



From Data to Evidence to Policy

Statement to the
Commission on
Evidence-Based
Policymaking

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The Challenge:

To serve the public good by making smart policy decisions, using data our government already collects.

1. What data are needed to support public good activities?
2. What steps are needed to build the capacity to *use* data and create the *evidence* required?



1930's

1940's

1950's

1960's

1970's

1980's

1990's

2000's

2010's



- ④ Supports research to improve the lives of young people.

- ④ Areas of focus:
 - Reducing inequality
 - Improving the use of research evidence

The Message

Be the Evidence Commission,
not just the Data Commission.



Data Needs

Research evidence

- ⦿ Derived from applying systematic methods and analyses to predefined questions or hypotheses

Multiple purposes of linked administrative data

- ⦿ Rigorous evaluations of program impact
 - Experimental
 - Quasi-experimental
- ⦿ Program improvement
- ⦿ Policy formation

Program Improvement

- ④ What works for whom and under what conditions
 - Calls for data on context, implementation
 - Conditions that facilitate or impede success
 - Guidelines for grantmakers could strengthen access to data for program improvement
- ④ Performance management
 - Support goal setting with data-sharing requirements

Policy Formation: Reducing Inequality

Need to understand the nature of challenges we face, and identify policies that respond

Example: Reducing inequality, the “defining challenge of our time”

Policy Formation: Reducing Inequality

Reducing inequality in education

- ④ Link national education surveys to state education records
 - In a national survey, NCES oversampled 10 states
 - Each state education agency had agreed to link education records to the survey
 - “Not a single state provided its data for linkage with the national survey.”
 - Bureaucratic/legal hurdles could not be overcome
 - Even though the state data were largely built with federal grants!

Policy Formation: Reducing Inequality

The American Opportunity Study

- ④ A standalone survey no longer needed to gauge social mobility
 - Link census data, federal tax & employment records, state data from federal programs, and national surveys
 - Create capacity to understand barriers and supports for social mobility
 - Allow formulation of evidence-based policies
 - Link to research samples to support program evaluation
- ④ Commission could recommend legislation that would require states to share participation data

Policy Formation: Reducing Inequality

The American Opportunity Study

- ④ Link national surveys to administrative data
- ④ View linkages as assets
- ④ Provide a framework
 - Specify types of data, including administrative, survey, and experimental data
 - Indicate purposes of linkages, including program improvement and policy formation
- ④ Consider a pilot

Build Capacity

Capacity to use data to create evidence is essential to evidence-based policymaking

- ④ Capacity = technology, expertise, organizational arrangements, & fiscal investments
 - Often under-resourced
 - Demand attention at the outset
- ④ Strengthen the federal infrastructure for evidence
- ④ Establish partnerships between researchers and policymakers

Build Capacity

Elements of a federal infrastructure for evidence

- ④ Leadership positions focused on evidence use
- ④ Interagency collaborative bodies
- ④ Dedicated office for research and evaluation within each agency
- ④ Codified sets of principles and practices

Build Capacity

Partnerships for building and using evidence

④ What is a partnership?

- Sustained structure for facilitating trust and shared goals
- Common in education between a university and a local or state partner

④ Benefits of partnerships

- Research questions respond to needs of decision-makers
- Culture of evidence leads decision-makers to consider evidence in policymaking

④ See: <http://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org>

Be the Evidence Commission

Ambitious but achievable goals

- ④ From sharing and linking data, to using data to create evidence, to using evidence to inform policymaking
- ④ Will result in smarter policies and greater opportunity for all