A new

Sacramento Policy Center

A CGS Feasibilty Study

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Center for Governmental Studies
Solutions for Democracy

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The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS), founded in 1983, creates innovative political and media solutions to help individuals participate more effectively in their communities and governments.

CGS uses research, advocacy, information technology and education to improve the fairness of governmental policies and processes, empower the underserved to participate more effectively in their communities, improve communication between voters and candidates for office, and help implement effective public policy reforms.

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Foreword

This Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) study contains findings and recommendations from a six-month investigation into the feasibility of creating a new Sacramento policy center that would help bridge the current gap between the California research and policymaking communities.

The report concludes that, although extraordinary amounts of high quality California policy research already exist, the legislative and executive branches of government have not used it effectively in fashioning public policy. The report recommends the creation of a Sacramento policy center that would act as a neutral broker to transmit succinct summaries of research information to Sacramento policymakers and, at the same time, alert the California research communities to Sacramento's ongoing policy and research needs.

CGS began this feasibility study with the hypothesis that Sacramento policymakers may be overwhelmed by the quantity of existing research and information they receive and may therefore need a method for obtaining policy information and analyses in concise, timely and policy-relevant formats. To test this hypothesis, CGS reviewed the available literature on think tanks and other research organizations. CGS also interviewed over 100 leaders from the research, policy and legislative communities in California, Washington, D.C., and other states. A list of interviewees appears in Appendix B.

CGS commissioned Gerald Hayward, Director of Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), Sacramento Office, and former Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, to conduct a separate break-out case study of the need for a Sacramento policy center on one specific aspect of state policy: the transition of students from high school to various institutions of higher education. This study appears in Chapter VIII of the report.

CGS formed a bipartisan advisory board from the policymaking and research communities. The advisory board provided valuable assistance in suggesting interviews and providing comments on the proposed findings and recommendations. A list of advisory board members appears in Appendix A.

CGS assessed the informational needs of Sacramento policymakers, the information gaps that may impede sound policy decisions, the extent to which policymakers would utilize new sources of information, and the ways to package and distribute information to policymakers to make it more relevant, timely and actionable. Informed by that assessment, CGS examined the utility, structure and operations of a possible Sacramento policy center, as well as alternatives to a stand-alone center. CGS explored the potential services such a center might offer, the extent to which these services would be used by policymakers, alternative methods for providing those services, ways such a center might be organized and funded, tasks or roles it might undertake, and "next steps" involved in a center's creation.

Walter Zelman, CGS Senior Consultant, and Tracy Westen, CGS Chief Executive Officer, conducted and prepared this study. Rachel Brown, a Masters in Public Policy candidate at the USC School of Public Policy, provided research assistance. Bob Stern, CGS President, supplied additional advice and guidance. Rebecca Schwaner, Janice Roberts and Saidah Johnson provided important financial and administrative assistance.

The James Irvine Foundation provided generous funding to support this feasibility study. The Irvine Foundation has a long-standing commitment to informed public policy in California. The Irvine Foundation, however, is not responsible for the findings and conclusions reached in this study.

The Center for Governmental Studies, founded in 1983, is a non-profit, nonpartisan, independent organization. Its mission is to create innovative political and media solutions to help individuals participate more effectively in their communities and governments. CGS uses research, advocacy, information technology and education to improve the fairness of governmental policies and processes, empower the underserved to participate more effectively in their communities, improve communication between voters and candidates for office, and help implement effective public policy reforms. CGS works to extend the benefits of its research and activities to Californians and to citizens across the United States.

Executive Summary

This report recommends the creation of a new Sacramento Policy Center. The policy center would identify high-quality academic and other policy research, prepare summaries of that research in succinct and useful formats, and deliver those summaries to legislative and executive branch policymakers during or before their deliberations on important policy issues.

The policy center would bridge the widening gap between academic research and public policy, a gap that is undermining the value and integrity of public policy in California today. The new center would improve California's policymaking processes by helping to integrate the state's research and policymaking communities.

Term limits, budget cuts, the loss of experienced legislative staff and increased partisanship in Sacramento have significantly cut California state government's access to policy research. Although California's academic and other research organizations produce policy research of the highest quality, far too little of this actually reaches policy-makers in formats they are able to use. Conversely, Sacramento legislators, executive branch members and staff often fail to communicate their pressing research needs to the state's academic and research communities in time for them to generate useful responses.

This report recommends that the proposed Sacramento Policy Center function as a "neutral broker" of policy information between academic researchers and policymakers. The center should initially focus on research areas of healthcare, education, long term economic forecasting, physical infrastructure, state and local government relationships and insurance.

The new policy center would transmit summaries of policy research to Sacramento policymakers and simultaneously alert academic policy researchers to Sacramento's research needs. In subsequent years, it would also provide legislators with neutral policy analyses and convene academic and policy leaders to help them reach consensus around difficult policy questions.

Findings: The Nature of the Problem

The research and policymaking communities differ fundamentally with regard to their incentives (e.g., tenure vs. political viability), timetables (leisurely vs. immediate), views of each other (too "political," too "academic") and format preferences (lengthy vs. succinct).

Consequently, policymakers often do not draw upon existing research in adopting or administering legislation. This problem is especially serious because it is not generally perceived as a problem.

To compensate for the lack of research support for new policies, new "policy brokers"—legislative staffs, think tanks and governmental research and budget agencies—have increasingly begun to translate academic or other research into useful formats for policymakers.

Research brokerage or translating institutions have been much more commonplace in Washington, D.C. than in the states. Washington, D.C. has 122 of the roughly 200 think tanks focused on national issues.

California was, until recently, a leader in providing research distilling services. Experienced legislators, high quality staff, a core of policy consultants, a number of governmental research agencies and a nationally recognized Legislative Analyst's Office provided quality and quantity in information brokerage services.

Recent developments, however, including imposition of term limits, loss of experienced staff, consultants and legislators, budget cuts and increased partisanship, have significantly reduced California government's research brokerage capacity.

California's renowned universities, including the University of California, University of Southern California and Stanford University, as well as leading independent research organizations such as Public Policy Institute of California and RAND, produce research of the highest quality. Too often, however, this research is not adequately translated into formats that Sacramento policymakers can easily use.

At the same time, California policymakers must solve increasingly complex problems. Addressing these challenges would certainly benefit from improved utilization of California's research capacity.

Recognition of the Problem

Most expert observers of California's policymaking process recognize a need to improve the flow of communications and information between the research and policymaking communities. They see two aspects to this problem.

Researchers believe policymakers are not making adequate use of their research. Policymakers believe researchers are not applying their research tools to the proper subjects and in the most useful formats.

Many policymakers report that existing research information is too complex, academic, lengthy, abstract and biased (from unknown sources with a "point of view").

Policymakers also express a need for timelier and more concise research-based information delivered to them at a point in time when it is most relevant.

Potential Solutions: Functions of a New Organization

Policymakers and others believe that a new non-partisan organization would provide the most benefit in improving the use of research-based information in the policymaking process. This new policy center would summarize important research information and provide it to policymakers in useful formats. It would also notify researchers of policymakers' research needs.

Policymakers and others also report strong interest in such an organization's providing non-partisan, "neutral" analyses of policy issues and performing fact-checking and "clearinghouse" functions.

Policymakers and others express only moderate interest in an organization's providing "point-of-view" research (conservative, liberal, environmental, etc.), especially in the policy development stage, and in the performance of a variety of educational and convening services. They view the convening and educating functions as valuable secondary services, although not valuable enough in their own right to justify the creation of a new entity.

A significant minority of interviewees express strong interest in the establishment of a mechanism or organization that would help build consensus on a few major issues at a time.

Interviewees express little support, however, for the generation of additional, significant, academic, long-term major research. Most feel California is currently being adequately served in this regard.

Potential Solutions: Characteristics of a New Organization

Interviewees for this study express virtual unanimity that a research brokering organization must be located in Sacramento.

They express a strong preference and need for a neutral rather than a mission-driven information broker.

They prefer the establishment of a multi-issue rather than a single-issue organization. Many believe such an organization would have a greater capacity to present and maintain a neutral posture.

Interviewees identify the following policy areas as potentially benefiting the most from better information on existing policy research: healthcare (especially healthcare financing), education (especially education financing), economic forecasting, state and local government relations, insurance (workers' compensation) and physical infrastructure (transportation, energy, water, etc.). They express a strong preference for a focus on complex economic issues (e.g., forecasting, health care or education financing) rather than value-based issues (e.g., abortion).

Interviewees express a preference for information-brokering services that are performed with an outreaching, entrepreneurial style. A policy center should identify those who might need various kinds of information and supply that information in usable formats and in a timely fashion.

Policymakers express a strong need for concise summaries of specific research and research fields. Many would value neutral policy analyses. Some would also value mission-driven policy analyses.

Many believe a "neutral" broker of research might benefit—mostly in terms of enhanced credibility—from an association with a major research center, university or think tank. They view this association, however, as a secondary consideration offset by other factors.

Interviewees recommend that staff of a new issue-brokering organization should be familiar with both the research and policy worlds. The organization should have a non-partisan or bi-partisan composition. The head of the new organization should have credibility, or at least the potential to achieve credibility, in both the research and policymaker communities.

The media should be viewed as a primary consumer of research brokering products.

Recommendations

A new Sacramento-based policy center should be established that has, as its primary mission, the brokering of information between the research and policymaking communities.

The center should pursue this brokering function with an emphasis on policy and political "neutrality." It should:

- Prepare concise syntheses of existing research, summarizing and consolidating specific research publications, projects and research fields.

- Assist researchers in identifying policy-related research needs and encourage them to generate that research in useful formats.

- Identify and supply policymakers who might need and/or value research products.

- Disseminate research summaries in appropriate and highly usable formats, including email and websites, and at opportune times to policymakers and staff in legislative and administrative branches, the media, interest groups and civic organizations.

- Link researchers with policymakers who wish to avail themselves of research expertise.

- Develop a capacity to respond to appropriate requests for information to the extent that it is feasible.

As a secondary mission, the center should engage in education and convening functions to the extent that these serve the overall mission.

Over time the new center should consider producing neutral policy analyses and helping to build consensus around difficult policy questions. These functions should not be undertaken until the credibility of the new organization is firmly established.

The new center should have a multi-issue portfolio, to the extent that is financially possible.

The new center should focus on some of the following issue areas: health care, education (especially education funding), long term economic forecasting, physical infrastructure, state and local government relationships and insurance.

Staff of a new information brokering organization should be familiar with both the research and policy worlds. The center should have a non-partisan or bi-partisan composition.

The new center should be structured to invite and encourage maximum participation from both the research and policymaking communities.

Next steps should include further circulation of this report to policy experts, discussions with potential funders, and explorations of partnerships with other research organizations and universities.

CHAPTER I

The Role of Research Broker in Public Policy Formation

Social scientists are often dismayed at the failure of evidence-based academic research to penetrate the policy arena. James Q. Wilson, now professor emeritus at UCLA, recounted his own experience with policymaking by noting, "Only rarely have I witnessed serious governmental attention being given to serious social science research" [Wilson, 1978]. Carol Weiss, a prominent scholar on the link between research and policy, discovered after studying a social program in Harlem that the Washington, D.C. policy elite ignored her conclusions altogether [Weiss 1978]. David Kirp has written in the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management that American politics is "abidingly hostile to the possibilities of analysis" [Kirp, 1982]. He concluded that politicians were immune to rational decision-making and rely instead on emotion and anecdotal evidence.

A considerable body of literature decries politicians for ignoring contemplative research [see Cohen and Lindblom, 1979; Wilson, 1978]. Yet the number of "research brokers" who transmit research to policymakers has increased.

Why?

Context: Sources of Policy-Relevant Information

Officeholders in a representative government have substantial discretion to choose among a wide range of policy options. The information they use to evaluate these options generally falls into two broad categories: "objective" sources and "advocacy" sources. Although in practice the line between these two categories is often blurred, academics and government researchers generally offer objective sources of information, while lobbyists and community organizers offer advocacy sources of information.

Both categories of information are available in great quantities in Sacramento and the halls of political power across the nation, yet advocates typically have greater incentive than objective researchers to ensure that elected officials receive their messages and respond to them. Policymakers, for their part, often pay greater attention to information from advocates who represent constituencies organized for political goals. Objective sources of information, by contrast, are frequently overlooked in the pressures of the policymaking process, unable to show direct ballot box or financial support for their policy conclusions.

According to a 1998 study by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, state legislators rely on four top sources of information: grass roots organizations, legislative staff, lobbying groups and national ethnic associations [W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1998]. These sources may use "objective" information while crafting their arguments, but their primary focus is political, not rigorous research. Policymaker inattention toward research is troublesome for those who hold that proposals should be tested before being enacted into public programs.

Growth of Policy Research

In spite of an apparent coolness by politicians toward objective or academic research, the field of policy analysis has grown considerably and become professionalized. According to Laurence Lynn and Sydney Stein, a "policy analysis 'movement' erupted into American political life" in the 1960s and early 1970s [Lynn and Stein, 1999]. Driven by Great Society programs, the burgeoning government compelled policymakers and bureaucrats to call for careful evaluation by professionals using prescribed methods.

This demand for evaluation by government officials has not decreased, and the increasing number of public policy schools demonstrates that there probably is now more capacity for policy analysis than ever before.[1] The private sector has also responded to the demand for policy analysis. The rise of public sector consulting at large firms like Deloitte and Touche and Price Waterhouse Coopers is one marker of the high demand for policy professionals.

Another marker of high demand for policy research is the explosive growth of think tanks in Washington, D.C., state capitols throughout the nation, and worldwide. There are more than 1,200 think tanks in the United States, and about 600 in Western Europe [Hellebust, 1997; Day, 2000]. At the state level, Andrew Rich, a political scientist who has studied think tanks extensively, estimates that there 170 think tanks operating in 42 states and 26 think tanks in California alone. (The Reason Foundation is California's largest conservative think tank, and the Pacific Institute is California's largest liberal think tank.)

Many of the state think tanks were established in the latter part of the 20th century [Rich]. Most are conservative, modeled on Washington, D.C. think tank heavyweights Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute. Rich writes that between 1985 and 1995, about 3.5 new conservative think tanks were formed each year. Of those formed in that 10-year period, 32 were "conservative," 24 had no identifiable ideology, and 14 were "liberal."

California today receives significant funding for academic research. The federal government, state government and industry have poured money into research and development budgets at the state's universities. California foundations distributed grants totaling over $1.2 billion in 1998, about $100 million of which was specifically earmarked for the public's benefit, according to the USC Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy [Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, 2001].

Causes of the Frayed Link Between Research and Policy

Social scientists point to several causes of the frayed link between research and policy. The following reasons help explain why the research and political worlds remain distant, dampening the influence of research on public policy.

Incentives

Researchers and policymakers work in vastly different environments with divergent incentives. According to Carol Weiss, "researchers and policymakers tend to have disparate understandings, norms and values." These lead researchers to select topics of study that do not coincide with the understandings, norms, and values that lead officeholders to select policy objectives. (This description and those that follow, of course, are generalizations intended to highlight the areas at which researchers and policymakers are most at odds.)

Researchers and policy-makers have disparate understandings, norms and values.

A researcher may choose a topic based upon the quality of available data, the existing research in the relevant academic field, the potential of research to break new ground, the possibilities for career advancement, the applicability of preferred methodologies, and the values of the individual researcher. A policymaker may choose to work on legislation or policy based upon the feasibility of implementation and the political costs or benefits associated with particular policy choices.

