

HUDSON INSTITUTE

INSTITUTE FOR
RESEARCH ON POVERTY

NGA CENTER FOR BEST
PRACTICES

ENHANCING THE CAPACITY FOR CROSS- SYSTEMS INNOVATION

A Project Overview Prepared by:

Thomas Corbett

*University of Wisconsin
Institute for Research on Poverty
Madison Wisconsin*

*Susan Golonka
&
Courtney Smith*

*National Governors Association
Center for Best Practices
Washington D.C.*

Jennifer L. Noyes

*The Hudson Institute
Welfare Policy Center
Madison Wisconsin*

November 6, 2002

This is a working paper and is subject to further review and modification. The points made in this paper, and the opinions expressed, are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinions of the organizations with which they are associated.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary		3
Introduction		6
Context and Issues		8
Selected Issues	9	
Research and Management Challenges		10
Proposed Analytic Strategies		13
Module 1-Legalistic	13	
Module 2-Practice	14	
Module 3-Operational	15	
Module 4-Accountability	16	
Module 5-Effectiveness	17	
Outcomes and Products		18
Intended Audiences	18	
Potential Products	18	
Dissemination Techniques	19	
Intensive Technical Assistance	20	
Stakeholder Forums	21	
Resources and Expertise		22
Concluding Caveats		23
Attachment A		25
Attachment B		28

ENHANCING THE CAPACITY FOR CROSS-SYSTEMS INNOVATION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

State officials note that federal funding silos, different eligibility and reporting requirements, and conflicting regulations can make it difficult to serve families comprehensively and effectively. Under the flexibility provided by the 1996 TANF legislation, some states developed programs to deliver coordinated services through initiatives employing imaginative cross-program integration. Their initial promise has heightened interest in identifying new opportunities and addressing remaining barriers to such integration.

The Administration's proposal for reauthorizing TANF contains a provision, commonly known as the *superwaiver*, which would dramatically expand state ability to integrate social service and workforce delivery systems by waiving parts of existing program rules across federal executive agencies. This provision generated considerable debate. Proponents argue that continuing progress in serving children and families demands more front-line innovation and control. States need not only take better advantage of existing flexibility in federal law, they also require additional flexibility to design and implement programs. Opponents argue that some states have not always fully or prudently exercised the flexibility they already have and, if given more authority, might well pursue strategies and policies of questionable benefit to vulnerable families and children. They also contend that federal law should provide stronger protections for families and children and that program targeting is often desirable to ensure that more disadvantaged groups have access to essential public goods and services.

We are seeking cooperation and support for an initiative that will ultimately enhance state and local capacity for cross-system innovation. We expect this endeavor to lead to a broad discussion about the future of social assistance, workforce development, and state flexibility in developing and implementing a variety of programs. The Hudson Institute's Welfare Policy Center, the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty, and the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices, in consultation with officials of other interested organizations, have developed a set of initiatives designed to reinvigorate a dialogue over state flexibility that is grounded in evidence, experience, and substantive inquiry. This initiative seeks to:

1. Determine how much flexibility exists within current law and practice, what barriers (intended and unintended) there are to using such opportunities, and why states might not be fully exercising the flexibility that does exist.
2. Facilitate a reasoned dialogue among key stakeholders about legislative and regulatory program changes that would advance state flexibility and to explore whether there is a consensus about making such changes.
3. Work with local, state, and federal officials to increase their capacity to design and implement cross-systems innovations under existing legislative and regulatory parameters.
4. Work with a broad array of state and local officials to stimulate thinking about the opportunities for innovation that might exist given more state flexibility.

5. Develop appropriate outcome measures and identify data needed to assure program accountability and monitor the well-being of target populations; and think through what is needed to examine the impacts of integrated service systems.

ACTIVITIES

To accomplish these goals, we have identified multiple strategies for exploring the different dimensions of the issue. Because this ambitious project may best be managed in smaller increments, we have structured several discrete project modules (sets of interrelated tasks and activities) that could be independently funded.

Module 1 [legalistic] focuses on federal statutory and regulatory impediments to cross-systems innovation. We plan to develop models for cross-systems integration and determine:

1. What aspects can be achieved through current options and flexibility?
2. Which rules must be changed for the proposal to succeed, and are they based in statute or regulation?
3. What processes must be followed to secure permission to proceed?
4. Who are the key actors and in which organizations are they located?

Module 2 [practice] focuses on the interface between federal and state government and across state and federal agencies. We hope to identify factors that are critical to working across systems and agencies to implement comprehensive programs for families and children. We plan to interview state and federal officials, conduct site visits, review documents and develop case studies to better understand the quality of interactions among state-level officials across agencies and between state officials and federal agencies, and how those interactions affect the pursuit of cross-system innovation.

Module 3 [operational] considers how state and local statutes and regulations, institutional cultures and practices, and organizational capacity encourage or impede innovation. To better understand these issues, we propose to convene workshops involving “lighthouse” or exemplar sites. The workshops might feature teams from several sites that represent instructive examples of cross-system integration. Each team would include a local representative from each major system that had been integrated (TANF, WIA, human services, education, etc.) and one or two state officials who could provide a broader perspective.

Module 4 [accountability] assumes that state and local flexibility cannot be pursued without strengthening program accountability. In the context of cross-program integration, this typically means incorporating the capability for monitoring populations into program governance and developing and implementing effective outcome measures. We intend to work closely with those institutions and individuals engaged in efforts to improve the use of social indicators and performance measures. Organizations such as Child Trends, ASPE, Chapin Hall, and the Urban Institute have been particularly active in this area over the past decade.

Module 5 [effectiveness] is motivated by a recognition that the push for cross-systems innovation is based on plausible hypothesis rather than rigorous research and analysis. We hope to convene researchers with expertise in program evaluation and experimental

design to discuss methods for assessing the effectiveness of cross-system integration models.

The five modules represent complementary strategies designed to sort out the relative contributions of legal and regulatory impediments, barriers associated with perceptions, prejudices, practices, and lack of leadership or organizational capacity. They cover the three levels of government (federal, state, and local) and encompass both the formal and informal dimensions of the problem. To develop a complete and coherent picture, these tracks will be coordinated and the products of each module will be integrated.

PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES

We believe that the information collected in the five modules described above will be extremely useful to a diverse audience including the national policy community, the federal bureaucracy, state and local officials, and the evaluation and academic community. Taken together, findings from these activities will help inform national discussion about reauthorization of TANF, WIA and other programs; guide state and local officials in developing more integrated and comprehensive programs for families and children; and identify future research activities and opportunities for demonstration projects.

We will use the information collected in interviews, site visits, meetings, and technical analysis in each module to develop a range of products for different audiences. Such products might include:

- Printed articles and reports tailored for policymakers, researchers, and state and local administrators, as appropriate
- Tool Kits to help state and local officials develop and implement cross-system innovations;
- Video and audio materials that highlight best practices.

