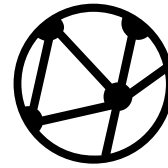


# *How (and Why!) to Form New Collaborative Relationships to Inform Policy*



**research 4 impact**  
**r4impact.org**

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President & Co-Founder, research4impact

*Thank you to the Rita Allen Foundation, William T Grant Foundation, and Greenwall Foundation for generous support!*

# research4impact 1.0 (2017)

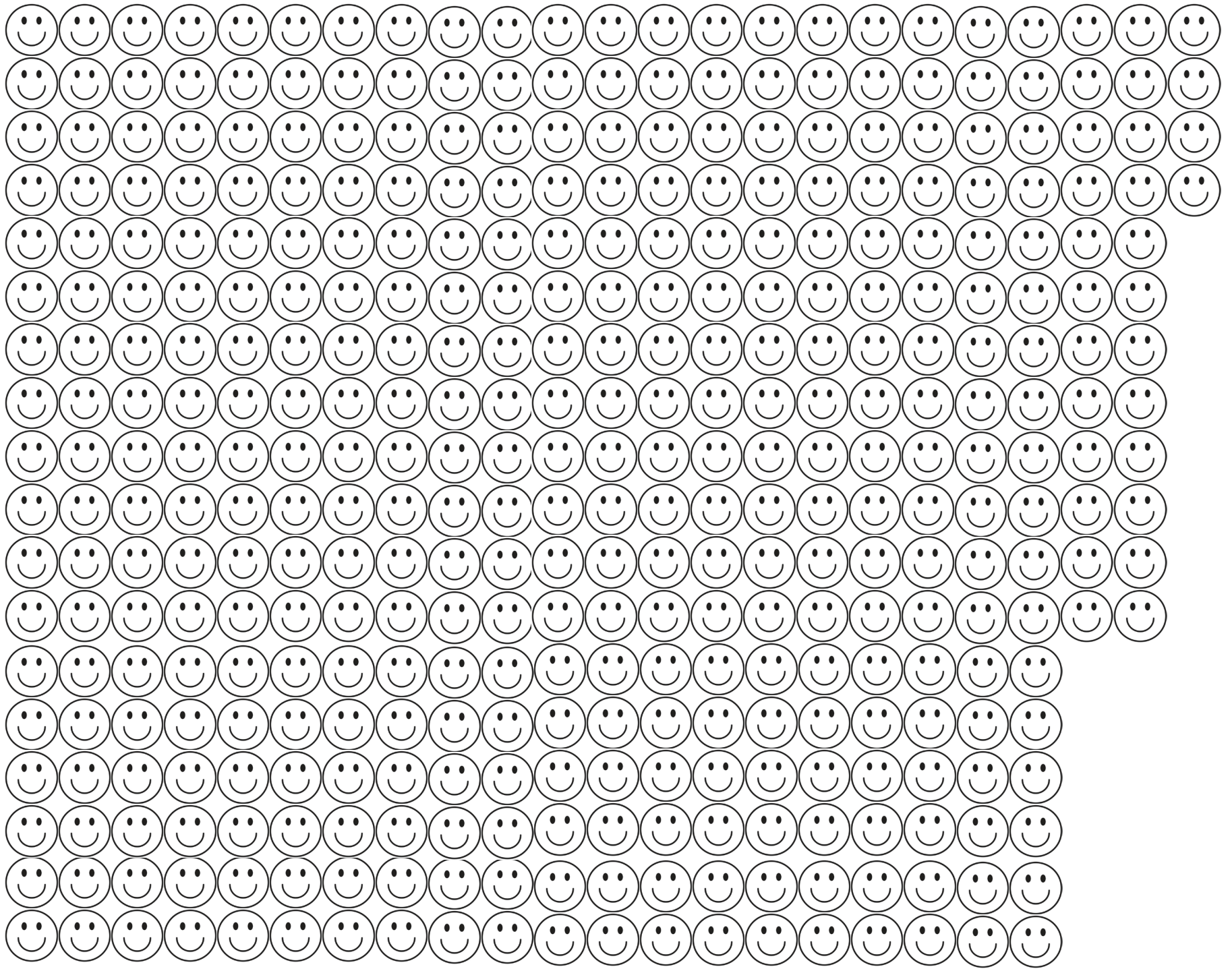
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## research 4 impact

*Research4Impact connects people from the academic, nonprofit, and governance spaces who are interested in collaborating with each other. Collaborations answer important questions, increase the effectiveness of policies and programs, and ultimately improve our quality of life.*

[read more](#)





# This is *surprising.*

- The research4impact profile builders had...
  - Interest
  - Resources
  - Opportunity



