



# Engaging Stakeholders for Sustainability: Telling your Story



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# Today's Agenda

- ▶ Welcome and introductions
- ▶ Engaging policymakers
- ▶ Building trusting relationships
- ▶ Advice from policymakers: telling your story
- ▶ Closing thoughts
- ▶ Questions

# Who am I?



CORNELL PROJECT  
2Gen

Undergraduate

5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher

Graduate

Congressional Fellow

Policy Engagement

# Who are you?

- ▶ Previous experience in policy engagement?

# Engaging Policymakers

- ▶ What do I mean by “policy?”
  - “Authoritative decisions made in the legislative, executive, or judicial branches of government that are intended to direct or influence the actions, behaviors, or decisions of others”<sup>1</sup>
    - Members of the legislature (or Board of Supervisors at the County level) = enact laws
    - Agency officials = write rules and regulations
    - Judges = interpret laws
  - Who else are policymakers with whom you work?

<sup>1</sup>Longest, B. B. (2006) *Health Policymaking in the United States*. 4th ed. Chicago, IL: Health Administration Press.

# Engaging Policymakers

## ▶ Why engage local policymakers?

The benefits go both ways!

- ▶ Policymakers control funding and local policy priorities that can impact your work
- ▶ Policymakers have connections to broader (regional and state) agencies
- ▶ Can use your expertise to make better decisions for their constituents



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The key to engaging policymakers:  
**Building Trusting  
Relationships**

# Building Trusting Relationships

- ▶ Think about the last BIG decision you had to make.
  - ▶ Who did you turn to?
  - ▶ Why?

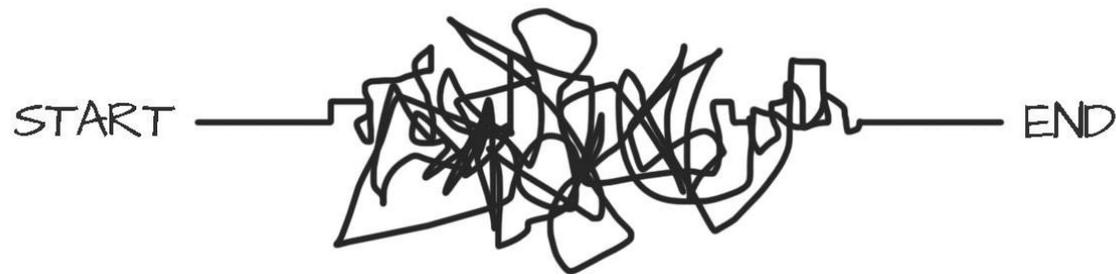
# Building Trusting Relationships

- ▶ Trusting relationships are critical for successfully engaging with policymakers
- ▶ “Policymakers read people not papers”
- ▶ Commitment to long-term relationship-building
- ▶ Leveraging existing relationships
  - ▶ You or your network
    - ▶ Supervisors
    - ▶ Community Stakeholders
    - ▶ Formal roles for engagement (lobbyists, policy teams, government outreach staff)



# Building Trusting Relationships

- ▶ Put in the work to get to know your audience
  - ▶ Knowledge of the policy process
  - ▶ Federal, state, or local issues
  - ▶ Which branch of government
  - ▶ Funding streams



# Building Trusting Relationships

- ▶ Get to know policymakers
  - ▶ Ex: how to pronounce his/her name
- ▶ Be mindful of legislative and executive calendars/timing
  - ▶ In session/out of session or budget season
- ▶ Remember: relationships build over time
- ▶ Make your work policy-relevant and easily digestible



# Building Trusting Relationships

- ▶ Be a reliable resource
  - ▶ Respond quickly to requests
  - ▶ Provide information on community needs
  - ▶ Work with both sides of the aisle
  - ▶ Make your work policy-relevant and easily digestible
- ▶ Remember: relationships build over time
  - ▶ Policymakers may not prioritize you or your work this moment, but by establishing the relationship, they'll be comfortable reaching out to you when the time comes



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# Advice from Legislators: Telling your Story

# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ State legislators from Indiana and Wisconsin
  - ▶ Formal study asking about engagement with experts
- ▶ County legislators from across NY
  - ▶ Working directly to provide data and information based on legislator needs



