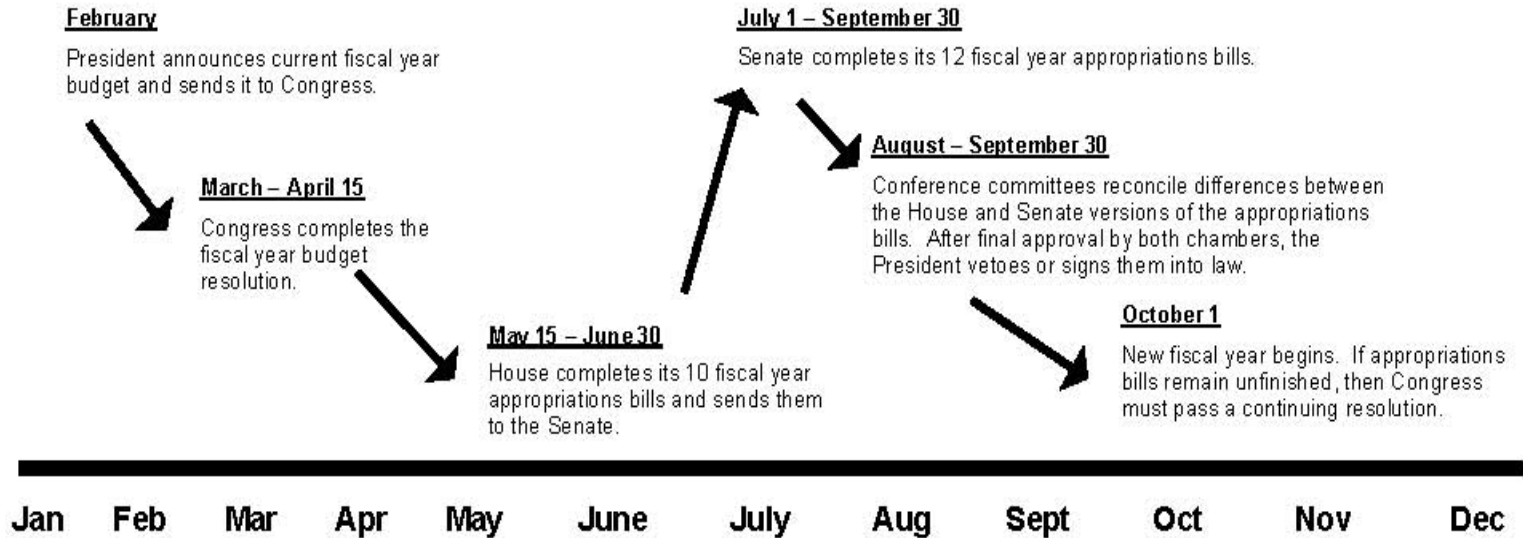
- The President proposes (requests) a federal budget each year (corresponds with State of the Union)
- President's priorities are reflected in the budget request to Congress
- Congress considers the President's request, makes allocations to 12 Appropriations Subcommittees

President's Budget

- OMB coordinates all submissions and develops the Federal Budget Request in January
- President releases budget on first Monday in February
- Budget is political

SURPRISE!

Legislative Budget Process



Executive Budget Process

The Presidential Budget

President's Budget

- Developed in summer and fall
- Secret process managed by W.H. Office of Management and Budget
- Initial agency proposals to OMB in early fall
- OMB “passes back” agency budgets in November
- Agency's make final appeal (December)

Congress and the Science Budget

- Where Congress deals with science
 - Authorizing Committees (e.g. House Science and Technology Committee)
 - Review substance of programs under jurisdiction
 - Provide funding guidance...minimum or maximum, recommended levels
 - Do not actually provide funds
 - Appropriations (e.g. House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science)
 - House and Senate Committees decide how funds allocated
 - 12 subcommittees, each funding specific portions of the federal government
 - POWERFUL committee assignment

Appropriations Committees

- Ag, Rural Development, FDA
- Commerce, Justice, Science
- Defense
- Energy and Water Development
- Financial Services and General Government
- Homeland Security
- Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
- Labor, HHS, Education, Related Agencies
- Legislative Branch
- Military Construction, VA, Related Agencies
- State, Foreign Operations, Related Agencies
- Transportation, HUD, Related Agencies

Appropriations

- Committee and Subcommittee Chairs hold significant power
- Hearings occur in spring
- Subcommittees “mark-up” bills
- Full Committee considers bills
- Committee approved measure goes to full chamber
- Chambers reconcile differences, send legislation to President for signature or veto

Deviations from the Plan

- Continuing resolutions
- Omnibus spending bills
- Mini-(omni)bus spending bills
- Mega-bus spending bills
- Super-committees and sequestration (a new twist)

Things to Remember: Congress

- 435 in House of Representatives, 100 in Senate
- House seats up for re-election every two year, 1/3 of Senate every two years
- Democrats control Senate, Republicans control House
- House → Rep. Boehner (R-OH) and Cantor (R-VA),
Senate → Sen. Reid (D-NV)
- Seniority and chairmanship are important
- Committee assignments and jurisdiction are important
- Founding fathers designed a government that would not easily pass laws → design was successful

