SUSTAINABILITY FOR SCIENCE SHOPS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DEVELOPING POLICY AND STRATEGY

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Living Knowledge
The International Science Shop Network

PERARES

European Commission

CAPACITIES

"It is not easy to play chess simultaneously on different boards. Many Science Shops do not know how to give more priority to their strategic development within international, national, regional or university policies"
(Established Science Shop)

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO DEVELOPING POLICY AND STRATEGY

Over the last 30 years, Science Shops across Europe have had to develop strategies to ensure sustainability. One of the main ways of achieving this over the long term has been linking to policy priorities. This means making sure that policymakers such as funders, political representatives and senior university managers understand and appreciate how Science Shops can help them to deliver on their own relevant priorities.

Developing a policy context takes time, knowledge and skill. The knowledge and skills can be learned and we hope that this handbook will go some way towards helping with this learning. However time is a separate issue and it should be noted that the suggestions here are a menu, and some readers may be able to implement more actions than others. Some readers may also already be implementing some of the actions without realising it.

Policy development work can feel challenging for Science Shop practitioners, especially in the early stages of the work. However the experience of longstanding Science Shops suggests that policy work is vital to long term success. This handbook draws lessons from the experiences of other Science Shop practitioners over the years. We hope this report will be of use to you in terms of thinking about how you might contribute to policy development in your own work.

We would like to offer our thanks to those people who took the time to provide us with information about their work which provides the raw material for this report.

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FIGURE 1:
KEY STRUCTURES IN HEIs FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY AND POLICY

