

Leveraging Knowledge:

**Taking Stock of the William T.
Grant Foundation's Use of Research
Evidence Grants Portfolio**

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The William T. Grant Foundation supports high quality research to inform programs, policies, and practices for children. In the course of this work, like other public and private foundations, we have funded studies that serve many functions. Research identifies the nature and extent of a problem, explains why it occurs, predicts what might happen in the future, offers strategies for improvement and change, and describes whether and how programs, policies, and practices work. And although the potential value of the research evidence is intuitive, the research itself is often absent from conversations and decisions about programs and practices for young people (National Research Council, 2012).

But research evidence is only one piece of the story. Policymakers and practitioners working on behalf of young people also have valuable knowledge. They have ideas about the nature and extent of problems, why these problems occur, what they mean for children and youth, and ways to make things better. Policymakers and practitioners also have concerns they want addressed and questions they want answered. Their ideas, however, rarely shape research agendas.

We've long suspected that greater input from policymakers would produce more useful research, which, in turn, would yield more effective responses to the challenges facing children and youth. In 2009, we launched an initiative to study research use in the worlds of policy and practice. Staff assumed that knowing more about the potential users of research would improve the production and use of research, which we defined as empirical evidence derived from systematic methods and analyses. Findings are now accumulating. This essay takes stock of what we are learning about the acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence, and briefly describes our call for proposals, cross-cutting themes, and key unanswered questions.

“ Science, when it has something to offer, should be at the policy table.”

National Research Council 2012

Studying the Use of Research Evidence

The study of how research evidence is used in policy and practice is not new. Following extensive readings and conversations with researchers, funders, policymakers, and practitioners, Vivian Tseng, Bob Granger, and other members of the Foundation's Senior Program Team crafted an initiative to extend earlier work in five important ways.

- i. To generate ideas about how to better connect research and policy and practice, the initiative focused on the users of research and their worlds. It discouraged investigations of barriers to the use of research evidence, and encouraged projects on the policy process, key stakeholders, and the way that research is used alongside other types of evidence. It also welcomed studies about conditions that support the use of research evidence.
- ii. It shifted the focus from understanding the use of research evidence by frontline workers to use by middle management and agency administrators. These agents are fairly stable policymakers with clear potential to call on research evidence. Leaders influence organizational culture and structure; managers make day-to-day decisions about adopting new programs and practices. Both are well positioned to understand different stages of the policy process—from policy formation and solution development to resource allocation and implementation.
- iii. Research evidence was conceptualized as having varied roles, which encouraged new questions about how it might be used. Ideas about the functions and uses of research, including conceptual, instrumental, tactical, and imposed uses of research evidence, were influenced by Carol Weiss, Sandra Nutley, and Huw Davies. This differed from the early work of dissemination and implementation science, which focused on questions about how to move research into policy and practice, often in the form of a packaged program. The focus on research also meant that data-informed decision making fell outside the initiative's scope.
- iv. It welcomed new perspectives on a persistent problem by encouraging multidisciplinary teams to conduct prospective qualitative and mixed methods work. Prior research was largely retrospective and often relied on a single informant or document reviews (Oliver, Innvar, Lorenc, Woodman, & Thomas, 2014). Reviewer recruitment was also broad and included both researchers and a practitioner or policymaker.
- v. It provided an infrastructure to support these explorations in the form of dedicated funding, a learning community, and leadership.

Staff hypothesized that understanding policymakers and the circumstances that shape their decisions at the federal, state, and local levels would inform strategies for improving the usefulness and use of research evidence. Ultimately, these advances could strengthen supports for young people.

The Call for Proposals

The initial call was released in 2009 and asked for studies about how policymakers acquire research evidence, how they interpret or make sense of research evidence, and how they use research evidence. The call acknowledged that decision makers do not use research evidence in isolation, and encouraged exploration of how policymakers' political, economic, and social contexts affect the acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence. The call also requested studies of intermediary

organizations that package and distribute research (e.g., advocacy organizations and technical assistance providers) and broker relationships (e.g., consultants and membership organizations) between researchers and policymakers and practitioners. Studies investigating how characteristics of the research itself shape its use were also invited.

As the initiative progressed, staff updated the guidance to applicants to reflect our growing interest in studies of the conditions that support the use of research evidence and strategies to promote its use. Staff also added a call for stronger methods to assess the use of research evidence, with the hope that these would be used across studies.

Funded Studies

Between 2007 and March 2015, the Foundation awarded \$12.5 million to support 34 research projects. This includes five awards made prior to the first call, including one to the National Research Council. Since 2009, we have supported 22 major research grants and 7 additional smaller awards of \$25,000 or less.

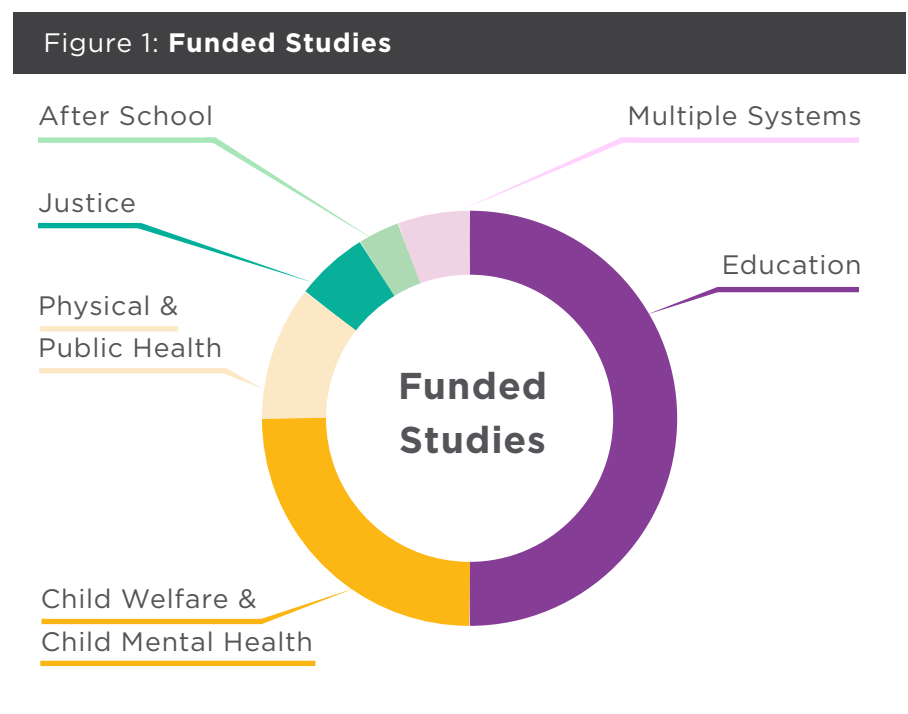
The majority of funded projects were descriptive studies aimed at extending theories about how research evidence is acquired, interpreted, and used.

The group of descriptive studies also included several projects investigating partnerships and other alliances as possible strategies to support the ongoing use of research evidence.

A smaller number of studies have tested theories. One study examined the link between evidence use and the quality of an evidence-based program’s implementation, another is testing an intervention to improve the use of research-informed guidance, and a third is modeling the decision-making process. Few studies, however, have assessed the impact of the use of research evidence on the quality of services delivered and young people outcomes.

Funded studies primarily explored the use of research evidence in education, child welfare, and child mental health (Figure 1). Across these systems, about half of the projects focused on the use of research evidence in local settings and one-quarter on research at the state and federal levels. Other projects focused on the role of intermediary organizations and their engagement with policymakers across the various levels.

In the six years since the initiative started, funded projects have resulted in 43 peer-reviewed articles, several books and chapters, one report from the National Research Council, and ninety presentations.



The output has not been purely academic. Investigators have developed several policy briefs and presented reports to local, state, and federal representatives, as well as key intermediary organizations.