Most policymakers take an incremental approach toward policy and build legislative measures or bureaucratic programs on what has already been successfully implemented. Incrementalism stems from the political process, where too much risk-taking can produce dire career consequences. Most elected officials respond to direct and obvious constituent demands and push for policies that are safe and/or politically expedient. These policies may provide short-term solutions, but they do not always address the entirety of societal problems.

Researchers, by contrast, tend to take a broader view of problems, a viewpoint which may not fit organically with the incrementalism of policymakers. Research topics may be abstract and not directly applicable to ongoing political developments. The incrementalism of policymakers can irritate researchers who believe that policymakers fail to grasp the totality of a problem. In turn, policymakers may presume that researchers are aloof and do not take into account the realities of the governmental or political processes.

Rewards in the university environment can be summed up by the brass ring that all aspiring academics want to attain: *tenure*. To obtain tenure, elite universities press new faculty members, first and foremost, to publish and, taking a distant second, to teach. Communicating research results to policymakers does not move a new academic closer toward tenure. Instead, academics are prodded to do original research and lauded for breakthroughs in their field. Applied research is frowned upon by many academics.

> ACADEMICS WANT TENURE:
>
> Academics do original research; applied research is frowned upon. Communicating research results to policymakers does not generate tenure.

Some have called for changes in this approach. Lawrence Summers, president of Harvard University, recently described efforts to encourage universities to tackle important policy problems [Traub, 2003]. According to Traub, Summers "wants to make the university more directly engaged with problems in education and public health, and he wants the professions that deal with those problems to achieve the same status as the more lordly ones of law, business and medicine." The fierce resistance to Summers' goals illustrates an existing academic environment that resists participation in the policy process.

Even if Summers were to transform university goals, the incentives of politics can make effective use of research problematic. Politicians seek short-term rewards—passing a bill, obtaining a position of power and, most of all, reelection. To do this, politicians need to cultivate distinct positions on issues. Policy research, on the other hand, typically develops longer-term conclusions not easily articulated by clear positions. Politicians have difficulty harnessing research conclusions to convince constituents to vote for them or to convince their colleagues to support their positions. Politicians often use research in a superficial manner. They grab at data points to bolster their position but fail to look at the bigger picture that the research explores. This "misuse" of research can irritate academics who envision a different objective for their studies.

Points of View

Researchers, according to Weiss, often use the term "politics" pejoratively. Prominent public policy scholars refer to the political agenda building process as a "garbage can," where policy problems and solutions are thrown in and messily assembled when the can is shaken. From a distance, policy development can appear random. This randomness can alienate researchers inclined to rational models of policy analysis in which every alternative is explored before the preferred alternative is chosen. In other words, many researchers view politics as something remote from well-studied policy proposals. When researchers have invested time to seek a policy end, officeholders who ignore that research in reaching conclusions may dismay them. Researchers often resent policymakers' propensity to take politically expedient routes, and they may bemoan the repeated failure of research to make a dent in the policy process.

Policymakers, in analogous fashion, often use the term "academic" pejoratively. Some believe that researchers are too distant from the policy process and that research conclusions have little relevance to policy decisions. Aggravating this conclusion, policymakers frequently believe that researchers fashion their recommendations for prescribed ends. Perhaps trained to be suspicious of partisanship, policymakers question the motivations of researchers and want to be assured that the research is "objective." Politicians often cite tales of shoddy research that has led policy astray. Their suspicion can be healthy skepticism, but taken to an extreme can cause policymakers to devalue researchers and ignore legitimate research products.

> TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS:
>
> Policymakers believe academic research has little relevance to policy decisions. Researchers view politics as remote from well-studied policy proposals.

Timeliness

Good research takes a long time. It is not unusual for an entire research process—from initial proposal to final written paper—to span a year or several years. The predictive ability of researchers is also poor, and the length of time it takes to complete their research can undermine the pertinence of research to policy choices once it is published.

The legislative process, by contrast, is volatile and rapid. In the California State Assembly, more than 2000 bills are introduced annually. Officeholders react to immediate concerns. If a crisis arises, research to address that unexpected crisis—which policymakers will want "yesterday"—might be months, if not years away.

For research to have an impact, officeholders want it to reach their desk at or around the moment they are considering policies that the research can inform. Consequently, the window of opportunity for the researcher to deliver his/her findings to a policymaker is extremely brief. To be effective, the researcher must know the legislative calendar as well as the more specific schedule of committees and other decision-making bodies. Conversely, if policymakers want to harness the state's research capacity, they must understand the time constraints of research and know where to look for existing research that can be of value.

Institutions and Ideology

Without an understanding of the culture of power, researchers risk seeing their work shut out. Familiarity with an institution allows a researcher to learn how to influence that institution more effectively. Certain positions in government, for instance, may traditionally have a great deal of power even though written rules may not give that position much power. Researchers need to understand the power of that position to ensure their work gets noticed. In the U.S. Congress, for example, Weiss notes that face-to-face interactions are the norm. In that culture, dense written documents do not make headway, and quality research can lose an important audience.

> Without an understanding of the culture of power, researchers risk seeing their work ignored.

The ideology of the people within the institutions, Weiss notes, can also play a role in how they receive or deliver information. "No amount of valid data about the positive effects of abortion on the lives of women and children is likely to convince a principled upholder of the right of life to support abortion policy," Weiss writes. Researchers can also have ideological bents—ranging from Marxism to free-market liberalism—that color their research and affect the applicability of their conclusions.

Communications and Format

Michael Kirst, director of Policy Analysis for California Education, a state think tank, has concluded that "communication format is central to effective [research] dissemination" [Kirst, 2000]. Policymakers have limited time, and the costs of wading through information rise when research is delivered in a complicated manner or format.

Researchers, by contrast, are rewarded for publishing in respected journals. These journals can be impenetrable to policymakers who are not experts in a research field and merely want to communicate policy justifications to constituents, colleagues or the media. Even when research is not published for academic journals, its language can be highly technical, abstract and littered with allusions to data or the "need for more research." Policymakers are unlikely to use research conclusions unless they can interpret them easily. Researchers can make their research more useful not only by making their written language lucid, but also by presenting it in face-to-face meetings and using visual presentation formats.

Researchers must also communicate research conclusions clearly. This is difficult, Weiss emphasizes, since research frequently does not present obvious policy recommendations. Although "every policy is based on a causal theory," she writes, research conclusions can support different courses of action. Instead of recommending one specific policy strategy, research may be more helpful in pointing out policy alternatives that the researchers believe will be beneficial. Overall, Weiss concludes "the move from this kind of shapeless research to action is a heavy intellectual burden."

Rise of Research and Brokers: Many Forms and Styles

Is research-based policy impossible?

Not all social scientists believe that research conclusions are dead on arrival at the steps of capitols. Contemporary thinking has shifted its emphasis away from linear impact theories—where research is delivered to policymakers who immediately implement the researcher's conclusions—to more circular or dispersed theories. Under these approaches, the effect of research on policy is real but harder to measure, because the interaction between researcher and policymaker is mediated by a series of forces. Yet researchers now acknowledge what seems intuitive: the research community's collective knowledge does have an impact on the political and policymaking processes.

Weiss concludes that research slowly reaches policymakers through "knowledge creep" or "enlightenment." Much research is lost between the research source and a recipient government body, but some research does affect policy, albeit indirectly. "If research did not lead to changes in policy or practice, it did influence the climate of informed opinion." Research alters the assumptions under which policymakers operate when it identifies new problems or insights that become accepted by policymakers. "Over time, information became known, and in some cases it became the new accepted wisdom." Policy proposals pursued by officeholders reflect a "reality" enlightened by research findings [Weiss, 2001].

Nancy Shulock, a political scientist at California State University, Sacramento, has also concluded that policy research impacts legislation in a circuitous fashion [Shulock, 1999]. She believes that policy analysis is used in three ways: "(a) as language for framing political discourse, (b) as legitimate rationalization for legislative action where prospective rationality is inhibited by 'garbage can' decision environments, and (c) as a symbol of legitimate decision processes that can increase support for governance processes in a society that values rationality." Like Weiss, Shulock posits that the "battle of ideas"—the backdrop of policy creation—is where researchers have their greatest influence. Shulock believes that research reaches policymakers through the general public by contributing to the "understandings that citizens have of issues" and the political choices citizens face.

Many participants speed up or slow down the path from the researchers' pen to officeholders' policy proposal. Those who speed up the process were dubbed "research brokers" by James Sundquist, senior fellow emeritus at The Brookings Institution [Sundquist, 1978]. Research brokers are "packagers and retailers who prepare and present the information in a usable form to the policymaker who is the consumer." They include economic advisors, policy analysts and legislative assistants. These people enhance the effectiveness of research conclusions by making those conclusions digestible through oral communication and written reports. (For the purposes of this report, a research broker is broadly defined to cover any intermediary that delivers a research product to a research consumer.)

Unfortunately, Sundquist found that research brokerage, as a skill, has not been fostered in government or academia. Those who could act as research brokers often stress the other duties of their occupation. Despite this, various research brokers have developed to fill the informational need of policymakers. They have built channels—both formal and informal—to deliver their goods to the research consumer. The following is a list of several research brokers central to the political process.

Journalists

The tagline, "according to a recent study," is frequently printed in newspapers and uttered by television anchors. Studies make easy news for journalists looking for timely and, sometimes, flashy information. When researchers make the news, it exposes policymakers and the public to their conclusions. It lends credibility to researchers in the minds of outsiders who rarely catch wind of their work. Policymakers read the newspapers and watch television reports. They are especially likely to keep watch on media in their districts. Voters cite top news stories when telling pollsters the issues that are most important to them. Studies that make the news, however, do not necessarily contribute the most to effective policies. The media may not be the best channel through which to deliver research conclusions to policymakers. Short journalistic attention spans mean that research conclusions are not explored in depth or followed up. Journalists may be flummoxed by complex research, leading them to distort research findings.

Lobbyists and Advocates

Lobbyists have become adept at delivering information that bolsters their positions. Armed with the latest study on a chosen topic, lobbyists come to the political game ready to persuade, and policymakers are the targets for their efforts. Lobbyists use information in efforts to convince policymakers to support specific proposals and to help make a case for policymakers' own positions. Policymakers rely heavily on lobbyists as an informational resource when considering pending action.

Lobbyists have an incentive to become dependable sources of information to ensure access to policymakers and foster relationships with the political leaders. Policymakers, who may often be in a hurry, desire information quickly in easily digestible forms from people who are close to them, both in proximity and in ideology. (As explained later, California's term limits may increase legislators' dependency on lobbyists for information, pushing them further away from developing evidence-based policy.)

Legislative/Executive Branch Staffers

Staffers in the offices of legislators and executive agency officials are often at the frontlines of research brokerage. Information pours into their offices. Staffers are charged with knowing what information will be relevant to their bosses and discarding the information that is irrelevant. Information that is pertinent to a legislator's committee assignments might be kept, while information pertinent to other committees will be filtered out.

Sundquist questions the capacity of staffers to handle research brokerage tasks, arguing that their level of competence and the emphasis placed on research brokerage by their superiors vary considerably [Sundquist, 1978]. Staffers may be ill prepared to handle academic tomes, or their political inclinations may lead them to dismiss research findings. The dispersal of the research brokerage tasks throughout government makes the deliverance of research conclusions incoherent and ineffective. Analyzing the content of research is probably not on the top of most staffers to-do lists.

Government Researchers

Perhaps because of insufficient research brokerage by staffers, several government bodies have been set up to research government programs and policies. At the federal level, these bodies include the General Accounting Office, the Office of Budget and Management, and the Congressional Research Service. At the state level, these bodies include the Legislative Analyst's Office, the California Research Bureau, and the Senate Office of Research. These bodies often have statutorily required obligations, such as reviewing the budget or evaluating programs at the request of a legislator or executive branch official.

The attention paid by policymakers to these government research bodies depends, in part, on the respect given to these bodies and the resources they amass. At the state level, the Legislative Analyst's Office is widely considered to be reliable, and, as a result, its policy conclusions have an impact. However, at both the state and federal levels, the power of the various government research bodies rises and falls depending on the administration in power and on whether or not that research institution is perceived to have been co-opted by political forces.

Being housed inside government is a double-edged sword for government research bodies. Such research organizations gain access to policymakers, and policymakers can easily go to them for policy suggestions. But, unfortunately for government research bodies, officeholders have the authority to cut research budgets, and scarce resources will stunt the government's research capacity. The continual money chase can place government research bodies in an uncomfortable position with policymakers that can diminish the quality of their work.

University-Based Applied Research Centers

Sensing the gap between academia and policymaking, many universities, often with the help of foundations, set up centers to galvanize faculty to study policy-relevant issues. Examples of these centers include the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California at Berkeley and the Advanced Policy Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles. The Advanced Policy Institute's mission states that "API addresses a variety of strategic policy needs by furthering the professional development of those working in the public interest, supporting efforts to access and apply research . . . and building new and mutually beneficial relationships between the university, policymakers and community leaders." To carry out its mission, API and centers like it identify public problems that policymakers want explored by researchers and find funds for researchers to carry out policy research.

The difficulty for applied research centers is that, as discussed above, they must swim upstream in an academic river that is primarily flowing against their goals. Furthermore, the academics that head the university centers still suffer from the same problems that create the disconnect between academia and policymaking in the first place. Sundquist, for instance, underscores that academics are not good at gauging the pace of policymaking and therefore make poor research brokers. The physical distance between the centers at the elite universities of the state and Sacramento makes it harder for the policy research encouraged by the centers to actually reach appropriate policymakers.

Think Tanks

The definition of think tank, according to James Allen Smith, writer of the best-known book on think tanks, is very broad, describing a variety of predominantly non-profit, research groups [Smith, 1992]. An example is the RAND Corporation in California, which started as a government contract organization generally focused on military matters. Think tanks have proliferated in the latter part of this century. There are more than 1,200 think tanks throughout the nation and about 26 in California. These think tank range from large "neutral" organizations such as Brookings Institution, which has an endowment of about $100 million, to smaller ideological organizations such as the Berkeley-based Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, which spent $2 million in 2002. Most recently, ideologically conservative think tanks, modeled after the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, have popped up in state capitals. Conservative think tanks now make up the bulk of new think tanks.

The activities of these think tanks range from in-depth research, to media outreach, to generating talking points packaged for maximum ideological impact. It is extremely unusual for these think tanks to serve as a bridge between academia and the policymaking world. Instead, they typically generate their own research materials and distribute primarily those materials to policymakers. These organizations have a stake in promoting their own research to demonstrate their value to funders and to take "ownership" of ideas when they enter the political marketplace of ideas.

Conclusion

The effective translation of research-based information and analysis into the policymaking process is, almost inevitably, problematic. Different cultures, time frames, motives and needs create gaps between researchers and policymakers. Over time, institutions and individuals emerge whose purpose it is to bridge that gap. But the obstacles to accomplishing that task can be substantial.

The effective translation of research-based information and analysis into the policymaking process is, almost inevitably, problematic.

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CHAPTER II

Research and Policy Brokerage in California

California policymakers face an unending array of policy challenges. Some are driven by the pace and scope of demographic change, others by California's large and complex economy, still others by a budget that dwarfs that of most states and experiences significant fluctuations in revenues. In addition, new and ongoing challenges continually arise in areas such as transportation, health care and education.

Brokering and Translation Mechanisms: Past and Present

Until the recent past, California's policy-making institutions and processes have responded to these challenges in a fashion that was widely respected and viewed as a national model. The state's strategies, institutions and processes appeared to foster the effective flow of information, research and analysis into the policymaking process. Among the hallmarks of this policy infrastructure were:

> Until recently, California's policy-making institutions and processes were viewed as a national model.

Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO): The LAO was, and still is, a widely respected and trusted organization that provides neutral analysis and data on the state's budget and all bills impacting state finances. Because it continues to be highly regarded at the national level, the LAO has recruited some of best and brightest from a young, national talent pool.

California Research Bureau: The CRB is another government-funded organization that has played a productive roles in the translation/brokering business. It provides research in response to specific policymaker research inquiries.

In-House Research: The Assembly and Senate Offices of Research have also produced valuable research in response to member inquiries and have sought to maintain credibility and respect among members from both parties.

Committee Consultants: A core of respected committee consultants have provided expert, neutral analysis of policy options in both houses of the legislature. Some bring specific academic training; others produce expertise through years of experience in the process. While legislative leadership choose these consultants, possibly because they reflect the general philosophical bias of the dominant party, they function to a large extent under work rules and expectations that encourage objective analysis and accountability to members of both parties. Many stay for considerable lengths of time through changes in committee leadership.

Legislative experience: A sizable number of experienced legislators have carved out areas of expertise and led legislative analyses in key issue areas for years. In most cases, legislators would not attain the rank of committee chair or vice-chair until they have had several years of experience in the issue area at hand. More likely than not, they would remain in that role for several years or more.

Expert Policy staff: While many legislators chose key staff for political acumen and experience, selection of staff based on expertise in the legislator's areas of interest is also commonplace. A legislator interested in becoming influential or holding a policy chair in a particular policy area would find that staff expertise in that issue area was a great asset.

Ties to Research Institutions: Policymakers (staff and members), researchers and other experts develop personal ties and working relationships. These build important linkages between research institutions and legislative offices.

Over the years, these research and government-based institutions such as the Department of Finance and the Little Hoover Commission, have produced sophisticated and credible information services, including translation and brokering services, for state policymakers. These institutions link the state's far-flung research institutions—based largely in public and private universities—with the policy-making process.

Recent Developments and Their Impact on Brokering Capacity

Many of the institutions and processes outlined above provide valued information-related services. The LAO remains widely respected. Other institutions, including the Little Hoover Commission, the California Research Bureau (CRB) housed in the state library, the University of California's Policy Research Center located in the East Bay, and Sacramento State University's Center for California Studies, also provide respected and, for the most part, well-utilized information and research services.

The Little Hoover Commission produces approximately 5-7 major reports each year on topics of major public and policymaker concern.

The CRB, whose services may be less understood than those of the LAO or the Little Hoover Commission, produces approximately 20 published studies each year in response to policymaker research inquiries, a number of policy briefs and a number of unpublished reports responding the questions from state policymakers.

The UC's Policy Research Center contracts with UC researchers to conduct research in areas of defined need. The UC has also sought to identify issues on which policymakers need research assistance and find appropriate UC researchers to conduct that research.

The Center for California Studies has a modest budget to contract with state university researchers to perform research in response to inquiries from the legislative and executive branches.

The establishment of the **California Public Policy Institute (PPIC)**, most importantly, has significantly expanded the state's overall research and policy analysis capacity, producing high-quality, peer-reviewed research on a variety of subjects including demographic change, infrastructure and other matters.

Interviews with dozens of observers and participants in the process, however, indicate that while the state's research capacity has in many respects expanded, the policymaking process itself suffers from both (1) a decline in the capacity to receive and effectively process research-based information and analysis, and (2) a reluctance or lack of capacity, in some instances, to use that information even when it may be available. Thus, while the complexity of the policy challenges confronting policymakers continues to increase, the capacity or readiness of the policymaking process to absorb and utilize the available information needed to address these questions is in serious disrepair. In recent years, the state's information brokering/translating capacity has seriously declined.

> The complexity of policy challenges is increasing, while the policymaking process is in serious disrepair.

According to interviews and other research, the multiple causes of this decline may be divided into two categories. First, some circumstances may have always created or tolerated a sizable communications gap between the research and Sacramento policy worlds. Given new demands on the system, these gaps or failings are becoming more visible and significant. Second, a series of developments have generated a decline in the translating or brokering capacity of organizations or processes that once performed these functions.

Circumstances that May Always Have Hindered the Brokering and Translation of Information in Sacramento

The following factors have been omnipresent in California policymaking processes for many years:

Absence of Think Tank Organizations in Sacramento

As noted in Chapter I, a primary vehicle for translating research-based information to policymakers is "think tanks." These organizations take a wide variety of forms and styles. They vary by size, number of issues studied, political stance taken, nature of research undertaken and purveyed, and so forth. But in large part, many of these entities distinguish themselves by emphasizing the delivery and analysis of research-based or scholarly analysis.

Think tanks push research-based information into the policymaking process. While they may perform other functions as well, many of them assist in the translation and brokering of information—more so, it should be emphasized, than most university research centers. While academic institutions exist primarily to produce research, they generally devote few if any resources to the dissemination of that research. By contrast, most think tanks view dissemination as a core value.

> The absence of think tanks in Sacramento is striking, given the scope and complexity of policymaking.

Given the scope and complexity of Sacramento-based policymaking, the relative absence of Sacramento think tanks is striking. This absence of Sacramento-based think tanks stands in sharp contrast to the plethora and continuing growth of think tanks in Washington, D.C.

Theoretically, given today's new communications technologies, an actual presence in Sacramento ought not to be critical; but it is. With regard to the translating, brokering and dissemination of information, a physical presence in the capital city is widely considered to be an enormous advantage, even a requirement. In large part, much policymaking is a face-to-face, short-term, hands-on process. Research tends not to be used unless the researchers are familiar among policymakers.

The best case in point may be the Public Policy Institute of California. PPIC is the largest state-focused think tank in the nation and prominent even by Washington, D.C. standards. It produces a wide variety of research reports in its areas of focus. Our interviews suggest that these research products are well regarded by Sacramento policymakers. But when it comes to analyzing the value to policymakers of PPIC research, two questions or concerns are continually raised.

1. The long-term, peer reviewed nature of the research often leaves it out of sync with policymaker needs and timetables. Policymakers frequently note, for example, "I need it now, not a few months ago or next year, and I need it in a more usable format than a 200 page treatise." (This categorization may raise as many questions about the capacity of policymakers to absorb research as it does the utility of PPIC's efforts.) Still, there is little question that PPIC's research deserves more attention and analysis than it currently receives.

2. Many policymakers—especially staff—express regret that PPIC lacks a strong Sacramento presence, which would allow staffers to access PPIC resources more easily. PPIC researchers profess a willingness to communicate with Sacramento policymakers—by phone, e-mail, or in person—and certainly Sacramento policymakers know they can easily access those researchers, but the 90 mile separation and the absence of ongoing, face-to-face contacts places limits on the exchange of information.

These responses do not necessarily suggest that PPIC should alter its mission or modus operandi and move to Sacramento. They do suggest, however, that PPIC's value to policymakers and ultimately to the state would be greatly enhanced if some entity—whether PPIC or another organization—devoted time and resources to pushing PPIC research and analysis into the Sacramento policymaking process.

The think tank one hears the most about in Sacramento is the California Budget Project, headed by Jean Ross. For the most part, Ross and the CBP are well regarded, and Ross' visibility in the Capital and in the media enable the organization to disseminate its research and analysis products effectively. Republicans tend to view the organization as being too liberal, and this may place limits on its capacity to achieve certain goals. However, like many mission-driven think tanks, the Project does, in fact, drive research-based information into the process and may make others more careful to use numbers that can stand up to higher levels of scrutiny.

> A Sacramento location is important for research dissemination.

For our purposes here, the primary lesson to be drawn from interviews concerning PPIC and California Budget Project is that a physical presence in Sacramento is of considerable value in enhancing the dissemination of think tank and other research-based materials.

A Modest-Sized State Capital

Given the size, complexity and scope of California's state government, and the need to draw great quantities of talent to the capital, Sacramento itself may be less than the strongest calling card. A great number of highly talented and committed state public servants certainly live there, and many new public servants arrive each year. But the state's university and research centers are in the Bay Area and Southern California. The state's most prominent public policy graduate schools are at UCLA, Berkeley and USC. Sacramento does have UC Davis as a neighbor, but when it comes to the academic divisions that might be most relevant to supporting governmental policies—political science, economics, public administration and public policy—Davis either lacks the strength of UC Berkeley, UCLA, USC or Stanford or has not chosen to directly engage in state policy development directly.

Given these realities, attracting adequate numbers of high quality researchers to Sacramento and thus to state politics—and keeping them there—may be difficult. Indeed, some express the view that one reason PPIC located in San Francisco was a fear that it would be not be able to draw the same level of academic and research talent to Sacramento. The comparison with Washington, D.C. is striking. The federal capital routinely draws hundreds of the top graduates from the nations leading universities and law schools. Most importantly, a reasonable number decide to stay. (According to interviews, the institution that draws the greatest nationwide, intellectual talent to Sacramento is the LAO, which routinely recruits nationwide.)

Other state capitals may suffer this same separation from the state's intellectual and university hubs. Exceptions to this rule may be Boston, Minneapolis/St Paul, Denver, Austin, and Madison. One interviewee noted, in particular, the differences he perceived between Boston—as both a center of government and intellectual activity—and Sacramento. In any case, this separation may place additional research brokerage burdens on many state systems. In the political and policymaking worlds, transferring information and analysis is often a face-to-face process. Proximity to major thinks tanks and universities, which tends to increase personal and other contacts between researchers and policymakers, may offer significant advantages to policymakers in states where that proximity and interaction is present.

Legislative and Hearing Processes Unreceptive to Research-Based Information

Those familiar with the details of the California legislative process know that the process does not generally encourage input from research-based sources or experts. A variety of traditions and processes erect more barriers than invitations to such input:

Legislative policymakers tend to focus on specific bills rather than policy issue areas. While scholars and researchers may be of great value in providing background information and analysis of trends and options, the vast majority of legislative hearings focus on specific bills and their details, many of which change from hearing to hearing.

Participation by outside experts in Sacramento legislative hearings is discouraged by a general inability to provide schedules for testimony. Many in the research world complain about going to Sacramento to testify only to find themselves waiting several hours to do so, then being offered a rushed opportunity to talk to the Chair and a few other present members.

The politics of the legislative process tend to result in and encourage fragmentation of issues into multiple bills—each authored by different members. Bills are not consolidated into policy clusters around which a broader more substantial debate might be generated. For example, the managed care reform movement of 1999 took the form of over 100 bills, only 20 of which were eventually passed and signed. Such a process favors the insider lobbyist rather than the researcher or outside expert.

According to at least one staffer, now a lobbyist, the "churning" of bills does little for sound policy analysis or comprehensive policymaking. Its purpose, he and others suggested, is more to serve the political needs of members and the work load needs of lobbyists, whose successes and failures are often judged by numbers of bills passed or blocked.

In similar vein, committees will often hear two dozen or more bills in a single hearing, each taken up according to the order in which their authors appear. With rare exceptions, virtually no effort is made to hear all bills relating to a particular topic in a consolidated time frame, a process that might be more conducive to participation by outside experts as opposed to Sacramento-based lobbyists.

This does not suggest that the political/legislative process should be turned into a public classroom. The vast majority of key contacts with policymakers will almost always take place in more private settings, with principal participants being policymakers and lobbyists. Moreover, it should be recognized that during the four-month annual period between legislative sessions, many committees and legislators participate in "interim" hearings focused on one issue. These are much more prone to be held outside of Sacramento, with research-oriented witnesses as key participants.

> Disaggregating policy areas into multiple bills makes it hard for researchers and research to have an impact on the process.

Still, the tendency to disaggregate policy areas into multiple bills that move forward on often unrelated tracks tends to make it harder for researchers to participate in the process and for research-based information—which may be more valuable in assessing circumstances, needs and history than specific solutions—to have an impact on the process.

Public Awareness and Concern About Sacramento Policymaking

Some believe that efforts to pursue serious, research-based policy analysis in Sacramento are understandably limited, given the general public's low understanding of and/or interest in Sacramento policymaking. Without public pressure, this argument suggests, legislators are freer to pursue short-term political needs which, as noted above, are all too compelling, especially in today's term limited environment. According to this view, efforts to expand research-based policy analysis in Sacramento need to begin with raising public awareness of the relevance of Sacramento to community-visible outcomes.

This view, it should be noted, while forcefully articulated by some and accepted by others, does not, in the view of most observers, adequately explain or provide a solution to today's perceived concerns. In addition, many express doubt that efforts to interest greater numbers of Californians in Sacramento policymaking will bear much fruit.

Changes in Institutions or Processes That Have Negatively Impacted Brokering or Translating Capacities in Sacramento

Some changes in California's policymaking processes are relatively recent.

Term Limits

During conversations with observers and participants in California's policymaking process, most interviewees mentioned term limits as having a greater impact on the policy process than any other factor. While some recognized value in term limits, most focused on a number of perceived negative effects:

A loss of legislative expertise, especially in the Assembly. According to at least one ex-legislator, this decline puts more pressure on all members. Rather than being able to rely on senior colleagues whose judgment they trust on particular issues, many legislators now find themselves on their own and more dependent on thin, partisan analyses of issues. One legislator lamented that in his third year on a committee, he had already become the chair but was only then beginning to grasp the skills required of an effective chair and just beginning to fully understand the complexities of the issues before the committee.

An increased politicization of the policymaking process. Members are now forced continually to evaluate their next political moves. They feel career pressure to place their future political and campaign needs above current policy considerations. Some feel this politicization is the same as increased partisanship. At least one experienced legislative leader, however, asserted that these forces are very different. Legislators, he suggested, are less driven by fierce partisanship than by increased concerns about electoral security which, in many cases under the 2001 reapportionment, means fear of a primary attack from within one's party rather than fear of a general election challenge from the other party.

An increased propensity to hire politically skilled staff, including former campaign managers and consultants, rather than policy-driven, knowledgeable, research-oriented staff. The reported result, far more visible according to the interviewees in the Assembly than the Senate, is a youthful, inexperienced staff whose level of expertise is not up to the challenges of serious policy analysis. Several interviewees noticed that the average term of an Assembly member is well below two years, although this figure could not be verified. Inexperience may keep some staffers from knowing where to get information or how to digest it. According to some senior staff, the policy inexperience of new staff is compounded by a lack of "mentors," those able to show them "the ropes." When they started, these senior staff confided, mentors were widely available, for process and policy purposes.

> Inexperience may keep staffers from knowing where to get information and how to digest it.

An increased uncertainty by staff that their job tenure is secure. As it becomes more commonplace for committee personnel and leadership to change, staff has less certainty that developing expertise in an issue area will enable them to remain in high-level, policy-related positions.

As a result, the audience for policy-related research may be less sophisticated, less experienced, or in some cases less interested in that research.

To be sure, some note positive changes resulting from term limits. But most of these positives are unrelated to the Legislature's expertise or experience in policy formulation and analysis. If anything, some point out, the constant arrival in Sacramento of new members and the changing roles of those already serving, only increases the need for research brokering services that would help them get quickly up to speed on a multitude of policy matters.

Policy and Research Consultants

Many of those interviewed noted a decline in the tradition and numbers of expert, relatively independent policy consultants who once played prominent roles in the process. Interviewees express a widely held view that legislative politics is now more partisan and less driven by policy expertise of legislators or policy consultants.

While the Senate Office of Research remains under the guidance of a well-respected director, many Republicans view it as more a Democratic than a Senate office. The Assembly Office of Research no longer exists. Committee consultants are more likely than in the past to turn over, as Chairs of committees rotate on a regular basis and many Chairs are prone to bring in their own preferred staff. As one scholar who focuses on California politics noted, the staff policy experts that played leading legislative policy roles in the Unruh years are largely, although not completely, a force of the past.

Declining Support for Government or Government-Supported Research Entities

The LAO and its Director, Elizabeth Hill, remain widely respected in the policymaking community. Even here, however, the harsh partisanship of recent California politics may be taking a toll. While Democrats assert almost unanimous support for the objectivity of LAO research and reports, some Republicans express modest concerns about the Office's "liberal leanings." Of still greater concern is the view, expressed only by a minority, that should the current director leave, the LAO might find itself bending more routinely to partisan pressures.

> In spite of the dramatic increase in data, research & analysis, the LAO's budget has been decreasing in recent years.

Also striking, and far more widely noted, is the reality that in spite of the dramatic increase in data, research and analysis available, the LAO's budget has been decreased in recent years. While the LAO once analyzed all bills to be heard in appropriations committees, funding reductions have forced the Analyst to eliminate this service.

One respected former legislator suggested that the best solution to a lack of policy information and analysis would be to give the LAO more money to do policy and options analysis and longer-term fiscal analysis. Others, however, disagree, suggesting that should the LAO wander too far from its core mission of budget and fiscal analysis, it would risk losing the credibility and widespread respect that render it so valuable today.

Others doubt that the LAO could safely or appropriately undertake a role of pro-actively linking policymakers to research and researchers. Allowing the LAO to take on the role of an aggressive, creative, pro-active broker of research-based information might significantly risk its credibility.

Explosion in Volume of Relevant Research-Based Information

While many legislative staff remain committed to policy analysis, many also report considerable difficulties in coping with the "deluge" of research reports that cross their desks. Formats are not easily digestible, are not as policy relevant as they might be, or often arrive when legislative and staff policy focus is elsewhere. Most staffers quickly admit that it is questionable whether they will remember the availability of that information when it becomes more timely.

Whether the complexity of the issues California faces today is greater than that faced 20 years ago can be debated. What is not debatable is that the volume of relevant knowledge and research dwarfs that of prior years. As many commented, even research that is properly formatted for digestion by policymakers may follow its own timetables, not legislative timetables, and it may be less to the point than policymakers might wish. If nothing else, seeking out research that may be highly relevant and valuable has become an increasingly daunting task.

The dissemination of relevant information has, in the Internet age, never been easier. While it may be quicker to deliver electronic copies to a policymaker's office, it has become perhaps more difficult than ever to move that policymaker from receipt of information to absorption of it.

Comparison of California and Washington, D.C.

As outlined in Chapter I, there are endemic difficulties that occur in the translation of research into the realm of policy. Although these affect policy and information brokering activities in Washington, D.C., as well as in the states, a host of brokering activities has developed in Washington that dwarf those in Sacramento. Some of these differences are, of course, to be expected from differences in size and scope of government activities.

Still, the comparisons seem significant.

Staff

> A host of brokering activities has developed in Washington that dwarf those in Sacramento.

Congressional staff budgets generally allow for close to 20 individuals in the House, and between 25 and sixty in the Senate, depending on size of the state. In California, legislative staffs tend to average around 5 individuals.

Committee Staffs

While we know of no published analysis of Congressional staff backgrounds, it is safe to say that Congressional staffs are routinely drawn from top universities and law schools. New recruits for Sacramento-based staff are far more likely to come California state colleges. Direct recruiting outside California is relatively rare. Some report having difficulty recruiting staff from California's leading universities and law schools.

Research Services

The Congressional Budget Office has a budget of $32 million and, in 2003, a staff of 233. The Congressional Research Service has a staff of 720 and a budget of $74 million (2001 figures). The Office of Management and Budget has a budget of $71 million (2001) and a staff of close to 600. The General Accounting Office has a budget of $432 million and a staff of 3,200.

By contrast, in California the Legislative Analyst's Office has a budget of under $6 million and a staff of 105, down 40% from about ten years ago. The Department of Finance has a budget of about $28 million, with a staff of 350. (There is no real equivalent of the Congressional Research Service). The Little Hoover Commission has a budget of $1.5 million and a staff of 9. The Senate Office of Research has a budget of $1.5 million and a staff of 12. The Assembly Office of Research no longer exists. The California Research Bureau had a budget of about $3 million and a staff of 40, but its budget was dramatically reduced in 2003, perhaps an indicator of the risky nature of governmental research. The UC research service undertakes some research for government officials; it has a budget of less than $200,000.

Think Tanks

According to research by Professor Andy Rich, Washington, D.C. is home to 122 of the roughly 200 think tanks focused on national issues. California has about 26 of these. Many of these focus on federal rather than state issues. The state's largest think tanks, RAND, PPIC, and the Hoover Institute are located in the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Palo Alto regions.

For all of these reasons—some long-standing, some of more recent vintage—the capacity of the Sacramento policymaking process to gather, absorb and process research-based information is under considerable pressure. Given the inevitable scope and breadth of today's policy challenges and the obvious need to bring the best information and analysis to the policy process, there is a clear public need to improve the way information is delivered to and absorbed by the policymaking process.

The capacity of the Sacramento policymaking process to gather, absorb and process research-based information is under considerable pressure.

Brokering Information as a Two-Way Street

Brokering, translating and disseminating information is a two-way street. Up to this point, we have examined problems on the policymaking or demand side of the information exchange. In the view of many interviewed, however, there are significant problems on the supply side as well.

Policymakers as well as some researchers suggest that, at least when it comes to producing timely, relevant, and useful policy-related research, California's research community has not met its full potential. The most common explanations include the following, listed in the order they were heard most frequently:

1. Research materials, when relevant to policymaking, are often produced in formats that are too academic, too long, and not geared for policymakers who have limited time to review issues.

2. Research timetables often do not fit policymaker schedules. Valuable ideas and information produced in a policy paper in 2001 may "be sitting on the shelf" in 2003. Policymakers who might benefit from them remain unaware of their existence.

3. The California research community—with the most notable exception being the PPIC—produces a limited amount of policy-relevant material. In comparison with federal issue research, relatively few researchers concentrate on state issues.

4. Tenure is such an overpowering necessity that academic researchers who might wish to engage in policy- or public administration-oriented research find themselves discouraged from doing so. Academia rewards original research, not applied policy research. (This may be less true with regard to public policy schools, which seem more willing to engage in policy-related research.)

5. Few researchers take the time necessary to establish personal or institutional connections that enable them easily to access relevant state policymakers. Building such ties takes effort, and some academics (e.g., Richard Brown of UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research) have made that effort. But most academics either are not interested enough to make these connections, do not know how to, or do not have the time to make and maintain them.

Many researchers also express frustration with the Sacramento policymaking process: Some express concern that Sacramento policymakers are not open to research or able to absorb it.

Some report that politics and partisanship are so dominant in Sacramento that research and rich policy analyses are deemed irrelevant.

Some express concern that Sacramento is not attracting enough talent or offering adequate enough positions to create "in-house" interest in research, thereby creating an environment in which research-based information is not valued.

CHAPTER III

The Need for Additional Research-Based Information: How California Policymakers Perceive the Problem

Problems in the production, translation, distribution and usage of research-based information make it difficult for policymakers to utilize research effectively. Research may be less likely to reach policymakers either because it was never generated, was poorly translated, was discounted or was undervalued in the process.

Assuming that access to the latest research-based information and analysis is an asset to the policy making process, one might also assume that a decline in the capacity to process such information should be of great concern to policymakers. This does, in fact, appear to be the case—although their concerns are expressed indirectly and only after some prodding.

If asked to cite the most serious problems they encounter in the process of forming policy, many California policymakers would not cite access to research-based information. Concepts information flow, collection of research-based policy analysis and particularly concepts of brokering or translating or information are more elusive than term limits, campaign financing, reapportionment and other process questions.

Still, access to research is perceived or viewed as important. Many if not most in the policymaking community quickly acknowledge problems in receiving or using research-based information or in driving research-based information into the policymaking process. They tend, however, to define the problem in terms of the "trees"—lack of expertise and experience, shortage of sources of neutral policy analysis, increasing dominance of politics and partisanship over policy—instead of the "forest"—a systemic problem in the transmission and utilization of research-based information and policy analysis.

To assess the issue of need and ultimately the question of value from an improvement in such services, we asked policymakers three key questions about substantive, policy-related information:

1. Where and from what sources do policymakers get such information?

2. What concerns, if any, do they have about this information and the sources delivering it?

3. What solutions do they think would be helpful in addressing these concerns?

Where Do Policymakers Get Their Information?

Policymakers receive volumes of information from multiple sources. Among the primary sources of information are:

Lobbying organizations: In terms of volume of information generated—both written and oral—this source dominates all others. Lobbying organizations produce both their own analyses and, where it supports their case, the analyses of others.

Personal staff: Staffers to decision-makers generally serve as information collectors and filters. Like decision makers themselves, they receive more information from lobbying organizations than any other source.

Committee staff: Staff draft an analysis of every bill heard in every committee. These are used both by staff to brief decision-makers and by decision-makers themselves. Generally, these bill analyses summarize the issues in question, describe the proposed solutions and present the arguments on different sides of the issue. Some committee analysts are particularly highly regarded—either by members of one or both parties. Their written or more private analyses and information may carry particular weight. The Senate Office of Research provides research assistance in the Senate.

Floor analyses: Partisan staffs of both parties generate analyses of each bill that reaches the Assembly or Senate floors. These are generally limited in their substantive or analytical content.

Legislative Analyst's Office: While producing only a trickle of information relative to some of the above sources, the LAO stands out as a unique and respected source of non-partisan information. The LAO focuses on budget and fiscal matters, only occasionally ranging into other policy arenas.

Other government sources of information: The California Research Bureau, the Little Hoover Commission and the State Auditor all produce occasional analysis—generally more focused on broadly defined policy, instead of specific bills, and on analyses of ongoing government programs and agencies. In addition, a substantial amount of information flows via virtually every form of communication—personal ties, anecdotes, systemic overviews and program evaluations—to legislators from government agencies.

Constituency-produced information: Policymakers receive countless messages and materials from individual constituents or community groups that do not have Sacramento lobbyists. In terms of policy analysis or research-based information (as opposed to expressions of need or interest), this source is of very modest relevance.

Reports, studies, books and articles from research organizations, journals, foundations and non-profits without lobbyists: Such information may reach policymakers directly or though personal staff or committee analysis. With some exceptions, these sources of information are not backed by registered lobbyists and generally lack a Sacramento presence.

The media: All legislative offices receive daily press clippings. Most of this information is used as much to assess how the news is being reported as for its substantive content.

What Concerns, If Any, Do Policymakers Have About Their Current Sources of Information?

Interviews suggested a number of areas of concern. Most centered on (1) the volume, content and format of information received, (2) limited experience and expertise, (3) partisan versus neutral sources of information and (4) information in a few specific policy areas. (Some of these have previously been noted above.)

Information Overload

The most common complaint is information overload or, more accurately, a difficulty in sorting through material to find what is relevant and helpful at the right time. This appears to be, as described by staffers in particular, a function of materials being perceived as too "academic" and thus too long, too scholarly, not really on point and arriving at the wrong time.

Limits of Experience and Expertise

Some express the view that this problem is aggravated by staff inexperience and lack of substantive expertise. While such concerns are expressed with caution, it is clear that questions exist whether some staff are expert or experienced enough to collect, analyze and summarize policy-relevant information adequately. The trend towards hiring those with political rather than policy or other skills was frequently noted as a problem in policy analysis.

Partisanship and Politics

Some, especially Republicans, express concerns that politics and partisanship now dominate information flow. They feel many sources, even some of those claiming to be "neutral," cannot be fully trusted. Committee analyses, generally prepared by staffers of the majority party, sometimes fall into this suspect category.

Many express praise for the LAO, but they also express concern that they do not receive enough in the way of "neutral, objective, non-partisan information and analysis." Proposition 140 resulted in a 40% decline in funding for the LAO, resulting in a significant reduction in staffing and a decision to stop LAO analyses of all fiscal bills.

Specific Policy Areas

With regard to specific policy areas, legislators in particular expressed concern about inadequate information with regard to school financing, insurance, health care and Worker's Compensation.

An Alternative Point of View

There is also, however, very clearly an alternative point of view. Some in the policymaking community simply are not concerned about the nature or source of the policy relevant information they receive, or think that such problems are either insignificant or the obvious result of other larger problems that need to be addressed. For example:

One Assembly leader held up a series of briefing papers on his desk and declared flatly that he perceived no shortage of information.

Other policymakers note that if they want information or research, it is usually no more than a phone call or key stroke away.

Still other policymakers, Republicans especially, note that all the research and evidence in the world, appropriately compiled and distributed, cannot overcome the political and partisan demands of the process. It is not, they argue, the absence of a data or research that is the problem; it is the political unwillingness of so many in the process to consider it.

Finally, others emphasize the larger systemic issues—especially term limits—that encourage policymakers to focus more on short term political needs than on deeper levels of policy analysis, rendering the search for richer research-based information and analysis less meaningful. For these policymakers, information-based problems may exist, but they pale before larger systemic concerns.

Most expressing these views, however, agreed that whatever the impediments to effective utilization of policy research, more original up-to-date policy relevant research would be valuable to policymakers. It simply does not rank very high on their list of needs.

What Would Be Helpful in Addressing These Concerns?

Answers to this question flowed relatively easily from earlier concerns expressed. In large part, they constitute a mirror image of those concerns. Those policymakers who had concerns expressed a need for one or more of the following:

- Succinct summaries of major studies or reports—some suggested standardized formats.
- Succinct summaries of a policy issue area: what are the major issues, what are the options, who advocates what. (Interestingly, good committee analyses usually perform this function effectively, although they may focus more on a particular bill than a policy area.)
- Occasional assistance in finding information.
- In-person delivery of policy-relevant information and an ability to point out where it is relevant to a policymaker's interests. (Note: Many interviewees reacted very positively

to this idea but only after it had been described to them.)

- More succinct, summaries of information from non-partisan, LAO-type sources.

Five Views of One Problem

The concerns and concepts at issue here (information generation, translation, brokering, dissemination) are not day-to-day policymaker concerns. But when described and discussed in interviews, a number of concerns emerge from policymakers and others. Interviews produced five definable categories of respondents:

1. Some quickly understood the problem as described and saw a clear need for dramatic improvements in brokering services between the research and policymaking worlds. These interviewees recognized systemic limits that might be imposed on brokerage services but clearly believed that efforts to improve those services would be worthwhile. (About 50-60% of respondents fell into this category.)

2. Some recognized problems in the current system and saw improved brokerage of information as a clearly positive development, but they expressed doubts—given various systemic barriers—as to the potential impact of such services. (About 10-20% of respondents fell into this category.)
3. Some felt that improved brokerage services would generally be a positive development, but they thought that systemic resistance (partisanship, term limits, politics, reapportionment) were so strong that they would minimize the likely value of new brokerage services. (About 10% of respondents fell into this category.)

4. Some saw value in improved information brokering services (more, they felt, certainly couldn't hurt), but they did not feel there was a great need for it. (About 10% of respondents fell into this category.)

5. Some were committed to the promotion of research-based policy analysis but expressed specific doubts about the value of or need to create a new organization to broker that research and analysis. They offered alternative suggestions—e.g., more funding for the LAO, etc. (About 5% of respondents fell into this category.)

Finally, it should be noted that some resistance to the ideas outlined here emerged from organizations that might view a new information broker as a competitor—either for foundation funding or for the role of information broker.

CHAPTER IV

Options for Increasing Research-Based Information and Analysis in Sacramento Policy Decisions

As discussed in Chapter II, California is not making maximum use of its available intellectual and research capacities in developing and analyzing public policy. Long-existing problems plaguing communication between the research and policy worlds have been exacerbated by more recent developments.