We will also disseminate findings through organized events, such as:

- Stakeholder Forums to present findings from the analytical work and to discuss the possible federal legislative and regulatory changes that would improve the capacity for cross-program innovation.

Finally, we will utilize our findings to assist states and localities in their efforts to improve comprehensive services for families and children. Technical assistance activities might include:

- Policy Academy on Cross-System Integration and Collaboration to work intensely over an extended period of time with cross-agency teams of high-level officials from a small group of states.
- Peer Exchange opportunities through existing regional networks such as WELPAN and WESTPAN, including site visits by state and local officials who are interested in initiating cross-system efforts

In our dissemination efforts, we will make optimal use of regional state networks of welfare officials, national organizations of elected and career officials such as NGA, NCSL, NACO, and APHSA; and state Family Impact Seminars to reach a wide audience.

INTRODUCTION

State officials note that federal funding silos, different eligibility and reporting requirements, and conflicting regulations can make it difficult to serve families in a comprehensive, holistic, and effective manner. The flexibility provided by the 1996 TANF legislation, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), afforded new opportunities for states to deliver coordinated services through greater cross-program integration. Successes in these endeavors over the past several years have heightened the resolve of many states to identify new opportunities and address remaining barriers.¹ These issues now have entered into an active debate respecting public policies for low-income families with children that has been spurred by the scheduled reauthorization of TANF and other related programs in 2002.

The Administration's proposal for reauthorizing TANF contained a provision, commonly known as the *superwaiver* provision, that would dramatically expand state ability to integrate social service and workforce delivery systems in ways that cut across existing program lines and the missions of federal executive agencies. This provision generated considerable opposition from many quarters, but many states strongly supported the principles underlying the provision. These diverse viewpoints became very apparent in forums conducted by the National Governors' Association (NGA), as part of its Welfare Reauthorization Roundtable series, and the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP), at the March 2002 Welfare Peer Assistance Network (WELPAN) meeting held in Washington, D.C.

Among the organizations that have made cross-systems program integration and enhanced state flexibility important parts of their agendas are the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Others involved include the Rockefeller Institute (the State Capacity Study), the Urban Institute (the New Federalism Initiative), and the Brookings Institution (Welfare and Beyond). All these organizations have added to our understanding of how states are coping with the opportunities and challenges of reform. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) has paid particular attention to integration between TANF and WIA, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has identified areas where flexibility in the Food Stamp Program might enhance the effectiveness of the program

Despite all this interest, it had become clear by the summer of 2002 that the principle of enhanced state flexibility to pursue cross-systems integration had been sidetracked by contention over the merits of the *superwaiver*. With encouragement and modest support from the Casey Foundation and the Joyce Foundation, IRP, NGA, and the Hudson Institute undertook to reinvigorate the dialogue over state flexibility. Rather than debate one specific tactic, we felt that progress was more likely if we could refocus the discussion on fundamentals: where do the real impediments to cross-systems

¹ See the WELPAN report titled *Eliminating the Silos: Or, It's not just welfare anymore*, Institute for Research on Poverty: Madison WI (2002). Because WELPAN is composed of senior TANF officials, they approach the systems integration issue from that program's perspective. However, it is also reasonable to approach the challenge from the perspective of another system, for example, WIA. WELPAN members examined potential links between TANF and Workforce Development, systems, TANF and child support, TANF and child welfare, TANF and SSI, TANF and housing, among other systems interactions.

integration lie, how do we sensibly respond to such impediments, and how do we make it easier to take advantage of existing opportunities?

We do not assume that the impediments to further cross-system innovations are predominantly statutory or regulatory in character, nor is it assumed that all impediments are located within the federal government, as was often implied in the *superwaiver* debate. Rather, we believe that there is a need for additional empirical information to enable us to sort out the relative contributions of legal impediments, impediments based in bureaucratic practice and process, and impediments based in diverse agency or program cultures and technologies.

We also acknowledge a number of local examples of successful cross-system collaboration and integration from which much can be learned. While these examples suggest that much can be accomplished under current law and regulation, how they accomplished what they did remains a bit of a mystery. It does appear, however, that state and local jurisdictions will require assistance in developing the capacity and motivation to aggressively pursue cross-systems initiatives. They also suggest that federal executive agencies must develop the capacity to facilitate local innovation and entrepreneurship. To be effective, therefore, we believe the initiative we propose must also focus on the need to nurture and support what we label the **capacity for cross-systems innovation** at all levels of government.

In this document, we lay out a full agenda, even though we are aware that resource constraints may not permit so complex a project to be fully entertained at this time. The issues and initiatives described below were developed through collaboration among many individuals whose views reflect both state and national perspectives.²

Our agenda is organized into the following sections.

1. Context and Issues lays out some of the salient issues that led to the development of this proposal.
2. Research and Management Challenges discusses the five major challenges around which the overall proposal is organized.
3. Proposed Analytic Strategies delineates a tentative set of tasks in pursuing each of these strategies.
4. Outcomes and Products discusses intended audiences, proposed products, and suggested dissemination methods.
5. Resources and Expertise suggests where expertise is required.
6. Concluding Caveats where some suggestions for realistically thinking about the project are provided.

² Sources of input for this proposal include meetings of the Midwest and West Coast Welfare Peer Assistance Networks (WELPAN and WESTPAN); a Washington, D.C. meeting of WELPAN (March 2002); a project planning meeting held in Washington, D.C. on September 10, 2002; and in numerous bilateral discussions. The input and encouragement of John Monahan of the Casey Foundation and Jennifer Phillips of the Joyce Foundation are gratefully acknowledged as are the contributions of Tom Gais and Mark Ragan of the Rockefeller Institute at SUNY-Albany.

CONTEXT AND ISSUES

Since 1996, the underlying goal of social assistance has shifted from partially remedying income shortfalls to effecting behavioral change at the individual, family, and community levels. Changing goals have encouraged the reallocation of program and policy authority to administrative entities closer to the point at which families are actually helped.³ Programs designed to change fundamental behaviors (such as work and marriage and fertility), instead of transferring cash and cash like resources as AFDC and Food Stamps programs have done, inevitably push decision making to lower levels of government and make it clearer where the individual program “silos” are inefficient and ineffective.

The WELPAN network of senior welfare officials has been meeting quarterly since the fall of 1996, examining both the opportunities for reform and the obstacles to realizing its full potential.⁴ Virtually from the beginning, the WELPAN network has focused on the tension between how the federal government structures programs within the social safety net and how many state and local program managers have come to envision the future of social assistance—a future in which comprehensive services are delivered in a seamless fashion. Throughout 2001, the members worked on the connections between TANF and related support programs, releasing their report, *Eliminating the Silos: It’s Not Just Welfare Anymore*, in January 2002.

