Leading examples of researcher-practitioner partnerships that are advancing evidence-based policy: A lightening round of insights from researchers

APPAM 2016 Fall Research Conference

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Overview

What are specific strategies that are becoming increasingly important in evidence-based policy at the federal, state and local levels? And how can researchers become involved in these strategies through practitioner / researcher partnerships? Those partnerships can not only help public leaders improve results for the people they service, but can also allow scholars to produce research that is value to them and to the field. This roundtable will explore three areas that are already playing increasingly prominent roles in evidence-based policy and will highlight real-life examples of successful researcher /practitioner partnerships on those topics.

- Building **evidence capacity** (capacity to learn and do what works) within jurisdictions, agencies and programs
- Using and linking **administrative data** for performance management and program evaluation
- Using **rapid experimentation** to learn what works and improve policies and practices

Bios

- **Mary Ann Bates** ([@MaryAnnMBates](https://twitter.com/MaryAnnMBates)) is Deputy Director of the North American office of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). She worked closely with Amy Finkelstein and Lawrence Katz on the launch of J-PAL North America, which is the newest regional office of J-PAL. In her six years at J-PAL, her work has cut across multiple sectors, including health, energy, and education. She is a co-chair of J-PAL North America's State and Local Innovation Initiative, which provides resources to U.S. state and local governments interested in testing important policy questions with randomized evaluations. She was also instrumental in designing and launching the U.S. Health Care Delivery Initiative, which builds the evidence base on interventions that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health care delivery. She is currently a co-investigator of a large-scale randomized evaluation of the Nurse-Family Partnership in a Pay for Success project in South Carolina. She holds an MPP from UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy.

- **Andrew Feldman** ([@andyfeldman](https://twitter.com/andyfeldman)), the panel organizer and moderator, is a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution. His work and research focus on helping public agencies at the federal, state and local levels to use evidence and innovation to better achieve their missions. He also hosts the Gov Innovator podcast, featuring more than 130 interviews with practitioners and scholars. He previously served as Special Advisor

for Evidence-Based Policy in the Office of the Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education; Special Advisor on the Evidence Team at the White House Office of Management and Budget; one of the top three appointed leaders at Wisconsin's labor department, an agency of 1,600, under Governor Jim Doyle; a Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Governor Doyle; Staff Economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisors in the Clinton Administration; and Special Assistant to the President at MDRC. He earned his B.A. in economics from Swarthmore College and his Ph.D. in public policy from Harvard University.

- **Robert Goerge** is a Chapin Hall Senior Research Fellow with more than 25 years of research focused on improving the available data and information on children and families, particularly those who require specialized services related to maltreatment, disability, poverty, or violence. Dr. Goerge developed Chapin Hall's Integrated Database on Child and Family Programs in Illinois, which links the administrative data on social service receipt, education, criminal and juvenile justice, employment, healthcare, and early childhood programs to provide a comprehensive picture of child and family use of publicly provided or financed service programs. He leads the HHS-funded Family Self-Sufficiency Data Center. He received his Ph.D. from the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago. He co-founded the International Society for Child Indicators.

- **Justine Hastings** (@JHastings_Econ) is a Professor of Economics and International and Public Affairs and Director of the Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab (RIIPL) a partnership between Brown University and the Office of the Governor of Rhode Island. Justine has a track record of innovative research and collaboration with public and private partners. She became an economist in order to use science to improve people's lives and impact the world for good. This is reflected in her work which combines economics and big data to solve social problems. She contributes to research in education, retirement policy, household finance, as well as marketing, competition and environmental regulation. She serves on the Academic Research Council for the United States Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and on the Council of Economic Advisors to the Governor of Rhode Island.