# This is *interesting.*

- *Observing an unmet desire to collaborate that reflects uncertainty about relationality – how to relate to potential collaborators, and how they will relate to us*



# Step back:

## How to connect evidence to policy

- Two ways:
  - Information dissemination
  - Collaborative relationship-building
- Collaborative relationships between researchers and policymakers are critical for evidence-informed policymaking (*Bogenschneider and Corbett 2010, Haynes et al 2011, Tseng 2012, Oliver et al. 2014, Cairney 2016, Bogenschneider et al. 2019, Crowley et al. 2021, Levine 2021, 2024*)
  - Example: Mobile vans

# Some Fundamentals

- Unmet desire: New collaborative relationships that people would value don't necessarily arise on their own
- Collaborative relationships can have multiple goals
  - Informal collaboration
  - Formal collaboration
- New collaborators often begin as strangers, who are uncertain about relationality (*Epley and Schroeder 2014, Sandstrom and Boothby 2020*)
  - Relationality is multi-dimensional & key form of *collaborative* capacity
  - Status-based stereotypes heighten uncertainty
  - Political polarization heightens uncertainty
- Example of civic engagement (*Allen 2016*)



# Three Tests

- Key Q: Under what conditions do decision-makers wish to engage in new collaborative relationships, and with what impact?
- Various outreach strategies
- Various types of policymakers (org, electeds, managers)
- All RCTs in which we aim to overcome uncertainty about relationality

# Test #1 (Volunteer org leaders)

- Partnership with 501c3 that builds awareness of climate solutions in chapters across US
- N=456 group leaders
- Opportunity advertised via email to speak with a researcher re: volunteer engagement
- January 2019
- Randomly assigned to 1 of 4 groups
  - Baseline (N=113)
  - More details about info being shared (N=110)
  - Two treatments that explicitly overcome uncertainty about relationality
    - Will efficiently share what you know (N=118)
    - Value others' information (N=115)
- Outcome: Did they want to talk?

# Test #1 (Volunteer org leaders)

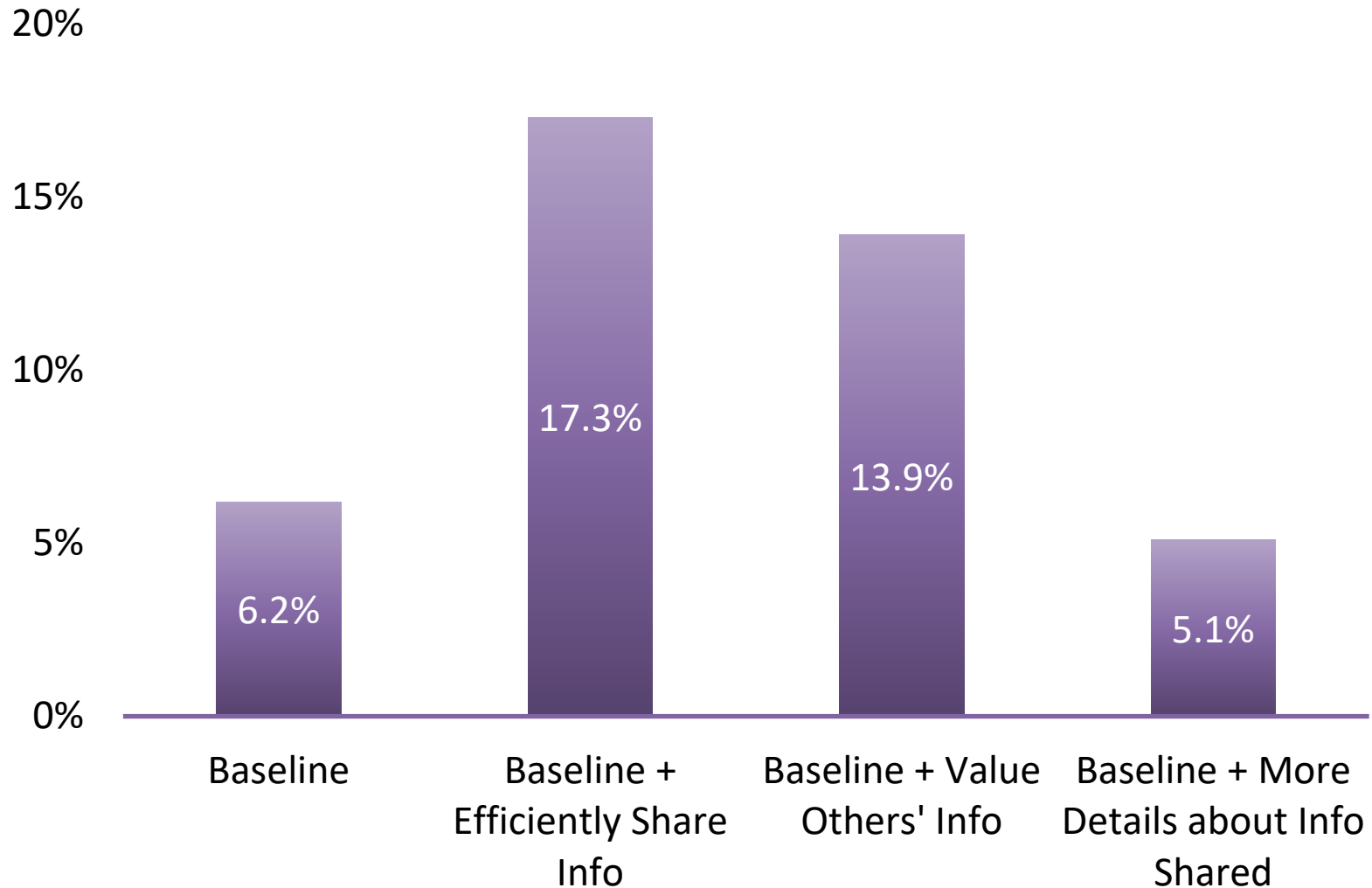
- Signaling that you will efficiently share what you know

