

ESAL

Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally

Playbook Guide - ESAL Playbook: Research a Policy Issue or Initiative

Purpose

- Learn about a specific policy or initiative in your community that you find interesting.
- Use the resources around you to delve deeper into a local issue.

Ideal Outcomes

- Gain the skills to understand the details of policies that directly impact the place where you live.
- Understand the political context for existing and proposed policies.
- Become more engaged and active at the local level.

How To Get Started

- **Read your local paper.** Regional and local newspapers are often overlooked in favor of national publications, but they can be a treasure trove of information. Your city, or even neighborhood, may have a local news source.

Tip: Scan your local publications to follow issues that you care about.

- **Visit your local government website.**
 - Local government websites contain a whole host of resources including but not limited to: news updates, public programs, links to government agencies, as well as official documents and public meeting information.
- **Look up local organizations or nonprofits that work on the issue you are interested in.**
 - There is often an organization in your area that is already working on the issue you care about, whether it be climate change, education, energy, land use, or something unique to your community. These organizations can offer policy-related knowledge or direct you to related sources.
- **Attend a public meeting.**
 - To understand the issues facing your community, try attending a city council, agency, or committee meeting. County governments and state governments also conduct much of their business publicly. Meeting agendas are often posted ahead of time so you can see whether a policy of interest is being discussed. They can also be great places to meet others interested in the same issue.
- **Connect with local leaders and elected representatives.**
 - Local elected representatives and government staff are very accessible to constituents. Take the time to network and talk to those who work on policies interesting to you. Learn about the issues firsthand from them.

Tip: Get face time by scheduling a coffee meeting with your city council member.

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