



# **SCHOLARS**

STRATEGY NETWORK

CASE FOR SUPPORT

IN GOD WE TRUST

**Researchers and research institutions have an important role to play in improving policy and strengthening democracy.**







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WAY POLICY IS MADE**

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When decisions are informed by the best research, public policy strengthens communities and spurs innovation.

Across the states, the Scholars Strategy Network is working to secure the use of research wherever policy decisions are made—from city halls to state legislatures to Washington.

### **THE CHALLENGE**

The United States faces pressing challenges and needs sound policies to meet them. Yet from Washington to state capitals to city halls, public debates and public policy are rarely informed by research. All too often, on issues from the economy to education to the environment, public debates are not grounded in evidence.

### **THE RESOURCE**

America's universities are the best in the world. The nation's universities spend \$71 billion annually on research and development. Among America's tens of thousands of university scholars are experts working on every issue, but they are too rarely involved in policymaking, and too often lack the strategies, skills, and networks necessary to make research matter.

### **THE SOLUTION**

The Scholars Strategy Network connects America's top researchers to policymakers, civic leaders, and journalists to improve policy and strengthen democracy.

# The Scholars Strategy Network is changing the way policy is made.

Through strategic connections and communications, the Scholars Strategy Network is reshaping the way Americans approach public policy challenges.



## **VOLUNTARY**

**University-based scholars join the Scholars Strategy Network to volunteer their time and knowledge to solve public problems.**

In 2017 alone, university researchers volunteered over 48,000 hours of time worth more than \$20M. As a network of over 1,300 volunteers across more than 225 colleges and universities in 48 states, SSN is extremely cost-efficient, unleashing powerful impact at minimal cost.







## IN THE STATES

**As a federated network of over 30 chapters across 26 states**, SSN is designed to provide state and federal policymakers with research and perspectives from their own districts.



## DEFINED BY IMPACT

**Researchers in SSN work with policymakers, civic leaders, and journalists.** By asking them how research can help them solve problems, SSN is focused on impact from the start.



## FOUR COMMUNITIES, ONE VISION

**Across its diverse chapters and members**, SSN's vision remains constant: improving policy and strengthening democracy with research and evidence.

# What Success Looks Like

Here are just a few ways the Scholars Strategy Network uses research and strong relationships to strengthen communities across the states.

## Increasing Tax Credits for Working Families

**Every year, the Earned Income Tax Credit lifts millions of families out of poverty.** In Massachusetts, SSN scholars provided written and oral testimony, wrote op-eds for local outlets, and met with state policymakers to enact a 50% increase to the EITC that got 400,000 families the support they need.



## Expanding Paid Family and Medical Leave

**In Massachusetts, Randy Albelda and Alan Clayton-Matthews contributed research** that was instrumental in crafting legislation to create a state paid family and medical leave program, which was signed into law in 2018. Their model for paid family and medical leave in Massachusetts showed who to cover and how to keep costs low, creating a win-win for families and businesses.



## Protecting Diversity in State Judiciaries

**When a judiciary is not diverse, people of color are more likely to be found guilty, face large fines, and to be incarcerated longer.** When a bill was introduced in Utah to disallow consideration of race and gender in judicial nominations, the SSN Utah chapter provided research about the effects of judicial diversity to inform state legislators in both parties. Armed with this evidence, the legislature tabled the bill.

## Reducing Incarceration

**In Georgia, the Mayor of Statesboro tasked Chad Posick and Jonathan Grubb to examine** research to inform city efforts to reduce penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana and take incarceration off the table. After Posick and Grubb presented their findings to the city council, the new ordinance was unanimously passed.



## Supporting Students Struggling to Get a College Degree

**In Tennessee, less than 45 percent of students at public colleges complete their degree.** Research suggests that aligning school curricula with workforce needs helps students graduate. The Tennessee SSN chapter is working with Governor Bill Haslam to implement evidence-based interventions and are on pace to grow the state's public college graduation rate to 55%.





A SUCCESS IN DETAIL:  
**Helping Families  
Prosper in Maine**



**Through strong relationships, SSN scholars ensure that research informs the policy debates that create opportunity to help people thrive.**

Consider the work of the SSN chapter in Maine.