Shortly thereafter, the Administration’s welfare reform agenda was released. Those criticizing the *superwaiver* were particularly concerned about how accountability for the use of funds would be assured. However, the WELPAN network has continued to support the principle of enhanced state flexibility, publishing two subsequent reports titled *Recreating Social Assistance: Or, How to Use Waiver Authority to Eliminate Program Silos* (May 2002) and *Developing Workable Cross-Systems Waiver Authority: Perspectives of the WELPAN Network* (June 2002).

Events over the summer have made it clear that the issue of state flexibility is being debated on two levels. The first is the Congressional debate evoked by the inclusion of the enhanced waiver authority in the administration’s proposal and House reauthorization bill, a highly contentious debate that has not yet resulted in any consensus. The second is the more fundamental dialogue about how we might continue to pursue the “devolution revolution” in a prudent and responsible fashion that benefits low-income families with children.

We believe that energies should shift from tactical discussions involving the reauthorization bill to a more strategic dialogue on the broader questions of state flexibility, accountability, and the future of social assistance. We are optimistic that the delay in TANF reauthorization and the upcoming WIA reauthorization may provide new opportunities for a more deliberate and reasoned debate and an exploration of a variety of approaches to enhancing state flexibility. We believe that the project proposed here can help to inform that debate.

³ See the WELPAN report titled *The New Face of Welfare; Perspectives of the WELPAN Network* for a detailed discussion of these trends. Available at <<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/welpan>>

⁴ See <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/welpan/home.htm> to access major WELPAN reports and products.

Selected Issues

The *devolution revolution* is a complex and controversial dimension of the welfare reform story. Proponents of state flexibility argue that continuing progress in welfare reform demands more front-line innovation and control. According to this view, states need not only to take better advantage of existing flexibility in federal law, they also require additional flexibility to design and implement initiatives that transform the way business is done.

Opponents of state flexibility argue that some states have not always exercised prudent stewardship of the flexibility they already have and, if given more authority, might well pursue strategies and policies that are of questionable benefit to vulnerable families and children. They also contend that federal law should provide stronger protections for families and children. Program targeting is often desirable, they suggest, to ensure that more disadvantaged groups have appropriate access to essential public goods and services.

Some opponents argue that, notwithstanding the positive outcomes associated with the 1996 reforms, too many states have failed to fully assert the increased state authority given them in existing federal law so that they can meet national goals. As a result, several of the current TANF reauthorization bills under consideration contain federally prescribed provisions designed to steer states in a given direction.

The crux of the issue, and the basis for differing perceptions of the success of the reforms, may lie in the complexities inherent in devolution. How do we encourage state and local variation in program design and implementation while preserving protections for low-income and vulnerable families?

One conundrum that this question evokes is the conceptualization of equity. For some, equity can only be ensured if all who are similarly situated are treated according to similar processes. For others, equity can only be achieved if services reflect individual and geographic differences, shifting the focus away from how similarly situated individuals are treated from a process perspective and toward what is accomplished with public resources. Even when the debate shifts from processes to accomplishments, there is still room for debate over the merits of outcomes that reflect improved performance overall but leave a minority of the target population worse off.

A second conundrum is that PRWORA's passage dramatically changed cash welfare programs while maintaining the basic structure of other programs important to low-income families. In so doing it reflected the rationales for some of statutory and regulatory variation in food stamp, housing, workforce, and other programs implemented by states for the benefit of low-income families. But such variation often creates tensions among programs.⁵

A third perplexity is how to satisfy the legitimate fiscal interests of federal, state, and local governments in ensuring that funds are appropriately deployed to address policy objectives. For example, seemingly benign accounting principles such as cost allocation

⁵ See *Aligning TANF & Food Stamps: A Clash of Program Cultures*, a report prepared by the WELPAN network (September 2000), available at <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/welpan/home.htm>

may cause states to avoid program innovations they really should put in place merely because of the uncertainty and complexity imposed by such rules.

Reasonable and informed people can legitimately differ about these, among other, issues. The administration's *superwaiver* provision would have created a broadened waiver authority permitting states to develop and implement new policy and program concepts across existing program lines including TANF, WIA, food stamps, child welfare, child care, and child support. The proposal brought the issue of state flexibility to center stage, but in a way that elicited contention and mutual suspicion.

The concerns of critics include but are not limited to the following:

1. There is sufficient flexibility in current law which has not been fully exploited;
2. Current state flexibility issues can be addressed with more narrowly tailored changes in federal law;
3. The proposal to expand waiver authority would shift policy control from the legislative to the executive branch of government;
4. The proposed waiver authority could be used to undermine legislative intent and undo protections built into the current safety net; and
5. The proposal does not contain enough detail about how approved waivers will be evaluated or monitored.

Many state and local officials have, however, argued very persuasively that the proposal is well motivated and that the future of reform depends upon developing a federal-state relationship that encourages innovation across traditional program lines and service technologies. Once talk turns to changing fundamental behaviors, the provision of services to narrowly targeted populations through independent and isolated funding and regulatory mechanisms makes less and less sense.

RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

This proposed set of initiatives is motivated by five challenges:

1. To determine how much flexibility already exists within current law and practice, what barriers (intended and unintended) there are to the use of such opportunities, and why states might not be exercising the flexibility that does exist.
2. To facilitate a reasoned dialogue among key stakeholders on legislative and regulatory program changes that would advance state flexibility and to explore whether there is a consensus about making such changes.
3. To stimulate thinking about the opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship which exist under current conditions or under conditions where flexibility has been enhanced.
4. To work with interested state and local officials to increase their capacity to design and implement cross-systems innovations now, under existing legislative and regulatory parameters.
5. To develop and use appropriate outcome measures to ensure program accountability and monitor the well-being of target populations; to develop an

evaluation plan, including identifying appropriate methods, for rigorously assessing the impacts of cross-systems models of integrated services.

The first challenge is intended to get a better handle on the alleged problem of federal impediments to cross-system innovation—if indeed there is a problem. In response to those who argue that there is not, some state officials have pointed out that actual flexibility is overstated and that federal practice and the unintended consequences of criteria for granting waivers undermine actual, as opposed to nominal, flexibility. These contradictory claims need to be assessed by identifying both the barriers that states face and potential statutory and administrative ways to remove those barriers. We intend to talk to a wide array of federal, state and local experts who have been involved in cross-systems innovations and conduct a considerable amount of technical and analytical work.

The second challenge suggests bringing reasonable stakeholders together in a series of safe forums or roundtables to discuss state flexibility in a broader and less political fashion than has been possible to date. We believe that considerable thought should be given to the size, composition, process, and format of these forums and are committed to working with a diverse group of advisors in doing so. At a minimum, however, some elements of the WELPAN network experience should be considered, including that the forums be kept small and the conversations kept reasonably confidential.

The third challenge is premised on the observation that the mere existence of greater flexibility will not necessarily translate into aggressive state action. The position of the WELPAN network is perhaps atypical—a byproduct of their unique interstate dialogue over the past six years. Many other states share these concerns, but may not have considered how they might more comprehensively integrate services and systems to the same extent.⁶ Therefore, we intend to launch a series of events, building upon the reports and expertise of the WELPAN network, to stimulate a dialogue among state and selected local officials on this issue.