Previous participants reported that it was an extremely efficient experience. The researchers acknowledged that folks are busy and don't have time to keep up on all the latest research they might wish to. So the name of the game is *efficiency* – they provide a concentrated dose of “news you can use”.

- Signaling that you value others' information

Previous participants reported that it was an extremely pleasant and affirming experience. They said that the researchers they spoke with were kind, respectful, genuinely interested in their work, and very clearly wanted to learn about their organizations.

# Test #1 (Volunteer org leaders): % Choosing to Collaborate



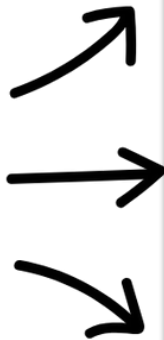
(Total N=456;  $p=.01$  baseline vs efficient diff of proportions test;  $p=.05$  baseline vs. value;  $p=.49$  baseline vs. more info;  $p$  values two-tailed and robust to randomization inf.)

# Test #2 (Local Policy, with Elizabeth Day)

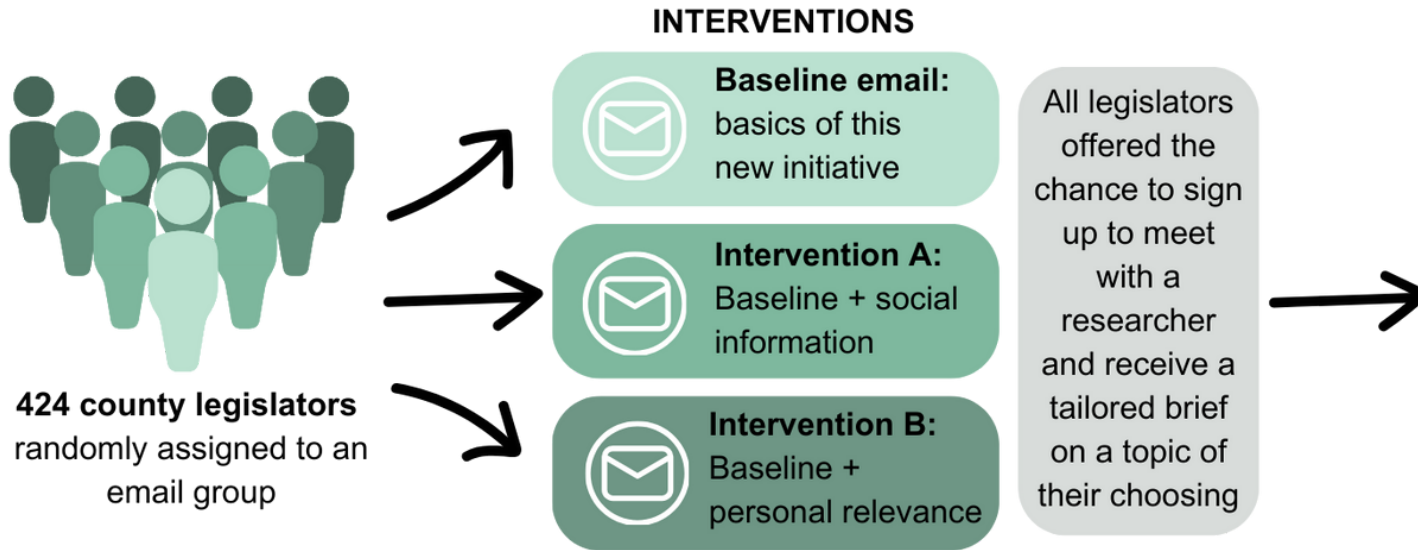
(Individual-level, cluster randomized RCT; Fall 2022)



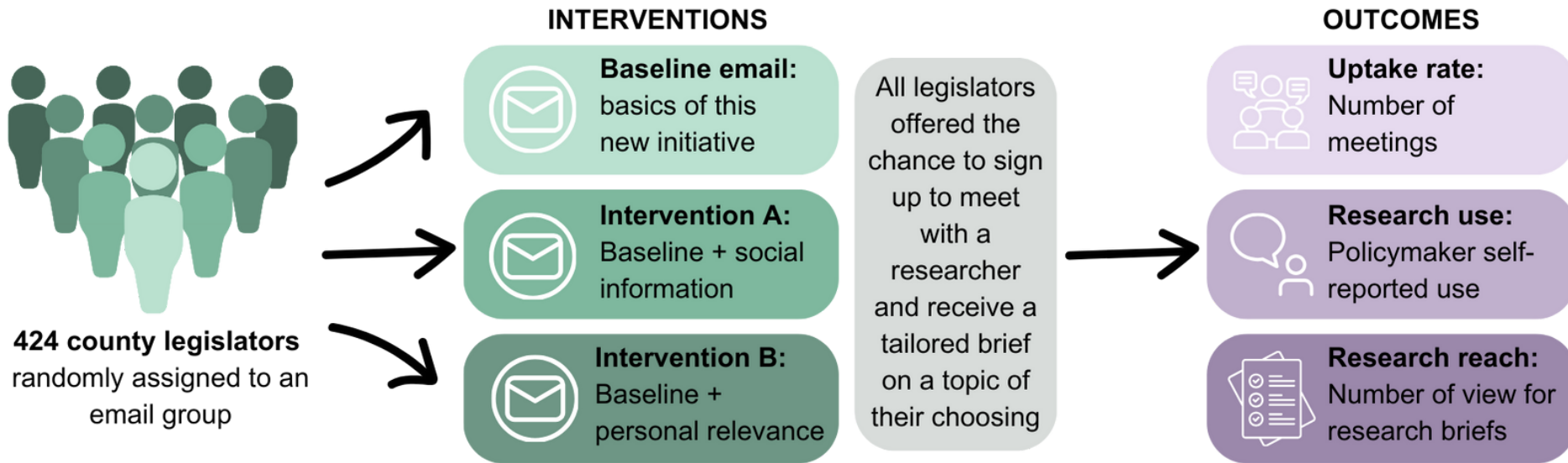
**424 county legislators**  
randomly assigned to an  
email group



# Test #2 (Local Policy)



# Test #2 (Local Policy)



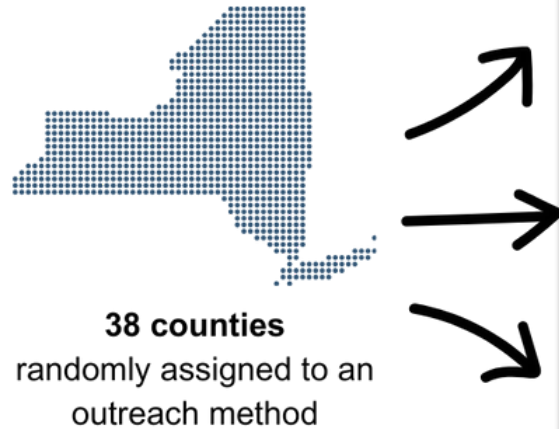
# Test #2 (Local Policy): Results

| Group                              | # county legislators | % legislators that requested a meeting |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Baseline                           | 141                  | 0.0%                                   |
| Baseline + social comparison info  | 141                  | 0.0%                                   |
| Baseline + personal relevance info | 142                  | 0.0%                                   |