**When Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP), an organization with over two decades of experience working with parents struggling with poverty, needed an expert voice, they turned to the Maine SSN chapter and SSN scholars Luisa Deprez and Lisa Dodson.**

To support MEJP's work, Deprez and Dodson wrote an SSN brief, "Helping Parents Get A College Education Helps Children Succeed," explaining the research behind LIFT 2.0, a bill that expands access to career-oriented higher education for low-income parents. Next, Deprez testified at the bill's committee hearing and answered questions from lawmakers. Deprez and Dodson also wrote an op-ed for the Portland Press Herald.

A few weeks later, the bipartisan committee unanimously voted to approve the LIFT bill. Leaders in the Maine Department of Health

and Human Services, who had originally been skeptical of the legislation, ultimately decided to support the bill. Joby Thoyalil, Policy Analyst for MEJP, noted that,

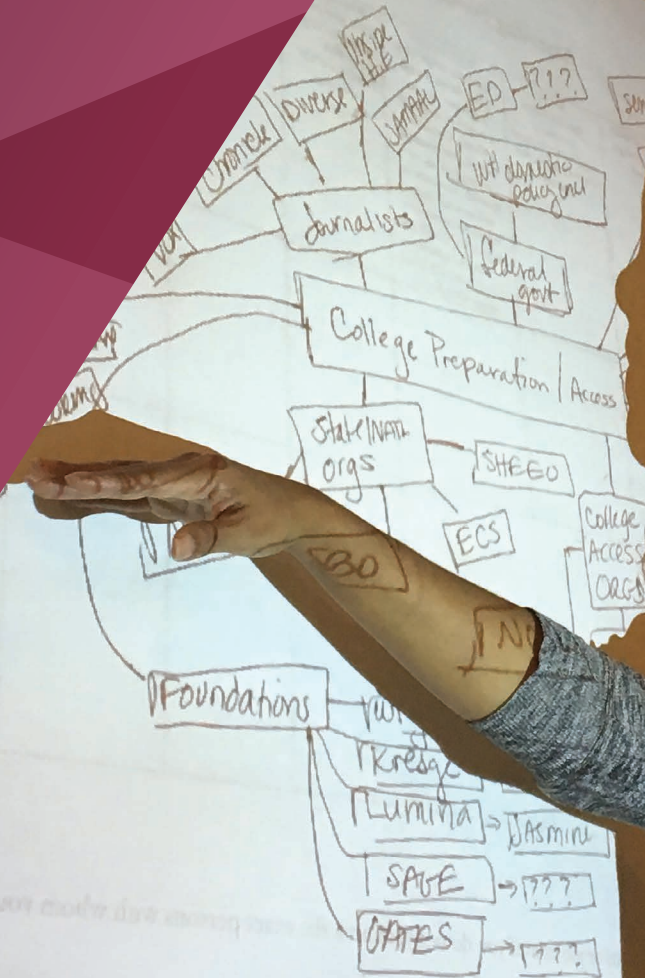
*"It took some convincing to get the Department to agree to support any four-year programs, given their strong interest in moving people into the labor force ... but Speaker Sara Gideon was ready to fight for that and had Luisa and Lisa's research and testimony to back up her conviction."*

LIFT 2.0 became law in April 2018. As a result, each year some 500 low-income Maine parents will now get the financial help, childcare services, transportation assistance, and one-on-one support they need to earn degrees and get jobs in healthcare, engineering and technology.

# How We Do It

SSN is the only organization dedicated to building a nationwide culture where research regularly informs policy at every level.

**To do this, SSN has four strategies:**





## SERVING POLICYMAKERS

**From connecting scholars to civic leaders to bringing scholars to Washington to testify before Congressional committees,** SSN brings together scholars to work on specific issues to make research matter to policy. SSN members help civic leaders and policymakers use research and evidence to make strategic choices and better serve the public.

“We consider Randy Albelda and Alan Clayton-Mathews [to be] resources we can turn to. To say that their research has been fundamental to this process is an understatement.”

**Legislative Staffer, Massachusetts Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development**

## TRAINING RESEARCHERS

**SSN’s unique workshop, *Training Research to Inform Policy*,** empowers scholars to become powerful players in policy by emphasizing a key research finding: policymakers make decisions by turning to people they know and trust. SSN’s trainings give scholars the tools to map the policy landscape and build relationships with the leaders who work on the issues they study.

“Too few social scientists know that there are best practices based on research that can help ensure their work is useful to—and used by—policymakers and practitioners. SSN has synthesized this research to create nuts and bolts workshops that empower scholars to achieve greater social impact.”