- **Matthew Hill** is the Executive Director of Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP), an initiative based at the University of Pennsylvania that focuses on the development, use, and innovation of integrated data systems (IDS) across government agencies for policy analysis and program reform by executive leaders in city, county, and state government. His academic research focuses on cities, urban revitalization and historic preservation in the U.S. and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. He is interested in the role that integrated and spatial data can play in revitalizing struggling and historic neighborhoods. Prior to AISP, he served as the Associate Director at the Center for Heritage & Society and the Dept. of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at UMass Amherst. He has also consulted to city governments, public park systems, and

nonprofit organizations in the areas of strategic planning and revenue generation. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in anthropology.

- **Julia Lane** is a Professor at the Center for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP) at NYU, a unique public-private research center that uses New York City as its laboratory and classroom to help cities around the world become more productive and livable. She also serves as Professor at NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and Senior Fellow at NYU's GovLab. As part of the CUSP team, Dr. Lane works with the research team to build the CUSP Data User Facility. Dr. Lane is the co-founder of the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamic (LEHD) partnership with the Census Bureau. LEHD data has been used to analyze commuting patterns for transportation planning, and the study of workforce turnover, pensions, and low-wage work. She has been working with a number of national governments to document the results of their science investments. Her work has been featured in several publications including Science and Nature. She received her PhD in Economics from the University of Missouri.

- **Dayanand Manoli** is an assistant professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Texas at Austin. His research focuses on empirical analyses to document and improve the impacts of government policies. His research interests include social security and retirement policy, income tax policy and education policy. In current and previous research projects, he has worked closely with private companies and government agencies, including the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, to analyze data, test economic models and implement large-scale field experiments. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

- **Lashawn Richburg-Hayes** leads MDRC's work in higher education, which is principally focused on finding ways to increase academic achievement and persistence among low-income students attending community colleges and less selective four-year universities. Directly relevant for this panel, she is the project director and co-principal investigator of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project, sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. BIAS is the first major opportunity to apply a behavioral research lens to programs that serve poor families in the United States. She is also the co-principal investigator of the Institute for Education Sciences Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness and project director and a co-principal investigator of the Behavioral Interventions in Child Support Services. She earned a BS from the Industrial and Labor Relations School of Cornell University. She received her PhD in economics from Princeton University.

- **Adam Sacarny** ([@asacarny](#)) is an Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management in the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. He is also a Faculty Research Fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research and an Affiliate of JPAL. His research studies the economics of health care payment policy, with a focus on documentation and coding, upcoding, and fraud. He is currently an investigator on two

randomized controlled trials, one focusing on inappropriate prescribing in Medicare Part D and the other looking at insurance choices in the Affordable Care Act marketplaces. His dissertation analyzed how hospitals learned to use more detailed diagnosis descriptions on their insurance claims to take advantage of a revenue-raising opportunity in Medicare. Dr. Sacarny received his PhD in Economics from MIT in 2014 and then served as a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar in Health Policy Research at Harvard University before coming to Columbia.

Researcher / practitioner partnerships: Overviews and insights

Focus area: Using rapid experimentation to learn what works and improve policies and practices

Running communications-related experiments to text out quick, low-cost interventions at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the State of Colorado

Representative on the panel: Adam Sacarny, Columbia University

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
  - Adam Sacarny, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University
  - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
  - U.S. Social and Behavioral Sciences Team, U.S. General Services Administration

- **Goals of the partnerships:** To find letter-based interventions that reduce overprescribing of drugs that can harm patients. The team is also looking for evidence on the drivers of overprescribing so that CMS and policymakers can more effectively respond to it.

- **How it works:** Dr. Sacarny is an unpaid consultant to the contractor that does anti-fraud work for Medicare Part D, giving him access to data that he uses to evaluate the interventions. He also works with the U.S. Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST), an organization based in the General Services Administration that promotes randomized evaluation and the use of behavioral insights in the federal government.

- **Example of a research project:** Dr. Sacarny, working with the Center for Program Integrity at CMS, is overseeing a multi-round randomized controlled trial of warning letters to high volume prescribers in Medicare Part D, with each round targeting a new group of prescribers. The study team takes a continuous improvement approach by rapidly evaluating a letter intervention and then using the results to inform the next round.