Interviews with participants in the policy process suggest that policy-relevant information and analysis are either (1) not being produced with great enough frequency, (2) not being produced in effective and useful formats, (3) not being effectively disseminated to those who might need them at the appropriate times or (4) not being effectively utilized when they are disseminated.

There is a clear need for a means of improving information flow and understanding between the research and policy making communities. While there is noticeable skepticism in the policymaking community regarding the capacity of research-based information to have much impact in a world of intense politics and partisanship, it appears clear that the process of Sacramento-based policymaking would benefit from improved and greater use of research-based information and policy analysis. At a minimum, it is clear that some would use it to good effect.

We turn now to the means, strategies, forms, formats and organizational mechanisms by which the goals suggested here might best be achieved. A number of specific questions stand out. In this chapter we address what is perhaps the most fundamental of these issues—the functions that might performed by new or existing entities in an effort to improve the use of research-based information in the policymaking process. In the following chapter we address a number of other closely related questions, including who or what might perform these functions, where they might be performed, with what organizational or philosophical style might they be performed and what issue areas might benefit most from that performance.

Improving the Policymaking Process: A Focus on Function

During the course of our research, we defined a series of functions that a Sacramento based policy organization might perform. Each of these could, in some way, service the larger goals of improving communication between research and policy worlds, brokering information between them and increasing the use of research-based information in the policymaking process.

Most of these potential functions were discussed in interviews. In addition, two focus groups were held—one in Sacramento, one in Los Angeles—that largely addressed these options. Participants in the focus groups had all been previously interviewed as part of the study, so all came having been exposed to the issues involved.

The ten functions studied are listed below. Conceptually, they may be seen as additive. An organization established to focus on functions near the top of the list would probably be unable to perform the functions lower on the list, while those focusing on functions lower on the list could probably perform the functions listed at the top.

1. Convening

A Sacramento policy center might bring researchers together with policymakers, host events, generate contacts and create dialogue on major issues, either in the short or long term.

2. Educating and Training

A policy center could provide education and training. There are four possible audiences for education, requiring different approaches and goals. Not all of these need be placed in one organization, although they could be. Audiences include:

***Policymakers*:** A policy center could educate policymakers (particularly staff) on key emerging issues, give them policy briefs and hold seminars, classes and new staff briefings. The organization could also run fellowships and internships.

***Research Community*:** A policy center could assist researchers in knowing what is needed and how and when to present it to policymakers. It could create internships allowing experienced researchers (M.A.s, Ph.D.s) to assist policymakers.

***Grantees and Non-Profits*:** A policy center could assist these organizations by training them in use of databases and research techniques. Specific funding could be offered to organizations putting more energy into research- and data-based analysis. (This function might be performed by an intermediary organization or by foundations directly).

***General public*:** A policy center could increase the general public's awareness of and interest in state policy issues.

3. Fact Checking, Maintaining a Clearinghouse

A policy center could collect, organize and dispense reliable fact-based information, maintain up-to-date databases, provide policymakers with routine updates on research and offer fast-track services supplying answers to data-based questions. This option might be more research and database oriented, and less activist, than the broker or translator role described below. It would probably not offer policy analysis. Two variants might be considered:

Sacramento only: Clearinghouse, fact-checking services would be located in Sacramento with Sacramento-based staff.

Sacramento as home-office to statewide clearinghouse: Research centers across the state would be funded to maintain databases in their areas of specialization. The Sacramento clearinghouse would turn to those research sources to answer data requests.

4. Brokering, Translating, Synthesizing

A policy center could advise the research community and foundations on policymaker research needs. It could proactively provide relevant research to policymakers, media and others in usable forms, at the right times. It could provide policymakers with routine updates on research and point out where research might be relevant and valuable to policymakers, including specific legislation. An organization of this nature might be viewed as something of a lobbyist for the research community. It might be more activist than the clearinghouse or fact-checking organizations outlined above. It would focus more on dissemination of relevant research than on development of policy analysis based on that research.

5. Providing Neutral Analysis of Policy Options

A policy center could develop and provide research-based analyses of options, pros and cons on key pending issues. As this function may rely more on staff members having specific issue-oriented expertise, it would have to be either limited in scope to a very few issue areas or very sizably funded. It could undertake independent research (again, a costly approach) or rely on research performed by others. Emphasis on neutrality would distinguish such an organization from more traditional, value-driven think tanks or lobbying organizations (see functions 6 or 7 below).

6. Providing Neutral Long-Term Policy Research Analysis

A policy center could provide neutral, longer term, "big-picture thinking" and analysis on policy issues. "Neutrality" might be achieved either by offering different points of view and options in each analysis or by employing researchers with different points of view, so that the aggregate body of research and analysis products is "neutral." This might or might not require peer-reviewed research.

7. Providing an Intellectual Space for Debate on Ideas and Policy

A policy center could convene and maintain intellectual dialogue on major issues and provide a space for policymakers and researchers to come together in a non-political atmosphere to discuss broad issues and trends that may not require immediate, specific policy responses. (This might be viewed as a combination of functions 1 and 6 above.)

8. Providing Research-Based Analysis from a "Point of View"

A policy center could present research-based information to policymakers, media and the public, where research is driven by a distinguishable set of values that one would typically associate with an ideological point of view. It could provide a traditional, mission-driven think tank approach, address single or multiple issues, employ long or short-term analyses and provide more or less intellectual rigor. Emphasis on research products and analysis would distinguish such a mission-driven think tank from a more traditional lobbying organization.

Two Other Functions/Options:

Discussions have produced at least two other approaches to addressing the goals defined above. In a sense, these two options stand alone. Attempting to merge them with other models above or to view them as additive to those models might be problematic.

9. Providing Grants to Organizations Pursuing Research-Based Policy Analysis

A policy center could receive and redistribute foundation and other funds to organizations (conceivably including government agencies) engaged in the kinds of activities that promote Sacramento-based, research-based policy analysis. It could provide funds for such activities as: developing expertise in research-based analysis, hiring an academic researcher as a consultant to provide assistance on a particularly complex issue, or opening an office in Sacramento. Foundations could perform this function directly, but pooling resources to establish an organization with expertise in this area might be more effective and efficient.

10. Creating Opportunities for Consensus on Major Issues

A policy center could seek to find common ground or consensus solutions in significant policy issue areas that appear to demand action but on which policymakers are having difficulty finding adequate agreement. One strategy to achieve such outcomes would be to convene commissions on selected issue areas, review research and options and seek consensus on viable policy solutions. Staff might be chosen for skills in servicing such commissions. Other approaches might convene a staff of bipartisan analysts to seek such solutions, something akin to a "shadow legislature." Different strategies might be employed for different needs (e.g., finding common ground among partisans, experts or community leaders from outside the legislature). Pursuit of this function may not, as is the case with all the other functions outlined above, depend primarily on collection and distribution of research-based information.

Findings and Analysis

Those interviewed offered a wide variety of views on the proposed functions. These views are summarized below.

FUNCTIONS PERCEIVED AS HAVING THE LEAST VALUE

Functions 6 (Providing “Neutral” Long-Term Policy Research Analysis) and 8 (Providing Research-Based Analysis From a ‘Point of View”) drew the least support.

Virtually no respondents expressed a preference for Option 6. The reasons for this were two-fold:

1. PPIC and university research organizations were viewed as already performing this task or capable of performing it with some adjustments in approach. Providing more of such analyses was not perceived as serving the greatest need.

2. Legislative staff, especially, expressed a much greater need for assistance in summarizing research, conveying relevant research and understanding viable options to issues before them in the near term.

Most of those interviewed saw more value in and need for neutral (Option 5) rather than value-driven policy analysis. Even when pressed about the value of “dueling think tanks” or the value of receiving information from trusted sources with similar value systems, most continued to express a preference for neutrality.

To some extent, this preference was driven by the awareness that more value-driven sources of information are currently and readily available. Neutral sources—the great exception being the LAO on fiscal and budget matters—are viewed as less available.

> Most interviewees saw more value and need for NEUTRAL rather than value-driven policy and analysis.

Several expressed disappointment that the LAO no longer provides analysis of fiscal bills.

Republicans especially tended to favor neutral sources, because those might have a greater capacity to influence those with differing political points of view (i.e., Democrats). Republicans also expressed concern that Democrats would capture a “point of view” organization. In short, credibility, which in the view of most respondents was virtually the same as objectivity and neutrality, was seen as a critical value in terms of influencing others.

Some did indicate a need for “point of view” information, at least for some kinds of information. Several legislators and ex-legislators expressed the view (echoed by some others) that this form of research-based information was more valuable in the earlier phases of the policy process, when problems are identified and agendas defined, than during the timeframe of a policy debate. It was during these times that policymakers might be more likely to turn to friendly, trusted sources to development agendas and proposals. Some argued that value-neutral information was impossible. Others contended that value-neutral information would be “boring” or not used by legislators who already had their own points of view.

However, while most respondents saw some value in "point of view" research-based information, most believed that if forced to choose, their preference was for more neutral as opposed to value-driven research information and analysis.

FUNCTIONS PERCEIVED AS HAVING SOME VALUE

Interviewees viewed Functions 1 (Convening), 2 (Educating) and 7 (Providing "Intellectual Space") as having moderate value.

Prior to and during interviews, our materials and descriptions regarding the convening and education functions stressed a number of options.

- Convening of conferences and forums on selected topics.
- Convening (including facilitating) smaller groups of individuals or groups who had an interest in resolving differences on a particular subject.
- Bringing researchers to Sacramento to present findings and analysis.
- Offering educational experiences (e.g., a one day course on California water issues) for policymakers and interested others.
- Convening discussions between researchers and policymakers on a future research agenda.
- Sponsoring internship or fellowship programs in which, for example, (1) policymakers might be given a stipend to attend a series of meetings, dinners or field trips, or (2) academics and other researchers would be placed in legislative offices or committee positions. Exchange programs might be instituted between the research and policy communities

Respondents viewed many of these ideas positively. If one specific need stood out, at least in terms of intensity, it was for programs that might build more expertise in the legislative staff on the Assembly side, where many believed extreme turnover and lack of experience and expertise was at times a serious liability.

However, one or more of the following comments or reservations almost always accompanied expressions of interest in these functions:

- Legislators especially, and in most cases staff, will not attend briefings or forums with much regularity. Many have tried to lure them with attractive sites and compelling panels, but they have been largely unsuccessful. One representative of a leading minority group organization emphasized that even his organization was unable to attract legislators to briefings on key issues. His organization, he related, has switched strategies to attract local public officials who appear less pressed for time, and to educate them on state issues in anticipation of their reaching higher elected office some day.

Another observer noted that these functions are more successful and more heavily attended in Washington, D.C., because (1) there are far more legislative staff with specific committee assignments and a need to know the latest information on specific topics, and (2) there is a much larger community of interested parties—think tanks, lobbyists, journalists, etc.—from which to draw a reasonable audience. Many of these individuals will be interested even if they do not perceive the topic at hand to be immediate relevant in the policymaking process. (Some also commented that the quality of the food and drink available was a factor in their decisions to attend.)

- There are a number of organizations—some interested in specific policy areas, some in policy in general—who host such events. Noted by some in this regard were efforts by various elements of the UC and the California Research Service, which has offered some forums with the PPIC.

- The policymaking and especially the legislative policymaking timetable is so tight that intense focus on an issue often exists for a brief period of time. Forums and other convenings that do not catch that window of opportunity have difficulty drawing participants.

Overall, the conclusion of the Los Angeles focus group may accurately sum up views on the performance of these functions. Efforts to achieve these functions should be encouraged where possible, but the needs envisioned do not demand creation of a new organization. Although some of these functions might be undertaken by a new organization, their need and value is not significant enough to warrant creation of such a new organization.

The creation of an intellectual space for policy discussions generated a more diverse response. Most interviewed viewed this concept as abstract, tangential to other options and needs, or a modest addition to other activities. But a handful of respondents—while not seeing this function as justifiable for creation of a new organization—expressed strong support for efforts to:

- Generate a broader intellectual policy dialogue in Sacramento.

- Create a space where policy oriented individuals could come, leave "their politics at the door" and exchange ideas on broad policy questions.

- Create a forum or space that might make Sacramento a bit more attractive to researchers, thereby encouraging those individuals to visit or stay in Sacramento.

Functions Perceived As Having Considerable Value

Functions 3 (Fact Checking Clearinghouse) and 5 (Neutral Policy Analysis of Policy Options) generated substantial support.

Efforts to expand the performance of these functions in Sacramento received fairly strong support. Interest in both, it appears, reflects a strong sense of need for "objective" or "neutral" facts or analysis. Beyond that generalization, the support they received appears to stem from different needs—a need for data and for analysis of options. Most respondents, while seeing value in both, tended to focus on the need for one or the other. Some commented on the loss of LAO's neutral analyses in this regard.

However, the need for performance and ability to perform both sets of functions also encountered significant skepticism from more than a few.

Concerns About a Clearinghouse and/or Fact-Checking Service

Interviewees expressed the following reservations:

- California already has many sources to which policymakers can turn for facts or data. At most, an organization trying to serve this function should limit itself to directing policymakers to those sources.

- Efforts to fact check or become a clearinghouse will inspire many requests. Some will come from staffers who want the fact-checker to do their work. Others will come from offices whose needs are not directly related to the policy process. Others will produce days of work to track down a piece of information that may or may not exist. Researchers will have difficulty in determining what facts to check and what requests should be filled. That selection process could cause some in the policy process to be disappointed. Thus, some conclude that such functions should be performed on an as-needed basis, with need determined by the organization and not by requests.

- Collecting and maintaining data, including significant databases, is a Herculean task. Of course policymakers would like to go to one source, but providing that service is far more complex and time consuming than is generally thought. If this service is to be provided, it should be done via referrals to others rather than through in-house production.

Interviewees generally concluded that while the fact-checker/clearinghouse functions are worthy of support, the challenges for implementation of those functions in the manner they are envisioned by proponents makes success in this area problematic at best.

Concerns about "Neutral Policy Analysis"

Concerns expressed about neutral analyses tended to reflect skepticism about the capacity of any organization to create them. Many believe that (1) it is virtually impossible to view public policy in a "neutral" way, or (2) that neutral analyses are not possible in the intense partisan and political environment of Sacramento. Indeed, even those who cited a strong need for more "neutral" analyses feared that

Sacramento partisanship would undermine any effort to produce them. The easiest way, it was noted, to undermine a finding one didn't like is to question the neutrality of the source. A neutral organization might face a constant struggle to maintain a neutral image.

The widely-respected LAO is viewed by many expressing these options as an exception to the rule. Indeed, one former legislator expressed the view that rather than create a new mechanism to provide neutral analyses of policies and options, the LAO budget should be augmented for this express purpose. This point of view, when discussed with others, was often supported, although some expressed concern that if LAO moved to far from its core task of budget and fiscal analysis, it might risk losing some of its coveted credibility.

When means of maintaining "neutrality" were explored, some skeptics seemed more open to a neutral analysis function. Some suggested the use of co-directors from different parties or points of view, association of an organization with a respected think tank or university, consideration of options that reflected different philosophical points of view, or creation of a bi-partisan steering committee. All these were viewed as means by which "neutrality" might be achieved and/or preserved.

One legislator wisely voiced the caution that satisfying fears of, or finding consensus among, Democrats and Republicans did not necessarily constitute neutrality. An emphasis on rigorous objectivity, might be the wiser approach.

FUNCTION PERCEIVED AS HAVING THE GREATEST VALUE

Function 4 (Brokering, Translating, Synthesizing Research) was perceived as offering the greatest value. Without question, this function was the most preferred of those outlined.