The lessons from these various products guide my analysis of grantees' work.

Understanding the Use of Research Evidence

Many factors shape what research is sought; how it is shared; the ways in which it is evaluated; and whether it is used, contorted, or dismissed. Studies supported by the Foundation offer promising strategies that may yield stronger connections between research evidence and policy and practice.

Three themes seem particularly relevant and emerged across different systems and levels of policy (e.g., federal, state, and local):

- » Produce research evidence that is valued amid other forces shaping policy and practice.
- » Leverage relationships to enhance the acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence.
- » Provide opportunities within and across organizations to shape and learn from research.

Research Evidence and Other Forces Shaping Policy and Practice

Grantees' work confirms earlier findings that a number of factors shape policy and practice and that the role of research evidence is often limited.

Science “shares the table with an array of nonscientific reasons for making a policy choice: personal and political beliefs and values are present as are lessons from experience, trial and error learning, and reasoning by analogy. Obviously, political matters and pressures weigh heavily when policy choices are made.” (National Research Council, 2012)

Grantees' work also provides examples of relationships and structures associated with the use of research evidence. These patterns can help predict and potentially influence where research sits in relation to other forms of evidence and forces. For example, research is more likely to be used when it is viewed by policymakers as sensitive to local context (Nelson, Leffler, & Hansen, 2009; Palinkas et al., 2014) and designed for action in the form of tools and protocols with detailed guidance (Bogenschneider, Little, & Johnson, 2013; Goertz, Barnes, & Massell, 2013). Empirical studies can generate evidence that is better aligned with what policymakers consider necessary and relevant to the decisions they are facing.

Research use also varies by the place in the policy process. Research evidence is most frequently used when policy problems are being defined and prioritized (Asen, Gurke, Conners, Solomon, & Gumm, 2013; Courtney & Mosley, 2012; Hyde, Mackie, Palinkas, Niemi, & Leslie, 2015; McDonnell & Weatherford, 2014; Nicholson, 2014; Nathanson, 2014). This pattern is consistent across policy levels and systems. In these instances the primary challenge is connecting research to those defining the nature and extent of the problem.

Research evidence plays a more secondary role when designing policy or programs for implementation. Studies also suggest that research is often combined with professional experience, policymakers' own

values and beliefs, and political considerations (Mahoney, 2013; McDonnell & Weatherford, 2014; Mosley & Courtney, 2012; Nelson et al., 2009; Nicholson, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2014; Wulczyn, 2014). Typically, the other forces are viewed as insurmountable barriers to the use of research evidence. Closer examination suggests, however, that policymakers may rely on other forms of evidence because there is a mismatch between the time required to generate relevant research and the pace of the implementation phase (Mosley & Courtney, 2012; Nicholson, 2014). A second possibility is that little research exists to inform implementation (Hyde et al., 2015; Leslie, Maciolek, Biebel, Debordes-Jackson, & Nicholas, 2014). When research evidence does respond to policymakers' considerations, it is more likely to be used. Mosley and Courtney (2012) found that state legislators were persuaded to extend foster care to age 21 when youth testimonials were coupled with research evidence about the costs and benefits of extending care. The cost benefit research was also critical to social service agencies as they deliberated and planned for the state rollout of services. Thus it is important to anticipate what different decisions might mean for local resources and to generate empirical evidence to respond to these concerns and questions.

The stability of a policymaker's organization also shapes the use of research evidence. Some theories suggest that practical dimensions, such as the availability of resources and staff capacity affect whether research evidence is used, while others emphasize the influence of an organization's norms and routines. Finnigan, Daly, and Che (2013) and Neal, Neal, VanDyke, and Kornbluh (2015) speculate that when uncertainty in a school district is high, districts rely more heavily on information they can control. Consequently, leaders look for information and research that is derived from internal sources. This idea aligns with Palinkas and colleagues' (2014) finding that system leaders in child welfare agencies, which are in constant crisis, are more likely to conduct self-assessments of the relevance of research than to rely on others' assessments. It is not clear how to permeate the boundaries of organizations that rely on internal sources for evidence.