Office Structure

- House

- Representative
- Chief of Staff

Washington, DC Office

- Legislative Director
- Legislative Assistants
- Legislative Correspondent
- Communications Director/
Press Secretary

Field Office

- District Director
- Case Workers
- Field Representative

- Senate

- Senator
- Chief of Staff

Washington, DC Office

- Legislative Director
- Counsel
- Legislative Assistants
- Legislative Correspondents
- Communications Director/
Press Secretary
- Press Assistants

District Office

- Similar to House

Relationships



Some Productive Relationships

- Professional society staff
- Elected officials and staff
- Grant program managers
- Reporters
- Colleagues, peers and more senior
- Deans, directors, chairs
- Community organizations – the people and the organizations

Relationships

- A key to success
- If a decision-maker knows you, he/she may ask your perspective
- Require care and feeding
- Knowing people is key
 - jobs
 - opportunities
 - connections to "influentials"

Relationships

- Can be personal and/or professional
- Not just individual, don't forget about organizational relationships
 - Collaborators
 - Strategic partnerships
 - Customers / consumers of your knowledge

Relationships with Policymakers

Two-way street – what do you offer?

- Credibility
- Technical expertise and knowledge
- Data
- Trusted source of information

Challenges to Building Policy Relationships

Some things academics can find challenging

- Perceived loss of objectivity
- Fear of being misinterpreted
- Lack of academic reward system (initially)

Challenges...cont.

Communication style and time frame

- Uncertainty in science
- Science is not always clear or unified... especially when focused on itself
- Different time frames
 - Policy may be debated for years, then a window opens and information is immediately required because a decision will be made
 - Examples may be health care reform and climate change

Challenges Aren't Barriers

Challenges shouldn't stop you

- Tips, tools, techniques and experience will allow you to avoid challenges, be an effective advocate for yourself, your work, and your profession

Relationships and Policy

- Simply knowing a policymaker will not guarantee the result you want
- Competing interests, science is one data point in policy decisions
- A relationship can help insure that you are at least heard

Competing Interests -- Congress

- Cause-based advocacy (environment, health, tax policy...etc)
 - Some of these can be emotional and drive voters
 - Healthcare: Massive resources in play (e.g., health care → 1,000' s of \$xxx,xxx lobbyists representing PHARMA, BIO, Universities, docs, hospitals, patients, local governments, lawyers, employers, disease groups/patients). Not just lobbyists, also media buys, fund raisers, briefings, etc.
- Folks from home...other constituents

Sampling of Hill Visits on a Given Day

- American Petroleum Institute
- Outback Steakhouse
- Caring to Love Ministries
- National Foreign Trade Council
- National Rifle Association
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- National Beer Wholesalers Association

Members of Congress – A Snapshot

- Overbooked
- Excessively lobbied
- Fund raiser
- Campaigner – must get re-elected to get seniority to accomplish campaign promises
- Outstanding orator
- Publicity seeker



Snapshot of a Staffer

- Young (~24 years old) – House younger than Senate
- Changes positions frequently (most House staffers hold a post less than 2 years)
- Poor pay, long hours, unpredictable schedules
- Smart
- Ambitious
- Generalist and multi-tasker
- Recommends action to Rep or Senator

What Gets Attention

- Does an issue impact the district/state?
- Does the member find the issue interesting?
- Is someone else already working the issue?
- Do constituents care?
- Is the issue related to a committee assignment?

Opportunities for Involvement

- Before legislation is drafted
- When a bill is introduced
- Briefings
- Hearings
- Before “mark-up”
- Before a vote

Get Involved

- Be active in your professional societies
- Subscribe to policy reports
- Build relationship with institution GR shop
- Respond to action alerts
- Visit your officials in the district



 Biological Sciences
Congressional District
Visits Week

Protect Your Reputation

Avoid

- Issues outside your sphere of expertise
- Overexposure (don't be a crank)
- Unrealistic expectations
- Ultimatums and threats
- Partnering with “loose canons”

Have you been successful?

- Metrics are difficult
 - Do key staffers know your name?
 - Do staffers contact you?
 - Did you communicate science to an appropriate decision-maker?
 - Did you get your message to the right people at the right time?
- Remember
 - Science is only one factor
 - Did something bad NOT happen?
 - Share the glory → cultivate a relationship

Building Influence

- Establish and maintain productive relationships on campus, with the community and with appropriate government officials
- Become an active participant in your professional societies (serve on a committee, pay your membership dues, participate in briefings, etc)

Building Influence

- Protect your credibility
- Find and pursue activities that are right for you – talking to Congress may not be your strength, talking to civic groups might be → both are important
- Consider exploiting new methods of communication
- Follow the news
- Vote
- Work for a campaign

Questions?



Model Hill Visits

- In your groups
- Continue using the scenario you have already been working with
- Devise a plan and craft a message to educate or lobby your Rep and Senator

Questions?



Contact

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