

For HEPAP meeting 9 May 2024



PCAST Letter:

# Advancing Public Engagement with the Sciences

Presentation given at PCAST meeting July 2023

# PCAST Reports

- Established by Executive Order, PCAST is an independent Federal Advisory Committee comprised of individuals from industry, academia, and non-profit sectors
- A PCAST Working Group studies the topic, solicits information from diverse stakeholders, and drafts a report
- To release a report, full Council must make the decision in public, which includes discussion and voting
- Recommendations must reflect the Council's independent judgment, and thus *PCAST reports are not subject to any interagency review or approval process*
- Reports are public, except if classified



# PCAST Science Communications Group Members

- **Saul Perlmutter** (Berkeley) ***co-lead***
- **Vicki Sato** (Harvard Business School, retired) ***co-lead***
- **Phil Venable** (Google) ***co-lead***
- **Lisa Cooper** (Johns Hopkins)
- **Eric Horvitz** (Microsoft)
- **Jennifer Richeson** (Yale)
- **Terry Tao** (UCLA)



# Organizations & Experts Consulted

## **Federal:**

Office of Science & Technology Policy  
Office of Management and Budget  
Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
Department of Energy  
National Institutes of Health

## **External:**

Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Annenberg Public Policy Center)  
Arthur Lupia (U. Michigan)  
Art O'Leary (Electoral Commission of Ireland)  
Jennifer Pahlka (Co-Founder, U.S. Digital Response)  
Renee DiResta (Stanford Internet Observatory)  
Beth Goldberg (Jigsaw/Google)



# Science & Technology Impact Everyone

Americans generally have confidence that scientists will act in the public's best interests

But there are stresses:

- changing media and information landscape
- legacies of societal inequities
- an overall decline of trust in institutions

Americans increasingly want their values and priorities to be integral to policy development and the decisions that affect their lives

**Goal:** public policies that are informed by both scientific understandings and community values

To achieve this:

- Provide access to accurate and trusted scientific information AND
- Facilitate dialogue between government R&D agencies, experts, and communities



# From “science communication” to “science engagement”

We learned that what we need isn't simply more *talking*.

What we need is more *listening*.

Enable Americans to communicate their values, concerns, priorities, and interests to adjudicate and legitimize policy choices

Foster inclusive, participatory engagement among scientists, policymakers, and the public so that all can be part of ongoing, productive discussions and community-building

This will lead to more effective policies regarding our health, our environment, our national security, and our general well-being



# Engaging with Americans to develop public policies informed by science and community values

Examples:

- **Historical:** *Recombinant DNA research in Cambridge, MA*
- **Current:** *Climate Change Response Framework*





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LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT  
Advancing Public Engagement with the Sciences

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Executive Office of the President  
President's Council of Advisors on  
Science and Technology

August 2023





# Recommendation 1

Issue a clarion call to federal agencies to make science and technology communication and public engagement a core component of their mission and strategy. An essential pillar of this effort is ensuring that experts in participatory public engagement are included in agency senior-level policy development and decision-making processes.



## Recommendation 2

Establish a new office to support Federal agencies in their continuing efforts to develop and build participatory public engagement and effective science and technology communications. This office should consist of individuals with a range of expertise who can partner with or be deployed to agencies, including assistance in the use of social science-informed techniques for participatory engagement and cutting-edge digital technologies. The U.S. Digital Service within the Office of Management and Budget and the 18F office within the Government Service Administration may be useful models for this proposed office.



# Responses to the PCAST Letter, *Advancing Public Engagement with the Sciences*

- A GSA convening of representatives from 16 federal agencies was inspired by the PCAST letter, discussing how to elevate the importance of public engagement, particularly two-way, within agency activities.
- OMB call to [Provide feedback to inform OMB's Federal framework, guidelines, and leading practices for public participation and community engagement \(PPCE\) activities](#) (Due May 17 2024)
- OMB/GSA “Challenge.gov”: [Public Participation and Community Engagement Evidence Challenge](#) (Ends May 21 2024)





## Comments in the HEPAP context

