

Influencing Public Policy and Connecting with Policymakers

Future Skills Centre (FSC)’s Community of Practice (CoP) is a pan-Canadian network for skills and workforce development stakeholders across diverse sectors and industries to connect, share, and learn from each other. As part of the CoP, Research Impact Canada, in collaboration with FSC and Magnet, is piloting themed Peer Learning Groups to facilitate an open discussion among peers in an informal and safe shared space.

The three-session Peer Learning Group Pilot will help organizations share best practices, resources, and tips in three areas: influencing public policy and connecting with policymakers, telling compelling stories of change and impact, and measuring and evaluating impact. This pilot will also help FSC determine how to continue improving these peer learning offerings so they better fit the needs of service providers.

The first of the three-part series took place on Zoom on July 28, 2022. Explore some of the ideas and resources from the session below.

We would also encourage you to join FSC’s Community of Practice by signing up for a free account on the Community of Practice Platform to access news, events, resources, and networks, and to continue engaging with professionals in the skills and workforce development sector.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY



WHAT WE HEARD: BIG CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

1. Working in Silos

“How could like-minded skills and workforce development practitioners and organizations better coordinate with each other and align their policy advocacy?”



Proposed Strategies:

- Build a formal or informal network of similar organizations in your network that meets regularly to build relationships, trust, and share ideas and best practices
- Designate one staff person to be the lead coordinator among like-minded organizations and help drive advocacy forward
- Invite ministers for a “show-and-tell” or “roundtable” to demonstrate your organization's valuable work
- Seek out networking events to meet with individuals and organizations doing similar work and start an open dialogue with them



Resources:

- [Sparkling change: Three ways to engage in advocacy](#) (2021)
- [Advocacy toolkit: A guide for nonprofits to meaningfully engage your community](#) (2019)

2. Connecting with Policymakers

“How could skills and workforce development practitioners and organizations connect with policymakers, effectively communicate their proposals, and drive meaningful change in public policies?”



Proposed Strategies:

- Building social capital is important to expanding your network - try asking as many people as possible (friends, family, acquaintances, etc.) to see who can introduce policy contacts
- If you already have a connection at the Ministry, ask for an introduction to an appropriate contact for your proposal
- When pitching to policymakers, have one clear ask aligned with government priorities with a presentable solution(s)
- Incorporate a storytelling technique when sharing your data with policymakers
- Share clear data, news, or an op-ed with your contact to maintain existing relationships with policy contacts (e.g. “FYI – Thought you might be interested in this”)

Resources:

- [Directory of public servants](#) (Ontario)
- [Employee and organization directory](#) (Ontario)

*Note: The majority of attendees from this session were based in Ontario, but if you are from a different province, each provincial government will have their own directories for public servants, employees, and organizations to contact in your area.

3. Funding

“How could skills and workforce development practitioners and organizations compete for resources in a competitive funding environment?”



Proposed Strategies:

- In addition to applying for governmental funding, seek out funding from elsewhere, such as from universities and the more well-known, bigger non-profit organizations and associations
- Request meetings with politicians in your local riding to make your organization's presence known and ask for advice on any supports available
- Use a [collective impact model](#) to achieve the same goals as a network when collaborating with industry partners working on the same issues to increase funding budget and capacity
- Align the proposal clearly with one or more of the Ministry priorities as outlined in their Strategic Plans or Mandates



Resources:

- Funding programs for jobs, training, and social development projects (Canada)
- Skills Development Fund spreadsheet (Canada)

JOIN US!

To participate in the Peer Learning Pilot, register and join us for the second session, "[Telling compelling stories of change and impact](#)" on Aug 15 and the third session, "[Measuring and evaluating impact](#)" on Sept 8!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Research Meets Policy \(2021\)](#)

This four-part series from Simon Fraser University's "Research Meets Policy" provides helpful tips and advice on how to communicate effectively with policymakers and conduct promotional outreach to gain their attention.

[A Guide to Engaging Policymakers \(2019\)](#)

This brief video (less than four minutes) demonstrates the foundations of conducting government relations. The video walks viewers through the practical steps on how to make connections with policymakers and how to influence policy through various tactics.

[Key Government Resources for Public Policy \(2022\)](#)

This compilation of key government resources by the University of Toronto is a handy guide that will help prepare public policy research using governmental data. It is also a great resource to find opportunities for policy intervention within the government.

[House of Commons Procedure and Practice \(2017\)](#)

This resource from the Government of Canada provides a comprehensive overview of the House of Commons' procedures and practices. It is useful for gaining a better understanding of how the political system works in Canada and the various points of opportunities to interact with policymakers and influence policy.

[10 Things to Know About How to Influence Policy with Research \(2017\)](#)

This article provides a series of infographics that shows organizations how to strategically leverage influence on policy, build relationships, and plan for engagement.

[Government 101: Why Understanding Government Matters in the Policy Process \(2010\)](#)

This short guide (less than 25 pages) uses plain language to break down the complexities of interacting with government officials in Canada and engaging in the policymaking process. It also contains helpful diagrams and charts for readers to visualize the political process.

[Evidence for Democracy's Trainings \(2020\)](#)

There are several excellent guides here, including how to write a policy brief, prepare plain language summaries, connect with political representatives and understand the federal budget.

CONNECT WITH US!

- [Sign up for a free account](#) to join FSC's Community of Practice Platform, powered by Magnet!