

**1. Descriptive Information**

<p><b>Plenary Session 3   Research-to-Policy Translation for Generating Evidence-Based Child Care and Early Education Policy</b></p> <p>Effective evidence-based policy requires rigorous research and user-friendly policy translation that moves evidence in a communicable format to appropriate target audiences. This panel aims to inspire interested CCEEPRC members to pursue translational research and to increase awareness of diverse partnership models relevant to policymaking and program development in the early care and education field. The panel will bring together thought leaders from the foundation, government, and university sectors, who will introduce diverse notions of “research-to-policy translation” and critically discuss the strengths and challenges of each based on their experiences. In addition, panelists will think through how to translate research (and the methods needed) into evidence that is pertinent to multiple agencies and diverse populations.</p>	<p><b>Facilitator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julia Henly, University of Chicago</li> </ul> <p><b>Panelists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maria Cancian, University of Wisconsin-Madison</li> <li>• Kim DuMont, William T. Grant Foundation</li> <li>• Pam Joshi, Brandeis University</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marty Zaslow, Society for Research in Child Development and Child Trends</li> </ul> <p><b>Scribe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracy Gebhart, Child Trends</li> </ul>
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**2. Documents in Session Folder**

[DiversityDataKids.org](http://DiversityDataKids.org)

**3. Brief Summary of Presentations**

The presentations covered different approaches to the translation process. Discussing how do we ask the right questions, find the right data, and find the right audiences with our work.

**Towards Research-Informed Practice and Practice-Informed Research - Lessons from Wisconsin:**

Maria Cancian, University of Wisconsin-Madison

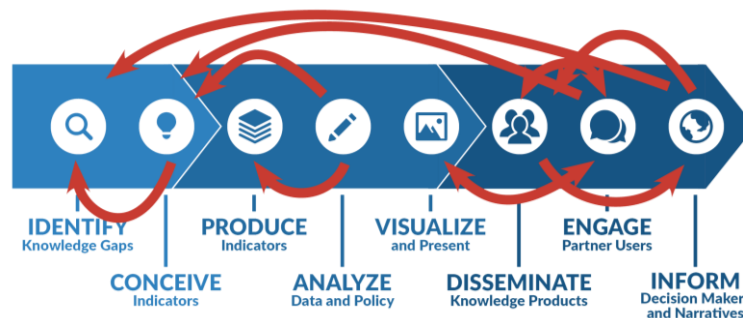
- *Overview*
  - Presentation reviewed lessons learned from an academic-agency partnership between the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) and Wisconsin state agencies. Highlights from the partnership maintain that connecting research and policy is a collaborative and iterative process that is mutually reinforcing and beneficial for each member.
- *Building Blocks for Academic/Agency Partnership*
  - Successful partnerships require infrastructure and resources to support *sustained* engagement
  - Sustained engagement helps develop trust, and a shared understanding of:
    - useful and interesting research question
    - appropriate methods of answering those questions
    - Satisfactory answers
    - How the above vary between/across partners
- *Logic of Collaboration*
  - Collaboration works best when it is mutually reinforcing and mutually beneficial
  - In the case of the IRP-Wisconsin collaboration, the state can provide policy issues, innovative programs, real-world experience, data, and funding. At the same time, IRP can provide university resources, technical expertise, and funding.
- *Administrative Data Infrastructure*
  - The IRP-Wisconsin collaboration allows IRP to access the wealth of data from the state. In exchange, IRP provides specialized infrastructure, programming and analytic staff to answer complex questions.
  - To develop research questions of interest, the partnership employs multiple methods:

- IRP staff and faculty affiliates meet regularly with agency leadership and staff. It is especially important to meet with both leadership and staff because, leadership shapes priorities and, project staff knows operational issues and questions.
  - Connect via regular briefings and opportunities for check-in
  - Revisit contracts or sustained research agreements for specific programs
  - Participate in a quarterly learning exchange – researchers present information about topics of interest to policy makers; focus on presentation being relevant, accessible in scope and language, and providing for dialogue and exchange.
  - Ad hoc consultation and support between organizations
- IRP can do things the state of Wisconsin cannot do on its own. IRP can collaborate across state department boundaries and remains valuable across changes in administration and staff. In exchange, IRB get access to data that are fundamental to their applied and academic interests. The more time the organizations spend together, the more consistency they have about what are interesting questions.
- Institutional Constraints Shape the Partnership**
  - Because the state's data is governmental, data may only be used to inform policy and program administration. State agencies can only provide data that researchers will use that advance the mission, limiting the potential scope of research questions
  - IRP's research results must be made public. State agencies must value and accept the independence of IRP's analysis.
- Examples of Collaborative Projects Supporting Both Policy Change And Research**
  - Education outcomes for children in foster care (the result of an agency request for TA) – agency did not have capacity to do a in depth comparison within foster care children, so IRP was able to use agency data to conduct comparison
  - Child Welfare/Child Support Collaboration (the result of a staff question)
  - National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) (the result of a federal RFA)

## Research-To-Policy Translation Models

Pam Joshi, Brandeis University

- Overview**
  - Presentation describes the research to policy translation used in [DiversityDataKids.org](https://DiversityDataKids.org). Emphasizes that, while the process seems linear, translation is more iterative.
- Diversity Data Kids**
  - DiversityDataKids.org is funded by Kellogg and Robert Wood Johnson foundation. The public use website brings attention to 1) access to opportunities for children and 2) outcomes for children at the national and neighborhood levels. The project makes a point to examine information with a race/ethnicity lens.
- Data for Policy Pipeline**
  - Process seems to be a linear 8-step process, but it is not designed to be. Translating data to policy is an iterative process that requires active communication.



- Identify knowledge gaps
  - EX: There is a demand for Head Start, but how does availability map with demand?
- Conceive indicators

- a. EX: Find a center to child ratio to determine availability
3. Produce Indicator
  - a. EX: Pick relevant information by combining census data with admin data
4. Analyze data and policy
  - a. EX: Utilize ACS, census data; build a large data infrastructure
5. Visualize and present
  - a. EX: Create Overlays, maps, rankings, histograms to present data
6. Disseminate Knowledge produces
  - a. EX: Publications in practitioner journals, webinars
7. Engage partner users
  - a. EX: Partner with large networks to disseminate from small center; work cross sector to engage wide audience
8. Inform decision makers and narratives

### **Translation to Connect Research and Policy**

Kim DuMont, William T. Grant Foundation

- *Overview*
  - Review of how the William T. Grant connects research and policy
- *Translation*
  - “Translation” is limiting, because it suggests information travels in a single direction in a discrete and time-limited task and understanding follows without intervention.
  - Instead, should be phrased as a way of connecting research *and* policy, not connecting research *to* policy
- *Approach*
  - The William T. Grant Foundation developed a 6 month full-time to 2 year part-time distinguished fellows program to connect researchers and embed them in the policy/practice setting and vice versa.
    - The fellowships helped fellows understand the daily activities, challenges, and substance of the research, policy or practice setting. This, in turn, helped seed questions and shifted the trajectory of research.
  - The Foundation also studying the use of research, seeking to understand the users of research as well as the conditions that support research.
- *Research Use in Policy (i.e. how research gets used)*
  - Instrumental –research used to make a decision (ex: helps decide which children to prioritize, or which tools to use). It’s often easy to draw a line between the research and the policy decision.
  - Conceptual – ideas from bodies of research seep into thinking and affect the understanding of a problem and the kinds of responses that are devised. The line between research and the policy decision is not so clear, but do have an impact on policy.
  - Strategic – research used to make a case, argue a budget, sway staff, or support a point. The research is embedded in an argument.
- *Connecting Research and Policy*
  - Research is more likely to be deemed of value and used
    - when it is designed with decision makers’ needs in mind
    - when relationships with researchers or knowledge brokers are characterized as trusting
    - when structured opportunities exist to discuss, unpack, and challenge the research
  - Providing structured opportunities to make sense of research are important for both sides. The deliberative processes of debate and discussion trigger cognitive processes the help gain better understanding. The depth of understanding is associated with greater use.