The brokering function drew not simply the broadest but the most enthusiastic support, and from all categories of interviewees. Very few thought it was a bad idea. Almost all thought it would be helpful to the overall policymaking process. The Sacramento focus group thought the greatest need was in the combination of this function with the "neutral analysis" function. The Los Angeles focus group perceived the greatest benefit to lie in the combination of this function and the fact-checking/clearinghouse function.

Some interviewees envisioned more limited goals for a broker, emphasizing the need to bring research findings to Sacramento and improve connections between policymakers with the research community. Others expressed a larger vision, such as increasing the value of research in the Sacramento culture, raising the "research bar" over which policy advocates would have to climb, and eventually attracting more research-oriented individuals to Sacramento itself.

In either case, the "broker" function was viewed as a sharply delineated one, emphasizing specific, pro-active, entrepreneurial and even selective efforts to translate information into material useful to policymakers. While the literature on "brokering" outlined in Chapter I envisions the "broker" role performed—even if secondarily to other purposes—by lobbyists, staffers, think tanks and conveners, the broker concept defined here envisioned a new organization that would focus primarily upon acts of bringing research-based information to the policy process and bringing policymaker needs to researchers. Performance of other functions—policy analysis, fact-checking, encouraging dialogue, managing internships or fellowships—might be consistent with, but clearly secondary to, that purpose.

> The 'broker' function emerged as sharply delineated: it emphasizes specific, pro-active, entrepreneurial and selective efforts that translate information into useful material for policymakers.

This definition of a "broker" is not one, it must be acknowledged, that interviewees came to on their own. It emerged gradually and took on more specific definition only during the course of the interviewing process. Over time, three images emerged as critical to the definition: neutral, pro-active and two-way delivery of information. Among the activities envisioned for such a broker were:

- Periodically updating and synthesizing research in a given field. As one legislator termed it, a broker like this might serve as a "search engine for think tanks."
- Staying abreast of research developments in chosen fields.
- Increasing the probabilities that research will have pragmatic value—both by helping researchers to produce policy relevant research and linking practitioners to research-driven, policy options. At least one state government researcher emphasized the need to encourage California researchers to be more interested in California, as opposed to federal or international issues.

- Expanding its own contacts with researchers and research organizations.

- Proactively developing Sacramento contacts—committee chairs and consultants, legislators with particular interest in an issue area, regulators and lobbying organizations, etc.—supplying them with research in areas of interest, and bringing them new or relevant research. (It was emphasized, however, that in undertaking such roles the broker must maintain independence and not assume the role of staff to policymakers).

- Assisting in the development of contacts and relationships between researchers and policymakers.

- Delivering research-based information in a timely fashion and in usable formats.

- Employing various tools in efforts to (1) assist in identifying short, intermediate and longer term research needs, (2) deliver analyses to relevant organizations and individuals in the research community and (3) encourage researchers to undertake needed research, address policymaker needs and deliver conclusions to policymakers in accessible formats.

Overall, many viewed the broker as an entity that would increase the likelihood that policymakers would place greater reliance on research evidence and policy analysis. Some even suggested that the broker suggest institutional reforms (e.g., changes in the committee processes) that might render the policymaking process more conducive to research.

Still, despite widespread support for this specific broker construct, some expressed the following concerns:

- Lobbyists and staff already perform this function adequately.
- Focusing on specific questions and data points will have less value than addressing larger issues growing out of research.
- Policymakers will make unlimited demands on an effective broker and suck it into advocacy process.
- Maintaining neutrality will be very difficult.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

Two other options were discussed: Function 9 (Providing Grants to Existing Organizations) and Function 10 (Consensus Building).

Providing Grants to Others (Function 9)

Some organizations suggested the creation of a "refunding organization" that would receive foundation grants and regrant them for others to engage in one or more of the functions described earlier in this Chapter. Understandably, some organizations already in the business of "brokering" information in general and/or currently receiving funding from foundations to pursue some of the functions outlined here had concerns about a new organization whose functions might overlap with their own.

At least two options emerged from this series of discussions.

1. Foundations interested in supporting the kinds of functions discussed above should make contributions to organizations already engaged in such activities. To the extent foundations wished to encourage the promotion of certain activities (e.g., more presentation of research-oriented analysis in Sacramento), they might offer funding for such activities. Foundations interested in furthering research-based analysis could also provide funds or incentives to grantees or other organizations to improve their own research capabilities—for example, by attending a course offered in use of the current population survey or other relevant databases.

A number of potential recipients of such grants stand out, including:

Universities or think tanks that already provide or could provide convening, educating, brokering or policy analysis functions in Sacramento.

Non-profit, foundation-funded organizations that already participate or could participate in the Sacramento policymaking process, especially those whose currency is research-based information and analysis.

2. Foundations might consider pooling resources to establish an intermediary grant-making organization located, ideally, in Sacramento that could develop expertise in grant making for the kinds of purposes outlined in (1) above.

These options, especially the second, were only occasionally discussed with the broader list of interviewees. Discussions with most interviewees focused on the feasibility of establishing a new organization, not the value of greater funding for existing organizations. In general, when it was raised, feedback on this option was limited, with most interviewees having no strong view on how to fund various efforts.

Consensus Building (Function 10)

Responses to Function 10 might be described as polarized. Many of those commenting on this option tended to express views on the extremes of the continuum. Some believed such efforts were likely to be unproductive or to be viewed negatively by those with presumed responsibility to seek such solutions. Others acknowledged some risk but also saw substantial, even unique merit in this approach. The Los Angeles focus group largely took the first of these two views. A significant minority of the Sacramento focus group thought the consensus building approach definitely worth pursuing.

Views on this potential function identified several differing approaches: (1) convening a blue-ribbon commission of prominent outsiders to create consensus recommendations that would have persuasive influence with policymakers; (2) convening a core group of legislative decision makers to help them broker a compromise; and (3) convening key lobbyists on different sides of intractable issues to identify common points of agreement on substantive, technical and policy issues.

The skeptics tended to emphasize that the establishment of commissions to address tough issues has been tried frequently, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Some expressed concern that reliance on the commission tool might be risky for the sponsoring organization, since some of its efforts would not be successful.

> Breaking through stalemates on major issues is a critical need in Sacramento, according to those intrigued by the consensus building approach.

Those more intrigued by the consensus-building approach felt that breaking through stalemate on major issues was a critical need in Sacramento. They felt that individuals or organizations working to achieve consensus or acceptable compromise might have an improved chance of achieving that goal if allowed to do so apart from the political pressures that normally accompany such an undertaking. Whether products of such a process might be of value when brought to policymakers is, of course, another question.

Some argued that traditional policy forums, such as legislative hearings, never resolve difficult issues. Instead, they merely allow advocates to sharpen their own divergent positions. What is needed, they feel, is an off-the-record process in the key advocates and experts involved in policy disputes can identify those issues upon which there is agreement, and those issues upon which there is not.

While the consensus-seeking approach might deal with a wide variety of issues, advocates of the approach envisioned at least three instances in which commissions or other consensus seeking techniques, properly structured and staffed, might be effective:

Conflict caused by partisanship: This would include issues on which consensus has proven elusive due to partisan divisions. Workers Compensation might be cited as such an issue. Long-term fiscal analysis might also be relevant here.

Issues of expertise: Finding new consensus on some issues might require levels of expertise not likely to be found among policymakers. Complexities of school financing or assessment of potential economics of long term tax and spending policies might be amenable to this approach. Education experts or economists might play leading roles.

Issues involving policymaker conflicts of interest: Political reform advocates have long held that policymakers are not likely to address certain issues that create direct conflicts for them. Examples include campaign financing, reapportionment, term limits, etc. An effort focused on these issues might rely heavily on assistance and insight from prominent, credible community leaders or former public officials.

In general, those who found the consensus-building or solution-seeking function attractive agreed that for the effort to be successful, those involved in the process of making recommendations would need to become advocates for those recommendations in the policymaking process.

Summary of Functions and Needs

While many views emerged, there was a clear consensus that the “broker” approach held the greatest potential for successfully increasing the role of research-based information and analysis in the policymaking process. Perhaps this is not surprising, since many of the potential functions discussed with interviewees are often envisioned in the literature and in practice as "brokerage or linkage" functions.

The concept of a broker that emerged from these discussions was more specific than the general construct of broker in the literature, which envisions a variety of individuals and organizations in a variety of pursuits and styles performing the broker function.

Clearinghouse/fact checking and neutral policy analysis were also potential functions that attracted considerable support. Mission-driven policy analyses drew some support but considerably less than "neutral" analysis. Functions relating to consensus building or compromise seeking drew strong interest from a minority of interviewees. Other functions discussed were either viewed as not compelling, not clearly needed in Sacramento today, or at best worthy of support as a secondary service.

CHAPTER V

Characteristics of a Sacramento Policy Center

In Chapter III, we outlined the research-based information and analysis Sacramento policymakers say they need. In Chapter IV, we explored a range of functions or activities an organization might undertake to fulfill those informational needs and concluded that the "broker" function offered the greatest value. Now we turn to a series of questions relating to strategy and organization. Each of these was discussed with most interviewees, often in great detail.

The potential characteristics of a Sacramento policy center are listed below. Analysis of each follows. The questions assume that a new organization to address the defined needs may be created or folded into an existing organization.

1. Does such an organization have to be housed in Sacramento, or could it be housed elsewhere with perhaps a "satellite" office in Sacramento?

2. Should a new organization seek a neutral posture or can it be value-driven? If neutrality is preferred, how might that be achieved and maintained?

3. Should the organization focus on just one or on multiple issues? What are the advantages and liabilities of both approaches?

4. Whether focused on individual or multiple issues, what policy areas might benefit most from increased research-based information and analysis?

5. Should a new organization be an active promoter of research ideas or just a responsive supplier?

6. How should research be disseminated and in what formats?

7. What organizational forms might work best? Free-standing? Housed in a foundation or university? Part of a larger national or California-based think tank?

8. What kinds of individuals should lead and staff the new organization?

9. What should be the relationship between a new organization and the media?

10. How might the new organization obtain adequate and reliable funding?

The answers offered to almost all of these questions generated a striking level of consensus. Where consensus did not emerge, the cause was usually (1) concern about viability of an option, or (2) lack of information on which judgments could be made.

Key Characteristics of a Sacramento Policy Center

Because the concept of "broker" as outlined in Chapter IV was so widely supported, we will focus, in addressing these questions, on how the answers might relate to a broker-type organization.

SACRAMENTO LOCATION

Researchers, advocates and policymakers expressed virtual unanimity on the importance of locating any new organization—regardless of its specific functions—in Sacramento.

> Those polled agree that any new policy center should be located *in Sacramento*.

Their core conclusion is that brokering policy-related information is often most effective face-to-face, and that the advantages of a local presence far outweigh the advantages of distance. Several representatives of Washington, D.C. think tanks underscored this conclusion, noting the considerable benefits they received from their Washington, D.C. location—personal contacts, easy availability for briefings on short notice, and visible participation in forums, including private and government forums. Underlying this conclusion are a variety of observations and assessments.

- An effective broker needs to know the lay of the land, key consultants and other policymakers, the legislative calendar and the processes of Sacramento. A broker should ideally be an insider.

- Sacramento, as a capital city, would benefit from the physical presence of an organization that promoted and distributed research.

- An argument that Sacramento policymaking would benefit from an infusion of research-based information would be undermined if the main conveyor of this information were located outside of Sacramento. This would identify a problem and then institutionalize one of the reasons the problem was not being solved.

- A Sacramento presence will better enable the organization to build personal relationships with participants in the policy process. Legislators and their staff often pay more attention to research from sources they personally know. By allowing policy center staff to build personal relationships, a Sacramento location will make them and their research more effective.

- A Sacramento presence will help the broker identify more accurately and quickly the issues that policymakers are confronting, including issues that are pending, issues that will emerge within the next six months, and issues likely to surface during the coming one to two years. The

Heritage Foundation, for example, is able to identify a legislator's or staffer's need and respond with a research brief within 24 hours when necessary.

- A Sacramento presence will help the policy center develop briefing formats that are directly responsive to legislative needs. One interviewee commented that the enormous quantity of academic and policy research received by legislative staff is so lengthy, abstract and vaguely targeted that "it might as well be written in Japanese for all the impact it has."

- A Sacramento presence will increase a policy center's access to the media, and the media's access to researchers and spokespersons on current issues. Print reporters, as opposed to electronic media reporters, are the most likely consumers of research-based information. They are predominantly located in Sacramento.

The only significant concern raised is whether a Sacramento organization has the capacity to attract quality personnel. A number of interviewees, especially from the research and foundation communities, noted that some organizations had considered locating in Sacramento but refrained from doing so due to concerns that attracting and holding research-oriented personnel might be difficult. These interviewees also questioned whether research-oriented policy analysts might see great enough variety of career options in a mid-sized capital city with a modest university attachment.

Others replied that these circumstances exist in most states—the great majority of which have no difficulty drawing Washington, D.C.-level talent to their capitals. They felt that concerns about attracting talent were largely unfounded, especially if those to be recruited were expected to bring some political and legislative experience as well as research skills to the task.

NEUTRAL VERSUS VALUE-DRIVEN

A minority of interviewees, including a number of ex-legislators, expressed reservations about the capacity of an organization to remain truly "neutral." Several noted that most policymakers prefer to obtain information and analysis from trusted, non-neutral sources.

> Interviewees expressed a strong preference of a neutral broker over a value-driven broker.

Others acknowledged that achieving credibility as a "neutral" broker would be difficult in Sacramento today. But overall, interviewees expressed a strong preference for the concept of a neutral, rather than a value-driven, broker. In the words of one legislative staffer, a "neutral approach would be harder but worth the challenge."

The term "neutrality" was often employed interchangeably with "objectivity," "non-partisanship" or "bi-partisanship." When pressed, however, most recognized that neutrality did not necessarily mean taking no position, or always producing a completely unbiased or balanced analysis. To them, it meant beginning with no bias and producing over time an objective body of work that resisted political classification or bias. A "neutral broker" might, then, be defined by some or all of the following characteristics:

- Briefing memos might disseminate, translate, and synthesize research-based information that reflected a number of points of view. These views would be identified. The fact that varying viewpoints would be included would communicate a willingness to look evenhandedly at many issue positions.

- Forums that would bring together proponents of differing points of view.

- Information would be disseminated without bias. Efforts to determine the needs of policymakers would gather information from policymakers with different points of view.

- The organization would refrain from advocating a given point of view or option; this, however, should not preclude it from identifying, for example, which of several solutions was more in line with available analysis.

Interviewees viewed all of these activities as acceptable in a "neutral" organization.

A number of interviewees warned that "neutrality" could be unexciting at best, boring or ignored at worst. Several representatives of Washington, D.C. based think tanks were especially strong in emphasizing this concern. In terms of arousing attention to ideas, stimulating discussion, generating policymaker interest and even raising funds, they felt that value-based organizations had enormous advantages. These and related concerns, if not creatively addressed, could limit the effectiveness of a "neutral" broker.

Still, the expressed need in Sacramento was clearly for "neutrality." Most Sacramento policymakers have had only limited experience with Washington, D.C. think tanks that strive to be research-based and objective but still articulate a point of view. As a result, most Sacramento policymakers perceive one of two sources: neutral sources such as the LAO, or advocacy sources such as lobbyists. This may explain their tendency to feel that information must fall into one of two categories, of which advocacy they feel is not in shortage.

In any case, the challenge here is to make a neutral approach compelling. The best approach may lie in the brokering of objective research-based data, analysis and ideas that can support multiple value systems.

