

1. Acquire policy acumen

"Decision-making is about making choices in the face of imperfect knowledge, risk, tight time-frames and complexity. Sometimes science is part of the process—sometimes not. To contribute, social scientists must develop an awareness of the policy world and understand that priorities can change quickly ... Scientists might best acquire acumen ... through developing relationships with policy makers, attending policy events and keeping abreast of policy processes and outputs."

2. It's all about process

"Social scientists that set out to be part of the policy process from the beginning are more likely to be effective. Social scientists will need to be creative in how they become a trusted advisor and consider cooperative modes of conducting science and coproducing knowledge. Scientists could temporarily embed themselves in a policy section through secondments or as part of a collaborative project, or ask for formal introductions into the broader policy arena."

3. Sit in their seat

"Social scientists ... should focus on the policy problem and help decision-makers to consider the risks, uncertainties and complexities and canvass policy options without bias towards their own work. Social scientists must develop trust. Developing trust is about enabling decision-makers to feel comfortable to open up, take appropriate risks and share vulnerabilities."

4. Be free to focus on strong science

"Social scientists should think about the contribution that they want to make with their science in broader terms and not be constrained by policy requirements. Policy-makers will often prefer to work with scientists that have already established themselves in their field ... [and these] social scientists can use their authority to simplify and generalise beyond the comfort zone of a conventional scientist."

5. Engage, educate and enable

"The opinion of the voting public, the media and powerful, vested interests are often more influential to policy processes than science. Influencing these and helping the public understand socio-environmental issues can be an effective way to increase literacy about an ... issue and its challenges and help ensure that public influence on policy aligns with the current state of the science."

6. Consider brokering

"The messenger can be more influential than the message ... some social scientists have successfully used NGOs, science advisors and key social identities to act as champions or activists for their science ... Brokers can be particularly effective if they are senior, sit in a policy department and can guide research."

7. Foresee opportunity

"Scientists need to identify where and when future opportunities might emerge. What is driving decisions today could shift tomorrow so an ability to respond quickly and positively will be crucial. A change in government, minister or senior bureaucrat, each represent a new policy-window."

8. Integration is the new black

"Working across disciplines helps expose knowledge blind-spots, questions assumptions, exposes trade-offs and synergies and leads to better solutions. Social scientists need to team up with biophysical scientists to provide a shared perspective on policy advice."

9. Know thy strengths

"Multiple perspectives, competing values, complexity and problem framing are some challenges that social scientists are particularly adept at tackling, each of which are critical to developing acceptable policy options."

10. Validate and add value

"Helping the public to understand ... how a ... decision was reached (using the latest scientific findings) provides an essential service to decision-makers. Social scientists that go 'above and beyond' what is required of them and add value to research by assisting in its facilitation or implementation, or by validating decisions within the public arena can achieve significant impact sooner."