- The first round of the study targeted top prescribers of Schedule II controlled substances with a peer comparison letter and yielded no detectable effects on prescribing.
- The study team then pursued a second round, targeting top prescribers of the antipsychotic drug Seroquel. These prescribers were sent multiple strongly worded letters focusing on penalties for overprescribing. The letters triggered an 11% reduction in prescribing. Prescribers cut back their Seroquel scrips to patients who were contraindicated for the drug according to evidence-based guidelines, but they nearly equally reduced their prescribing to patients who were indicated for the drug.
- The study team is now designing a new intervention that seeks to reduce overprescribing of opioids. This intervention will emphasize the importance of guidelines so that prescribers are pushed to reduce only prescribing that is inappropriate. It will also test whether messages focused on harms to patients or penalties for prescribers are more effective.

- **Benefits from the partnership for both researchers and practitioners:** By taking a continuous improvement approach, the study team is developing evidence for CMS on how to best intervene to reduce overprescribing. The use of randomization ensures that this evidence is high quality. CMS has expressed interest in using the insights from this study to inform program integrity and anti-fraud work for other parts of Medicare. The study team is also publishing its results so that other practitioners can benefit from this evidence.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful:**
  - Becoming an unpaid consultant to the contractor was crucial for this work because it provided Dr. Sacarny with access to the data. Joining the contractor meant he could use their data security infrastructure (e.g. use their secure laptop to access data), making the project much simpler.
  - Think in advance about how to maintain long-term enthusiasm for projects. The research team encountered some roadblocks in the middle of the study and a plan of action before the problems occurred would have helped.
  - Running a randomized trial requires different management skills from writing an academic paper. In particular, it is important to make judicious use of the implementing partner's time. Scheduling frequent but short meetings with clear agendas, provided in advance, can help keep the project running smoothly and minimize wasted time.

Representative on the panel: Lashawn Richburg-Hayes

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
    - Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
    - MDRC
    - 15 state and county social service agencies

- **Goals of the partnership:** The BIAS project applies behavioral insights to issues related to the operations, implementation, and efficacy of social service programs and policies. The goal of the partnerships is to learn how tools from behavioral science could be used to deliver programs more effectively and, ultimately, improve the well-being of low-income children, adults, and families.

- **How it works:** The BIAS project developed a systematic approach called behavioral diagnosis and design to try to improve program outcomes through the application of insights from behavioral science. In this multi-stage process, program administrators and researchers analyze each step in a program's process to identify possible drop-off points, or "bottlenecks" where the program is not achieving its desired outcomes. Then, adopting the perspective of the program's participants and staff, the team searches for possible behavioral reasons for the bottlenecks — those related to individuals' decision-making processes and actions — and designs and evaluates behavioral interventions intended to address those barriers (typically using an experimental design).

- **Example of a research project:** When parents with child support orders are incarcerated, they often have a limited ability to make payments, which may lead to a high accumulation of debt. The BIAS team built upon an existing outreach campaign in Texas focused on encouraging these parents to submit a modification application to lower their child support order amounts while in prison. The intervention consisted of redesigning materials to include a new letter, an application pre-populated with information the state had on file, and two new postcards. This approach increased the number of incarcerated parents who submitted a complete modification application by 11 percentage points (from 28 percent for those receiving the existing outreach to 39 percent for those receiving the redesigned materials).

- **Benefits from the partnership researchers and practitioners:** The BIAS team found that behavioral science provided the language and tools for program administrators and staff to envision new approaches to service delivery. The behavioral diagnosis and design process enabled staff in government organizations to collaborate with the BIAS team in a process of creative problem-solving. Staff were generally excited to participate in this

work, and programs benefited from the process beyond the specific interventions that were tested. At the same time, the organizational context and lack of discretionary funding to support the interventions constrained each stage of behavioral diagnosis, design, and testing to some extent.