# What information do they want and how do they like to get it?

- ▶ What they want:
  - ▶ Policy-relevant
  - ▶ Offers multiple solutions



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

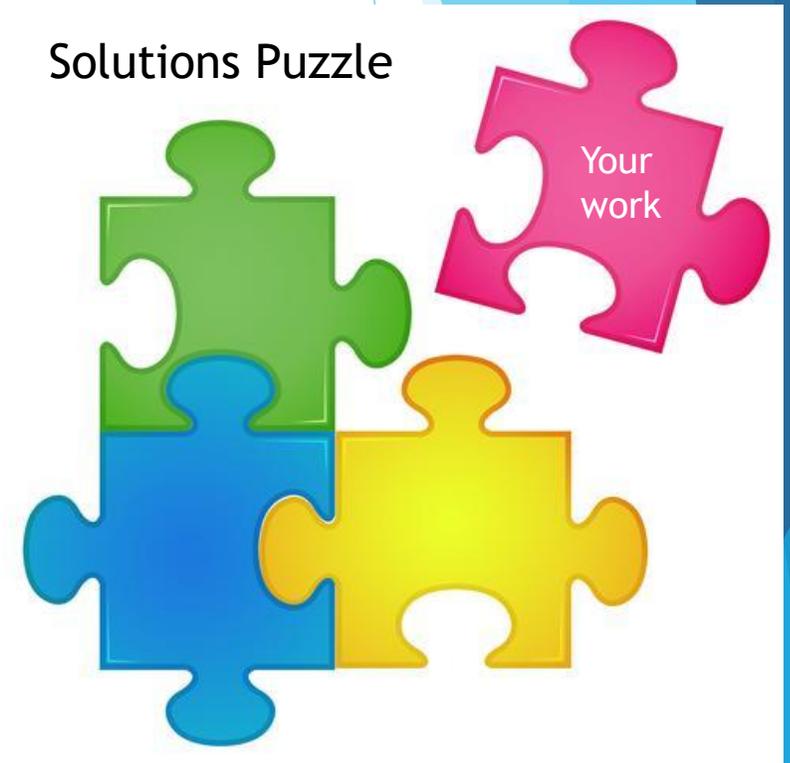
“Whenever information about ‘next steps’ is put in, you immediately question whether the whole impetus of this study was to get you to a particular next step. But on the other hand, research that doesn't offer any potential solutions also lead -- yeah, okay you pointed out a problem, but without giving me a solution, where do we go from here? Because it's easy to point out problems... I prefer research that says here's the problems, here are some various solutions that have been proposed.

- IN Republican

”

# What does this mean for you?

- ▶ Communicating how the work you're doing is solving real problems for your community
  - ▶ Identifying problems
  - ▶ Identifying a range of solutions
  - ▶ Specifically noting where your work fits in that range of solutions
- ▶ Important distinction between lobbying and educating
  - ▶ Lobbying *narrows* the set of “acceptable” solutions, usually to one specific policy or program
  - ▶ Educating *expands* the set of “acceptable” solutions



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ What they want:
  - ▶ Policy-relevant
  - ▶ Offers multiple solutions
  - ▶ Includes ideas/information from other states/districts/areas



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ Western NY COVID-19 responses:
  - ▶ Key question: What are other counties doing about childcare for essential workers?
- ▶ State legislator:

“I think there was a lot of great information about, you know, here's what other states are doing, here's what we're seeing about kids who do and don't stay in longer and what their success rates are afterward.

- WI Democrat”

# What does this mean for you?

- ▶ Give policymakers the broader picture of what other places (states, counties) are doing
  - ▶ Include specific examples as it relates to your work
  - ▶ This can be a good way to highlight the novelty of your own work
- ▶ If there are data on outcomes or results, include them!



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ What they want:
  - ▶ Policy-relevant
  - ▶ Offers multiple solutions
  - ▶ Includes ideas/information from other states/districts/areas
- ▶ How they like to get information:
  - ▶ Information brought to life with stories



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

“I will be totally candid. I use research a lot to begin those processes, but I am a salesman and not a scientist, so research, in my opinion, in this building does not go very far. It can be easily discarded. And what is much more compelling is the story behind the number. I want the story because that's what I need to sell.