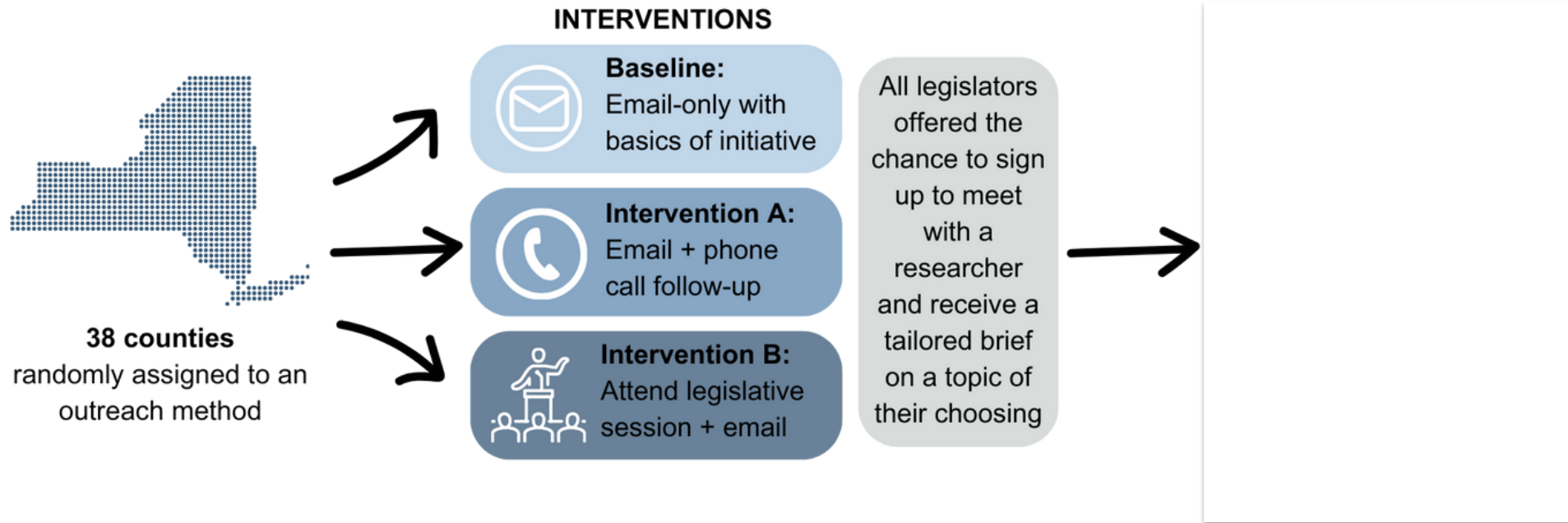


# Test #3 (Local Policy, with Elizabeth Day)

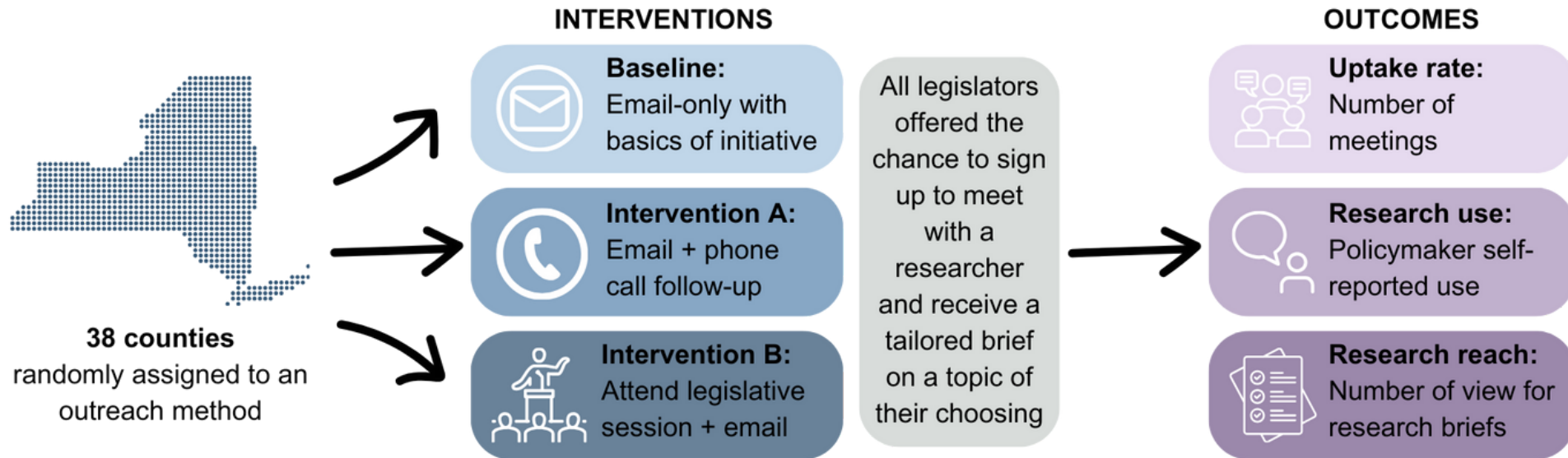
(County-level RCT; Spring-Fall 2023)



# Test #3 (Local Policy)



# Test #3 (Local Policy)



# In-person Intervention



# Test #3 (Local Policy): Results

|                       | # counties | # counties in which we had at least one meeting | # counties in which we increased research use (i.e., policymakers used research from a research brief) |
|-----------------------|------------|---|--|
| Email only            | 13         | 0.0% (0 of 13)                                  | 0.0% (0 of 13)   |
| Email then phone      | 12         | 16.7% (2 of 12)                                 | 8.3% (1 of 12)   |
| In-person, then email | 13         | 69.2% (9 of 13)                                 | 61.5% (8 of 13)  |

