



2026 Researcher Guide

[Researcher name]

Jefferson County, Colorado

This project is funded by the William T. Grant Foundation and led by researchers Elizabeth Day and Deborah Han (University of Oregon) and Adam Levine (Johns Hopkins University). For questions, please contact projectLINK@uoregon.edu.



Welcome to Project LINK!

We are so excited to have you as part of this initiative aiming to facilitate **Local Integration** of **New Knowledge** between researchers and policymakers. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a one-stop shop for all resources, tools, and tips for building connections with your local policymakers.

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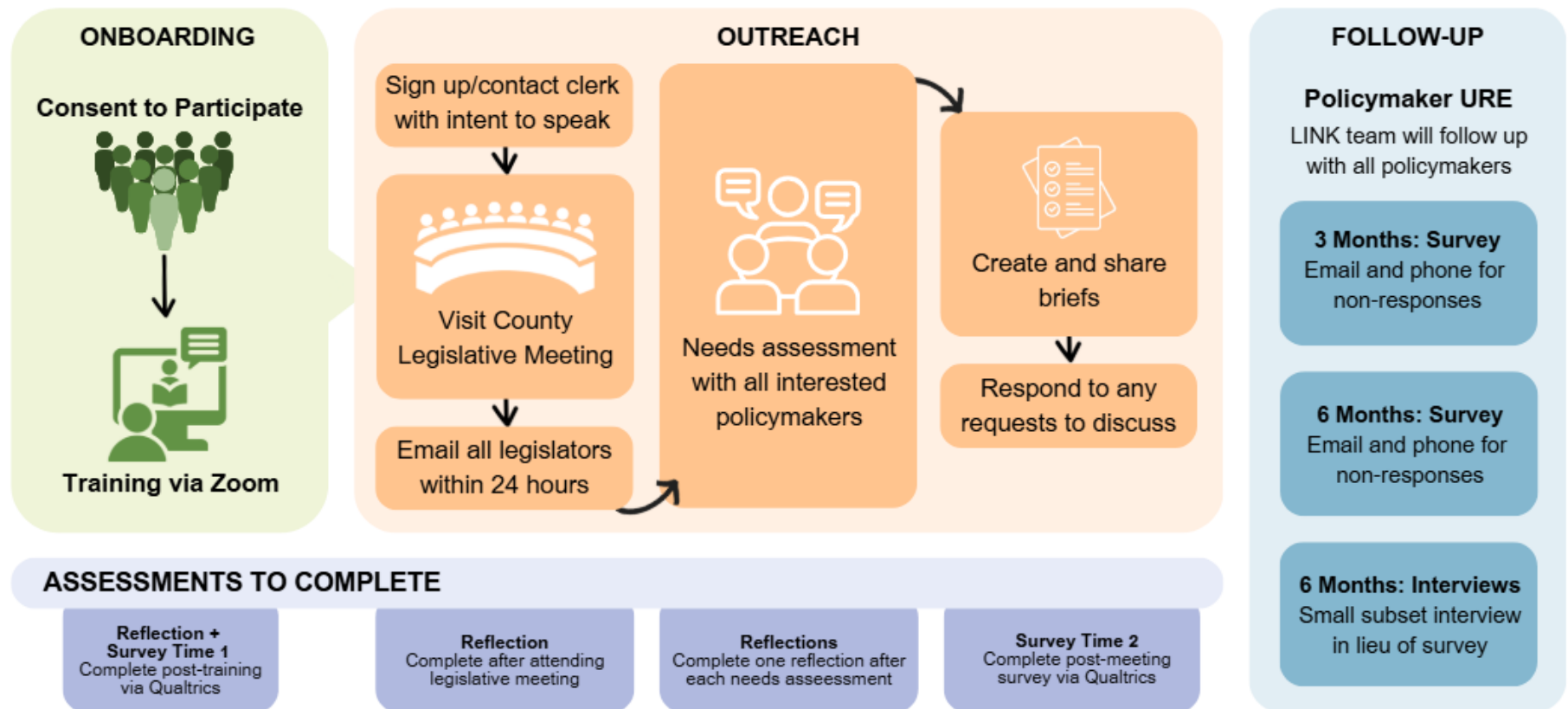
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Sharing this Resource

Please do not share this resource widely (e.g., using it as part of a course or sharing widely via professional associations or other workshops) until after June of 2027. If you do share it after that time, please let us know (we would like to let our funders know!) and appropriately cite the guide as follows:

Day E., Han, D., & Levine, A. (2026). Project LINK researcher guide. *Project LINK: Local Integration of New Knowledge*. Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation.