The fourth challenge arises from the state and local interest in taking steps *now* to improve the delivery of services to families and children, regardless of what changes may be down the road. To some degree this interest in innovation is being spurred by pressures from rising public assistance caseloads and state budget crises. This is a very different scenario from the heady days of TANF “surplus,” but it is no less compelling. State and local officials want examples of best practices and successful strategies, and advice on how to overcome barriers and obstacles.

The fifth challenge is premised on the long-standing observation that integrating services and systems raises difficult measurement issues. One can no longer rely on the administrative data from existing programs (e.g., food stamp data or TANF data). Rather, we need to develop population-based data systems and rethink existing performance measures and outcomes by which to monitor the well-being of families.

⁶ Discussions with members of WESTPAN—the west coast equivalent to WELPAN—suggest that they are not nearly as far along in their thinking on this issue but that it would not take much to stimulate interest along these lines. Moreover, there are a number of state and local sites (outside the Midwest) where extraordinary experimentation has taken place including (but not limited to) Oregon, Utah, Florida, and El Paso County, Colorado.

Integrated service systems often result in entirely new signals to the community that alter behaviors in ways not fully understood. Thus, the measurement and use of population outcomes are vital. At the same time, we have precious little research on whether integrated service systems actually deliver better services. In part, our ignorance is a product of the methodological challenges generated by the complexity of these new models.

In pursuing these challenges, we propose several discrete initiatives or modules (sets of interrelated tasks and activities). Findings from the various tasks and analyses proposed in these modules will be incorporated into a variety of products and disseminated through a variety of venues. The information will be used to inform technical assistance efforts with states as well as broader stakeholders discussions about modifying federal law and regulations to enhance state flexibility. *Briefly, these modules are:*

Module 1 [labeled the *legalistic* module for now] focuses on federal statutory and regulatory impediments to cross-systems innovation.

Module 2 [labeled the *practice* module for now] focuses on the interface between states and other levels of government, particularly (though not exclusively) the federal level, as well as interfaces across agencies within the state and federal levels. Primary concerns include:

1. What do states face when they pursue opportunities for change with relevant federal actors in the various executive agencies? Are the interactions supportive or inhibitory? Are the processes seeking federal guidance and/or approval reasonable or counterproductive? Also, what do the lead state agencies experience when they try to work with other agencies and substate jurisdictions in their own state?
2. What barriers exist which are not legal in character, but rather emanate from the institutional cultures of executive agencies in Washington or regional federal offices and the way these agencies interact?

Module 3 [labeled the *operational* module for now] focuses on the world outside the federal government, looking at how state and local statutes and regulations or local institutional cultures, perceptions, and practices impede change and experimentation.

Module 4 [labeled the *accountability* module for now] assumes that state and local flexibility cannot be pursued without serious attention to strengthening program accountability. In the context of cross-program integration, this typically means incorporating the capability for monitoring populations into program governance and developing and implementing effective outcome measures. Work of this sort has been going on for several years, with varying degrees of success.⁷

Module 5 [labeled the *effectiveness* module for now] is motivated by a recognition that the push for cross-systems innovation is based on plausible hypothesis rather than rigorous research and analysis. This paucity of research is, in part at least, due to the

⁷ Child Trends, Chapin Hall, HHS (ACF & ASPE), IRP, and others have been involved in relevant projects, see *Indicators of Children's Well-Being* by Hauser, Brown, and Prosser. Kris Moore and Matt Stagner should also be involved in this discussion.

methodological challenges associated with conducting classic experiments, the accepted approach to measuring impacts, on innovations that are systemic, rather than incremental, in character.

Conceptually, the *legalistic module* (1) can be thought of as a “*top-down*” perspective—what formal or structural impediments to cross-systems integration exist in statute and regulation? The *practice module* (2) is an *interactional* approach because the emphasis is on perceptions and experiences of others in negotiating the process rather than on legalistic barriers. How does *practice*—everyday interactions among key actors— influence the prospects of change and innovation? The *operational module* (3) can be thought of as a “*bottom-up*” approach, examining how some local agencies and communities manage to innovate and change whereas others do not. What attributes and strategies might explain their success? We think of the *accountability module* (4) and the *effectiveness module* (5) as parallel efforts to the other three. The willingness and capacity to monitor the well-being of target populations, to continually assess systems performance, and to test the effectiveness of new service models in accordance with accepted scientific standards are critical corollary activities.

The first three modules can be thought of as complementary strategies designed to sort out the relative contributions of legal barriers and barriers associated with perceptions, prejudices, and practices. Each gives us a somewhat unique perspective on the issue, and thereby increases the probability that proposed action strategies will be balanced and comprehensive. They cover the three levels of government (federal, state, and local) and they encompass both the formal and informal dimensions of the problem. *In order to develop a complete and coherent picture, these tracks need to be coordinated and the products of each module must be integrated.* The final two modules are of a different nature, dealing more with the technical and methodological issues related to program accountability and rigorous analysis. Absent attention to these dimensions of the issue, the call for advancing cross-systems integration will not be as convincing as it might be.

As outlined below, each of these modules (and their corresponding questions of interest) suggest somewhat different evaluative strategies.

PROPOSED ANALYTIC STRATEGIES

In this section, we lay out a set of activities for each module. We stress that this is a tentative agenda, because an uncertain political terrain and unforeseen findings early in the project may demand ongoing tactical adjustments.

Module 1 -- Legalistic

How much flexibility exists under current federal law and regulation? The suggested approach is to develop proposals for cross-systems integration and systematically ask:

1. How much of the proposal can be achieved through current options and flexibility?
2. Which rules must be waived or modified for the proposal to succeed, and are they based in statute or regulation?
3. What processes must be followed to secure permission to proceed, if it is at all feasible?

4. Who are the key actors and in which organizations are they located?

Some of the initial examples could be drawn from the WELPAN suggestions in *Recreating Social Assistance*, particularly Example 1, which more fully integrates TANF and workforce development systems.⁸ They might, for example, include: comprehensive service delivery for vulnerable families; integrating TANF and child welfare for better child outcomes; and cross-program simplification of eligibility definitions, application processes, and staffing. This is a very technical task, requiring expertise regarding Congress and federal executive agencies (see discussion in **Resources and Expertise** below). The analysis will provide a detailed view of what is permissible under current law and how requirements across programs differ with respect to definitions, eligibility, reporting, accountability, governance, and use of funds.

Module 2--Practice

This module is divided into two distinct tracks, (a) and (b). **Track (a):** What is the quality of interactions among state-level officials in other executive agencies and other stakeholders and how do those interactions affect what happens?

The suggested strategy is to select key officials in several states that have been particularly active in cross-systems reform (e.g., Ohio, Vermont, Utah, Oregon, or Wisconsin). We then would pay site visits and conduct in-depth interviews and document reviews—essentially, small-scale case studies.

