

Stimulating Effective Innovation in Government

Plans for the Policy Roundtable Meeting Seminar

The Policy Roundtable of the Behavioral and Social Sciences is convening at its next meeting a seminar on stimulating effective innovation in government. The seminar will be held on Thursday, 30 October, in Room 120 of the main Academy building at 21st and Constitution Avenue, N.W., from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Many government programs provide social services or allocate resources to programs in education, health, energy, national security, and the environment, among other important areas. The seminar will focus on three broad questions about such programs:

How can innovations be stimulated? Where do the ideas for new programs or changes in current ones come from? How can these ideas be stimulated? What has worked to spark effective innovation in the past and what are new models for encouraging compelling new approaches?

How can we efficiently learn about whether innovations produce positive impacts? How are the ultimate program outcomes defined and how are they measured or otherwise ascertained? What types of evaluation are best employed for this purpose? When and how can administrative and performance management data be used to simplify evaluations and generate results much more rapidly?

How can we use lessons of innovations to manage, reshape, and expand programs? Can rapid early evaluation methods be used by program administrators to reshape program elements quickly? What structure is needed to maintain high-quality practices? How does what we learn from implementing programs feed back to the formulation of new policies and programs? Can innovation and performance evaluation help create learning organizations?

To explore the answers to these and other questions, the seminar will focus on a few programs where major innovations have been tried. Examples of programs are the following:

Educational Innovation at the Department of Education

Investing in Innovation (i3) provides competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement and attainment in order to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.

Race to the Top is a competitive process to spur innovation and reforms in state and local district K-12 education in four specific areas: 1) Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; 2) Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; 3) Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and

retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and 4) turning around lowest-achieving schools.

Presenters:

Robert Gordon, The Brookings Institution

Robert Slavin, Chairman of the Board, Success for All Foundation

Public Assistance and Child Welfare Waivers at the Department of Health and Human Services

Public Assistance Waivers. In the 1980s and 1990s welfare reform waivers were tied to serious evaluation. These waiver-evaluation strategies yield a great deal of very high quality information that was subsequently included in federal and state reforms.

Presenter: Howard Rolston, Abt Associates

The Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration authority provides states with an opportunity to use federal funds more flexibly in order to test innovative approaches to child welfare service delivery and financing. Using this option, states can design and demonstrate a wide range of approaches to reforming child welfare and improving outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For example, a federal child welfare demonstration enabled Illinois to assist relatives who were named legal guardians of children formerly under their foster care.

Presenter: Mark F. Testa, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) innovations at the Department of Agriculture

SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. The Food and Nutrition Service works with state agencies, nutrition educators, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions about applying for the program and can access benefits. FNS also works with state partners and the retail community to improve program administration and ensure program integrity.

Presenter: Scott Cody, Vice President, Mathematica Policy Research

Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program in the Department of Health and Human Services

The Office of Adolescent Health is responsible for implementing and administering the Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program, a \$105 million discretionary grant program. The TPP program works to prevent teen pregnancy by supporting the replication of evidence-based programs and the implementation of demonstration programs to develop and test new models and innovative strategies. Three grant programs funded through the TPP Program include: (1) TPP Replication of Evidence-Based Programs, (2) TPP Research and Demonstration Programs, and (3) TPP Communitywide Initiative.

Presenter: Evelyn M. Kappeler, Director, Office of Adolescent Health

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