Focus area: Building evidence capacity within jurisdictions, agencies and programs

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Developing behavioral insights that inform and improve tax administration

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Representative on the panel: Day Manoli, University of Texas at Austin

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
    - Day Manoli, Economics Department, University of Texas at Austin
    - Staff from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service

- **Goals of the partnership:** To conduct empirical analyses and field experiments using IRS data in order to develop behavioral insights that inform and improve tax administration.

- **How it works:** Day is on an IPA (Intergovernmental Personnel Act) assignment part-time, which allows him to physically sit within the IRS and have access to IRS data as an IRS employee would, while also protecting data privacy as an employee would as well. His research is co-authored with IRS staff.

- **Example of a research project:** One project presents experimental evidence on the effects of one-time and follow-up reminders on tax filing decisions among lower-income nonfilers, meaning individuals who did not appear on a filed tax return but had income reported by third parties to the Internal Revenue Service. The team conducted two randomized controlled trials. The results demonstrate that one-time reminders increase tax filing, both to claim tax refunds as well as to voluntarily pay balances owed to the IRS. However, these effects do not persist. Consistent with recency effects, individuals who owe a balance due appear more likely to recidivate into nonfiling than those who receive refunds. Follow-up reminders continue to increase tax filing, particularly among individuals who previously had to pay balances to the IRS instead of receive refunds.

- **Benefits from the partnership for researchers and practitioners:** A key benefit of the partnership is the exchange of perspectives. Researchers know about data analysis and research designs, but practitioner partners (IRS staff) bring vast knowledge of institutional backgrounds and program administration. The exchange of perspectives generates research ideas and even innovations. An innovation, for example, was using non-filer data to map out areas of higher non-filing rates in the U.S., allowing the IRS to work with partners to try to boost those rates.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful:**
  - o Patience is critical, including having patience to hear what research questions are of interest to practitioners and to allow time for a sincere give and take (each side listening to each others' research priorities and interests).
  - o Explaining to partners about any constraints he is facing (time / tenure / publication deadlines) is important so that IRS colleagues understand the context in which he is working.
  - o Being open to being onsite in order to access the data
  - o Thinking about research from multiple perspectives – in this case, academic and tax administrative perspectives
  - o Being on an IPA at the IRS has been very helpful for developing trust, learning the institutional background, and exchanging ideas with coauthors / talking in real-time. It has also been important from a data access perspective.

<div style="border:1px solid black; background-color:#FFFF99; padding:4px;">Helping state government use data-driven, evidence-based decision making</div>

Representative on the panel: Justine Hastings, RIIPL

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
  - o Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab (RIIPL) at Brown University: http://riipl.org/
  - o Rhode Island governor's office
  - o Rhode Island state agencies

- **Goals of the partnership:** The Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab (RIIPL) at Brown University is a new collaboration between researchers at Brown University and the Office of the Governor in Rhode Island. Together, RIIPL and RI GOV are harness big data and state-of-the-art research to develop effective public policy and increase equity of opportunity in society.

- **How it works:** The RIIPL model has three components.
  - o First, RIIPL is centered on ideal data. High-quality data fuel high-quality research and policy insights. RIIPL has constructed a comprehensive administrative database with added industry data in key sectors, to provide a 360° view of family and economic well-being. We call this integrated data system Panorama. It provides an unprecedented ability to evaluate and guide policy decisions to improve lives.
  - o Second, RIIPL policy and research development is collaborative and interdisciplinary. We combine data science, behavioral science, economics and public policy in our approach. We foster collaboration between scientists and practitioners to come up with real, workable, testable solutions.
  - o Finally, RIIPL integrates education at Brown University into the ideation, research and dissemination processes to change the way policy is approached today and in the future through the training of next generation leaders.