**Vivian Tseng, Senior Vice President,  
William T. Grant Foundation**

## MAXIMIZING MEDIA

**SSN helps scholars develop media strategies that make a difference** in today’s policy debates and strengthen the role of research in public discussion for the long run. SSN helps scholars maximize the impact of print, television, radio, and online media, and teaches scholars to translate academic jargon into clear, compelling language.

“SSN helps me understand what’s really going on in the world and, most importantly, convey that to my readers.”

**Michael Hobbes, Senior Enterprise Reporter, HuffPost**

## EMPOWERING STATES

**In the states, SSN chapters build communities where research systematically informs policy by connecting local researchers with key policy players.** Through chapters, researchers advance new ideas for cutting-edge solutions, answer questions from policymakers, and explain the evidence for programs that work. Chapters take on their own projects based on pressing policy issues facing people in their state.

“Thank you so much for all your help in making [the session on K-12 vouchers] a success! I would say it was by far our most successful meeting. The staff and members found it incredibly helpful.”

**Maggie Gau, Chief of Staff,  
Office of Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers**

# SSN Chapters

**The primary components of SSN are the keys to the network's success.**

## **SCHOLARS**

SSN scholars produce peer-reviewed research and communicate their work in effective and accessible ways.

## **STRATEGY**

Through strategic communications and partnerships cross the aisle, SSN amplifies the voice of scholars in debates about policy.

## **NETWORK**

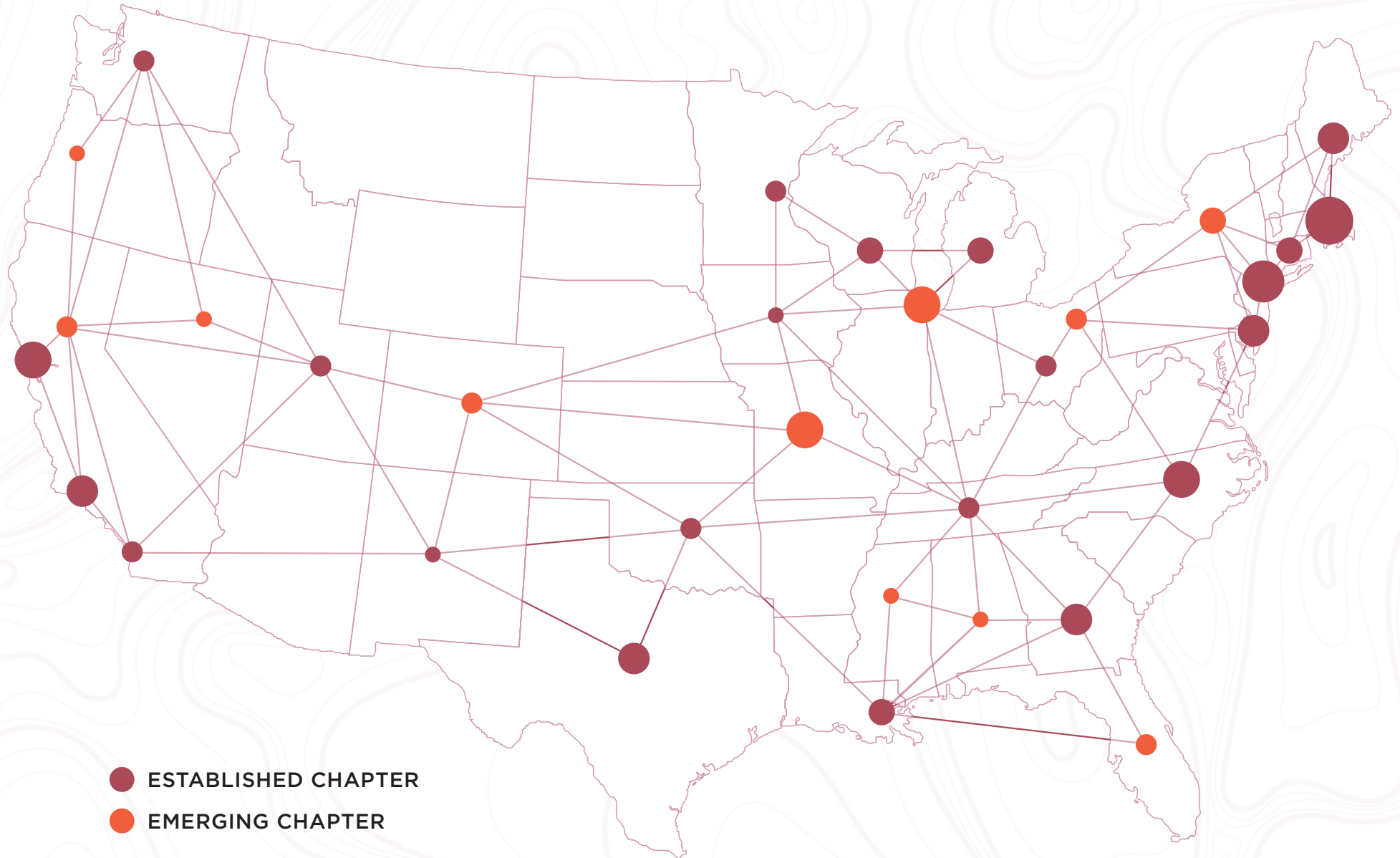
Scholars join the network to become part of a collaborative community who regularly share new ideas and best practices through chapters across the country.