*(z=2.62, p=.009 for uptake on in-person vs email-only; z=2.81, p=0.005 for URE on in-person vs email only [though note additional assumption for unbiasedness]); p values two-tailed and robust to randomization inf.)*

# Test #3 (Local Policy): Results

|                       | # counties | Total number of unique viewers of research briefs (other than their own) in our online library |
|-----------------------|------------|--|
| Email only            | 13         | 2  |
| Email then phone      | 12         | 3  |
| In-person, then email | 13         | 19   |

*(t=1.74, p=.095 for in-person versus email only; p value two-tailed and robust to randomization inf.)*

# Summary of Three Tests

- Unmet desire
  - New collaborative relationships with decision-makers that people would value do not always arise on their own
- Importance of relationality
  - In addition to resources/interest/opportunity, relationality is a key collaborative capacity that varies across decision-makers
  - Resolving uncertainty about it increases decision-makers' desire to engage

# Actionable Next Steps

- Surface unmet desire to collaborate: Use 5 questions on next slide
- Meet unmet desire
  - Self-service
  - Third parties



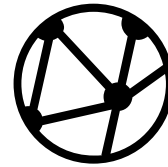
# 5 questions to surface unmet desire

1. What types of policy do you want to influence, and what kinds of decision-makers do you want to engage with?
  - Home visiting state leads? Community agencies? Elected/appointed policymakers and their staff? Agency staff?
2. Would you be looking for informal collaboration (knowledge exchange) and/or formal collaboration (new projects over which you share ownership, decision-making authority, and accountability)?
3. What hesitations do you have about interacting with them? What hesitations do you think they have about interacting with you?
  - Capacity? Interest? Stereotypes? Lack of permission? Legal constraints? Other relational concerns?
4. Why should they want to engage in a collaborative relationship with you?
5. Why do you think these connections don't exist already?

# *How (and Why!) to Form New Collaborative Relationships to Influence Policy*



JOHNS HOPKINS  
UNIVERSITY



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President & Co-Founder, research4impact

Don't hesitate to email 😊 [adamseth@jhu.edu](mailto:adamseth@jhu.edu)

**\*\*\*Extra info\*\*\***

# COLLABORATE NOW!

How Expertise  
Becomes Useful  
in Civic Life

**ADAM SETH LEVINE**

# Test #1

Hello [Group Leader],

We wanted to start off the new year with an exciting opportunity for our group leaders!

**Want to strengthen your volunteer base** as we gear up to [build awareness of climate change and one possible response to it]?

If so, you're in luck! We're partnering with Research4Impact, allowing any interested group leader to talk to an expert about the latest techniques for volunteer engagement, and how you can apply them in your chapter.

**Research4impact connects organizations with social scientists eager to share research on how to recruit new volunteers and further engage existing ones.** They've already connected over 40 volunteers and staff with researchers from across the country.

**Interested?** Just send a quick note to [email address] by this [date] if you wish to take part.

Include your name, email address, and a one-line note saying you're interested. Then Adam Levine, president of research4impact and professor at Cornell, will respond to schedule a 30 minute phone conversation at a time that's convenient for you.

Your participation in this opportunity can help [organization name] improve its training and operations as we gear up for supporting our volunteers throughout the country in this critical year ahead.

Thank you for all you do,

[Executive director]


Hello [Group Leader],

We wanted to start off the new year with an exciting opportunity for our group leaders!

**Want to strengthen your volunteer base** as we gear up to [build awareness of climate change and one possible response to it]?

If so, you're in luck! We're partnering with Research4Impact, allowing any interested group leader to talk to an expert about the latest techniques for volunteer engagement, and how you can apply them in your chapter.

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Your participation in this opportunity can help [organization name] improve its training and operations as we gear up for supporting our volunteers throughout the country in this critical year ahead.

Thank you for all you do,

[Executive director]

# Test #2

Hi all —

NYSAC is partnering with two researchers, Elizabeth Day and Adam Levine, from Cornell and Johns Hopkins, on a new initiative to help make research more accessible and helpful to you. Please see their message below.

Good morning,

We know there are many pressing challenges facing youth and families in counties throughout the state, and many county legislators don't have easy access to all the information they need to tackle them.

That's why we are offering this free opportunity to meet with us and learn 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, we would provide you with a tailored research brief addressing the topic of your choosing.

Would you be interested in a short phone call? If so, please schedule a time to chat using [this link](#).

Best wishes and we look forward to hearing from you!