Project Overview





Onboarding

Onboarding for this project includes consenting to participate, completing training and T1 survey, and post-training homework. You've already completed three-fourths of your onboarding!

- ✓ Consent to participate
- ✓ Survey
- ✓ Training via Zoom

Overall reminders:

- Take an honest broker approach (no lobbying)
- Please use your .edu email to communicate with policymakers
- Any questions or concerns? Email linkproject@uoregon.edu
 - There is an Updated FAQ document in your Sharepoint folder; be sure to review it!

TO DO

- ☐ **Send your full name and address to Deborah** linkproject@uoregon.edu so we have it on file for sending you compensation checks.
- ☐ **Complete your first reflection memo.** The reflection memo template is located in your Sharepoint folder.



Outreach: Before Attending the Board of County Commissioners Session

It's time to connect with policymakers! Be sure to watch a previous meeting to get a sense of how things flow.

Contact the Board ([Contact Form](#) or 303-271-8525) to inquire about whether you need to sign up in advance to provide public comment (see email template below) at a Board of County Commissioners Meeting.

Then, read about your county structure, policymakers' backgrounds, and topics that may be of particular interest in your county in preparation for the Board of County Commissioners session.

Upcoming Board of County Commissioners meetings:

The [Jefferson County Calendar](#):

July 14th, 9am

Additional meetings are not listed, but meetings seem to be on Tuesdays at 9am. Check back often for more dates as needed.

Let us know the date of which meeting you will attend. We will email you the day before with reminders. Don't hesitate to reach out at any time during your meeting prep for support!

Note: Even if virtual participation is an option, please sign up for in-person!

TO DO

☐ **Email to confirm board meeting dates and process for signing up to speak.**

To email the Board, please use the template below.

Note: You can adapt this template to ask about upcoming meeting dates and how to sign up for public comment in a single email.

Email text (please use your .edu email):

Dear Board of County Commissioners,

My name is [your preferred name], and I would like to speak during public comment at the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners meeting on [Meeting date]. I will be introducing myself and offering Jefferson County policymakers a free opportunity for connecting with me to share any pressing youth and family issues where a research brief may be helpful for their decision-making.

Is there anything I need to do prior to attending?

Thank you!



- ❑ Email linkproject@uoregon.edu to let us know which meeting you will attend.
- ❑ **Review your county profile** in your Sharepoint folder. You don't need to memorize anything, but getting to know the basics of your county policymaking body is important to signal you are an informed, thoughtful researcher.
- ❑ **Watch at least one recording** from a recent public meeting from Jefferson County. Visit <https://www.jeffco.us/4528/Meeting-Videos-and-Documents> to find the recordings.

Things to look for:

- Get a sense of where you'll stand (usually at a podium or microphone stand)
- Listen to understand the general flow of the meeting (formal procedures and common nomenclature)



Outreach: Attending the Board of County Commissioners Meeting

Attending the Board of County Commissioners meeting will be your first chance to meet policymakers and introduce the initiative.

- Dress in business attire
- Arrive early
- Review your county profile and watch a recording before attending
- Remember, talk to them like you're a neighbor, not an academic!

TO DO

☐ Have your introduction script accessible (no need to read verbatim!):

Thank you for having me. My name is [your preferred name here] and the reason I'm visiting is because I'm part of a new initiative to connect researchers (like me) with local policymakers in counties across the United States. The project covers any child and family policy challenge you're facing in our county.

Here's a bit about how it works: First, I'm visiting to introduce myself. After the meeting, I'll send follow-up emails describing the initiative and include a way to sign-up to meet with me. I'll also ask you to forward it to others who do work related to children and family issues in our county.

For those who respond, I'll have a short meeting to learn about the child and family policy challenges you're focused on, and where you think research would be helpful. Then based on that, I'll create a tailored research brief with the relevant research, share it with you, and then offer to talk through it and how you might apply it in your county.