Politics and values also affect what information is shared and how it is valued. There is evidence that strong theory can predict how states engage with external stakeholders and research. Nathanson and colleagues (2014) used existing theories about political subcultures to predict how Colorado, New York, and Washington State would engage with other stakeholders and researchers when constructing public health policy. They correctly predicted that research would be used more in states where political parties were viewed as drivers of change and in those who called on external stakeholders to broker internal debates. Thus, although there is considerable swirl, there are strategies within the control of researchers that may increase the odds of research being placed at the table with other forces shaping policy and practice.

Relationships Matter

Findings across all systems and levels of policy suggest that relationships matter.

Relationships and professional networks are critical to acquiring research evidence (Davies, Nutley, & Walter 2008). Policymakers' relationships shape what research evidence individuals and organizations acquire and how they make sense of it. Leaders often turn to trusted peers in similar settings to access information (Barnes, Goertz, & Massel, 2014; Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2014). They also rely on intermediaries to synthesize and transfer research evidence from research producers to policymakers, especially at the state and federal levels (Goertz et al., 2013; Haskins & Margolis, 2014; Hyde et al.,

2015). Intermediaries sit in the space between policymakers' immediate settings and researchers, and vary in their missions, roles, and levels of influence. They include advocacy groups, vendors, technical assistance providers, and professional associations. At their best, intermediaries understand the needs of policymakers, serve as honest brokers of research evidence, and facilitate exchanges in which researchers influence policy and policymakers influence research (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010).

Relationships within agencies also affect the flow of research evidence across individuals, departments, and levels of the organization (Barnes et al., 2014; Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2013). For example, Daly and Finnigan use social network analysis to understand the pattern of relationships between network members and how information is shared. They find that in low-performing school districts central office administrators readily share expertise among themselves, but expertise sharing with and among principals is more limited. In addition, when principals in low performing schools do share evidence, they typically connect with the principals at other low performing schools and miss out on opportunities to import research and other expertise from their higher performing peers (Finnigan et al., 2013).

Studies from the education sector further suggest that the quality of a relationship affects opportunities for learning and what information is effectively shared (Asen & Gurke, 2014; Finnigan & Daly, 2012; Neal et al., 2015). Daly and Finnigan report that when connections between members are fragmented the networks can share routine pieces of information such as schedule changes, but strained relationships limit the diffusion of less familiar and more complex information, such as research (Barnes et al., 2014; Honig, Venkateswaran, & Twitchell, 2014). In contrast, when relationships involve trust, individuals can engage in risk taking and greater learning and behavior change (Asen & Gurke, 2014; Honig et al., 2014). When research comes from a trusted source, the trusted source lends confidence that the research is legitimate and influences how research is valued (Asen & Gurke, 2014).

Unfortunately, trust between researchers and policymakers and practitioners is often lacking (Asen & Gurke, 2014; Daly, Finnigan, Jordan, Moolenaar, & Che, 2014). Researchers are sometimes seen as manipulating study designs and findings and forwarding political agendas. Trust for intermediaries is also challenging. The landscape is cluttered with intermediaries who vary on a number of dimensions, making it difficult to know which intermediary organizations to partner with (Scott, Lubienski, DeBray, & Jabbar, 2014). Since research evidence is connected to judgments about people and their organizations, when relationships between researchers or intermediaries and policymakers lack trust, it is unlikely that the research will be used (Asen & Gurke, 2014). In contrast, when trusting relationships exist, information is more readily exchanged and both members exert influence (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010). Asen hypothesizes that because judgements about people are informed by interactions, it is possible both to develop trusting relationships and to improve the chances that research is consulted and used.

Opportunities for Engagement are Critical

Funded studies challenge the idea that if research is produced it will be used. Traditional dissemination channels rarely connect research evidence and potential users (Spybrook, Everett, & Lininger, 2013). More effort is required.