Points to be investigated include:

1. What was the impetus for reform and the outcomes they were hoping to achieve?
2. What other officials (federal, local, and state) were instrumental as they proceeded?
3. What issues were involved? What factors contributed to the success of the effort?
4. What did people do that helped or hindered progress?
5. What strategies were involved in overcoming relationship problems or turf issues?
6. What failures were encountered and why?

We are initiating this module with a trip to SUNY-Albany (Rockefeller Institute) to review some of the State Capacity case studies and to interview Cheryl Mitchell (Vermont) and other officials from that state as a way to formalize protocols and sharpen research questions. The state-level interviews can also be used to identify individuals and positions at the federal level that appear critical to the success of local initiatives. In effect, we are proposing a modified form of “snowball” sampling where initial respondents provide information about whom to interview in the future and what issues to pursue at the federal level. Likewise, discussions with state officials may suggest potential state and local contacts.

Track (b): How does the interaction between state officials and federal agencies/officials affect the pursuit of cross-systems innovation?

⁸ This approach to determining where the legal (and some practice) barriers to cross-system integration exist was proposed by Robert Greenstein (CBPP) and Mark Greenberg (CLASP).

By examining federal-state interfaces we hope to understand how federal agencies work together and individually with state and local governments, and visa-versa. Points to be investigated include, for example, what types of institutional opportunities and constraints do they encounter; whether they communicate and cooperate with peers in other agencies; whether roles and responsibilities are clearly understood; and the dispositions of key officials at both the state and federal levels.

The suggested strategy is to interview informed officials at both the federal and state levels. One possible strategy for identifying the key respondents in each agency, as already noted, would be to use the analytics from Module 1 to identify which officials and agencies must be engaged if local cross-systems demonstrations are to proceed. Another strategy would be to use components of Module 2, Track (b) and Module 3 (see following discussion) as sources of information about those who may have played a pivotal role in the process. Having established a sample frame, we could enlarge it during initial interviews by asking respondents about relevant contacts in other agencies. The challenge will be to secure cooperation.

Points to be covered in these interviews include:

1. What are the statutory and regulatory boundaries to cross-systems experimentation in their program area?
2. What is the role (both formal and informal) respecting such experiments in their organization/unit?
3. How do they view their own role in such experimentation?
4. What has been their experience with any such cross-systems initiatives?
5. With whom do they interact in other executive agencies or other parts of their own agencies regarding such experimentation, and what is the character of such interactions?
6. What are the processes for reviewing and approving demonstrations, and what purposes do they serve?

Module 3—Operational

This module intends to create a dialogue among “lighthouse” state and local demonstrations, eliciting information about strategies used to overcome impediments and about those areas in which the impediments appear to be insurmountable. The common assumption that most impediments are outside of the purview of the states—a result of the way the federal government operates—needs a more rigorous examination. Moreover, it is again merely an assumption that states would respond enthusiastically if additional flexibility were provided through a *superwaiver* or some similar provision.

The suggested strategy is ambitious and complex, centering on workshops involving “lighthouse”⁹ or exemplar sites that have enjoyed some success in developing cross-systems innovations¹⁰. Work in this module will also be informed by the “mini-case studies” of Module 2, and vice versa.

⁹ This term is borrowed from Mike Wiseman.

¹⁰ Perhaps some sessions would involve sites that have not been successful. This, however, raises some obvious challenges; would participants fully share insights on what are perceived as failures.

The core of the *lighthouse* workshop would be a panel, organized around three to five illustrative or exemplar sites that represent intriguing and instructive examples of cross-system integration. In one model, each site would select a local representative from each major system that had been integrated (TANF, WIA, human services, education, etc.) up to some maximum and one or two state officials who could provide a somewhat broader perspective. The total number of persons on each panel probably should not exceed 15 to 20 individuals so that a healthy dialogue can take place. Open and verbal individuals should be selected as panel members.

Each session would generally be organized into the following segments:

1. An opportunity to briefly tell the story of the program site: what they tried to accomplish, what systems they brought together, and what they did not bring together. This should be an informational, not a back-patting occasion.
2. An opportunity for panelists to question each other, particularly concerning the strategies used to surmount barriers.
3. An opportunity for the facilitator and members of the audience to question the panel.
4. An opportunity to draw some conclusions and vet them with panelists.
5. (Potentially) an opportunity to video or otherwise record parts of sessions, or the panelists discussing some of the lessons generated by the discussion to use in other dissemination venues.¹¹

The purpose of the panels is to capitalize on the synergy that often occurs when peers close to the operational level have the opportunity to talk about issues. Through these workshops, we can focus on how state and local officials managed to achieve the degree of integration they did; what strategies seemed to work; where were the real boundaries that they encountered; and which people or institutions were helpful or unhelpful as they went about their business. These panels should be particularly useful for sorting out whether impediments and barriers are located in statute and regulation or in practice, and whether the practice impediments are located at the federal, state, or local levels.

We suggest that at least one or two prototype workshops be done, the first in early 2003 to determine how to revise the workshop format to optimize its utility, and perhaps to determine whether the workshops are, in fact, a useful venue. *For these prototype workshops in particular, we suggest strictly controlling the outsiders who can attend so that participants can be open and honest.* Another point to be decided is whether a single workshop can fully explicate complex initiatives or whether some or all participants should be invited to more than one session.

Module 4--Accountability

This module needs to be developed further, since most observers believe that effective system analysis requires population-based indicators (e.g., outcome measures that assess system performance and well-being measures that tap into how well populations of interest are doing). Finding and agreeing upon measures that really capture what a program is trying to do—and then actually using them—are essential to inform the activities discussed in the other modules.

¹¹ As noted later in the text we believe it essential to try one or two proto-type lighthouse sessions in early 2003 to see what works best, including experimenting with video techniques.

At this point, we propose reinvigorating a dialogue with those institutions and individuals engaged in efforts to improve the use of social indicators and performance measures over the course of the 1990s. This component should build on, not substitute for, this effort. Such organizations such as Child Trends, ASPE, Chapin Hall, and the Urban Institute, have been particularly active.¹² As a first step, we suggest that a dialogue be initiated between some of the national groups involved in indicator work¹³ and the Midwest and West Coast state welfare peer assistance networks (WELPAN and WESTPAN), both of which recently gave high priority to the development and introduction of better outcome measures to facilitate program integration and improved services. The WELPAN and WESTPAN networks might, for example, contribute by coordinating their individual efforts to develop outcome measures designed to improve program performance.

Module 5--Effectiveness

As with Module 4, this module needs further development. We include it here because it is an essential and inescapable part of any comprehensive strategy for enhancing state ability and capacity to engage in cross-systems innovation. Nominal support for various systems-integration models exists because they make sense. However, plausible ideas do not always result in proven programs. Science typically demands that we compare subjects exposed to the innovation with those in a control group. The accepted method for creating experimental and control groups is random assignment.