All of this is free to you. Our work is funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, which shares our commitment to strengthening connections between research and policy. Thank you for your time. I'm happy to take any questions about how it works, what kinds of topics we might cover, and so on, either now or after the meeting.

☐ Bring something to take notes

☐ Complete your reflection memo within 48 hours of the meeting



Outreach: After the Board of County Commissioners Meeting

Congratulations on successfully attending a Board of County Commissioners meeting! Now it's time to email and coordinate needs assessments. **Please send all emails within 24hrs of the Board of County Commissioners meeting you attend.**

To schedule meetings: Use the scheduling method of your choice. In the past, we have used [Calendly](#), a free online booking platform that easily syncs to Outlook calendars. However, if you prefer to schedule via email or using another scheduling app, please do what works best for you.

TO DO

☐ **Email all policymakers listed below using this script.**

Legislator emails:

Name	Email
Rachel Zenzinger	rzenzing@jeffco.us
Andy Kerr	akerr@jeffco.us
Lesley Dahlkemper	ldahlkem@jeffco.us

Email subject line: Jefferson County follow-up on opportunity to meet

Email text (please cc linkproject@uoregon.edu):

Good afternoon,

I really appreciated the opportunity to speak in front of the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners yesterday. I'm following up to see if you'd like to connect.

Here's a quick reminder about my work. I'm working on a new initiative to connect research and policy at the county level. I know there are many pressing challenges facing youth and families in our county, and that's why my team and I are offering this **free opportunity to talk about child- and family-related research** that would be helpful. We are happy to talk about whatever child- or family-related topic is on your agenda right now.

The process is simple: After a brief phone call to learn more about your needs, I would provide you with a tailored research brief addressing the topic of your choosing. For example, if you are facing a problem like how to support families struggling with substance misuse, we can create a brief that shows how other counties have responded to this problem and/or summarize any additional research literature that can inform the response in your county.

This opportunity is free. Our work is nonpartisan and is funded by the William T. Grant Foundation. We've worked with legislators in counties across upstate New York in the past and are pleased to now be expanding this work.



Would you be interested in a short phone or zoom call? If so, please **schedule a time to chat by emailing me/using this link**. Please also feel free to forward this email to any other policymakers in the county who might be interested in this opportunity.

I look forward to speaking with you!

- ☐ **Send Deborah (linkproject@uoregon.edu) your scheduled meetings.** As meetings are confirmed, please send them to Deborah so that we can keep a record of them.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

Outreach: Needs Assessments with Policymakers

Before you meet, do a quick search for any information on the policymaker(s) with whom you'll be meeting. There may be limited information for agency staff and leaders.

Remember, you are not advocating, you are simply learning their needs and letting them guide the topical focus for the conversation.

Suggested language for your meeting is below in orange. An abridged version of these prompts and language is at the end of this section.

1. Introduce yourself and the project. Instead of focusing on your academic credentials, it's sufficient to simply state:

I'm [your preferred name] and I'm a researcher with [your institution's name]

As a reminder, I'm part of a new initiative called Project LINK to help link up researchers and policymakers. Today, my goal is to learn about challenges facing youth and families in our community where a research brief I create might be helpful for you. I'll also ask you a few questions at the end about how you use research and data in your work. To start, tell me about some pressing challenges you've seen for youth and families in Jefferson County.

2. The goal of the meeting is to establish at least one topic for which you will create a research brief. In our experience, these generally fall into two buckets:
 - Data collection with other counties to find out what they're doing
 - Example: <https://2gen.bctr.cornell.edu/library/probationandschools>
 - If the policymakers suggest you launch a full new study, kindly let them know that is beyond the scope of the project, but we can connect them with a service called Research4Impact that matches researchers with policymakers to do in-depth studies.
 - Literature review to find research on the topic of interest
 - Example: <https://2gen.bctr.cornell.edu/library/caseworkerretention>
- Policymakers may not have a good sense of how research or data can help them; use the meeting as a chance to unpack the challenges they're facing and identify specific ways you might be able to help.
 - Example: "Youth in my county are facing serious mental health struggles." Youth mental health is too broad a topic for a meaningful brief; help them narrow their focus by asking questions such as:

What approaches or strategies are already in place to support youth mental health in your agency/department? What settings are you most interested in for offering supports (e.g., through community programs, schools, home visits, youth sports)? Are you interested in learning about evidence-based strategies from the research literature or more about what other counties are doing? (if yes) Which counties would be the most helpful to hear from?

The goal is to understand as much of the context of the issue as possible so that you can provide a meaningful brief.

- Some policymakers will know exactly what they need from you.
 - Example: “I need to know what evidence-based programs can be used to help youth involved in both the social services and juvenile justice systems.” In these cases. It may be helpful to know if there are places they have looked already so that your brief can provide new information.

Are there programs or initiatives you're already familiar with so that I can avoid those? Are there particular states or other counties whose work may be particularly relevant for you?

3. Be explicit about what you will provide for them as the meeting wraps up. They may offer you multiple areas where research can inform their work. The maximum number of briefs to offer is two (our team will support you with brief creation), so tell them exactly which topic(s) you plan to address.

It sounds like [issue A], [issue B], and [issue C] are all really important. Is there one or two that you would consider priorities right now? I will plan to create a brief that outlines [issue A] with a specific focus on [give some detail as to what aspect you'll focus on].

4. Confirm with them if this is time sensitive. Most policymakers will say no, but some may have upcoming meetings where this information will be useful.

Do you have a specific deadline for getting this information? I generally aim to have briefs back to policymakers in 2-3 weeks, but if you need it sooner, I can make that happen.

5. Be sure to ask their baseline survey questions verbally at the end of the meeting. If there are multiple people in the room, each one should complete a separate survey.

My last request is for you to complete a very brief survey about research in your work. Your answers will only be viewed by the team leading this study. I will not see them.

Paste link into the chat:

https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cOYk4RrtzidDCHc or share the QR code



TO DO

- ☐ Immediately following the meeting, complete your reflection memo(s).
- ☐ Email us linkproject@uoregon.edu to tell us the topic you'll cover for the brief.

Needs Assessment Protocol Summary

These are suggestions; you do not need to read them verbatim. Use your best judgment for what is relevant to the discussion as it unfolds.

1. Introduce yourself and the project.

I'm [your preferred name] and I'm a researcher with [your institution's name]

As a reminder, I'm part of a new initiative called Project LINK to help connect researchers and policymakers. Today, my goal is to learn about challenges facing youth and families in our community where a research brief I create might be helpful for you. I'll also ask you a few questions at the end about how you use research and data in your work. To start, tell me about some pressing challenges you've seen for youth and families in Jefferson County.

2. Suggested probes for more information on the topic:

- What approaches or strategies are already in place to [topic here] in your agency/department?
- In what ways does your department/agency address this issue already?
- What settings are you most interested in (e.g., community programs, schools, home visitings, youth sports, other relevant settings for their topic)?
- Are there programs or initiatives you're already familiar with so that I can avoid those?
- Are you interested in learning about evidence-based strategies from the research literature or more about what other counties are doing?
 - (if yes) Which counties would be the most helpful to hear from?
- Are there particular states or other counties whose work may be particularly relevant for you?

3. Summarize what you'll do

- It sounds like [issue A], [issue B], and [issue C] are all really important. Is there one or two that you would consider priorities right now?
- I will plan to create a brief that outlines [issue A] with a specific focus on [give some detail as to what aspect you'll focus on].

4. Confirm timing

- Do you have a specific deadline for getting this information? I generally aim to have briefs back to policymakers in 2-3 weeks, but if you need it sooner, I can make that happen.

5. Ask them to complete survey

- My last request is for you to complete a very brief survey about research in your work. Your answers will only be viewed by the team leading this study. I will not see them.



https://oregon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cOYk4RrtzidDCHc

Creating Briefs

Once you've met with policymakers, it's time to start drafting content for the brief (at most, 3-5 pages). While these briefs will not involve new systematic searching for research, we still want to prioritize rigorous existing syntheses as a first stop for evidence for this project. If there is no high-quality synthesis on their topic of interest, turning to high-quality primary studies or highly relevant studies (e.g., using participants from your state) is ideal.