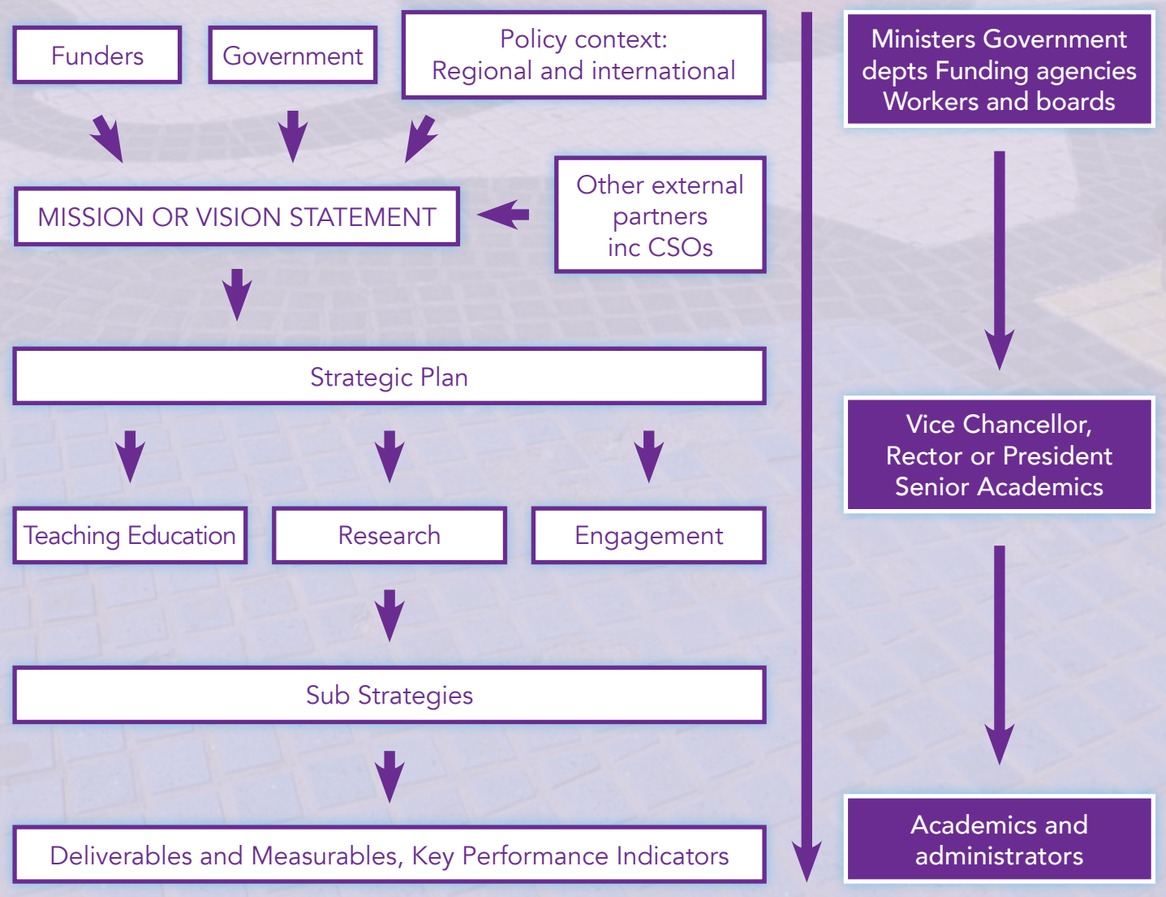


Figure 1 above shows some of the key structures which influence policy development within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Whilst there may be variations between different organisations, policy priorities are normally based around the three pillars of Higher Education - teaching, research and engagement. Science Shops have been successfully embedded in policy in all three areas since they normally involve students working on research projects with external organisations.

"We started out in the educational office, then moved to our research office. We're now in student support. Our targets have varied from number of subjects, to number of community groups to numbers of students we work with. The context changes but the work stays the same."

(Established Science Shop)

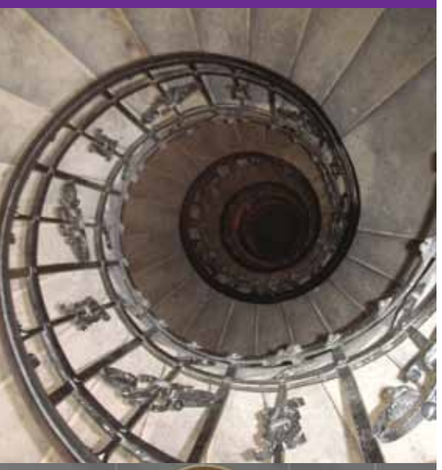
FIGURE 2:
METHODS FOR DEVELOPING POLICY AND STRATEGY TO SUPPORT SCIENCE SHOPS IN HEIs

	What		How
Step 1: Survey territory	Desk Research	Strategic Plans. Education Strategy and policies. Research Strategy and policies. Funding Streams. Strategies of Key Funders.	Online.
	Background Research	Find people who know about policy in the HEI What are the interests of senior managers – research and personal? Relevant academic departments.	Examine networks. Use Blogs, Twitter, CV, Research profiles. Use contacts in different academic departments.
Step 2: Build alliances	Networking	Identify like minded people For non-academic Science Shop co-ordinators, identify academic partners to supervise projects. Create national and international links.	Practice your arguments Create an exemplar project (see figure 3). Attend conferences, network. Use Living Knowledge website.
Step 3: Make your case	Lobbying	Inform	Send information to key decision makers.
		Involve	Ask decision makers to do something for you, or ask how your science shop can help them fulfil their objectives
		Participate	Contact relevant staff to ensure you are on the mailing list for policy document being consulted on. Volunteer for policy working groups or strategic committees. Contribute info/words to key policy documents. Go to consultations and events and talk to people, formally and informally. Use your elevator pitch (see figure 4)
Step 4: Be prepared	Maintenance	Watching brief	Identify new policy coming up and existing policy due to be reviewed. Volunteer for committees/strategy groups.
		Maintain and build relationships	Informal meetings, send info, attend events
		Maintain and build PR	Take photos, write up press releases using good practice examples (see figure 5) Gather testimonials from students, staff and CSOs Evaluate qualitatively and quantitatively, to have statistics and stories ready

Figure 2 is a summary of the methods used to develop policy and strategy to support Science Shops in HEIs. These methods are explored in more detail in the following section. It offers four steps in developing strategy to support community engagement in HEIs: Surveying the territory; Building alliances; Making your case; and being prepared for challenges.

"My colleague can talk to anyone. He spotted our Dean on the train and decided to go and tell him all about Science Shops. He has a really persuasive way with him and he was able to do this, I never could!"

