Today’s Agenda

- Government Agencies Defined
- Structure and Hierarchy
- Political Considerations
- Activity: Finding the Right Partner
- Building Relationships
- Q&A/Next Steps
Government Agencies
Government Agency Policy Actions

- Implement Policy
- Rulemaking
- Monitor and Report on Policy
- Provide Services
- Communicate with Constituents
- Legislative Feedback
- Conduct Research
Breakdown of Government Agencies

**Federal**
US Department of Education

**State**
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Local**
Boston Public Schools
Government Agency Structure
Political Considerations

Agencies are meant to serve their constituents, not a political party.

Yet, they must also work with elected officials, who oversee, fund, and decide on much of their work.
Agency Staff
Why Government Agencies?
Finding the Right Audience

❖ Look for the agencies that carry out the programs or services relevant to you
❖ Identify which level of government (local, state or federal) has authority over your issue
❖ Do some background research on the agency
❖ Find individual staffers to contact
❖ Once connected, use them to build your network – and use your network at the start to find warm ties!
Brainstorm:

❖ What level of government would your research fit best in? (Local, state, federal)
❖ Which policies, programs, or overall issue areas you’d most want to engage with?

Share:

❖ What you want to communicate to your chosen audience, and why it’s important for them to know what you know.
Agency Staff are Just People

When agency staff need to make decisions, they turn to people they know and trust.

For research and evidence to matter, researchers need to be part of those inner circles.
Local vs. State vs. Federal Relationships

Relationships tend to get progressively more formal as you move up to the federal level.

But agency staff at all levels are looking for and interesting in building new relationships.
Formal Partnerships

Researchers get funding, access to data, and a built-in opportunity to connect and collaborate with staff.

Agencies get the research or data they need and get to set specific research questions and goals.
Informal Partnerships

When there is an existing friendly relationship, agency staffers feel comfortable turning to researchers to answer pressing questions or access needed information or context.

They typically source this type of expertise from their networks.
## Making Informal Connections

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Opportunities to Connect with Agencies
Making a Connection

- Reach out at the beginning of your research
- Prioritize collaboration
- Familiarize yourself with agency timelines
- Be responsive
Reaching out to an Agency Staffer

❖ Your email should be short and concise
❖ Make your motivation for reaching out clear
❖ Avoid politically charged language
❖ Include a policy brief, if possible
❖ Expect to be persistent
Reaching out on the low income housing tax credit program

Megan.Kirkeby@hcd.ca.gov

Dear Ms. Kirkeby,

My name is __________, and I am a ______ at __________. I'm reaching out because I saw the new program being developed by California's Department of Housing and Community Development to encourage use of low-income housing tax credits to spur new development in high opportunity areas. As an expert with several years of research into these tax credits, I was excited to see this policy, and plan to study it as it unfolds.

With that in mind, I would love to make a connection with your office so hopefully my research could be of use to you. Would you be available for a brief meeting to see how we might collaborate, share findings, and discuss what support I could provide? I would also be glad to chat about my research plans and hear any feedback or questions you might have.

Would you have time to meet in the next two weeks?
Communicating with agency staff

- **Jargon and long, dense documents**
  I am interested in the way the Census tracts are classified by the TCAC and their associated developments, and I wanted to share my article that compares locational patterns pre- and post-incentive.

- **Plain language and concise documents**
  In researching this program, I have identified the impacts and benefits of encouraging affordable housing in high resource areas, and I’ve attached a short policy brief that you may find relevant to your work.

- **Only focusing on educating agency staffers**
  I have been concerned about the rising level of those experiencing homelessness in the state, and have research that I think would inform and redirect the work you are doing - I would be happy to walk you through my findings.

- **Prioritizing collaboration**
  I have seen the efforts of your agency to address the rising level of those experiencing homelessness in the state, and I would love to meet to discuss how I might be able to support this work.
Communicating with agency staff

Using politically charged language
It is extremely troubling that the Department of Health has failed to address serious lapses in vaccine requirements for children. The agency must set aside political pressure in order to take needed, immediate action.

Mirror agency language
I have seen that the Department of Health is working to review the state’s requirements for vaccines for children, and I have research that may provide some insight.

Missing context and unreasonable expectations
My research highlights the importance of restorative justice in schools, and I believe that the Department of Education should look into these policies and work to implement statewide.

Be aware of their work
I’m aware the Department has recently been allocated funding by the state legislature to set up a pilot program for restorative justice in schools, and I wanted to share my research which may help set up the program to its best effect.
Policymakers returning to you for advice.
Questions?

For any questions or further policy support:

Contact FABBS
info@fabbs.org

See FABBS’ Resources:

❖ Public Scholarship Toolkit
FABBS compiled and developed resources to help researchers engage with policymakers and translate their work for a broader audience. Learn more about how to:
- Connect to Congress
- Communicate with Federal Agencies
- Draft Policy Briefs
- Write and Place an Op-Ed
- Raise the Profile of Behavioral Science on Campus

❖ FABBS 2022 Advocacy Outlook
A primer on the federal budget process and suggested tools and opportunities to connect your research to policy.
Questions?

For any questions or further policy support, contact:

**Lizzy Ghedi-Erlich**, Director of Policy, Scholars Strategy Network

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