The classic experiment works well when we are assessing impacts attributable to discrete program components; subjects in the experimental group are exposed to the new program and those in the control group get nothing, or are exposed to the old program. Thus, we can directly compare the new treatment to a counterfactual with assurance that the differences, if any, cannot be attributable to pre-existing differences across members of the two groups.

Cross-systems innovations, however, fundamentally differ from introducing a new service modality into an existing program. They often involve collocating programs and integrating staff, and creating new signals to target communities. Thus, it is often impractical to randomize members of the target population. We suggest that workshops and other venues be organized where evaluation experts can think through the methodological challenges associated with assessing the impacts of emerging models. We also strongly suggest that members of the evaluation community spend more time interacting with program officials who are working on these new program models so that they can better appreciate the nature of the innovations and the research questions requiring attention.

¹² IRP was quite involved in this set of issues, sponsoring numerous conferences and publications. For example, see *Indicators of Children's Well-Being* edited by Hauser, Brown, and Prosser (New York: Sage Press), 1997, particularly the foreword by Tom Corbett that discusses the importance of indicators to trends in the organization of welfare institutions.

¹³ For example, we are thinking about experts like Kris Moore of Child Trends, Matt Stagner of the Urban Institute, Martha Moorehouse of ASPE/DHHS, and Mark Courtney/Bob Goerge of Chapin Hall (U. of Chicago). i

OUTCOMES AND PRODUCTS

We review our intended outcomes, products, and key audiences rather generically since some technologies and methods are applicable to all the components.

Intended audiences

Several audiences will benefit from the work undertaken in the four modules:

1. *The national policy audience*—by generating insight into how state and local officials view systems integration and into the actual impediments to future efforts to “think outside the box.”
2. *The federal bureaucracy*—by providing insight into how current practices might be deterring reasonable initiatives designed to experiment with new service models and by providing specific suggestions for facilitating such experiments.
3. *The state audience*—by generating insights and strategies leading to greater cross-systems integration within current law and regulation and by educating Governors (particularly newer ones) and their policy and senior management staff about the potential for improving services to families and children through greater integration.
4. The audience of *relevant local officials*—by generating insights and strategies for greater cross-systems integration within current law and regulation, and generating local support for expanded authority allowing them to be more ambitious in the future.
5. The *evaluation and academic audience*—so that they may become more informed about the management and institutional issues that need analytic study.

Potential products

If all components are eventually supported, we anticipate a range of products tailored to specific audiences and issues. At this point we merely enumerate some qualitatively different types of products:

1. *Analytical Materials*. Some products will directly answer the salient questions of interest. For example, what are the statutory and regulatory impediments to cross-systems experimentation? What nonlegal impediments exist and how important are they relative to the legal restraints?
2. *Descriptive Materials*. Some products will be descriptive in character. What have been the experiences of states as they attempt to innovate across systems? What do some of the more successful models look like?
3. *“How To” Materials*. These products will be manuals for interested states and localities as they undertake cross-program collaboration and integration. What strategies did successful jurisdictions use to overcome impediments and barriers? How can such strategies be applied in other jurisdictions?
4. *Interactive Activities*. In some cases, traditional methods for involving officials in intensive planning process will be employed. It is proposed, for example, to make use of the Policy Academy model of the NGA to engage select officials in intensive exercises designed to use the insights developed in other project modules to advance the cross-systems integration agenda. The content of the Policy Academy will be informed by the material developed through the four modules. (See Attachment A for a description of the Policy Academy Model.)

These products are overviewed in a generic fashion. However, as discussed further below, some are module specific.

Dissemination techniques

Although we want to remain flexible in this area, we generally believe that multiple methods should be employed to reach our intended audiences. Print reports are essential, but can disappear without trace in the blizzard of materials being disseminated today unless they are effectively integrated with other media. The challenge is to get the information to the various audiences of interest in ways that will have maximum impact. Each strategy should be tailored to the audience and the type of information being distributed. We strongly believe, for example, that our practice audience (particularly local officials) needs access to information that is intense and interactive.

At this point, we merely enumerate the methods we intend to employ:

1. *Print Reports.* Reports summarizing those tasks that lend themselves to a written summary or a written interpretation of results will be prepared. These include, for example, the analysis of legal impediments under Module 1, the Module 2 mini-case studies, and the Module 3 panel sessions.
2. *Special Issues of Focus.* We propose to publish at least two issues of *Focus*, IRP's highly regarded publication. We believe this will be an excellent outlet for the panel deliberations in Module 3 and the mini-case studies in Module 2. *Focus* reaches academics and policymakers at all levels of government and thus the findings will receive attention.
3. *Tool Kit for State and Local Officials.* We propose to develop a tool kit that will help state and local officials work through the process of developing and implementing cross-systems innovations. It will include descriptions of best practices and successful strategies and discussions of different options for integration and collaboration. It will be an "action-oriented" manual.
4. *Video and Audio Materials.* Some members of the intended audience may best be reached through video materials, particularly if they are integrated with other dissemination strategies below. For example, the Module 3 panel discussions could be videotaped and then edited to highlight essential points. Longer discussions can be reduced to relatively short video productions that can be distributed directly to interested state and local officials, disseminated through media outlets such as public television, or disseminated through web-casting strategies.
5. *Distance Learning Techniques.* Reaching broad audiences with video products is a challenge. IRP has been successful in the past using distance learning video satellite conferencing techniques. Essentially, video segments are combined with real-time panel discussions that are transmitted to participating local sites around the country via satellite technology. This gives remote audience members some opportunity to ask questions.
6. *Optimal Use of Regional Networks.* One of the more interesting innovations to emerge from the devolution revolution has been the creation of regional peer assistance networks for senior state welfare officials. Two such networks exist: WELPAN since 1996 and WESTPAN since 2000. In addition, the Rockefeller Institute is exploring the possibility of developing one or two southern networks.¹⁴ We intend to use these networks as sounding boards for products and as

¹⁴ Tom Corbett is involved in all of these networks.

sources of ideas for how to proceed. They provide a very effective way for reaching state bureaucracies.

7. *Optimal Use of Family Impact Seminars.* The state Family Impact Seminar model is a very effective way of reaching state legislatures. Initially, they were developed by Theodora Ooms (now at CLASP) to bring the best research and analysis regarding families to Washington, D.C., decision makers. Several years ago, the emphasis shifted to state decision makers and institutional responsibility was transferred to Prof. Karen Bogenschneider at the University of Wisconsin. Currently, there are state Family Impact Seminars projects in some 15 states, offering a very effective method for reaching this important audience.¹⁵
8. *Optimal Use of National Organizations and Groups.* We will use the national representative organizations such as NGA, NCSL, APhSA, NACO, NASBO, etc. One example will suffice for now. The fall elections are bringing a significant number of new governors into statehouses.¹⁶ We believe it is important to reach the staffs of these governors early in their tenure. Thus, we hope to have some products available by April, when NGA will be conducting training sessions for policy advisors to newly elected Governors.

