

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT, ADVOCACY, & LOBBYING EVIDENCE- TO-IMPACT COLLABORATIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative (EIC) is a research center at Penn State University that aims to improve the dissemination of evidence and impact of research on social wellbeing. The Research-to-Policy Collaboration (RPC) is a nonpartisan research translation model utilized by EIC to facilitate connections between researchers and policymakers. Policy associates implementing the RPC model provide consultation using methodologies that are informed by research evidence. The RPC approach is agenda-neutral and apolitical prioritizing scientific evidence that is both data driven and objective. EIC oversees consultation on implementing the RPC model in partnership with other researchers and organizations.

PURPOSE

This document delineates the standards and procedures for legislative engagement that organization members are expected to abide by when representing the EIC, its governing institution Penn State University, or when using restricted federal funds and resources. The *Institutional Policy on Legislative Engagement, Advocacy, & Lobbying* has been developed by EIC to ensure that all organization members are aware of and understand federal, state, and institutional definitions and regulations regarding lobbying and advocacy. This document seeks to facilitate compliance with these policies and outline acceptable policy-related activities.

All views, opinions, or recommendations expressed by EIC or via the RPC model are solely representative of EIC and are not associated with or representative of Penn State University.

The policies described herein do not limit the individual rights of members to engage in lobbying or advocacy in their personal lives when they are not representing EIC or Penn State University, using organizational or institutional resources, or using federal research funding.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Advocacy:** Engaging or communicating with congresspersons, government officials, or other government employees to prompt action on an issue. Advocacy consists of a wide variety of activities, including, but not limited to, nonpartisan education (i.e., the provision of comprehensive and nonpartisan research, data, and information on issues or topics pertaining to legislation).
2. **Lobbying:** Engaging or communicating with congresspersons, government officials, or other government employees to influence the outcome of specific legislation.
 - a. **Direct Lobbying:** Engaging with any legislative member to support or oppose specific legislation.

- b. **Indirect Lobbying (Grassroots Lobbying):** Urging the public to contact legislative staff or otherwise influencing public opinion to support or oppose specific legislation.
 - c. **Lobbying Activities:**
 - Attempting to **influence specific** legislation or **advocating** for the **adoption** or **rejection** of legislation
 - Writing materials or preparing argument(s) that **support a specific policy position** or **specific recommendation**
 - Preparing and planning for **lobbying communications**
 - Holding strategy meetings to coordinate lobbying
 - Participating in coalition meetings about **specific legislation**
3. **Restricted Federal Funding:** Any funding provided by a government agency (e.g., National Institutes of Health) is **strictly prohibited** from being used for any lobbying activities. Federal funding includes monetary awards and resources including but not limited to paid time, grant funded travel, institutional email addresses.

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

EIC and the RPC model do **not** attempt to influence the adoption or rejection of specific legislation. EIC also does not provide positions on specific legislation. Using the RPC model, EIC may directly provide research expertise and relevant scientific information to congresspersons, government officials, or other government employees upon request. EIC may also use the RPC model to work with other researchers, organizations, and universities to facilitate connections between research experts and government officials. As part of these partnerships, other organizations may provide specific research expertise and relevant scientific information to members of congress and related staff. Legislative activities conducted through the EIC or via the RPC model will remain nonpartisan and will not be used to influence outcomes or make specific recommendations for specific legislation. Additionally, EIC may use the RPC model to work in collaboration with researchers and other organizations to develop educational materials, such as fact sheets. Documents and materials created through partnerships that have been approved by EIC will be designated as such (e.g., with an RPC model logo). The independent views expressed by the organizations or individual researchers involved in the RPC model are not reflective of EIC as an entity. Additionally, legislative activities and related communication conducted by organizations or individual researchers **during personal time outside of work with the** RPC model are **not** representative of EIC.

ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

EIC may communicate with policymakers and engage in legislative activities that are non-partisan and that do not constitute lobbying. These activities may include, but are not limited to:

1. **General Advocacy** – in alignment with policies outlined in this document and in consultation with RPC’s co-directors, staff may engage in, but are not limited to, the activities listed below:

- Sharing best practices and success stories, including **model** legislation
- Making available **nonpartisan** analysis, study or research
- Examining or discussing **broad**, social, economic and similar problems
- Updating an organization's members on the status of legislation, **without** a call to action
- Providing technical assistance or advice to legislative body in **response to a written request**
- Communicating with a legislative body regarding matters which might affect the existence of a tax-exempt organization
- Building coalitions
- Providing **comments** or **research** on administrative/agency rules or regulations

2. **Lobbying Exceptions** – EIC may engage in lobbying activities or communication, **only** when criteria are met for one of the four exceptions listed below:

- a. **Technical assistance** – EIC may respond to a request made by a legislative body or committee to make recommendations regarding specific legislation. EIC may respond to this request if **both** of the following criteria are met:
 - the request must be made in writing by the entire legislative body or committee **and** the expertise is provided to the entire legislative body or committee (i.e., not just one side, or a select few members).
- b. **Nonpartisan Analysis, Study, or Research** – EIC may express an opinion or view related to specific legislation **only** when the following **two** criteria are met:
 - The discussion provided must be fair and comprehensive (e.g., a neutral and objective report comprising relevant facts that allow an individual to form their own opinion or conclusion of the evidence regardless of the opinion or view expressed by EIC).
 - The document or report is broadly disseminated to the public (e.g., conference presentations, media outlets, articles or reports made accessible online).

If the above **two** conditions are met, EIC may express an opinion or view related to specific legislation and include an indirect call to action (e.g., listing the legislators involved). Researchers **cannot** include a direct call to action (e.g., telling readers to contact the legislators).

- c. **Examinations of Broad Social, Economic, or Similar Problems** – EIC may discuss broad social, economic, or similar problems without expressing a view on specific legislation. Under this exception, opinions and suggestions can be provided if they do not pertain to specific legislation or include a call to action.
- d. **Self-Defense** – EIC may engage in direct lobbying activities only when specific legislation directly threatens the EIC's powers as an organization, duties, tax-

exempt status, and/or deductibility of contributions. Calls to action are not allowed under this exemption.

Periodically, RPC staff will be responsible for reviewing and updating this institutional policy document to align with RPC's most up-to-date procedures and organizational mission. This review will be done in consultation with EIC Co-Directors and Implementation Director.

RESPONSIBILITIES

EIC is responsible for understanding Penn State University's institutional policies governing acceptable legislative engagement activities. EIC understands that the policies established by Penn State University may differ from federal code and/or the EIC's organizational policies.

Uncertainty or other questions related to institutional definitions and policies will be directed to EIC Co-Directors. Consultation will be sought as needed to ensure RPC correctly implements and adheres to institutional policies. The EIC will provide any required disclosures of activity, finances, and time in adherence with policies set forth by Penn State University.