The case for more gas stations

If data is the fuel for change, we need a better delivery system

Evan White
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Innovation in Evidence
The California Policy Lab

We improve the lives of Californians by working with government to generate evidence that transforms public policy.

We do this by forming lasting partnerships between California government and the state’s flagship universities to harness the power of rigorous research and administrative data.

How do we compare?

- Place, not sector
- University, not government
- Quantitative, not qualitative
- Focus on unlocking the power of linked individual-level admin data
- Full spectrum, not just RCTs
- Long-term partnerships, not contracted
- Engaged in the policy process, not separate from it
Policy Areas

- Criminal justice
- Education
- Homelessness and high needs populations
- Labor and employment
- Social safety net

Partners

- State
  - Tax board
  - Employment agency
  - Higher education
  - Social services
- Several counties and cities
  - Criminal justice
  - Health
  - Homelessness

California is the world’s 5th largest economy. We have 40 million residents and annually spend $350+ billion in social programs.
Vertically integrated

Place-based
The EBP theory of change

**Supply**
- Policy Experimentation
- Good Data
- Research Expertise

**Demand**
- Desire for change
- Belief that evidence will drive positive change
- Knowledgeable consumer of evidence

**Demand for Evidence**

**Relevant Evidence**

**Informed Decision**

**Policy Change**

**Improve Lives**
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Demand for Evidence

Informed Decision

Policy Change

Improve Lives
What does it take to turn data into policy change?

1. Lower barriers to entry
2. Focus on humans, not variables
3. Engage in the policy process, don’t avoid it
Lower barriers to entry: infrastructure to streamline project setup

1 Roads: When CPL establishes a new relationship with each partner, the first project builds a “road” of legal agreements, data infrastructure, and security protocols that future researchers can use for other projects.

2 Bridges: Most data held by different agencies is difficult to link together for specific projects. CPL’s legal infrastructure makes it easy to create “bridges” between agencies that want to link data to improve the lives of Californians.

3 Road signs: CPL documents and curates the data we use, shares code and historical intelligence, and shares the process for accessing certain data.

4 Secure Garages: CPL’s Data Hub is an ultra-secure computing cluster that is powerful and accessible for researchers while also having a fully auditable environment for government partners.

In sum, don’t destroy value!
Focus on humans, not variables

- Translators and guides
  - But scale?
- Responsive and connected
- Harm reduction
Engage in the policy process, don’t avoid it

- Test what matters
- Engage and create
- Prospective, predictive
- The last mile
- Improving lives – stories
- Culture change
Recap: What does it take to turn data into policy change?

1. Lower barriers to entry
2. Focus on humans, not variables
3. Engage in the policy process, don’t avoid it
Parting thought - which decisions are we targeting?

Impact

Need for cultural change (i.e., decreasing influence of evidence)

Agenda setting

Program funding decisions

Policy tweaks

Front-line worker decisions

Process improvements

Note: the placements on this graph are illustrative only, and highly variable.
How to learn more about CPL

Contact me at evan@capolicylab.org

Sign up for our newsletter at www.capolicylab.org

Donate to support our work by contacting leslie@capolicylab.org