- **Example of a research project:** Rhode Island's three year prison recidivism rate stands at 52%. Governor Raimondo's administration has set a goal of reducing this to 44% by 2020. Studies suggest that criminal activity may be exacerbated by food insecurity. Data from the Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab (RIIPL) suggests that only a minority of eligible prison releasees sign up for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) upon release and that those who do sign up have significantly lower recidivism rates. This suggests auto-enrollment in SNAP could be an effective way to reduce recidivism. However, this correlation may be driven by selection instead of enrollment hassle costs – those who would benefit from SNAP post-release or who desire to re-integrate are the ones who sign up. To determine if auto-enrollment is helpful, has no-effect, or is harmful in reducing recidivism and for which inmate types, we are launching the Connect for Success pilot where inmates will be enrolled for SNAP benefits so that they receive activated EBT cards on the day of release. We will test whether inmates with immediate access to SNAP benefits are less likely to recidivate than their counterparts who do not have immediate enrollment. We will also test if there is any harm, for example, if recidivism is accelerated for particular prior offenses.

- **Benefits from the partnership for researchers and practitioners:** For researchers: Conducting state-of-the-art but also high-impact research. For students: Engaging in experiential learning; impacting the world while learning. For practitioners: Having partners in change, access to knowledge and opportunities for outside-the-box thinking, Tech-up classes, improving the impact of their programs.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful:** Partnerships are successful when all are willing to find places where all partners benefit; where scientists are committed to finding solutions and completing projects on a fast-paced-real-world timeline and practitioners are willing to take chances to try new things and commit to true, gold standard evaluation; when all involved are patient and enjoy understanding different perspectives and accommodating different constraints as part of the process. At RIIPL, we believe learning increases when we connect scientists, policy makers and students around data to solve real problems. RIIPL's team of Economists, Data Scientists and Smart Policy Analysts are using their talent with purpose – to increase equality of opportunity in society through data- and research- driven policy. To meet our team visit www.riipl.org/people

Representative on the panel: Mary Ann Bates, J-PAL North America

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
  - JPAL-North America: www.povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal
  - JPAL's network of researchers
  - State and local U.S. governments

- **Goals of the partnership:** The J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative supports U.S. state and local governments in using randomized evaluations to generate new and widely applicable lessons about which social programs work, which work best, and why. The initiative aims to:
  - Build the capacity of state and local governments to create and use rigorous evidence;
  - Share this evidence with other jurisdictions that may be facing similar challenges;
  - Document and disseminate best practices for feasibly implementing randomized evaluations at the state and local level.

- **How it works:** J-PAL hosts an annual innovation competition for state and local leaders who are interested in designing and implementing randomized evaluations and using the evidence generated to inform their decision-making. Selected state and local governments receive:
  - Technical support from J-PAL staff to develop feasible, policy-relevant evaluations
  - Partnerships with experienced researchers from J-PAL's network to implement the evaluations
  - Flexible funding to help get these evaluations off the ground

- **First round projects:** In the first round of the innovation competition, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Puerto Rico, Rochester, and South Carolina were selected from among 25 applicants. This first cohort of governments will develop and test innovative approaches to increasing employment, helping people move out of poverty, expanding opportunity for young people, and finding more effective treatments for substance use disorders.

- **Example of a research project:** As one example of the kind of project this initiative will spur, we have an ongoing collaboration with the State of South Carolina. The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) is leading an innovative expansion of the Nurse-Family Partnership over the next four years, providing NFP services through a Medicaid waiver coupled with a pay-for-success contract. NFP pairs vulnerable first-time parents with specially trained nurses, who provide home visits from early pregnancy through the child's second birthday. Mary Ann and her colleagues -- Katherine Baicker (PI), Michelle Woodford, and Annetta Zhou -- are conducting a

randomized evaluation to measure the impact NFP has on mothers' and children's health outcomes. Researchers and NFP have completed a pilot phase, and the full expansion is now underway. The study will enroll 6,000 women over four years, with 4,000 offered access to NFP's services. Using administrative data from South Carolina the research team will measure NFP's short- and long-run impact on a wide range of health, economic, and other outcomes, starting with preterm births, birth spacing, and child injuries.