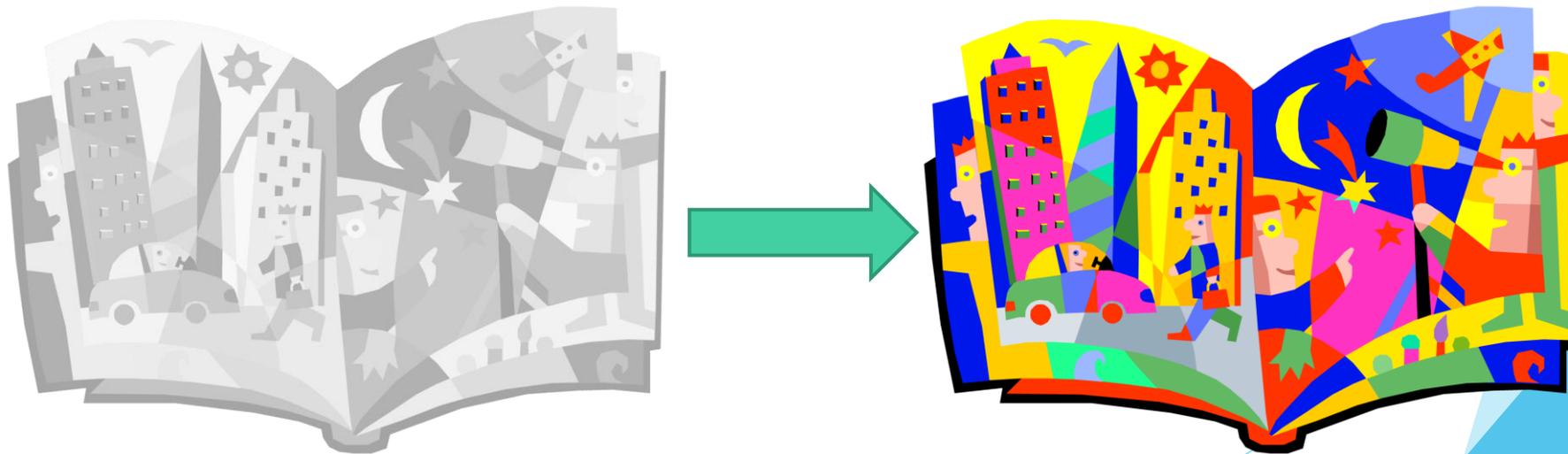
- WI Democrat”

“People in politics seem to be moved by the personal. Not the statistical.

<sup>22</sup> - IN Republican”

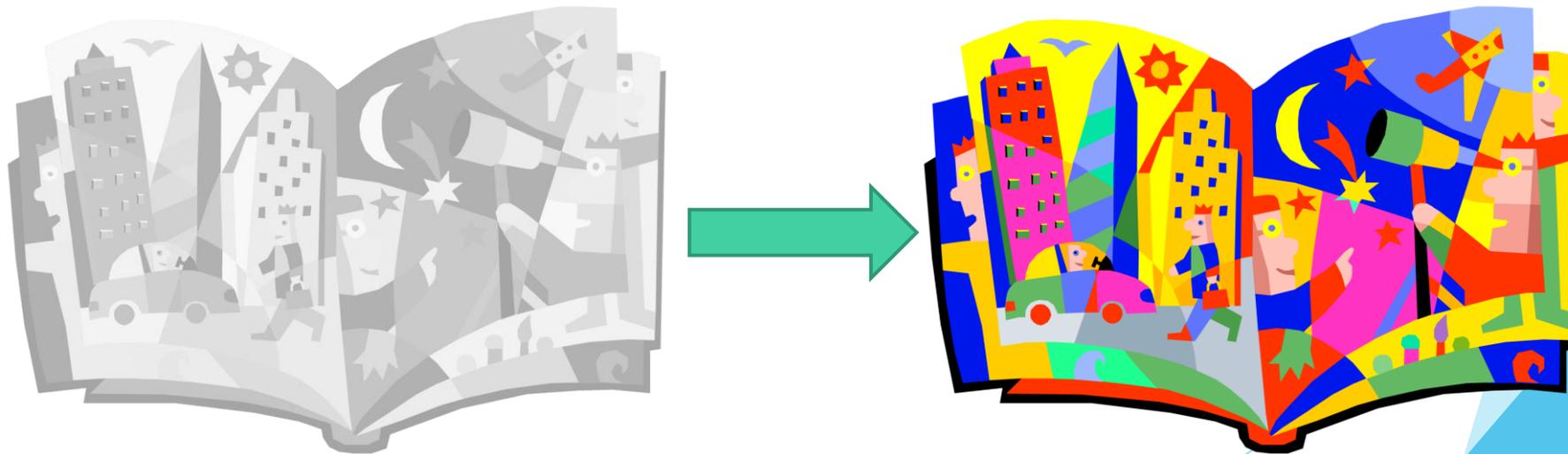
# What does this mean for you?

- ▶ Use individual stories to bring your work to life
  - ▶ Individual practitioner stories of the work he/she is doing
  - ▶ Individual participant stories
- ▶ Think about telling your story as you design various parts of your program
  - ▶ Ask open-ended questions on surveys, in participant interviews, and focus groups
  - ▶ Take photos (when possible) or video at events



# What does this mean for you?

- ▶ Tie individual stories to broader themes and statistics you see in your work
  - ▶ Tying quotations to data points
  - ▶ Using individual examples to illustrate a program benefit
    - ▶ E.g., Participants ranked themselves “highly satisfied” with your program on average. Include a quote to illustrate “highly satisfied”



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ What they want:
  - ▶ Policy-relevant
  - ▶ Offers multiple solutions
  - ▶ Includes ideas/information from other states/districts/areas
- ▶ How they like to get it:
  - ▶ Information brought to life with stories
  - ▶ Use bulleted lists and brief summaries



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

“It's getting the four-page brochure versus a one-page bang, bang, bang, bang. And it's data. It punches. It's useable.