Grantees' work confirms that venues that offer an interactive approach are among the strongest means

for introducing research into the policy context (National Research Council, 2012; Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2007). McDonnell and Weatherford suggest that structures for processing information can result in attitude change if the deliberation process elicits active, reflective processing. This process, in turn, can facilitate a higher valuation of research evidence.

...the complex content of the research and evidence mobilized critical attentiveness and focused discussion; and the process was structured to provide channels and incentives to engage with other researchers, state agency staff, and respected practitioner representatives. (McDonnell and Weatherford, 2014).

Work by Honig and colleagues (2014) further demonstrate how deliberation and reflective processes facilitate greater engagement with research evidence. Honig's team studied how staff in the central offices of six schools used research to change their own practices. They hypothesized that real shifts in practice would occur when staff:

- » had the opportunity to learn from research-based ideas,
- » were assisted by others knowledgeable about the target practices, and
- » had opportunities to respond to and deepen understanding about challenging ideas.

They found such opportunities facilitated the use of research evidence, but that the depth of learning depended on the larger context. For example, when leadership prioritized learning, deeper learning occurred. That deeper learning led staff to achieve changes in practice (Honig et al., 2014).

The opportunities for engagement described in the above cases were intentional. Collaborations between researchers and other stakeholders offer a standing mechanism for making sense of research evidence. Grantees have studied a number of different collaborations, including coalitions (Mosley & Courtney, 2012; Nathanson, 2014; Scott et al., 2014), intentional teams and committees (Bayer, 2014; McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013) and research-practice partnerships (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2012; Glazer, 2015). Collaborations create an infrastructure to increase the flow of information between research, policy, and practice and to provide structured interactions between researchers and policymakers and/or practitioners in order to make sense of research findings in light of the local context. Collaborations may also keep research evidence in the policy process even as new policy actors enter and exit the scene (Mosley & Courtney, 2012; Leslie et al., 2014).

Coburn et al. (2012) and Palinkas, Short and Wong (in press) also suggest that sustained relationships between researchers and practitioners bridge the different ways that researchers and practitioners define research evidence, assign priorities, and align their agendas. In turn, this ongoing social exchange provides opportunities for engendering trust and making sense of research evidence in light of the local context.

What's Next?

Findings from the first six years of studies offer clear ideas about how key stakeholders share research evidence and some of the conditions required to promote the acquisition and use of research evidence.

Ideas about how context matters for the use of research evidence and the importance of relationships and opportunities for engagement feed theories about what is needed to create the conditions necessary to produce and use research evidence. Three questions seem especially salient.

1. What are promising strategies to promote smart uses of existing research?
2. What does it take to produce new research evidence that is useful to policy and practice?
3. When research is used in smart ways, how does it affect policy, practice, and outcomes for young people?

The methods used and developed by grantees also provide a strong platform for subsequent work. But the field needs stronger methods that can be used across studies to facilitate more generalizable findings. Future measures should also facilitate learning among agency leaders and not just researchers.

What are Promising Strategies to Promote Smart Uses of Existing Research?

We want no one to underestimate the complexity and difficulty of bringing research on vulnerable children, youth and families into the policy process. At the same time...examples already exist of how research has been used to build better public policies for families. We believe that is worthy of our efforts despite all that it apparently takes to make it a reality (Bogenschneider, 2011).

Future studies need to identify ways to put research at the table along with other types of evidence and how to connect existing research with policymakers making decisions relevant to youth. Even better would be to assess whether different approaches increase the likelihood that research will be critically considered as policymakers frame problems and responses, allocate resources, improve existing programs and practices, and implement new ones. These are smart uses of research.

Although few projects have tested strategies for advancing the use of research evidence, the funded studies provide important clues. A number of studies found that research is more likely to be used when it is synthesized and action oriented, such as when it is embedded in assessment tools or reflected in standards. This notion needs to be tested.