- **Benefits from the partnership for researchers and practitioners:**
  For practitioners:
    o The innovation competition model uses the priorities of the jurisdictions as the starting point for which evaluation questions to prioritize.
    o Pro bono technical assistance and flexible early pilot funding can help research collaborations get up and running more smoothly.
    o J-PAL can learn from the successes and challenges across its network of researchers and share practical know-how for designing and running experiments in many different settings.

  For researchers:
    o The opportunity to partner with state and local governments to test different social programs while accessing administrative data opens up exciting new research opportunities.
    o J-PAL's innovation competitions help researchers connect with policy makers and practitioners who are open to and welcome partnering with external researchers.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful:**
    o These partnerships work best when we can find an opportunity to test a question that is both a priority for the jurisdiction and matches the research interests of a research team. Patience is helpful on all sides to find the right fit.
    o Randomized evaluations are an effective tool for learning the causal impact of a program, but they are not always feasible. It can take several attempts to find an opportunity where feasibility, sample size and data access align.
    o Frequent, open communication and clear expectation setting is key. Researchers need to be sensitive to the priorities and constraints of jurisdictions. Jurisdictions need to be open to external research partners publishing the results of studies.
    o On-the-ground coordination is needed throughout the project between researchers, government partners, service providers, and the community.
    o Gaining access to relevant administrative data at the state or local level is essential for running efficient evaluations. For more information, see: www.povertyactionlab.org/admindata

Focus area: Using and linking administrative data for performance management and program evaluation

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Collecting, integrating and analyzing data to improve quality of life in New York City

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Representative on the panel: Julia Lane, CUSP

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
  o Center for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP) at New York University: http://cusp.nyu.edu/
  o Participating New York City agencies

- **Goals of the partnership:** To create a "sandbox" (i.e., testing) environment that demonstrates the value of linking data to agencies through active learning techniques

- **How it works:** CUSP has built a secure environment to house confidential microdata. It does the following:
  o Trains the workforce: Trains agency staff and contractors in new empirical models and tools for decision-making
  o Develop new products: Develops pipeline of potential new products for government agencies
  o Create new data: Creates new joined-up datasets to address cross-agency challenges
  o Establish new networks: Establishes cross-agency and city connections to address shared problems

- **Example of a research project:** Linking data on ex-offenders with housing, transportation and jobs data to examine the impact of access to jobs on labor market outcomes and subsequent recidivism

- **Benefits from the partnership for researchers and practitioners:**
  o Creates a pipeline of new prototype products central to agency mission as defined by senior management.
  o Develops teams of practitioners who can demonstrate the value of the new types of data for solving real world practical problems and who become embedded in their organizations.
  o Makes new linked data available as an ongoing asset.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful:**
  o A lot of work. Also a focus on the needs of the data provider and the value added to the agency.

Representative on the panel: Matthew Hill,

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
  - Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) at the University of Pennsylvania: http://www.aisp.upenn.edu/
  - Counties and cities that are part of the AISP network

- **Goals of the partnership:** The principal aim of AISP is to improve the quality of education, health and human service agencies' policies and practices through the use of integrated data systems. Quality integrated data systems (IDS) are designed to help executive leaders in municipal, county, and state government evaluate and establish effective programs for the people they serve. AISP's activities have built support for the efforts of state, county, and municipal education, health and human service agencies to improve their use of data for policy analysis and program improvement. Its goals include: 1) Developing the capacities of existing and new IDS sites; 2) Demonstrating uses of IDS for policy and program reforms; 3) Identifying opportunities for innovation in the development and use of IDS.

- **How it works:** The AISP Network is composed of 13 states and local governments that are leaders in the field of integrated data systems (IDS). Network members are sites with mature, functioning IDS capable of producing actionable intelligence to guide policy and practice decision-making. These jurisdictions, comprising 26% of the US population, have been collaborating for nearly a decade in a professional network to share best practices and to conduct multisite research, under a MacArthur-funded initiative called Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). As part of its network building activities, AISP is also promoting the development and use of IDS among *additional* states and counties through its "developing sites" seminars and technical assistance activities.