### **4. Brief Summary of Discussion**

Questions for the panel and the audience:

- [\[Referring to lists in section below\]](#) Is the list of key components the right list for what we are learning through the ongoing platform of sustained collaboration?

- What examples do we already have of this platform (besides CCEEPRC)?
- What would you advise to early career researchers who don't have the chance to do this type of work?
- What have you learned about communicating your research that should be taken into account? What successes have you had in which research influenced policy, and where were there missteps that can offer room for growth?

Defining the difference between policy and process.

- Translating research for different audiences – particularly advocacy or legislative groups – reiterates that finding the difference between politics and policy can be difficult
- Policy is the legislative consideration and is moved through the legislative process to the executive branch. Politics are statements by ideology that may influence the policy. Our goal is not to engage in the politics but not engage in the policy. “Partisan” is a clear flag for where the line is.
- There is a difference between politics changing the work that you do/the answers you get and changing the way that you think. For example, our work stays the same throughout the change in administrations. The topics stay the same, but the way we phrase things may be responsive to the executive branch's priorities. With some governors, I may describe a policy as better serving families but in other circumstances I might phrase it as a way to save money. We don't change the research we do, but we also can't always be pure. We must know what the agenda priorities are. That goes back to knowing what questions are useful.

Meaningful Engagement of Different population

- How do we meaningfully engage parents? We've been talking about policy makers, but what about parents who are affected by the policy?
- We could be more mindful about racial equity with the audiences that engage with data. Researchers look very similar; we need to think of racial equity
  - With DiversityDataKids.org, part of the project is to draw out differences and think about kids who are vulnerable. To get there, we need diversity on the research team in terms of race/ethnicity, perspectives we bring to the table and in the disciplines in our research teams. We need to broaden the discussion on diversity and try to generate demand in the area, since diversity or equity issues are not always on top of researchers or policymakers' lists of priorities.

## 5. Summary of Key issues raised

In the past, research was shared with policy makers as a “push out” model. The presenters elaborated on a conceptual shift that has been made with the sharing of research.

The key components of this new model include:

- Bidirectional Translation – The process is no longer a unidirectional translation of research to policy, but a bidirectional exchange. There is a need for sustained engagement so bidirectional flow can develop. This can only be achieved with an infrastructure for meeting and communication.
- Reciprocally-Generated Research Questions – research questions have to be pressing for researcher and feasible in both the policy world and in the availability of the data.
- Data Infrastructure – data infrastructures between the research and policy spheres are developed over time and strengthened by the consistent engagement. With enough engagement, the collaboration can shift the way in which data is collected.
- Constraints to Partnerships – government structures create an obvious constraint to partnerships. Namely, who has access to the data and the rules of review and release.
- Effective communication – attention must be paid not just to analysis of key question but also to their effective communication. Visualization and networks are important to improving accessibility and distribution. The effects of good research are intensified by understanding the end users. Researchers also cannot enter into policy meetings without thinking about how to best communicate their findings.
- Distinction Between Policy and Politics – translating research to policy brings the researcher closer to politics. A distinction must be maintained between providing findings to enhance research and providing (or not providing) findings to advance politics. Research findings must remain neutral.

Challenges of this new model include:

- Timeframes – research can, and often does, take longer than policy timelines and pressing needs
- Hours – funding, especially within government constraints, may not be good for the amount of tasks
- Critical issues regarding data – maintaining confidentiality and ensuring completeness
- Trust – partnerships require trust (and consistent engagement and communication) across agencies in order to access large administrative data
- Constraints – there are limiting constraints of what can and can't be done in policy
- Audience – determining how to communicate research given the audience(s); the presentation focused on executive agencies, but the reciprocal process is different with advocacy and legislative groups.