



HESI SDG Publishers Compact Fellows: Top Action Tips

Communicating implications 1: Policymakers, journalists and the public

Practical information and guidance for authors of research articles on communicating practical applications of their research about SDGs to non-specialist audiences

The goal

Support an emerging international norm that the abstracts of articles which have practical implications for policymakers, journalists, science writers and the public need to include a plain language section to share that information, to help achieve UN SDGs.

The need

If a research finding or systematic review has implications for policy, society or individual members of the public, it is important to communicate clearly and concisely in a discoverable, accessible way.

The underlying message to the public is often filtered through the press, so it is important to consider journalists and science writers and those working in public relations and the media to help get the right message out and maintain trust in scientific research.

Since not all audiences are experts in a particular area, avoid technical terms and be clear and succinct in how you write.

When to do this

Not all research is directly relevant to policy or the general public; consider whether material you are sharing is likely to fulfill one or more of the following:

- Change best practice in a way that informs policy
- Helps policymakers re-assess existing policies
- Aid decision-making amongst the wider public
- Answer practical questions about beneficial changes that the public can make themselves.

If you feel your research findings meet one or more of these requirements, read on for further ideas on how and where to share them.

Where to share practical implications

As article abstracts are made freely available to all and can then be seen by anyone, we recommend adding bullet points to your abstract highlighting content that relates to SDGs. Take every opportunity to share practical and policy points as widely as possible. For example, use social media, *Kudos* or [ScienceOpen](#) or your own academic or institutional website to increase the impact of your findings and drive positive decisions aimed at bringing about change for the wider good. Remember, always link social media and web posts to the original article.

How to share practical implications

Some journals and publishers already request short bullets or plain language summaries (PLS) to be added at the end of an abstract to summarise key policy or societal implications. This practice is likely to become the norm, but if *Author Guidelines* do not yet include such advice, we recommend the following:

- Decide, and make clear in your headings, who summary bullets are intended for (such as policymakers and/or the general public) and tailor what you write accordingly
- Provide 2-5 bullet points relating to specific SDGs
- Always be as clear and succinct
- Make sure that information is understandable by non-specialists and avoid using technical terms whenever alternatives are available
- Start with a point that clearly states policy/practical problems that you are addressing
- Make sure that key information comes first to catch the attention of busy readers (because not everyone will read through to the end)
- Share what your findings mean in real terms; e.g.: ‘Medicine X works better if taken with food’ or ‘Without restriction of air pollution levels to below Y, deaths from respiratory conditions in affected areas are X% higher’
- Ask a non-specialist to read the bullets to test for clarity
- Consider publishing a policy brief based on the outcome of your research; (see links below for additional guidance.
- For an example of a published policy brief see [here](#).

Resources

Plain language summaries (PLS)

- American Geophysical Union - [Guide to writing plain language summaries](#)
- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) [policy on communicating with and involving the public in decision-making](#)
- Envision Pharma Group - [Plain language summaries \(PLS\) of publications toolkit](#)
- ISMPP endorsed multi-stakeholder study (2021) - ‘[Plain language summaries of publications of company-sponsored medical research](#)’
- Kudos - [Free service for hosting your plain language summary](#)

- ScienceOpen - [My ScienceOpen](#) offers free tools to promote your plain language summary
- Taylor & Francis - [How to write a plain language summary](#)
- One Earth - [Science for Society statements](#) box in Research Articles (scroll down this page)
- Patient Focused Medicines Development (PFMD) - '[How-To](#)' [guide for multi-stakeholder co-creation](#)
- Open Pharma Recommendations for PLS (2022): [Infographic: Open Pharma recommendations for plain language summaries of peer-reviewed medical journal publications](#)

Policy implication resources

- Cambridge Public Policy SRI - [Policy Impact, A 'how to' guide for researchers](#)
- Emerald Publishing - [Publish your policy brief with us](#) and [The do's and don'ts of brief writing for a policy-making audience | Emerald Publishing](#), and an [example policy brief](#)
- Nature Energy Policy Briefs: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41560-019-0489-9>
- Browse [POST](#) for examples of policy briefing notes and active research topics- <https://post.parliament.uk/how-to-write-a-policy-briefing/>
- Taylor & Francis - [Key Policy Highlights guide](#)