[Elizabeth Day](#)  
[Adam Levine](#)



# Data from early research4impact matchmaking (2018-2021)

| Goal of requesters   | Number of requests |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Informal Collaboration</b><br>(Knowledge sharing to discuss a large research literature/gain ideas about how to measure impact) | 128                |
|  |                    |

# Data from early research4impact matchmaking (2018-2021)

- N=123 who moved forward after scope call, and had at least one match
- 109 of them (88.6%) reported that the initial interaction provided actionable information that was useful for the challenge in their work they identified when they initially reached out

# Data from early research4impact matchmaking (2018-2021)

| Goal of requesters   | Number of requests |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Informal Collaboration</b><br>(Knowledge sharing to discuss a large research literature/gain ideas about how to measure impact) | 128                |
| <b>Formal Collaboration</b><br>(Work on a new research project)  | 73                 |

# Data from early research4impact matchmaking (2018-2021)

What ultimately happened among those who wanted a formal collaboration and stated early on that they began one?  
(57% of formal collaboration requesters; N=42)

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Extended informal knowledge exchange but ultimately goals/timing not aligned (Step 2)</b>                                  | <b>25%</b> |
| <b>Experienced lack of funds/org buy-in (includes situations with concrete outcomes but not shared project) (Steps 3,4,5)</b> | <b>25%</b> |
| <b>Completed shared project (Step 8)</b>  | <b>50%</b> |

# Unmet Desire Among Local Policymakers

- Unmet desire for a more evidence-informed policymaking process
- National sample collected by CivicPulse
- Focus on local policymakers because they're important
- Focus on local researchers because new collaborative relationships are highly doable
- N=541
- Spring 2021
- Survey weights to increase sample representativeness

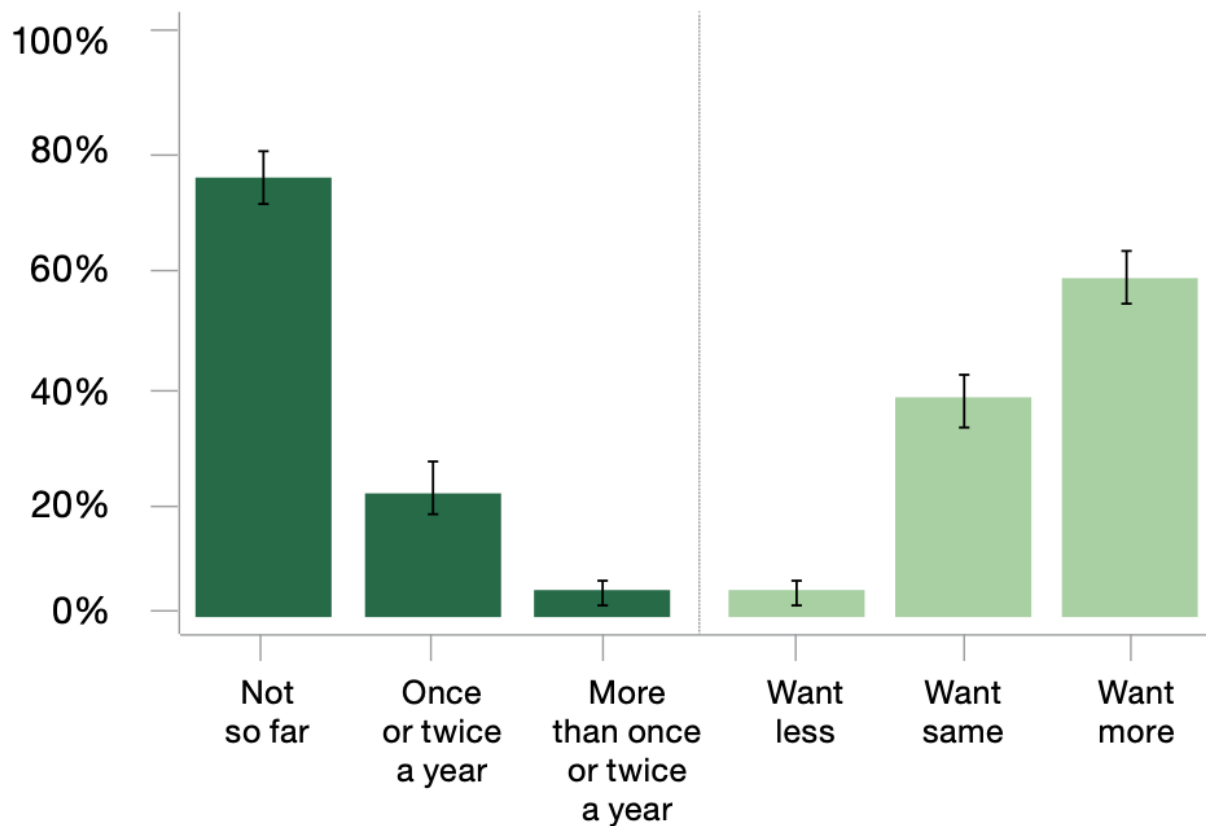
**Figure 2: LOCAL POLICYMAKERS WANT MORE COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL RESEARCHERS**

**EXISTING**

Local policymakers rarely collaborate with local researchers to tackle policy challenges ...

