

Call for participation: policy engagement learning community of practice

Overview

As part of Nesta's [university-based training offer](#) within [Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement](#) (CAPE), we are excited to invite you to take part in a community of practice (CoP) dedicated to improving understanding of what works in professional development for policy engagement. Open to all staff – particularly researchers, academics, professional research support staff and training providers – this CoP will facilitate cross-sector learning, collaboration, and innovation within policy engagement training provision and other professional development or capability building opportunities between [CAPE university partners](#): University College London, the University of Cambridge, the University of Manchester, the University of Nottingham and Northumbria University.

The community of practice

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

- Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner

Created in response to a [greater perceived need](#) from across CAPE university partners for quality assurance and knowledge sharing in what good policy engagement learning looks like in practice, the CoP seeks to establish a peer-to-peer network of passionate professional services staff, academics and researchers from across CAPE university partners. Through a series of workshops hosted between August 2022 to June 2023, we'll work collaboratively to generate a better understanding of what good quality policy engagement learning looks like within unique university contexts and across the sector. The CoP aims to:

- bring together sector experts, academics, professional services staff and training providers to establish a cross-institutional network to share and listen to unique experiences and knowledge of what works in policy engagement learning offers;
- serve as a learning and development opportunity for participants, through discussion around tools and techniques for policy engagement training design and delivery;
- uncover exceptional practices, learning mechanisms and case studies to help enhance the quality of policy engagement offers across CAPE universities;
- generate a better understanding of how policy engagement training and other professional development activities can be situated within and adapted to unique learner needs, university landscapes and incentives, ultimately strengthening the ability for learning to translate to changes in practice at the individual and institutional level;
- Build a network between CAPE universities and sector experts that will share tools and

techniques for fostering inclusive, structural improvements to academic-policy engagement through training and professional development.

The facilitators:

With a wealth of experience and expertise in designing and delivering learning programmes such as the [Evidence Masterclass](#), [Evidence Use and Academic Engagement Programme](#), UCL Public Policy's [Pathways to Engagement](#) and [States of Change](#), Nesta will facilitate a series of workshops that will bring together a diverse group of professional services staff, researchers and academics to stimulate and strengthen policy engagement capability and cross-organisational collaboration through university training offers and skills development. We will be accompanied by a network of experts with combined specialisms in knowledge of effective learning design, knowledge exchange and research mobilisation. Together, sessions will draw upon existing evidence of what we know works for academic-policy engagement and effective learning theory, our lessons from previous work, and the collective wisdom of participants.

What we'll cover:

Between August 2022 to June 2023, we will hold five workshops in total, each focussing on [capacity building at a different tiers](#), from individual learning to the wider ecosystem. Following an initial co-creation session, each workshop will focus on modes and mechanisms to facilitate capacity building and include an exploration of mechanisms that support improved access and visibility of people from under-represented groups in policy engagement learning. Participants will be invited to co-create agendas for the workshops, each including a mixture of opportunities for peer-learning, collaborative problem-solving and exploration activities, in addition to learning from sector experts. Below we have outlined questions raised in our scoping work that might help frame the agenda and activities undertaken by the CoP:



Workshop 1

Co-design: mid-September 2022

In this preliminary session, we'll set the stage for how we'd like to learn together and explore deeper themes and questions we'd like to cover in other workshops. We'll also learn more about co-design itself as a process for creating learning experiences. Some examples of the questions we hope to explore and interrogate together:

- What are our shared objectives, visions for excellence and challenges across universities – including skills or knowledge gaps within academic-policy engagement learning offers?
- How might we collectively tackle these challenges in order to improve cross-sector practice?
- What is our shared vision and mission as a CoP – and how might we disseminate this good practice beyond CAPE and this community?

Workshop 2

Individual and team: mid-November 2022

This workshop will uncover members' knowledge about tailoring policy engagement learning to an individual and team level needs. This will include mapping out different routes into policy engagement for academics and researchers, identifying the different challenges and pressures that an individual may face when engaging in policy and exploring ways to overcome these barriers through training and other professional development activities.