- **Example of a research project:** PI Dennis Culhane partnered with the County of Los Angeles' Office of Research and Evaluation Services to conduct a study on the young adult outcomes of youth who age out of Los Angeles County's child welfare supervised foster care system and/or juvenile probation system. Two cohorts of young adults from both systems were selected for analysis, in addition to a cohort of "crossover" youth involved in both child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In addition to providing findings on these groups, the study provided a basis for outcome comparisons among the three groups. It also looked at outcomes across a variety of adult domains including educational, occupational, health, mental health, criminal justice, and public welfare systems.

- **Benefits from the partnership for researchers and practitioners, drawing from the LA County example:**
  - County officials were pleased to learn that the costs associated with exiting youth could be determined quickly and at such a modest cost.
  - Nine recommendations for policymakers resulted in improving the immediate and long-term outcomes for these youth.
  - This was the first study to look at the outcomes of crossover youth.
  - It also allowed LA County to understand the extent to which adult services (e.g. mental health, substance abuse, health care, criminal justice, etc.) were used by this youth population.
  - It gave hard evidence to information that everyone suspected anecdotally.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful, drawing from the LA County example:**
  - The project was of interest to County human services officials because it involved a costly population, and there are lots of youth who age out of foster care in CA. Officials also wanted to make more informed decisions about policies and programs that affect this population
  - External funding supported the project, through a foundation (Hilton) that was interested in funding research on youth who age out of foster care and juvenile justice in CA and NY.
  - Persistence and patience were required in order to get everyone on board with the Data Use Agreements, especially with a large government bureaucracy.
  - There was also a lot of back and forth with the legal office about data sharing, emphasizing that this is legal, and that it can be done.

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Using linked data to inform evidence-based policymaking in Chicago
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Representative on the panel: Robert Goerge, Chapin Hall

- **Who is involved in the partnership:**
  - Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago: http://www.chapinhall.org/
  - City of Chicago agencies and school district, Cook County agencies, Illinois state agencies

- **Goals of the partnership:** To provide rigorous analysis with comprehensive data to inform program and policy within Illinois, Cook County and Chicago. Agency partners specify specific research questions or evaluations in collaboration with Chapin Hall researchers.

- **How it works:** Agencies provide data under legal agreements to Chapin Hall and Chapin Hall staff create a research-ready database through record-linkage. Chapin Hall researchers work with agency leadership to understand the need for evidence or other

information. Funding is either provided by agencies or obtained by Chapin Hall researchers. Chapin Hall researchers also collaborate with external researchers when the goals of the project fit Chapin Hall's or partner agencies' mission.

- **Example of a research project:** A project funded by the Ford Foundation conducted in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services focused on an analysis of all SNAP cases from 2000-2014 in Illinois. Their Medicaid, TANF, and child care subsidy participation as well as their household and neighborhood characteristics were analyzed through Latent Class Analysis to understand the types of cases and their outcomes from the perspective of agency leadership wanting to encourage work participation for this population. The analysis is now being used as part of the development of a predictive model to guide service provision at the frontline.

- **Benefits from the partnership (for both researchers and practitioners):** Besides access to data, the researchers, working with agency staff at all levels, learn the actual challenges these agencies and program participants face on a daily basis, relative to both policy and practice. When there is a situation that requires a data-driven solution, the agencies call in Chapin Hall researchers to bring data and analysis to bear on a particular set of questions or begin a new effort to develop the necessary knowledge.

- **What it takes to make the partnership successful:**
  - Stamina. It's no organization's mission to provide administrative data to a researcher. Being tenacious is the only way it is going to happen.
  - Be sure that you focus on the agency's needs—in some cases, the research will have to be relevant to the agency's mission in order to get access to the data. These are requirements of FERPA and HIPAA.
  - You need to know the policy, political and organizational context. Know the business of the agency that you are requesting data from. Most researchers can understand schools with a little work, while most don't naturally understand the criminal justice system.
  - In some cases, the researcher will have to provide the technical capacity to get the data from the raw, database format of an agency, into a use-able format.