How neutrality of a new broker might be protected

Maintaining neutrality will never be easy for a broker, especially in a world in which many believe neutrality does not exist. The first line of attack on any information offered by the broker—from those who may not approve of a conclusion however neutrally derived—will be to attack its source as "partisan" or biased. A neutral broker will therefore need to devote considerable energy to maintaining both the reality and image of neutrality.

Following the characteristics of a "neutral" broker outlined above will help in this regard. But other efforts would also be required, some of which might be borrowed from processes employed by such respected neutral analysts as the LAO. These might include:

- Rigorous internal checks on all disseminated materials.

- Periodic polling of policymakers, media representatives or others to check for any perceptions of bias.

- Maintenance of policymaker contact lists to make certain that the broker is not tending to meet with one partisan side rather than the other.

- Concerted efforts to employ non-partisan staff or a bipartisan staff.

- Establishment of a prominent, non-partisan or bi-partisan board of directors and/or advisory committees.

- Hiring a leader respected for non-partisanship or at least for a capacity for even-handedness. If a leader were to have some partisan cast, a co-director or prominent vice president from the other party might be appropriate.

ONE OR MULTIPLE ISSUES

Respondents also clearly preferred an organization that would broker information on multiple issues instead of just one. Their preferences reflected three considerations:

1. Many simply believed that more information would be preferable.

2. Some believed that a "neutral broker" would maintain credibility more easily by focusing on multiple issues. A focus on one issue—e.g., health care—might suggest a reform-oriented, activist image. A focus on infrastructure or the business climate, by contrast, might yield a different image. By covering multiple issues, an organization could maintain an overall image neutrality. Balance, in other words, would be maintained in the aggregate over all the organization's projects and not necessarily in any one project.

3. Some expressed the view that a one-issue broker might run the risk of looking more like an advocacy organization. Dealing in multiple issues might reinforce an image that process (brokering) was as important as substance (which can tend to be confused with advocacy).

Focusing on multiple issues can also help with funding. Brokering of information may require less expertise and thus less funding than full-blown policy analysis or original research. , Multiple issues for a broker organization might also create economies of scale, meaning that adding issues may add only marginal costs. Multiple issues may be attractive to a wider range of funding organizations.

SPECIFIC POLICY AREAS

When asked which policy areas might benefit the most from the activities or analysis described, interviewees named a wide variety of issue areas. They mentioned health care and education most prominently, especially financing of health care and education. As these two issues dominate the state budget and legislative process, this finding is not surprising.

A number of respondents emphasized the need for more complex and longer-term fiscal and economic analysis, including issues of state and local government relationships. One noted specifically the potential value in the kind of long-term budget projections developed by the Congressional Budget Office in Washington, D.C. Another noted that California frequently fails to receive all it deserves from the federal government because databases in agencies are not inadequate to produce up-to-date accurate numbers. That the LAO and to some extent the Department of Finance engage in this kind of activity did not, in these interviewee's minds, detract from the need for additional analyses. Competition, they asserted, will improve government's capacity to engage in these activities. Counties, some also suggested, need enormous assistance in forecasting and fiscal analysis.

Interviewees frequently mentioned infrastructure concerns, especially water, and many mentioned insurance problems.

Political reform issues received mixed responses. On the one hand, as discussed in Chapter II, many viewed term limits and to a lesser extent reapportionment and the two-thirds vote rule as critical issues demanding reform. On the other hand, a number noted that these issues were highly charged and partisan, and that tackling them might be risky in terms of organizational success or credibility. Moreover, productive discussions of these issues, it should be noted, are likely to depend less on the development and dissemination of research-based analysis or data than would be the case in, for example, health care or education.

Legislators' opinions stood out a bit on this question. The issue that emerged most consistently for them was education financing. They expressed interest in better comparisons between California and other states, better and more reliable analyses of ongoing programs, and assurances that increased education spending was providing appropriate levels of progress.

AN ACTIVIST OR RESPONSIVE BROKER

Interviewees, especially after some discussion, clearly preferred an activist to a more passive or responding broker. One of the clearest points of consensus that emerged from the interviewing process was that policymakers are deluged with reports and research and little capacity to identify highly relevant or valuable information. This is true both in terms of sorting a relevant report from other reports and in terms of determining what information in a particular report might be of special value. Interviewees felt an activist broker that would maintain contact with and seek out those who might have special research needs was a high priority.

> The 'broker': a lobbyist for balanced research and their findings.

Interviewees were familiar with lobbyists as aggressive distributors of information, but academic or research-based sources did not fit this image. Academics more typically distribute reports by mail or email with a cover letter. Occasionally, such distributions will be accompanied by a "briefing session." Rarely will someone walk a report, or a summary or synthesis of it, into the office of an interested party, prepared to point out how that report is particularly relevant to the recipients needs. In this respect, the broker concept outlined here has more in common with a DC think tank, which thrives on knowing the policymaking process and access points in it, and less like a research institute located outside the capital, which largely relies on others to market their analyses.

It is this image of a "broker"—a kind of lobbyist for balanced research and its findings—that proved compelling to many. Interviewees did not feel that an entrepreneurial, selective, assertive broker undermined the concept of such a broker's neutrality.

FORMATS AND MEANS OF DISTRIBUTION

Responses to this series of questions reflected a strong consensus and, more specifically, a highly pragmatic, "need-to-know-now" view, rather than an academic or theoretical orientation. Sacramento and Washington, D.C. policymakers and think tank representatives reported similar advice and lessons.

- Policymakers want materials that are short, concise and to the point.
- They want them delivered and available at the right time—when needed.
- They are deluged with materials and reports they cannot absorb and that tend to sit on shelves unutilized.

Although interviewees frequently cited a need for summaries of research findings on specific issues, they also mentioned, a bit less frequently, the need for summaries of entire issue areas. One State Senator even described a specific format in which she would like to receive materials, suggesting that a Sacramento policy center should format each of its communications in the same manner.

> When research is needed and relevant, it is likely to be in preparation, or on the proverbial 'shelf.'

Interviewees repeated these points so consistently that one received the impression that it would be wiser to deliver a 1-2 page synopsis, executive summary or précis to a policymaker without also delivering the underlying report or study itself. Policymakers (some committee consultants are an exception here) repeat over and over again that they cannot read a full report, seeming almost to ignore the reality that virtually every report they receive does, in fact, have an executive summary. Interviewees therefore left the impression that a stand-alone two-page summary may be more likely to cut through the clutter than a 100-page report with a two page summary attached. Ironically, the presence of the underlying lengthy report may undermine the utility of the summary.

Timeliness is also a critical factor and one the major challenges to bridging the research and policy worlds. Overworked staff (and most are overworked) are so deluged with information that if something is not on top their desk at the time of need, it is very likely to be overlooked. This is especially true if staff are inexperienced and non-expert, as many report is the case, especially in the state Assembly. Data points may be easy to find, but analyses or research-based conclusions are likely to be unrecalled, omitted or underutilized.

The conflict between research and information needs of policymakers is dramatic. High quality research, especially that which entails more than the collection of data, takes time. It is almost impossible to aim publication or dissemination of such research to a policymaker or legislator on a pre-set schedule. When research is actually needed and relevant, it is likely to be in preparation or on the proverbial shelf.

Thus, making sure that research is delivered when relevant may depend largely on (1) condensing that research down into convenient syntheses or summaries and (2) delivering that research at a time when it is needed and relevant.

Journalists, civic organizations, policymakers and representatives of Washington, D.C. think tanks also stressed the importance of the Internet in disseminating policy information. All research syntheses and policy briefings should be organized and easily accessible on a Sacramento policy center's website. Materials should be indexed, summarized and available for downloading. Older reports should also be archived and available for reading or downloading. Email should be used to distribute short research summaries and notify legislators and staff of new briefings, provided that recipients agree ("opt-in") to receive such materials by email.

Media Relations

Interviewees, including representatives of the media, who addressed this issue, agreed that the media should be considered a primary consumer of broker-delivered information. Not only do the media have their own obvious need for such materials and services, they also serve as brokers in their own right. Enhanced and timely use of research-based materials in the media will inform policymakers and encourage them to consider and employ that type of information.

Interviews were conducted with only a few representatives of the media, all print reporters (LA Times), columnists (Sacramento Bee) or editors (California Journal). Each expressed a somewhat different perspective and need. But all concurred that a credible, research-based organization would have considerable access to and be of significant value to various media outlets. Indeed, the widespread use by Washington, D.C. journalists of think-tank spokespersons—some representing presumably "neutral" sources, some not—suggests this would be the case. Further anecdotal evidence of think tank or broker access to the media can be seen in the widespread media use of information and comment from the California Budget Project.

Some conflict may exist between the likely modus operandi of a "neutral broker" and the value of an aggressive media outreach program. Many media outlets may be more prone to seek opinion rather than neutral analysis of policy-related questions. On the other hand, most journalists should find significant value in a neutral broker which could provide, among other things:

- Periodic updates relating to research findings. These could be targeted to specific journalists with specific "beats" or interests. Most of the major newspapers in the state have reporters specifically assigned to major issue areas, including education, health care and state economic developments. These individuals might be the core media constituency of a research broker.

- Background information and assistance in understanding core economic and other research-related matters underlying policy options. Such information could be provided in background papers or in person.

- Assistance in finding or analyzing information, including assistance in connecting journalists with researchers. Some researchers appreciate opportunities to speak with the media, while some shy away from media representatives. A broker would know which linkages would be particularly productive.

- Neutral analysis of ongoing policy discussions and comments on the extent to which research may or may not support various policy options. Such analyses might be particularly appreciated by editors and commentators. Editorial board visits would be a staple product of an activist broker.

STAND-ALONE OR AFFILIATED CENTER

A new Sacramento policy center could be created on a stand-alone basis, or affiliated with an existing research organization (think tank, university, public interest organization), or lodged within a charitable foundation. No compelling consensus emerged on these options, in part perhaps because the great majority of those interviewed had no unique experience or expertise relevant to this issue.

Interviewees were asked whether an organization performing research brokering functions—in this case, including research summaries, longer-term research, educating or convening functions—might be advantaged or disadvantaged by a visible connection to a major, credible research institution, such as a major California university, a California based think tank like PPIC or RAND, or an East Coast-based think tank like Brookings or the Urban Institute.

Interviewees generally thought there would be advantages to this approach, but they also noted disadvantages.

Possible advantages of such a connection included:

- Enhanced credibility, viewed as especially critical if the organization intended to stress objectivity or neutrality.

- Easier access to some researchers, which might reduce costs of producing research, hosting forums, etc.

- Enhanced capacity to raise, or assistance in raising, funds, depending on the capacity of the affiliated organization.

- Reduced operating costs, if the institution provided low-cost or free space and/or technology, and economies of scale, e.g., accounting, legal, office management.

- Enhanced accessibility to internships and student researchers.

Possible disadvantages of such a connection included:

- Reduction in flexibility resulting from a need to adhere to rigorous academic standards while operating in a policymaking environment.

- Conflict with institutional academic needs (tenure, peer review, need for rigorous theoretical research, pressure to make significant contributions to substantive disciplines) that might conflict with the shorter term, practical requirements of policymakers.

- Potential resistance in translating academic research into formats preferred by policymakers –e.g., that such formats might lack subtlety or create misleading summaries.

- Turf considerations that might lead to a decreased capacity to broker information from all sources. The hosting institution might have some difficulty getting researchers from other institutions to participate fully.

- "Image creep," in which the identities of existing institutions might color perceptions of a new organization. Many Eastern think tanks have an image, whether correct or not, of being "liberal" or "conservative." An association of this nature might produce liabilities for a "neutral" California broker.

- Conflict with fund-raising approaches. Academic institutions have their own unique fund-raising systems. A new policy center might find it difficult to engage in independent fund-raising if it were a part of a larger university. Policy center grant applications might "conflict" with academic fund-raising appeals. Policy center funding would typically have to be coordinated by the university's development office, which would seek to prevent a foundation from receiving multiple applications from the same source.

Discussions with representatives of research institutions suggest no clear consensus on whether a policy center affiliation with one research institution or university might limit the willingness of researchers from that institution to participate. Many suggested that they would themselves have little difficulty participating in policy center activities (e.g., participating on an advisory committee) if the broker was affiliated with an organization other than their own.

Others believed that some "turf issues" might emerge. The two options that most believed would be acceptable were (1) a policy center affiliation with one organization that has expressed a clear willingness to share policy center decision-making, or (2) a policy center affiliation with a larger of number of institutions, all of which agreed to participate collectively in oversight activities.

Two California universities, responding to discussions with CGS representatives, have expressed interest in pursuing discussions along the lines outlined in project materials.

- The USC School of Policy Planning and Development is interested in a possible connection between a new policy center and its Sacramento facility and programs.

- A representative of the University of California has expressed interest in creating a consortium of public and private research institutions to pursue some of the functions outlined in this report and to be housed in the new UC building near the state Capitol.

In addition to a freestanding entity or a possible affiliation with a research institute, a new organization might be housed within a charitable foundation. The California Health Care Foundation, for example, has housed and operated the MediCal Policy Institute.
A consortium of Colorado health care foundations is launching a new state health care clearinghouse. It recently convened a day-long discussion of these three models. It considered a freestanding model represented by the Kansas Health Institute, a university-based model represented by the health care institute located at the University of Washington, and a foundation based model represented by the MediCal Policy Institute. The Colorado foundations reportedly chose the freestanding model as its preferred option.

Overall, while organizational structure is an important question, it does not appear to be central to the issue of whether a new organization is needed, or how it should function. This issue may be more appropriately addressed when questions of funding are considered.

Leadership and Staffing of a Research Brokering Organization

This question was not routinely discussed in interviews. When it did come up, however, a high level of consensus emerged. Interviewees recommended the following:

- To the greatest extent possible, leadership and staff members should be knowledgeable, comfortable and interested in both the policymaking and research worlds. A research broker must understand the traditions, cultures and incentives of each that they are trying to bridge.
- Staffers of a new organization should not be strongly associated with a party or point of view, or represent, as a group, a variety of points of view and political histories.
- Leadership would benefit from having academic credentials and non-partisan policymaking experience or, at minimum, not be clearly affiliated with a point of view. Some with experience in think tank-type organizations suggested that selection of the right leader was an absolute imperative. Some suggested that dual leadership by a Republican and a Democrat would be of value.
- As a whole, staff and leadership in particular should be credible in the policymaking world and have some credibility or standing in the academic community.
- Even if the organization primarily served as a neutral broker of others' research, some research capacity and/or policy expertise will be needed in most staff roles.

Assuring Adequate Funding

Interviewees consistently expressed the view that a new organization should possess sufficient funding to establish its credibility and presence. Many warned that accomplishing this would take several years. Some said that adequate funding would be necessary to assure an organization's staff, as well as policymakers and legislators, that the new organization was "there to stay." (These issues are discussed further below.)

Summary of Findings

Interviews and other research produced a reasonably high consensus on key questions to be addressed in creating an organization that would promote research-based information in a balanced or objective fashion. This consensus suggests that:

- A new policy center or research broker must be located primarily in Sacramento.
- It should, especially in its formative period, assume a neutral as opposed to a value-driven substantive posture.
- It should, if funding is available, have a multi-issue portfolio.

- It should consider health care, education (especially education financing), economic forecasting, insurance and infrastructure concerns (energy, housing, land use, public facilities, technology, transportation, water) as primary issue areas on which to focus.

- It should be entrepreneurial and aggressive in identifying those who need various kinds of information and supplying that information to them in usable formats.

- Its main products, at least during its formative stages, should be concise summaries of specific research and issue areas, delivered in effective and usable formats at the appropriate time and to those most in need of the information.