(New Science Shop)



STEP ONE:
SURVEY THE TERRITORY

Getting to know your HEI and the broader government policy context for the work of the Science Shop is the first part of successful policy development. How to go about this will vary from one HEI to another. Each HEI is unique. Some are very formal and it is difficult to break through layers of administration. Others are much more informal and it is easier to directly approach people in different areas. Desk research is a good starting point regardless of HEI structures.

Get to know the policy context in your HEI by doing desk and background research:

- Read key documents - strategic plans, research and teaching strategies for the HEI and for academic or administrative departments. *What are the key priorities the HEI/department are delivering on? Where can the Science Shop model best make a contribution? Who writes the strategic plan? What are the timescales for the next version? Where is the HEI/department having trouble delivering on the strategic plans?*

- Examine funding streams and what they are designed to deliver. *Can The Science Shop link to any existing funding streams? Is it able to deliver added value? Is it able to deliver on an area that is currently underachieving?*

- Talk to colleagues and friends who know the policy context – do you know anyone who is very good at policy influence? *Can they lobby on your behalf? Can you use them to practice your elevator pitch(see Figure 6)? Are there people outside the HEI who can break through the structures?*

- Get to know the agenda of your Rector/VC/Dean/Head of School – you may want to focus first on the person you have most access to, but it is worth knowing about the others as well. Read their documents, look at their research interests, read their biographies, Google them and see what comes up. *Are they on social media? Follow them. Do they have a blog? Can you see any points of connection to what The Science Shop is doing? Be prepared for a time when you may meet them unexpectedly.*

- Get to know the formal and informal agendas in relevant academic departments. *Which are more linked to CSO agendas? Where do they have trouble getting experience for students? Where are the opportunities in the curriculum? Check formal requirements for academic skills for students/ graduates and see how science shop projects can support these.*

- Look out for other documents that may be useful – anything that comes across your desk, think about it through the frame of Science Shop – academic quality assurance documents may help, as may academic council reports or minutes.

- Watch out for opportunities and threats - who will support or work against Science Shop agendas? *Keep a general watch on what is happening in the university, use contacts to keep in touch with who is working on what.*

STEP TWO:
BUILD ALLIANCES

Find the people who are likely to be supportive of the work you are doing. Some may support you on a personal or collegial basis. Others may be supportive of the transformative effect of the work on students or on CSOs.

- Analyse your social and professional networks to see where there are people who might support the Science Shop. Look across the academic structures.

- Practice your arguments. Talk to colleagues and friends about why you are committed to the Science Shop. See what connects with people. See what they want to know and whether they have any problems with the concept. If necessary, identify training to help you with this.

- Create an exemplar project (see Figure 5 below).

- Make use of tools developed within international networks – they can lend credibility to your arguments.

- Attend national and international conferences and events and build links with other Science Shops in your region and internationally – for example the biannual Living Knowledge Conference. Often your senior managers will be persuaded by what is working successfully in other HEIs, particularly those they regard as competitors or leaders.

- Identify venues and opportunities to talk to policy makers about what the Science Shop can do for them – inside and outside the HEI.

- Talk to people at all levels - sometimes junior people within a HEI can influence policy agendas and are easier to reach than senior people.

- For academics – your head of department or head of research or teaching group may be your route to senior management. Get to know how the Science Shop might fit their interests. Make them your advocate or champion if possible.

- Find venues in the HEI where people connect across faculties and the hierarchy, formally or informally. For example, learning and teaching or research seminars, or the university gym, crèche, dining facilities, etc. Where do people go to connect with others?

- Develop relationships with policymakers – once you've found what they're interested in and their key targets and deliverables, find ways to connect them to the Science Shop agendas.

"One Professor realised that the project was carried out in the town where she was from, and something started to click"

STEP THREE:
MAKE YOUR CASE

Once you get to know the agendas of your senior managers, the next step is to start to lobby them. There are softer and harder lobbying techniques and not all will be appropriate in every context, so choose what is most likely to work within your HEI and what works best for your skill set. The first goal is to make sure that policy makers know what you do, the second step is to try to involve them (even in an honorary capacity) and the third goal is to get them to participate.

