Building a Framework for Evidence-Based Policymaking

February 26, 2016

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Moderator: Luke Martel, Director of Strategic Initiatives, National Conference of State Legislatures
Building a Framework for Evidence-Based Policymaking

National Conference of State Legislatures
Who Governs? A Look at the Demographics of State Legislators

- Audio Information:
  - Audio is now available through your computer's speakers, or you may login via telephone using the call-in information contained in your registration confirmation email.

- Questions Information:
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Webinar Recording and Materials Will Be Available at:

Today's Speakers

Benjamin Fulton
Associate
The Pew Charitable Trusts

Herb Frierson
State Representative
Mississippi

Randy Sanders
Deputy Director
Mississippi Legislative Budget Office
Benjamin Fulton

Ben Fulton is an Associate in State Policy for the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative. Before joining the project, Ben was Policy Analyst for the Montgomery County Council in Maryland and has previous experience working in state government.
Representative Herb Frierson

Representative Herb Frierson serves District 106, which includes the counties of Lamar and Pearl River. He has been a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives since 1992.

He is the chair of the Appropriations Committee; and a member of the Education, Performance Based Budgeting, Revenue and Expenditure General Bills, Wildlife Fisheries and Parks, and Workforce Development Committees.

Frierson earned his B.S. from Mississippi State University and attended Pearl River Community College. Frierson’s professional experience includes working as a real estate appraiser.
Randy Sanders

**Randy Sanders** is the Deputy Director of the Mississippi Legislative Budget Office. He received his B.S. from Mississippi University for Women and earned his M.P.P.A from Mississippi State University in 1989. Randy has over 26 years of experience working in governmental budgeting. With the Legislative Budget Office he was a budget analyst for thirteen years and his area of expertise was in K-12 education. Prior to becoming the Deputy Director he was the Senior Budget Officer for the Mississippi State Senate.
Building a Framework for Evidence-based Policymaking:

Developing a Common Language and Asking the Right Questions

February 26, 2016
The Policy Challenge

• Budget development often relies on inertia and anecdote

• Limited data on:
  – What programs are funded
  – What each costs
  – What programs accomplish
  – How they compare

The Solution:

*Bring Evidence into the Process*
The Solution: Bring Evidence into the Process

**IDENTIFY** current players and stats

**CONSIDER** analytics to project future performance

**TARGET** funds to cost-effective and undervalued players

**GOAL:** Achieve playoff success without increased spending
Results First Policy Areas

- Adult Criminal Justice
- Juvenile Justice
- General Prevention
- Child Welfare
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health
- Early Education
Participation in Results First
Establishing a Common Language

Defining Levels of Evidence
Why Define Terms?

• Provides a common language for discussions about program effectiveness
• Establishes evidence-based policymaking as a priority
• Encourages the accurate use of evidence-based terms
• Provides a structure from which decisions can be made
Definitions for Tiers of Evidence

**Tier 1: Evidence-Based Program or Practice**
- Offers a high-level of research on effectiveness
  - Determined as a result of multiple rigorous evaluations, such as randomized control trials and evaluations that incorporate strong comparison group designs;
  - A single large multisite randomized study

**Tier 2: Promising Program or Practice**
- Has some research demonstrating effectiveness
  - Such as a single randomized controlled trial or evaluation with a comparison group design; but does not meet the full criteria for Tier 1

**Tier 3: Theory-Based Program or Practice**
- Has been tested using less rigorous research designs that do not meet evidence-based or promising standards.
Defining Levels of Evidence

Policymakers in a growing number of jurisdictions are using evidence to help inform their decisions about which public programs to fund. In general, they can achieve substantially better outcomes for their constituents by directing limited resources to programs that have been rigorously evaluated.

To promote the consistent use of this information across agencies and branches of government, several states have established formal definitions for levels of evidence. These definitions acknowledge that available data on programs' effectiveness often vary by both the rigor of the underlying research and the number of studies that test outcomes. Creating formal definitions of these levels of evidence provides a common language for discussions about programs' demonstrated effectiveness.

The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative reviewed states' legislative and administrative language related to levels of evidence, identified the best examples, and created the following definitions based on them.

1. An “evidence-based” program or practice offers a high level of research on effectiveness, determined as a result of multiple rigorous evaluations, such as randomized controlled trials and evaluations that incorporate strong comparison group designs, or a single large multisite randomized study. These programs typically have specified procedures that allow for successful replication.

2. A “promising” program or practice has some research demonstrating effectiveness, such as a single randomized controlled trial or evaluation with a comparison group design, but does not meet the full criteria for an evidence-based designation.

3. A “theory-based” program or practice has been tested using less rigorous research designs that do not meet the evidence-based or promising standards. These programs and practices typically have a well-constructed logic model or theory of change.

Policymakers can refer to these definitions to create a shared understanding of evidence across agencies and branches of government and, over time, increase its use in the budget and policymaking processes.
Asking the Right Questions
Mississippi’s Elements of Quality Program Design
Mississippi: Elements of Quality Program Design

- Program Premise
- Needs Assessment
- Program Description
- Research and Evidence Filter
- Implementation Plan
- Fidelity Plan
- Measurement and Evaluation
Building a Framework for Evidence-based Policymaking: Developing a Common Language and Asking the Right Questions
Questions?

- To ask a question, type your question into the box on the right-hand side of your screen.
  - You will not be identified and only the presenters will see your question.
Questions after the webinar

- If you have any questions regarding this Webinar, please contact: Jackson Brainerd
  jackson.brainerd@ncsl.org

- This Webinar will be archived and will be available at the following link:
Resources

- “Legislating Evidence-Based Policymaking.” (2015):

Thank you for participating!

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