### **SSN HAS BEGUN WORK ON ISSUES INCLUDING:**

- Budgets and Taxes
- Children and Families
- Civic Engagement
- Criminal Justice
- K-12 Education
- Economic Development
- Environment and Energy
- Elections, Voting, and Democracy
- Health Care
- Higher Education
- Immigration
- Jobs, Workers, and Workforce Development
- Poverty
- Race and Equity
- Women's Health and Equality



## CURRENT SSN CHAPTERS ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING



# Advancing Evidence-Based Policy

Through national reach and local depth, SSN is uniquely positioned to secure the use of research in federal, state, and local policy debates.

There are a number of ways to support the work of the Scholars Strategy Network.

**Training Researchers to Improve Policy:**  
\$4,000 – \$8,000 per workshop

Train the next generation of publicly engaged scholars.

**Chapter:** \$17,000 – \$22,000 per year

Build the network of chapters that are changing policymaking across the country.

**Regional Fellows Program:**  
\$65,000 – \$85,000

Expand the capacity of a chapter to inform state policymaking.

**No Jargon Podcast:** \$75,000 per year

Bring jargon-free research to millions more listeners each year.

**National Leadership Retreat:** \$95,000

Amplify the impact of the network by bringing together scholars and policy leaders to share ideas and foster collaboration.

**Issue Area Working Group:**  
\$125,000 – \$265,000 per year

Strengthen the role that researchers and research play in an issue you care about.



# Accomplished and Committed Leadership



## Theda Skocpol Director

*Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology, Harvard University*

Theda Skocpol helps set SSN's strategic direction and has edited over 1,000 scholarly briefs. An internationally recognized scholar, Skocpol has also served as Dean of the Graduate School at Harvard University and as Director of the Center for American Political Studies. Skocpol's work covers a broad spectrum of topics and her books and articles have been widely cited in political science literature and won numerous awards. Her recent research seeks to explain recent major transformations in U.S. national and state politics amidst the shifting inequalities in American democracy. She has tracked the development of organizations and their impacts, including the Democratic and Republican parties, the conservative Tea Party and the center-left resistance to Donald Trump.



## Avi Green Executive Director

Avi Green joined the Scholars Strategy Network in 2013 and has led the staff of SSN since 2015. Previously, Green served as Executive Director of a voting rights organization, where he led successful large-scale effort to increase voting and civic engagement, boost participation in the US Census, improve redistricting, and modernize voter registration and election administration. At SSN, Green has helped researchers communicate in dozens of venues from to The New York Times to Fox News. Green has also helped researchers develop relationships with civic leaders and policymakers on both sides of the aisle in many states across a wide range of issues.

## Board of Directors

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Developer and Philanthropist

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**Jacob Hacker**, *Stanley B. Resor Professor of Political Science, Yale University*

**Lawrence Jacobs**, *Walter F. and Joan Mondale Professor of Politics and Governance, University of Minnesota*

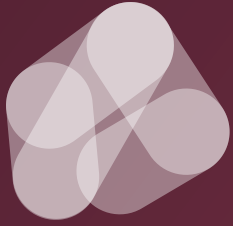
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# **SCHOLARS**

STRATEGY NETWORK

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