"We don't really lobby, but we do go to places where we know people with influence will be and we make presentations and talk to them afterwards"
(Community Engagement Initiative)

Inform by:
- Inviting people to your events, sending them information and keeping them in touch with what you are doing. Get in touch with their secretary and see if you can get time held in their diary to attend your event.
- Using internal communication routes, magazines, staff newsletters etc to make sure your work is known within the HEI.
- Getting public profile for successful projects - use your HEI's press office or build links with local press. Take good photographs and get consent to use them publicly. Make videos if possible.
- Using social media - website, Twitter, Facebook and linking to the people you are seeking to influence.
- Developing a website to highlight your work.

See figure 5 for examples of websites, leaflets and videos from existing Science Shops.

Involve by:
- Giving senior managers an honorary role, for example in an advisory board or a student awards panel.
- Taking photos and videos which include senior managers (with their consent to use them for publicity).

Participate by:
- Contacting relevant staff to make sure you are on the mailing list for policy consultations.
- Reading draft policy documents and commenting on them, adding in specific words where possible. Small and specific changes are often easier to implement than big changes.
- Ensuring that any targets you add to documents are deliverable by you personally or by trusted partners - at this level, success is vital.
- Going to policy consultations and telling policy makers why and how the Science Shop delivers on their agendas. Asking them directly to write it in, giving them direct words where possible to make it easier for them.
- Volunteering or getting nominated for policy working groups, strategic committees, boards, advisory groups etc where possible to help build connections.
- Going to places where policy makers will be and talking to them.
- Watching out for opportunities for informal discussion - using people you know to help.
- Keeping a watching brief on what is coming in the future - for example EC policy.

FIGURE 3:
CREATING AN EXEMPLAR PROJECT

- For academics, look for a manageable research topic, ideally within your own academic area
- For administrators, identify a supervisor who is supportive of the Science Shop concept and has a flexible approach
- Pick a topic that will gain interest within your HEI – either because of the subject area or because it targets a geographic or other area of strategic importance
- Find a good student who is likely to produce a strong result and who is likely to speak positively about the learning from the project
- Work with an organisation who understand that this is a pilot project and is enthusiastic about the concept as well as the output – someone who will speak positively about the idea even if outcomes aren't perfect
- Take plenty of photos or video footage and get permission to use them publicly

FIGURE 4:
DEVELOPING YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

It is important to have a strong elevator pitch ready for the times when you unexpectedly meet a policy or decision-maker. For example, if you meet a Pro-Vice Chancellor over lunch or your Head of College in a lift, and you get an opportunity to pitch your Science Shop, what do you say to them? A pre-prepared 'elevator pitch' (so called as it is meant to be delivered in the time it takes you to take an elevator ride) is a 30 second - 2 minute piece that could outline:

- The name of the initiative (a snappy name is useful), your name and role, a short summary of your goals and activities, key achievements. If possible, identify an issue currently concerning senior management in the HEI. Draw clear links between your work and the strategic needs of your School/College/University. Ensure they know how to contact you for further information.
- The key point is to emphasise the "so what?" element: our initiative, if supported, can help you/the School/College/University meet its goals/deliverables/tasks/key performance indicators (KPIs) in the area of University/National policy, strategic plans, etc. in the following way(s)…

To deliver an 'elevator pitch' effectively, experience suggests that there is a need for academic staff in particular - who may be discipline, teaching or research-focused - to become knowledgeable about the bureaucracy of their HEI, the names and roles of key policymakers, the specifics of School/College/University strategic plans and KPIs, and relevant county or national education/research policies which can be linked to a rationale for CBR activities. For some, this may involve an uncomfortable closeness with the language of new-managerialism; however, it is possible to translate the unrelated language of HEI 'business' into more appropriate language to describe civic engagement activities such as CBR.

STEP FOUR:
PREPARE TO MOBILISE

Almost every longstanding Science Shop has experience of having someone in a position of authority who does not understand what they do or support what they do. Many have also faced budget or staffing cuts due to changing priorities or overall reductions in HEI funding. Successful Science Shops have understood the need to keep engaging with people at a broad level across their HEI so that they have strong support if a threat emerges. Some have also successfully shifted the focus of what they do whilst keeping the main goals of the work the same. It is important to work with every new manager and find a way to connect, mobilising other supporters where necessary. It is vital to anticipate this threat and be prepared!