- IN Republican”

“If you have information you should have the 30 second, top line bullet points. Here is what really is the message. Then you should have the Executive Summary. So maybe I want to get into a little bit more, a little more detail but the bullet points and then the whole study.

- IN Democrat”

# What does this mean for you?

- ▶ Present your information in a variety of formats
  - ▶ Policy briefs
  - ▶ Executive summaries
  - ▶ Full reports
- ▶ Incorporate graphics and visuals

## RESEARCH BRIEF SERIES

### Supporting Vulnerable New York Families

Tuesday, April 24, 2018  
Legislative Office Building, Albany NY



## The Opioid Epidemic and Child Well-being: Two Generations at Risk

By: Laura Tach, Elizabeth Day, and Maria Fitzpatrick, Cornell University

### Background

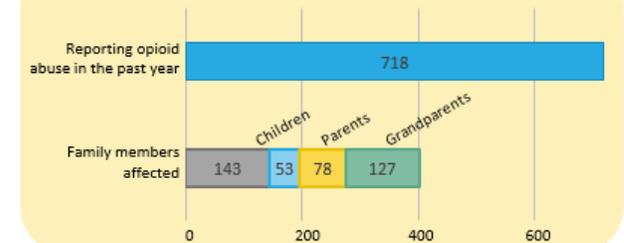
1. The opioid epidemic is having devastating consequences for communities across New York.
2. Most of the focus on the epidemic has been on individual and pharmacological aspects of addiction (i.e. who is misusing, what treatment options are there for individuals, and how can we prevent misuses?)
3. A **two-generation (2gen) framework** emphasizes the importance of considering the whole family when discussing prevention and treatment of opioid addiction.

### Findings

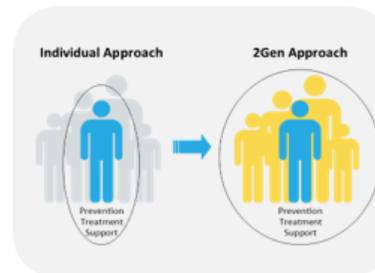
**1 in 12** New Yorkers is affected by opioids either directly or indirectly through their immediate family.



### Number of New Yorkers (in 1,000s)



Estimates derived from: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2015-2016; SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health statistics; 2015 NY state child maltreatment statistics and national statistics of share of cases involving drug-related maltreatment; National Survey on Drug Use and Health and American Community Survey



### Implications for Policy

#### Health

- Family-friendly residential and outpatient programs; comprehensive prenatal care for opioid-dependent women

#### Education

- Evidence-based guidelines and professional development for educators in high-need areas; evidence-based 2gen prevention programming in schools

#### Child Welfare

- Standardized and integrated clinical assessment of parental substance use in cases; coordination of treatment via research-based, whole family approaches

For more information about Cornell Project 2Gen visit: <http://www.2gen.bctr.cornell.edu/> or contact us at: [project2gen@cornell.edu](mailto:project2gen@cornell.edu)

# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ What they want:
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- ▶ How they like to get it:
  - ▶ Information brought to life with stories
  - ▶ Use bulleted lists and brief summaries
  - ▶ Create the opportunity to discuss the information, not just send the information and hope it goes somewhere



# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

“So if you can get people here, you know, who are experts in their field, that's even better than just presenting the data on paper because then committee members have an opportunity to ask questions... there's a back and forth exchange.

- IN Democrat”

# Perspectives: State and County Legislators

- ▶ Creating a conversation: uses for a mobile social services unit in upstate NY
  - ▶ What to do with a mobile unit?
  - ▶ Creating a conversation with key community stakeholders:
    - ▶ Legislators
    - ▶ School administrators
    - ▶ Local housing and homelessness organization
    - ▶ Local food bank experts
  - ▶ What do they see as community needs? How does this relate to legislative capabilities?



# What does this mean for you?

- ▶ Create opportunities for policymakers to interact with program leaders, staff, and participants (if appropriate) to share their stories
- ▶ Create opportunities for program leaders and staff to share findings/important information/anything policy relevant
  - ▶ Meals
  - ▶ Coffee hours
  - ▶ Site visits



# Closing Thoughts

- ▶ Trusting relationships are critical for building relationships towards sustainability
- ▶ Building relationships takes time
  - ▶ May not happen immediately, but worth it in the long-run
  - ▶ Understanding the culture of policymakers' worlds
  - ▶ Knowledge of the policy process and communication strategies to tell your story effectively
- ▶ The onus is on you; policymakers tend to be inundated with information and short on time

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**Thank You!**

*Questions?*