

How and Why Research and Professional Organizations Advocate for Building Resiliency

Principal Investigator: Sharyl Rabinovici, PEER Visiting Scholar
Student Investigator: Sahar Derakhshan, PEER
University of California Berkeley

OVERVIEW

This poster summarizes a recent review of approaches that seven major US research institutions, professional organizations, and regional associations are using to engage in policy processes at the local, state, and federal levels. This is a purposively selected subset of a larger pool of organizations active in this field. We reviewed web material and documents pertaining to each organization’s policy agenda and advocacy efforts, emphasizing their process and action agendas related to resilience. Key findings include:

- “Empowerment” approaches were the most common. That is, most organizations had programs to **inform members** about policy issues that relate to the organization’s mission, and in some cases **help members to take action** such as letter writing.
- With the exception of ABAG and UCS, policy efforts tended to be small and to operate on a **volunteer basis** or with a **very limited budget**.
- Funding for **research about policy** topics was less common than advocacy efforts related to **scientific funding**.
- Practices and level of effort depended on the **core purpose** of the organization, the **intended audience** for the policies, and the organization’s **priorities**.

Other policy and advocacy models exist that emphasize the leading role institutions like PEER can play in the earthquake safety advocacy world, like choosing a National Earthquake Lobby day to encourage participation from organizations and members; or have even more visible and proactive programs to teach about and empower students, researchers and academia to engage in appropriate ways with public decision making processes related to their areas of expertise.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEER INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES

Things PEER Does Currently:

- Bringing Science to Critical Issues** : The PEER Center’s involvement in research, analysis, and working with scientists and academia, facilitates building resilience by shaping evidence-based solutions.
- Promoting Access to Science** : Knowledge is power, and with access to scientific knowledge and advancements, communities are empowered, and PEER Center is providing the technical and scientific information to inform policy on risk management for the community.

Opportunities for More Involvement:

- Support Applied Research Initiatives** to increase impact.
- Build Coalitions and Deepen Partnerships** with other active professional organizations involved in building resilience
- Involve Members** in sharing their opinion and making decisions about PEER’s position on advocacy issues. Consider starting a public policy committee.

HOW RESEARCHERS CAN ADVOCATE

- Be an Active Member** of institutions and support their efforts to organize on behalf of critical societal concerns.
- Talk about Their Expertise** and how it affects building resiliency with people and civic leaders in their community.
- Email The Elected Representative**, especially during “policy windows” after disaster events, during budget negotiations, and when new legislation is actively being considered.
- Write an Op-Ed** for a local newspaper.

Organization	Audience	Description of Approach: Why and How
The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)	Civil engineers and elected officials	Process: Public policy committee develops policy positions covering a wide range of issues, with a strong bottom-up approach Example Projects: -Annual List of Priority Issues (Federal and State) identified via annual survey of members -Click and Connect with Congress – Accessible website for members to learn about policy issues that affect their profession and identify elected officials -Legislative Fly-In : Provides participants with an inside look at the political process
Seismological Society of America (SSA)	Congressional committees	Process: Government relations committee develops and supports variety of positions, with an active approach Example Projects: -Interact with congressional committees – Educating members on policy issues -Active legislative agenda - Issuing resolutions or position statements on seismic matters -Provide information on seismic issues to U.S. legislators and staff
Western States Seismic Policy Council (WSSPC)	State and local governments in the western US	Process: Three committees develop policy recommendations on regional and national seismic issues, and is supported by a strong member involvement . Members can propose a policy statement and discuss and vote for new positions.
Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction (ACEHR)	National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	Process: The Committee is building coalition by considering the recommendations of the USGS and the Scientific Earthquake Studies Advisory Committee (SESAC) The committee is representative of the stakeholder community and provides support for a bottom-up approach .
The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM)	Managers and elected officials	Process: ASFPM has a bottom-up approach and addresses flood management policies both at the national level and for state and local programs. They take an active role and if critical recommendations are not be authorized under current law, they suggest Congress should change the law to better serve the public interest.
Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)	Cities, counties and special districts of the San Francisco Bay Area.	Process: ABAG’s “Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan” has action items focused on local government actions , identify the local government department in charge and focus on the explicit interest in that region. The advocacy is strengthened since each of the local governments that have adopted the plan have indicated the policy actions that they have undertaken.
Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)	Scientists, advocates and citizens	Process: UCS advocates for a variety of issues with a strong bottom-up approach Example Projects: -Action Center - Have one main priority policy action item with direct links to send letters to policy makers -Campaigns and Actions - Tips and Tools for advocates on how to write a letter to policy makers or meet with them, with detailed information on the legislative process

This project was made possible with support from: