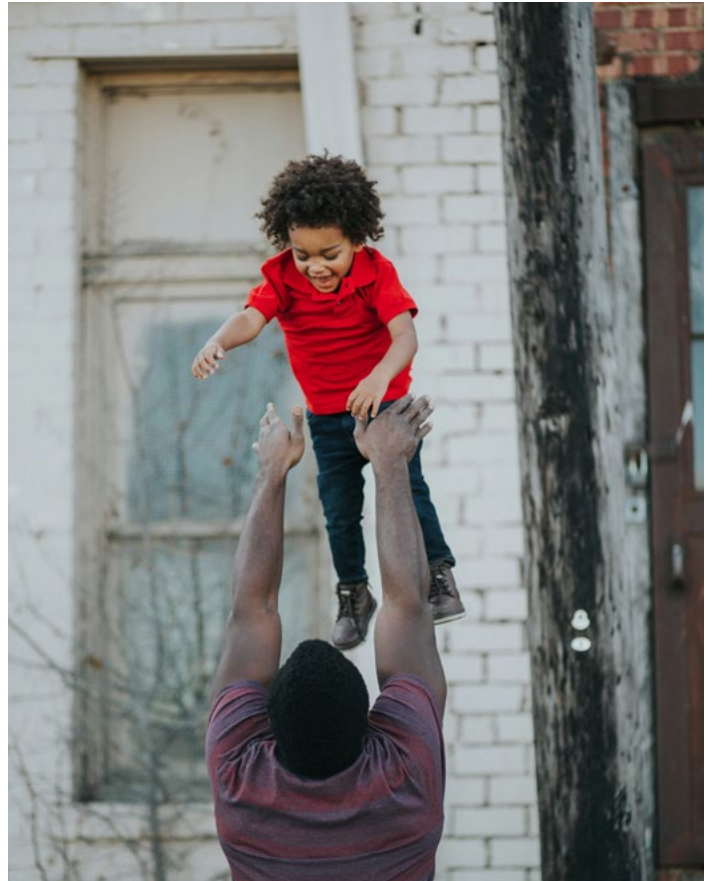


WHY AND HOW TO RESEARCH THE POLICY PRIORITIES OF NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Post-election research builds on research conducted during an election ([see more about candidate research here](#)). While campaign research focuses on where candidates stand on your policy priorities, post-election research seeks to more fully understand the policy priorities of newly elected officials, especially potential PN-3 champions.

Post-election research should identify opportunities for building and leveraging legislative relationships and understanding leaders' policy decision-making – reflecting fundamental theories of power mapping ([more about power mapping here](#)). For example, it is essential to know what other issues your top champions care about and who influences them. Advocates should aim to learn the many factors that influence lawmakers' decision-making and explore both targeted lawmakers and the larger legislative body, whether it's a school board, city council, or state legislature.



Post-Election Research Priorities

- **Don't wait!** Start research immediately after an election (if not sooner). It's crucial to know where your elected officials stand on prenatal to three issues as soon as possible.
- **Identify where lawmakers stand.** Knowing where lawmakers stand on your policy priorities can help you identify new legislative champions (e.g., people willing to spend political capital to advance your policy) for each of the policies you're tracking. Once you identify those potential champions, you should build a fuller profile of what other issues they prioritize so you know where you stand.
- **Identify opportunities for early relationship-building.** Understanding how lawmakers approach your issue, as well as what other issues they care about, helps you build deeper relationships with them – especially with new lawmakers who are eager to build their own relationships and “learn the ropes.” Strong research allows you to enter conversations positioned as a knowledgeable resource.
- **Share knowledge within the movement.** Post-election research can help you to prepare your supporters and allies. For example, research can help you define how an election could impact prenatal to three issues in the next legislative session.

How To Conduct Post-Election Research

- **Gather as much information as possible about lawmakers' decision-making.** Work to determine how lawmakers make decisions and their underlying motivations. Use any knowledge available to you, whether it comes from your prior conversations with lawmakers when they were candidates on the campaign trail or from professional relationships, social networks, online research, or movement allies (see below for sample research questions).
- **Build your team.** Post-election research often works best when informed by many people rather than conducted independently by a single person. If capacity allows, consider having multiple people on your research team to provide a diversity of perspectives and knowledge and minimize potential biases. This can include internal colleagues and coalition partners.
- **Create questions for your team to ask lawmakers directly.** Some questions can only be resolved by asking lawmakers directly. Set aside those questions for get-to-know-you conversations with lawmakers, and aim to hold those conversations as early as possible (far ahead of the next legislative session). Learn more about [creating effective questions for candidates here](#), and learn more about [meeting with lawmakers and asking them questions here](#).
- **Create questions for your team to investigate.** Develop a set of questions to understand how lawmakers make decisions. The goal is to fully understand how decisions are made: What issues are most important? Who has power, and how is it used? Who carries influence, and in what ways?

Sample Questions To Explore in Your Post-Election Research

- Who are the lawmaker's top staff and advisors?
Which campaign relationships do they appear to most closely maintain?
- Who manages their communications and media relations?
- Where does the lawmaker live? Do they have children or other family members who may be familiar with prenatal to three issues?
- What issues do they care most about – what do they talk about the most?
What moves them? Will bad press influence them, for example?
- Does the lawmaker have any relatives or close friends in other leadership roles or public servant roles?
- What positions of power do they hold (committee assignments, caucus roles, or other titles)?
- Who leads the legislative committees that you care most about? Who is in key leadership?
- Who moved off or onto your top committees?
- Who is in the leadership of the legislative body now that wasn't before,
and what kind of relationship do they have with your legislative champions?
- What PN-3 policy issues have been the subject of campaigns or issue debates in their district?