See Attachment B for further detail regarding the relationship between the five modules, potential products, and related dissemination strategies. Obviously, as reflected in the attachment, this is an extensive and ambitious undertaking. What we learn from the exploratory stages of the overall initiative undoubtedly will inform and shape the subsequent employment of specific products and dissemination strategies. Of course, resource availability will play an important role.

Intensive Technical Assistance

We propose to help state and local officials design and implement cross-systems innovations to improve service to low-income children and families. The exploration phase of the project, discussed earlier, will provide the most up-to-date information on flexibility in current laws and regulations; how states and localities have used existing flexibility to improve service delivery; and how barriers to greater program integration can be overcome.

1. *Policy Academy.* We propose to conduct a Policy Academy on Cross-System Integration and Collaboration (see attachment A), to enable us to work intensely over an extended period of time with cross-agency teams of high-level officials from a small group of states. The Academy model typically involves two formal Academy meetings with all participating teams as well as on-site technical assistance. Academy meetings include substantive presentations and discussions as well as considerable time devoted to teamwork on specific tasks such as the development of goals, measurable outcomes, strategies and policies, and implementation plans.
2. *Peer Exchange.* Additionally, we believe that some resources should be dedicated toward supporting site visits by state and local officials interested in initiating cross-systems innovations, including those involved in the Academy.

¹⁵ Professor Bogenschneider has created the Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars (PINFIS) which is housed at IRP and which provides direction, technical assistance, and cross training to the state projects.

¹⁶ Based on early results, about half of the states will have new governors in 2003.

State and local officials have often sought out interesting new program models and used them as inspirations for innovations in their home site.

Stakeholder Forums

We propose to hold one or two day-long stakeholder forums to present the findings from the analytical work and to discuss the possible federal legislative and regulatory changes in human services and workforce programs that would improve the capacity for cross-program innovation. The forums would also consider options for ensuring program accountability. While not necessarily trying to reach a consensus on policy recommendations, we would strive to determine the common ground and the greatest differences. We anticipate that participants in the stakeholder meeting would include federal legislative staff and administration officials, state officials, advocates, and researchers.

Rather than exhaustively enumerating all the potential links among the modules, audiences, products, and dissemination techniques, we offer the example in the box below.

Example: Our judgment is that new models and service technologies are best disseminated through strategies that permit intensive interaction among those who have developed the new models and those ready to innovate. We envision Module 1 (legalistic analysis), Module 2 (mini-case studies), Module 3 (“lighthouse” sessions), and Module 4 (outcomes analysis) as all generating empirical input into a better understanding of the challenge and as providing guides for how to proceed. Reports, special issues of *Focus*, and other written materials can adequately summarize these results for many intended audiences—specifically, national policy makers and academics/evaluators.

However, other intended audiences—local and state policy makers—probably won’t respond as well to lengthy, academic written documents. What we need are products and dissemination techniques that are more immediate, such as videos, distance satellite techniques,¹⁷ tool kits, and the opportunity for hands-on participation. The Policy Academy (see Attachment A) is one approach to providing technical assistance to improve services to low-income children and families and other vulnerable populations. One variant of this model would use the exemplar sites that participate in Module 3 as a sample frame from which to select participants for an intense discussion and plan development that can best be done through the ‘academy’ model. While the Academy can be viewed as a dissemination technique, it more importantly a strategy for using the findings and lessons learned in the exploration phase to assist state and local policymakers in developing and implementing cross-program innovations and reform.

¹⁷ IRP used distance satellite technology in its County-to-County project where TANF innovations in local sites were shared with other sites across the country through video and satellite technologies.

RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

Two issues are briefly introduced in this section. First, building on a suggestion already made, we consider the possibility of developing one or more “advisory groups” or so-called “kitchen cabinets.” Second, we offer a couple of thoughts on resources.

First, an argument can be made that each module should have its own advisory group that will be a sounding board and source of ideas as the work plan is finalized and problems are encountered. Module 1, as noted, requires technical expertise and inside knowledge of the federal bureaucracy within Washington, D.C., and the regional offices. Module 2 requires greater knowledge about and insights into what is happening outside Washington, D.C., though some knowledge of the federal bureaucracy is essential. Module 3 requires knowledge of what is going on in the state and in local communities. Module 4 requires knowledge of prior efforts to develop and use social indicators.

The following individuals might be considered for inclusions in each of these two groups. The lists are not exhaustive and are intended only to reflect the manner in which we are thinking about the groups’ composition.

Module 1 — Lynda Crandall, Mark Greenberg, Ron Haskins, Robert Greenstein, Elaine Ryan, etc.

Module 2 --- Tom Gais, Barry Van Lare, Cheryl Michel, Joel Rabb, Elaine Ryan, Deb Bingaman, etc.

Module 3 — Mark Ragan, Pam Holcomb, Larry Mead, Jack Tweedie, Barry Van Lare, Ann Sessoms, Shirley Iverson, etc.

Modules 4 & 5--- Matt Stagner, Kris Moore, Martha Moorehouse, Larry Aber, Mark Courtney, Marilyn Okon, John Karl Scholz, Robert Moffitt, etc.

Second, we need to consider the resources and expertise available to take these next steps. At this point, it appears that we are able to initiate Module 3, though much more help is needed to complete the work fully. The analytics involved in Module 1 probably require another set of skills, more technically focused, as well as additional resources.

On the topic of resources, it becomes even more apparent as this work proceeds that there are several other ongoing, related initiatives. Module 2 probably should lean heavily on those involved actively with states and networks of states like WESTPAN (Welfare Information Network) and the emerging networks of Southern states (Rockefeller Institute). Likewise, some of the work at the Rockefeller Institute and at WIN (in support of WESTPAN) is closely related. Undoubtedly, some pooling of resources should be discussed at some point. As noted, Module 4 should build upon those who have been actively involved in developing and using social indicators over the past decade.

Third, it is clear that, taken as a whole, this is an ambitious and long-term project and that it may be advisable to break the entire project down into discrete segments that could be funded as modules. If that is done, someone must maintain a coordinating function. For this overall coordinating function, we suggest that a small committee be established, with members being drawn from among those organizations playing key

roles. This group would, among other responsibilities, review the progress of various modules, assess overall progress, and attempt to integrate findings and lessons.

Finally, no one knows at this point where this all will go. If it is revealed that many impediments and barriers lie in practice and perceptions at (or near) the operational level, and not in federal statutory and regulatory barriers, then the task becomes broader and the audience more diffuse.

CONCLUDING CAVEATS

The narrow debate about the *superwaiver* has evolved into a broader dialogue about nurturing cross-systems integration to improve the quality and effectiveness of services to challenged families. During this dialogue, we have come to appreciate the need for broad-based strategies to enhance the capacity of governments at all levels to pursue thinking “outside the box.”¹⁸

The entire strategy is clearly complicated as well as both resource and labor-intensive. Thus, we have organized it into a set of interrelated, yet distinct, modules. Some of the modules, namely 1-3, we believe should be undertaken in the very near future. Others, namely 4-5, are included to bring them to the attention of the research and evaluation communities so that they will receive appropriate attention.

We also conceptualize the initiative as falling into distinct stages. The first stage focuses on developing insights and information about the impediments that exist and strategies to overcome them. Thus, the legalistic module and parts of the practice and operational modules clearly are designed to gather data. And from these efforts would come traditional products such as written reports, videos, and tool kits.

However, we recognize that policy officials are inundated with traditional project products. We strongly argue that stage 2 be devoted to high-intensity and highly interactive activities designed to fully involve policy makers and program officials. Here, we would deliver the materials and insights developed in stage 1 in a ‘hands-on’ way. It is proposed that stakeholders groups be convened, that the NGA Academy model be used, that on-site technical assistance and distance learning techniques be considered, and that the welfare Peer Assistance Networks be exploited. The choice of strategies in stage 2 might well depend on what is learned in stage 1.

We don’t expect any one organization to do all the work, nor fund the whole project. We do not necessarily anticipate that all the modules will be carried out by the organizations that have prepared this comprehensive proposal. As should be evident, the expertise required for the various activities varies considerably.

We do believe, however, that it is important to think about the project as a set of interrelated parts. Therefore, we argue that coordination across the modules must be maintained. We urge that at least one of the four principals who participated in the development of this proposal and who are listed on its first page have a leadership role in each of the four modules, and that the four principals serve act as an overall

¹⁸ This point was made by Andy Bush (ACF, USDHSS) at the September 10 planning meeting for this project.

coordinating body for the entire initiative, whoever does the actual work on a specific module.

We hope we have done a reasonable job of laying out a plan for better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for advancing a cross-systems integration agenda. We believe this issue will be a preeminent public policy challenge of the early 21st century.

ATTACHMENT A

Policy Academy on Cross-System Integration and Collaboration

A “Policy Academy on Cross-System Integration and Collaboration” could address a critical, unmet need by providing technical assistance to states and localities that are interested in reforming service delivery to improve services to low-income children and families and other vulnerable populations.

Background and Need. The implementation of welfare reform in states has had a significant impact on how states and localities deliver services to children and families. With the goal of helping families achieve long-term self-sufficiency, state and local welfare agencies have both had to change their own “culture” as well as establish new relationships and partnerships with a whole new range of services including workforce development, substance abuse and mental health services, child welfare, transportation—to name just a few.

The most innovative efforts have generally expanded beyond a focus on TANF clients to strive for a comprehensive, customer-focused delivery of services. For example:

- Ohio, Utah, and Wisconsin, among other states, have consolidated their workforce development and welfare reform agencies to strengthen the emphasis on work but also to ensure that support services are available to jobseekers. One-stops in these states exemplify the “no wrong door approach.”
- Montgomery County Job Center (Ohio) has collocated over 45 public and private agencies and providers on-site providing a full range of employment and social services, including intensive case-management, short-term training programs, job search programs, and substance abuse and mental health screening and assessment. Smooth operations are partially attributed to the Job Center’s Partner Council which meets bimonthly to discuss operations issues, solve problems, share information, and provide general management oversight of the facility.
- Oregon is redesigning its field operations so that clients need only go to a single field office to receive services in the areas of child welfare, vocational rehabilitation, self-sufficiency, and programs for seniors and people with disabilities. Under the new structure of 16 regional offices, clients can have their multiple needs addressed without having to visit a number of different offices. Case planning and management will be collaborative.
- El Paso County, Colorado, is integrating child welfare and cash assistance programs into a common system to refocus TANF as a primary prevention program for child welfare and out-of-home placement. For example, the county is combining family preservation services with “prevention”-focused TANF services, such as drug and alcohol treatment and domestic violence prevention. The county has also used TANF funds for kinship care services to grandparents raising their grandchildren.
- Nebraska has developed a fully automated eligibility determination and case management system that integrates 27 programs. It integrates child welfare case

management functions in the same system as other human service programs, includes information on available resources and services, and is used to make payments to clients and providers.

A recent Rockefeller Institute report identified strategies that some states and localities are undertaking to improve and integrate service delivery: consolidating agencies; instituting collaborative planning and oversight at the local level; integrating federal and state funding streams; collocating services; integrating client intake and assessment processes; creating multi-disciplinary service delivery teams; and integrating information systems. As the above examples illustrate, efforts have involved programs within the human services arena and across systems such as human services and workforce development.

Interest in cross-program collaboration and integration is growing among states as they try to improve services to low-income children and families and other vulnerable populations. While the flexibility and resources under TANF provided the initial impetus for rethinking service delivery, more recently the interest has also been driven by a shortage of funds, budget cuts, and staff reductions. States and localities are looking at ways to do things more effectively and more efficiently. For example, South Carolina's human services department, which has had its budget reduced 30%, is now redesigning service delivery, planning to develop a single unit that will address any range of issues facing families with children.

In attempting to create new collaborations, states and local officials cite a number of challenges: contending with varying program philosophies, different federal reporting requirements and regulations, funding silos, and outmoded information systems. These perceived challenges can appear extremely daunting for officials who sometimes feel they are going at it alone. Our conversations with state and local officials make it clear that they are looking for help in developing service integration and collaborative strategies and are already moving toward greater service integration to meet the needs of low-income families and individuals within the confines of current law and the current knowledge base.

Proposed Activities. We would like to conduct a “Policy Academy” on topics related to cross-system integration and collaboration—bringing together teams of high-level state and local policymakers (including governors’ policy advisors) and program administrators from about six states to help them develop and implement initiatives to improve services to low-income children and families and other vulnerable populations. The Policy Academy model—which has been successfully used in many policy arenas at NGA—typically involves:

- Preliminary on-site work with a state’s team to facilitate discussion and help lay the groundwork for the state-specific initiative;
- Convening all the state teams for two formal Academy meetings. Teams work on their plans and receive feedback from nationally-recognized experts and lessons learned from their peers in other states,
- On-site, state-specific technical assistance provided after each Academy meeting by NGA staff and other experts to help teams complete their action plans and implement and measure the impact of their plan.

Policy Academies are a catalyst for change. They require a substantial commitment of time, resources, and energy from both Academy participants and project staff. The anticipated outcome from the proposed Academy would be a measurable improvement in service delivery for families, children, and other vulnerable populations. Lessons learned from the experience of the Academy states will be shared with other states through reports, web-site and meetings.

We think this Academy would be of interest to both new and incumbent governors and their advisors. At least 21 new governors will be entering office in January 2003 (and possibly as many as 23 or 24). They are entering during a time of severe fiscal crisis and increased demands on human service systems. We believe that the offer of intensive technical assistance (through the Academy) to Governors and their advisors to help them rethink service delivery to improve both effectiveness and efficiency will be viewed as highly valuable.

Attachment B

Outcomes and Products