Another idea involves promoting collaborations. Partnerships between researchers and practitioners are viewed as a promising strategy for producing and using research, but we need to know more about their effects on the production of new research and the use of existing research. Also important are tests of whether decision makers' involvement in the research process (e.g., whether they participated in research production or are solely consumers) influences their understanding and use of existing research. Similarly, it is important to know whether the co-production of research leads researchers to study questions of greater relevance to policymakers and practitioners.

Grantees' work on trusting relationships, brokering network members, and opportunities for engagement holds promise for promoting the use of research evidence among policymakers. But we need deeper knowledge of how to cultivate these processes. For example, we know trusting relationships matter, but how can trust be engendered and then leveraged to improve policymakers' use of research evidence?

Finnigan and Daly's work suggests one strategy for strengthening relationships within organizations. They used maps created by their social network analyses to facilitate district-wide discussions about how information was shared within and across the district. In 2010, relationships within the district were fractured and district central office staff members were segregated from school principals. One year later the network of relationships was more cohesive and the exchange of research between the district central office and principals had increased (Finnigan et al., 2013).

In addition to hypotheses emerging from grantees' work, studies should also capitalize on other current efforts aimed at building stronger connections between existing research and practice. For example, in response to concerns about access and understanding of research, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners are presenting information in simpler and more straightforward ways (National Research Council, 2012). Yet the impact of these efforts—both in terms of the volume of research consumed and the quality of its use—is unclear. Similarly, it may be worthwhile to consider recent developments in dissemination and implementation that bolster the infrastructure to aid frontline workers in implementing new programs.

Although we are focused on the efforts of middle management and agency leaders, the strategy of establishing networks of peers that collectively solve problems and share resources and tools may prove valuable (Saldana & Chamberlain, 2012).

What is Needed to Produce Relevant Research?

We also need to know how newly generated research can meet the needs of policymakers. The research community has made significant strides in the rigor of testing the impact of programs and practices, but this aspect of research is not always valued by decision makers. Agencies want information that helps them evaluate whether programs, policies, or practices are relevant to their local context. This includes questions about an effort's burden, such as its costs and requirements for training and implementation. Partnerships offer one approach for informing such research agendas. We are interested in studies that move research agendas to incorporate the questions of policymakers. We then want to know what happens if relevant research is generated.

We also welcome studies on the role of organizational incentives in the production of research that is relevant to

Research Practice Partnerships

How can researchers, practitioners, and policymakers work together to address persistent challenges in education?

Our new Research-Practice Partnerships microsite features resources, work samples, and tips for forming and sustaining effective collaborations.

The Foundation launched a new microsite in 2014 to serve as a “one stop shop” for building and maintaining successful collaborations between researchers and practitioners in education. The resource-rich site is a collaboration between the Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment (FYI).

Outlining fundamental topics from structuring a partnership to funding and staffing, the site is the culminating project of the Foundation's learning community of research-practice partnerships, which has convened twice annually since 2012. The site's resources, work samples, and guiding tips will help strengthen existing partnerships and provide guidance to those who look to engage in this important work in the future.

Research-practice partnerships are embodied by collaborative efforts to address practical problems that are relevant to the needs of school districts and systems.

www.wtgrantfoundation.org/RPP



policymakers. Institutional incentives affect the questions researchers ask, their selection of collaborators, their relationships with decision makers, the types of studies conducted, and their strategies and outlets for sharing findings. These choices, in turn, likely impact the relevance of the research produced. Thus, future studies might examine the forces that drive research agendas and build knowledge of ways to improve researchers' engagement with policymakers and practitioners. These frontiers are largely unexplored.

What Happens When Research Evidence is Used in Policy and Practice?