Questions we might seek to explore include:

- **Individual demand:** how can we best promote and improve accessibility of policy engagement support to increase interest from a broader audience, and not just the 'usual suspects'?
- **Format considerations:** what is the most effective way of formatting learning offers?
- **Networks and peer learning:** what are effective academic support structures and how might an institution/faculty go about setting these up? What does successful peer learning for sharing look like?
- **An individual's journey:** what does the policy engagement process look like across different disciplines, level of subject expertise and how might this be better supported?

Workshop 3

Organisation: mid-January 2023

In this workshop we'll explore how training and other professional development opportunities could be better linked into existing practices at different universities to increase policy engagement capacity. Topics we might explore include:

- **Differences in institutional capacity:** how might we level up policy engagement training and professional development offers between institutions with varying access to resources?
- **Staff and resource constraints:** how can we improve the efficiency and effectiveness of training delivery when capacity is limited?
- **Incentivising policy engagement:** what is a way to celebrate, recognise and integrate policy impact, and motivate participation in policy engagement, especially as linked to career progression pathways?

- **Practical learning offers/ policy engagement mechanisms:** how can we connect policy engagement training to other mechanisms (such as fellowships, mentorships etc.) and how has this been done well?
- **Mechanism and content adaptation:** What is core policy engagement training and how might this differ depending on the audience?

Workshop 4

Ecosystem: mid-March 2023

This session will look to draw together members' and sector experts' knowledge to collectively define what good quality policy engagement learning looks like and to understand how we can effectively forge systemic improvements to academic-policy engagement learning, influencing the cross-sector approach and incentivising systems to improve opportunities for learning:

- **Cross-learning:** how do different universities and institutions create and deliver policy management training/learning opportunities? What modes and mechanisms for training have worked well? How can a cross-sector model relieve capacity pressures?
- **Skills and competency frameworks:** what does fit-for-purpose learning for different needs/career stages look like?
- **The policy engagement roadmap:** where does training or the other professional development opportunities fit within the broader policy engagement roadmap?
- **Quality assurance:** what does good policy engagement training look like and how can we be confident in assuring the quality of signposted resources?

Workshop 5

Graduation: mid-May 2023

This final workshop will explore the discussions held throughout the CoP and encourage participants to reflect on the following.

- What have been the most significant changes / experiences for you / your team as a result of participating in this CoP?
- What have we collectively learned about the individual and team, organisation and systems approach to policy engagement learning?
- What else would you have liked to have seen within these discussions?
- How might we collectively share and disseminate the good practices uncovered through this CoP?

EOI process and next steps

We are keen to hear from all staff from CAPE partner universities- including researchers, academics, [professional research support staff](#) and training providers – with a range of expertise, seniority and experience. We ask that, at a minimum, members commit to

attending the five x virtual workshops held every two months between September 2022 to May 2023. We also ask that all interested individuals seek approval from their line manager to participate in the programme before submitting an expression of interest (EOI). Although there will be no cost to members for participating in the CoP, unfortunately we cannot reimburse their time. For those unable to participate, we'll also be sharing insights and resources generated through each of the workshops in a series of blogs - please do get in touch if you're interested in learning more.

If you are interested in participating in the CoP, please complete this anonymous [equity, diversity and inclusion form](#) before submitting [this expression of interest form](#) before Friday 15th July 2022, outlining your role, experience of policy engagement learning and motivations for participating in the community of practice.

Note that we are limiting the number of CoP participants to 25. Expressions of interest will be assessed based on the following criteria:

1. relevance of roles and responsibilities as related to policy engagement learning;
2. motivations for participation within the CoP;
3. ability to integrate CoP learning into practice within your institutions.

We will be in touch with successful CoP members to share more details about the CoP and initial co-creation session.

Deadline to apply: Friday 15th July 2022

We are committed to protecting your privacy and will take all reasonable precautions to safeguard personal information throughout the delivery of this CoP. For more details on how we expect to use your information please review [this privacy notice here](#).

For any questions about this Call for Participation, or if you'd like to discuss the Community of Practice more broadly, please contact evidence@nesta.org.uk.