If the policymakers have requested that you collect data for them from other counties, our team can support you with these efforts if needed. **Please flag this for us (email linkproject@uoregon.edu) so we know to jump in for support ASAP.**

We've provided a template for you in your Sharepoint folder to give you a starting point. Please email our team at any point if you need help drafting your content. We are happy to act as a sounding board, think partner, or support you in organizing content. Then, our team will do some light design work on the brief before it's ready to go to the policymaker.

****If another researcher has already created a brief that is relevant and useful for your policymaker, our team will share it with you as a starting point!****

TO DO

- ☐ **Draft** the content for your brief using the template provided in your Sharepoint folder.
- ☐ **Email linkproject@uoregon.edu when you have a first draft** ready for review and design.
- ☐ We will email you when the designed version is in your folder. **Do a full, final review of this draft and note edits where needed.**
- ☐ **We will email you when the final version is ready to distribute.**

Sharing Briefs

Once you have the final version, it will go to the policymaker who requested it. You will repeat this process for each brief you create.

We will send you a link to the online version of the brief to share. Please note, this link is specific to your policymaker! **Please do not use it yourself to publicly distribute your brief. To share your brief with others, use the public link.**

TO DO

- ☐ **Email the brief to the policymaker using the template below.** Please cc linkproject@uoregon.edu on the email.

Hi [policymaker name],

Thank you so much again for taking the time to speak with me! As promised, here is the brief that includes information on [summary of what they requested information on]. To summarize, we found that [brief summary of what is included in the brief].

[add link we provide here]

Hopefully this document will be helpful as you continue to do such great work for the families in Jefferson County! Please feel free to share this with colleagues as you see fit.

Thank you!

- ☐ Only once you have **completed all briefs** and shared them with policymakers, complete your final reflection memo and survey.

Running Checklists

Researcher Training

☒	Complete training on how to engage with policymakers (approx. 2 hours)
☒	Complete survey during training
☐	After training/prior to outreach: Complete reflection memo #1

Policymaker Outreach – Attend a Legislative Session

☐	Email linkproject@uoregon.edu to let us know which session you will attend.
☐	Watch a public meeting from your county
☐	Attend public legislative session
☐	Same day of legislative session: Complete reflection memo #2 after attending
☐	Next day after attending: Email all county legislators with invites

Needs Assessments with Policymakers

☐	Schedule and lead needs assessment(s) with policymaker(s) - Email linkproject@uoregon.edu as these meetings are scheduled
☐	After each meeting(s): - Complete reflection memo #3 (and additional as needed) - Email linkproject@uoregon.edu with the topics you will cover

Preparing and Sharing Evidence

☐	Create tailored research brief for policymaker using the template
☐	Email linkproject@uoregon.edu once first draft is ready for design (if not sooner)
☐	Deliver brief to policymaker

Post-Outreach Data Collection

☐	Complete final reflection memo
☐	Complete researcher survey

Additional Resources

- [National Association of Counties](#)
 - For all things counties (see “About Counties” if you’d like to read more details about governance and explore your county)
- [TrestleLink](#)
 - For policy engagement resources
- [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
 - For state resources if you’d like to learn more about your state overall
- [USA.gov](#)
 - For information on the U.S. government structure
- Gluckman, P. D., Bardsley, A., & Kaiser, M. (2021). Brokerage at the science–policy interface: from conceptual framework to practical guidance. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 8(1), 84. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-021-00756-3>
 - For more information on honest brokering
- Study description for supervisors (we defer to your judgment on sharing this information with your supervisor, just please note that we ask **no media coverage** of the initiative occurs until after May 2027).

I am participating in a study aiming to connect researchers (like me) with local policymakers. As part of this study, I will be attending a county legislative session in our county to introduce myself and offer policymakers a chance to meet one-on-one to discuss pressing issues facing youth and families. I will not be lobbying; the goal of this initiative is to provide policymakers with a research brief that details the evidence on their topic of choosing, *not* to lobby on behalf of any particular interest or entity.

Once the study is completed in Spring 2027, I would be happy to share more details with you or with our communications team if you think they would be interested in the ways I’m actively supporting local policymakers to make evidence-based decisions. The study is led by Elizabeth Day (eaday@uoregon.edu) and Adam Levine (adamseth@jhu.edu) and they are happy to meet if you have any questions I’m unable to answer.