The case for using research evidence would be more compelling if we had a body of evidence to show that research positively impacts the quality of policies and practice for young people and their potential outcomes. Key unanswered questions concern how research affects policymakers' choices and if these choices lead to cost-effective responses (National Research Council, 2012). This is a tall order, and few studies have tested the assumption that smart uses of research lead to better policy and practice (Oliver, Lorenc, & Innvar, 2014). However, some recent federal efforts may lend themselves to study. For example, while federal policies were intended to increase the use of research evidence through mandates and incentives, little is known about whether policies such as No Child Left Behind; the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Grants; and the Social Innovation Fund were successful. Also of interest is how these policies affected states' and regional offices' abilities to roll out the programs, maintain quality of services, and improve the outcomes of children and youth. We need to build knowledge of whether and how different types of policies influence the use of research and whether policies achieve their intended outcomes in terms of agency decision making and child and youth outcomes.

| New Book | Featured Resource |
|---|---|
| In their book, <i>Using Research Evidence in Education: From the Schoolhouse Door to Capitol Hill</i> , editors Kara Finnigan and Alan Daly examine how individuals, systems, and relationships advance or impede the integration of research into policy and practice. |  |

Conceptual studies are also needed to define and construct metrics of how policy and practice change as a result of using research evidence (Oliver, Lorenc et al., 2014). Tseng and Nutley (2014) observe that, across studies supported in education, the use of research evidence was both varied and meaningful. The studies demonstrated that research is used to frame problems and solutions, facilitate individual and organizational learning, inform the development of usable applications and tools, and anchor funding

parameters. Studies are needed to capture these direct and indirect uses of research evidence and understand how they affect policy, practice, and various outcomes.

Methods to Advance the Use of Research Evidence?

As the questions shift, so too should some of the methods. To date, funding has largely supported studies involving a mixed methods approach with strong qualitative components. These methods were appropriate for the questions being asked and the findings will inform theories of change to advancing the use of research evidence.

Support for such methods should continue. Experimental and quasi-experimental design will also be required to further assess the effectiveness of strategies to promote the use of research evidence.

Grantees have made important strides in measurement work on the use of research evidence. Palinkas and colleagues (2014) validated a structured interview on the use of research evidence. Asen and Gurke (2014) applied discourse analysis to examine the role of research evidence in deliberations. Neal et al. (2015) developed a new method for reliably coding themes from audio data and rapidly generating preliminary research results and feedback to stakeholders. Goldie, Linick, Jabbar, and Lubienski (2014) applied a technique to map citations and then examined how research was transmitted from the federal to local levels. Daly and Finnigan (2009) developed a protocol for analyzing networks as they relate to the flow of research evidence and other sources of information. Coburn's team (2014) and Nicholson's team (2014) are developing tools to observe social exchanges around evidence. Despite these gains, these measures require further refinement and more widespread use.

Additional work is needed to further develop quantitative scales, coding schemes, and tools for observing and analyzing conversations, activities, and relationships that will benefit policymakers, not just researchers. We know from grantees' work that feedback is critical to learning. Thus we also need tools that provide decision makers with the opportunity to assess and discuss where and from whom they obtain evidence, how they evaluate it, and how it is integrated with other types of evidence.

Closing

In the current landscape, the systems in which young people learn and grow face challenges as they adapt to new directives, shifting standards, and shrinking budgets. Research evidence can strengthen education, child welfare, child mental health, and other systems, but only if it is at the policy table.

As we look back on the five years of funded studies on the use of research evidence, we can identify barriers, facilitators, and strategies for the future. Our portfolio of research offers rich explanations for how different forces relate to the acquisition, interpretation, and use of research evidence. These uses are varied, and encompass problem understanding, solution framing, decision making, and learning.

We also know that policymakers operate in a complex system, with many forces shaping their decisions. Diverse approaches are needed to open avenues of engagement and connect research evidence and policymakers. The research produced needs to be meaningful. It also needs to be shared by individuals and organizations that have trusting relationships. Opportunities are required to challenge and digest research evidence and to make sense of it in light of other forces and types of evidence. We now need studies to suggest ways to initiate and sustain such efforts and to understand their impact on policy, practice, and young people. We invite you to accept this challenge.

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New Directions for Research

Featured Resource

Margarita Alegría and colleagues take a developmental perspective to investigate racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and outline an agenda for future research in *Disparities in Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Mental Health Services in the U.S.*