Prepare by:
- Understanding that policy and strategies continually move on. Many successful Science Shops have reinvented themselves where necessary.
- Ensuring that The Science Shop is written into as many different policy areas and strategic aims as possible. This means it can continue to exist even if one area loses priority.
- Continuing to maintain a listening ear and build relationships. You may rely on these relationships if a threat emerges.
- Continuing to use PR mechanisms to ensure there is an information flow on successful projects and to keep the project in the public eye and visible. Invisible projects are much easier to cut. See figure 5 overleaf for examples on how other Science Shops do this.
- Continue to work with international colleagues to help develop new ideas and for mutual support

Conclusion
This guide has suggested a range of practical actions to help new and emerging Science Shops examine the policy context within their HEI and understand how they can influence it. More than anything, being aware and prepared is vital. It is important to both create and seize opportunities and to have the arguments ready ahead of time. Different people will develop different styles of communicating policy information; these guidelines aim to help you develop yours.

I commented on a paper for the HEI ... adding in the words 'and community' where business was mentioned. (The policymaker) was really grateful because I was the only person who had commented at all... now community is written right through our Educational Philosophy'
(new Science Shop)

FIGURE 5:
RESOURCES

Leaflets and newsetters
Queen's University Belfast Science Shop
http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/ScienceShop/FileStore/Filetoupload,259705,en.pdf
DIT Students Learning With Communities leaflet
http://www.communitylinks.ie/students-learning-with-communities/information-for-students/looking-for-a-research-topic-final-year-or-postgraduate/
Vrije Universiteit Brussels Newsletter *http://www.wetenschapswinkel.be/Nieuwsflash/nieuwsflash_11.html*

Module
University College Cork Community Academic Research Links
http://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/module/
http://www.asph.org/UserFiles/Module4.pdf
http://individual.utoronto.ca/sadaf/resources/cbpr2007.pdf

Photographs
University College Cork Community Academic Research Links
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s3w6b68zffsf5eg/W3jd5iO3By

Publications
Wageningen Science Shop - publications
http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/science-shop/Publications-and-reports.htm
Free University of Brussels Science Shop
http://www.vub.ac.be/wetenschapswinkel/publicaties/thesisonderzoeken.htm
DIT Students Learning With Communities – newsletters.
http://www.communitylinks.ie/students-learning-with-communities/publications/

Social Media - Twitter
Living Knowledge Network, Europe *@scienceshops*
National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, UK *@nccpe*
London School of Economics Impact Blog, UK *@lseimpactblog*
Community University Engagement Project, UK *@cuppbrighton*
Simon Fraser University Engagement, Canada *@sfuengage*
Pascal Observatory *@pascalobservatory*
UNESCO Chair for CBR and Social Responsibility in Higher Education *@buddhall*

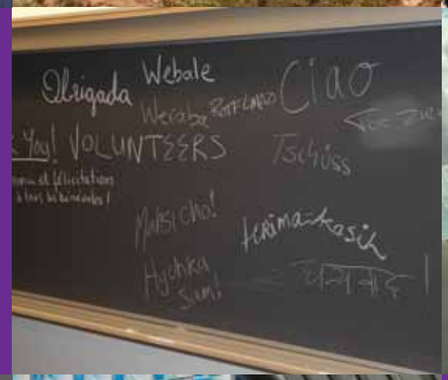
Videos
Queen's University Belfast Science Shop
www.qub.ac.uk/scisho
http://www.youtube.com/user/qubsshop?feature=watch
Dublin Institute for Technology's Students Learning With Communities
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8saFZ15QE9E
Free University of Brussels Science Shop
http://www.vub.ac.be/wetenschapswinkel/
University College Cork, Ireland, Community Academic Research Links
http://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/

"One needs to talk to every new person in power and make the case for a Science Shop again"

(Established Science Shop)

"I'm well connected, better than a lot of people more senior than me. I sit on committees and on strategy groups and it means I get talking to a lot of people and they know me….often I can move things on a bit"

(Senior Manager)



"Just try it – I was told at the start that these colleagues would not be interested in the Science Shop but they were!"

(New Science Shop)

"We got a new manager who is less interested in Science Shops and now I need to mobilise all positive forces with me"

(Established Science Shop)