**DESIRED**

... yet a majority want more frequent collaboration.



**Figure 3: LOCAL POLICYMAKERS WELCOME CONTACT FROM LOCAL RESEARCHERS**

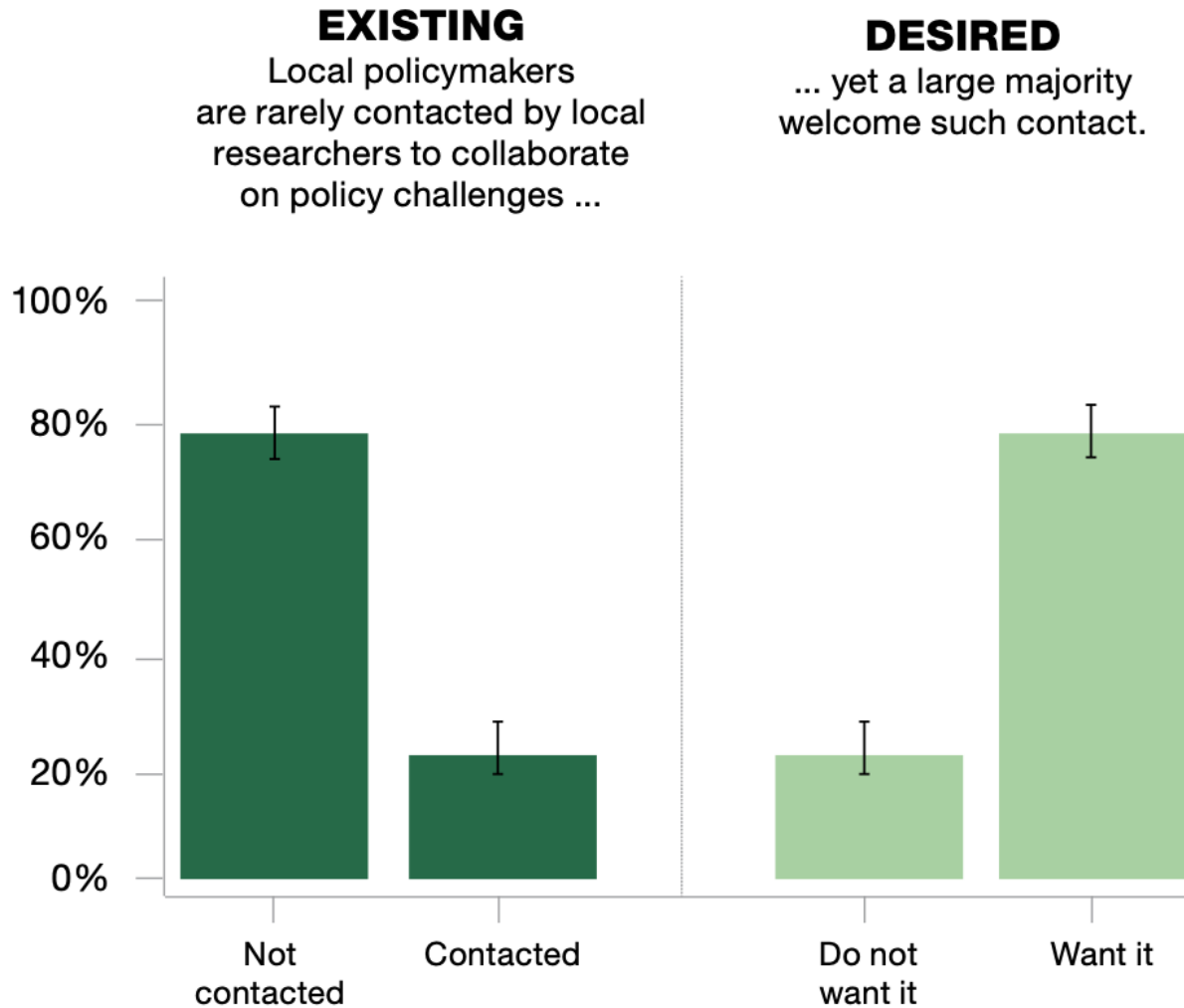


Figure 4: LOCAL POLICYMAKERS' WORRIES ABOUT INTERACTING WITH LOCAL RESEARCHERS