- It might consider affiliating with a major research institution, but this decision may depend on whether sufficient independent funding is available.

- It should employ leadership and staff familiar with both the policy and research worlds. Staff should have some non-partisan or bi-partisan standing.

- It should employ an assertive media outreach strategy and consider the media a prime consumer of its products.

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CHAPTER VI

Recommendations: A Sacramento-Based Information Broker

This report recommends the creation of a Sacramento policy center that would act as a neutral information broker, transmitting findings of academic and other research to Sacramento policymakers and, at the same time, alerting California's research communities to Sacramento policymakers' ongoing research needs.

Findings: The Nature of the Problem

The academic literature describing the relationships between the research and policymaking communities, as well as interviews and other research conducted by CGS for this study, clearly indicate that there are fundamental differences between the needs, incentives, points of emphasis and time tables of the research and policymaking communities. Academic research is often theoretical, abstract and focused on constructs or subjects that are either too broad or too narrow to attract and hold the attention of policymakers. Policymakers typically need research that is concrete, specific and focused on the precise issues pending at specific points in time.

As a result, translating research from the academic to the policy realms is often problematic. Moreover, the translation problem is compounded because it is not generally recognized as an institutional problem.

Over time, institutions and processes have emerged—including legislative staff, think tanks, governmental research organizations, media and budget oversight agencies—that translates or brokers information and thus seeks to overcome the institutional barriers to effective utilization of research in the policymaking process. These institutions have always been more commonplace at the federal level in Washington, D.C. than in the states.

California, while always facing inherent problems in information translation or brokerage, has been, until recently, a leader in providing these services. Experienced legislators, high quality staff, a core of policy consultants and a nationally recognized Legislative Analyst's Office provided quality and quantity in information brokerage services. Research by the state's leading universities—University of California, University of Southern California, Stanford University and others—continues to rank with the best in the world.

Recent developments in California, however, including imposition of term limits, a loss of experienced staff, consultants and legislators, and an apparent increase in partisanship, have significantly reduced California's information brokerage capacities. At the same time, California policymakers are facing increasingly complex challenges. Addressing these would almost certainly benefit from improved utilization of California's research capacity, and many in the California research and policy communities recognize this reality.

This problem is definitely a two-way street. Policymakers not only fail to make maximum use of research-based information and analysis. Researchers provide information that, in the view of policymakers, is "too academic," abstract, lengthy, and unfocused on matters of legislative concern. Policymakers express a need for timelier and more concise research-based information delivered to them when it is most relevant and in a format that is succinct and useful.

Findings: Potential Solutions

Interviewees considered a wide range of functions that a policy organization might pursue. A sizable majority of the policymakers and researchers interviewed concluded that the *greatest benefit* would flow from a non-partisan, organization that would act as a "broker" between the research and policymaking information communities. This information broker would synthesize existing research and deliver it to policymakers in succinct and useful formats. The broker would also communicate the research needs of policymakers to the academic community.

Some interviewees also expressed *strong interest* in an entity that would (a) provide non-partisan, "neutral" analyses of policy issues, and (b) perform fact-checking and "clearinghouse" functions.

Interviewees also expressed *moderate interest* in more mission-driven, think tank analyses (especially in the policy development stage), and in a variety of educational and convening services.

Convening and educating were viewed as valuable *secondary services*, although not valuable enough in their own right to establish a new entity.

A significant *minority* of interviewees expressed strong interest in establishment of a mechanism or organization that would focus on consensus building or solution seeking for a few major issues at a time.

There was *little support* for the generation of more academic-oriented, long-term major research. Most felt California's existing academic and research institutions were performing adequately here.

Potential Solutions: Issues, Organization and Other Matters

Interviewees expressed near universal agreement that an information broker organization must be based in Sacramento. They also expressed a strong preference for a "neutral" rather than a "mission-driven" information broker. They agreed that an information organization should have a multi- rather than a single-issue portfolio, concluding that such an organization would have a greater capacity to maintain overall neutrality on the issues.

Interviewees listed a number of subject matter areas in which research summaries might offer policymakers the greatest benefit. The most frequently cited were health care (especially health care financing), education (especially education financing), economic forecasting, state and local government relations, insurance and state infrastructure issues (transportation, water, electricity, etc.).

Interviewees also recommended that an information-brokering organization operate with an entrepreneurial style, identifying policymakers who might need various kinds of information and supplying that information to them in usable formats and at appropriate times.

Policymakers also expressed a strong need for concise summaries of specific research and research fields. (One said the typical academic report is so lengthy and abstract it "might as well be written in Japanese" for all the value it delivered.) Many interviewees stressed the need for value-neutral policy analysis. Some would also value mission-driven policy analysis (e.g., "liberal," "conservative," "libertarian," etc.).

Respondents did not communicate strong views on whether a "neutral" broker of research might benefit from association with a major university, research center or think tank. Some felt such an association would be helpful in establishing credibility. This, however, was a generally viewed as a secondary consideration.

Finally, most respondents noted, often before being asked, that the media should be viewed as a primary consumer of research brokered products.

Final Recommendations

Based on these findings, the views of interviewees, and our own CGS analysis, we recommend the following:

1. A new Sacramento-based organization should be established that has, as its primary mission, the brokering of policy research between the research and policy communities.

2. The brokering function, pursued with an emphasis on policy and political "neutrality," should include:

    Assistance in identifying research needs.

    Efforts to encourage the generation of that research.

Concise summarizing and consolidating of specific research projects and research fields.

Entrepreneurial efforts to identify those who might need and or value different research or brokering products.

Dissemination of information in appropriate and highly usable formats and at opportune times to, among others, policymakers and staff in the legislative and administrative branches, the media, and interest groups.

Linkage of researchers with policymakers who wish to avail themselves of research expertise.

A capacity to respond to policymaker requests for information as appropriate and to the extent possible.

3. As a secondary mission, the new organization should engage in educational and convening functions to the extent they serve the overall mission.

4. Over time the new organization should consider (a) creating neutral policy analyses and (b) helping to build consensus around difficult policy issues. These should not be undertaken until the credibility of the new organization is firmly established.

5. To the extent that it is financially possible, the new organization should have a multi-issue portfolio.

6. The new organization might at first focus on the following issues: health care, education (especially education funding), long term economic forecasting, state and local government relationships, infrastructure (transportation, water, energy) and insurance.

7. The organization's staff should be comfortable in both the research and policy worlds. Staff overall should have a non-partisan or bi-partisan composition.

8. The proposed organization should encourage maximum participation of the research and policy communities.

Three Research Brokering Scenarios

How might a policy center, acting as an information broker between the academic and policy communities, function in practice? How would it overcome the political and other institutional hurdles that might block full utilization of research-based, policy-relevant analyses in the policymaking process?

A Sacramento policy center might provide three distinct brokerage services:

1. Assist policymakers and researchers in identifying policy areas in which research is needed.
2. Inform policymakers about research that is relevant to current policy analysis and formulation.

3. Assist policymakers in evaluating and overseeing the effectiveness of existing legislation, policies and programs.

To explore how a Sacramento policy center might be of value during these processes, we will look at three different hypothetical scenarios—one for each of the three processes defined.

Identifying Emerging Issues and Research Agendas: Education and the Transition to College

One core function of a research broker would be to assess the policy environment on a regular basis to anticipate what issues are likely to emerge in the near future. The broker could then advise the research community on appropriate places to invest time, money and attention, as well as provide policymakers with results of that research.

A number of interviewees—including one expert on think tanks—emphasized that helping to identify emerging policy issues is a key technique in which a think tank or broker can exert influence. Once a policy issue emerges, and especially once positions on that issue have hardened, political considerations often trump research concerns.

To identify emerging policy issues, a Sacramento policy center might periodically interview individuals or organizations active and knowledgeable about a specific policy area. These would include key public policymakers in the legislative and executive branches, key organizations or institutions involved in the policy arena, researchers whose focus is on emerging policy issues, key economists, demographers and others, and key journalists or commentators knowledgeable in important issue areas.

Interviewees would be an ongoing, rather than a one-time process. The broker would maintain regular contacts with such individuals and organizations, periodically survey them for future priorities and research, and generate issues for a priority research agenda. The broker would write up, disseminate widely, and seek feedback on these tentative conclusions. On occasion, the broker might convene a panel of advisors, including both researchers and policymakers, to meet for a day or two to define a near and longer term research agenda.

The transition of students from high school to college might serve as an example of how such a process might work (see further discussion in Chapter VIII below). The following describes a scenario in which an emerging issue might be identified.

A massive problem appears to be brewing, yet the legislature has given it scant attention. California is ranked 46th among the states in the number of bachelor degrees awarded per 100 undergraduates. Demographers expect an increase of 700,000 *additional* students applying for admissions by 2010, a number equal to the entire student population of Illinois. Over one-half of college students are now minorities, and by 2010 more Latinos will graduate from high school than whites. How will California accommodate this "tidal wave" of students?

Key Policy Figures

To identify such an issue as emerging and important, Sacramento policy center staff would periodically talk to key education leaders and ask them to

> Identify and talk with the major public policy players and key institutions knowledgeable about and typically influential in a particular policy area.

identify key emerging issues. In education, the major policy players include the legislature, the governor and the governing boards of the state's education institutions. A policy center would therefore start with the policy committees in both houses (members and staff), the superintendent of public instruction, the secretary of education, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, the respective executives in three segments of higher education--the Community Colleges, California State University, the University of California--representatives of private colleges and universities, the Joint Committee on the Master Plan for Education, school district superintendents and the State Board of Education. Obtaining perspectives from other states would also be critical perhaps through national higher education and K-12 groups like the Chief State School Officers and the American Association of Community Colleges.

Policy Area Researchers. Keeping up to date with current research in the field, both nationally and locally, would be essential. Individuals knowledgeable about these issues, (e.g. Mike Kirst, Stanford's Director of Policy Analysis for California Education; Patrick Callan, Executive Director of the National Policy Center on Higher Education; Dennis Jones, President National Commission on Higher Education Management Systems; Richard Atkinson, retired President of the University of California) should become a part of the policy center's information gathering plan.

Economists and Demographers. The policy center should also consult with economists and demographers and others experienced in California's enrollment trends. These might include, for example, Bill Story, retired from CPEC; staff of the population projection unit in the Department of Finance; staff of UC, CSU and the Community Colleges responsible for long-range enrollment projections; and Dave Breneman of the University of Virginia an especially thoughtful academic on these issues.

Key Journalists. To round out such an environmental scan, the policy center should consult with individuals from the press knowledgeable about these issues. They will later become important in any dissemination strategy the Center may adopt. The policy center should meet, for example, with Peter Schrag, columnist for the Sacramento Bee, Duke Helfand, education writer for the Los

Angeles Times and education writers from the San Francisco Chronicle, Orange County Register, San Jose Mercury News and San Diego Union.

Potential Funders. Finally, an important group to consult about agenda setting must be potential funders in the field, which often have accumulated research on emerging trends. The most logical starting point would be foundations with a history of funding education policy work. These would include the Gates Foundation, the Haas Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Irvine Foundation, the Packard Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trust, and the Stuart Foundation.

These interviews would identify a number of policies for possible inclusion in a research agenda. The policy center's next task would be to write up, disseminate widely, and seek feedback on the tentative conclusions formed on the basis of these interviews. Convening a panel of advisors to meet for a day or two with the desired end product being an agenda for the policy center's work over the next two or three years would be the last step in the agenda-setting process.

The agenda-setting function is important far beyond settling on an agenda for the policy center or researchers. It will help the policy center establish a shared activity among a network of researchers and policymakers. How well a policy center establishes and utilizes these networks is essential to its ultimate success.

Informing Legislators on Active Legislative Issues: Health Plan and Physician Relationships

In recent years, considerable concern has been expressed about the role of medical groups in the state's managed care system. Groups of physicians are usually paid via "capitation," receiving X dollars per month for each health plan member enrolled in their medical group. If these medical groups are poorly managed or paid less than their actual costs, they may under serve patients, creating problems in access or quality. In a number of high visibility cases, these medical groups have gone insolvent, creating significant inconvenience and serious access to care problems for consumers.

Regulation of such medical groups has been indirect to date. Various regulations—rights to a second opinion, rights of access to certain benefits, grievance rights—are imposed on managed care plans, which in turn are then responsible to ensure that the medical groups with whom they contract abide by those requirements. But there is very little direct regulation of medical groups as an entity.

From a policymaker point of view, the role of medical groups is poorly understood. Some information needed to make judgments on the physician issue is proprietary—it is not generally known exactly what health plans pay different groups or how much risk any one group may be bearing. Medical groups come in all sizes, as do their contracts with health plans. They may, for example, have very different degrees of reliance on the capitated revenue streams that arouse the most concern.

Given these realities, what role might a neutral entrepreneurial broker play in assisting policymakers with the question of whether to regulate or not, and if so, how much?

Data/research-related tasks. A broker organization with some knowledge of this issue area could assist policymakers in the collection, translation, synthesis and distribution of relevant information, including

- Extent to which managed care is delivered by medical groups, including broader education on medical groups and what they do.

- Classification of the various types of medical groups and types of arrangements with health plans according to potential need for regulatory oversight.

- Review of recent trends in physician group insolvency—e.g., whether insolvency is still a serious problem or the marketplace has corrected for it.

- Review of market surveys on levels of risk actually being taken by medical groups and incentives given to physicians to lower costs, increase access, improve quality, increase consumer satisfaction, etc.

- Review of literature on impacts of capitation on physician behavior—are the economic risks being assumed by physicians enough to significantly impact their treatment of patients?

- Experiences in medical group regulation in other states.

- Development and analysis of performance measurement.

Audiences. As outlined in the analysis already provided, the broker might find several audiences for such materials. They might include:

- Legislative staff, especially committee consultants.

- Key legislators.

- State regulators and policy analysts in the executive branch—especially those who might be expected to take a position on proposed policy options.

- Interest groups involved in the issue area, including physician groups, health plans, consumer groups and others, health writers at the state's major papers (there are about 8 of these) and a smaller number of commentator analysts interested in health care issues.

- Editorial boards, if the issue has become visible enough to draw editorial comment.

Other Services. In addition, a neutral broker might provide a number of other services, perhaps in alliance with others, e.g., the public seminar series run by the California Research Bureau:

- Host or co-host an event at which a researcher or a group of researchers offered different conclusions on the need for medical group regulation and alternatives to it.

- Assist appropriate legislative committees or legislative staff in identifying and contacting key researchers and facilitate direct exchanges of information between policymakers and researchers.

- Summarize known research for a legislative committee.

- Produce an options paper detailing pros and cons of medical group regulation, the extent of research-based consensus issues that might need to be addressed in a regulatory framework, and alternatives to regulation of medical groups (e.g., more regulation of health plans or physicians, greater information disclosure, reliance on the marketplace, etc.).

Could Others Provide Such Information and Services?

Theoretically legislative or executive branch staff might be able to provide the information or services noted above. But there are many reasons why this is unlikely. It is unlikely that legislative staff would have considerable expertise in this issue area. While important, the subject area is not highly visible. The focus on managed care proponents and opponents has been largely on health plans and, to a lesser extent, physicians as represented by the California Medical Association, not organized medical groups.

Additionally, depending on a variety of circumstances, the credibility of some information may also be lacking. A committee consultant trying to summarize issues would most likely rely on information supplied by impacted lobbying organizations. Most of the research-based information reaching policymakers would be filtered through advocates.

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The Legislative Analyst's Office is also unlikely to be involved in this issue. While the LAO might weigh in on the costs of a regulatory apparatus, it would not be likely to look deeply into the policy aspects of the proposal.
For all of these reasons, information summarized and appropriately distributed by a neutral broker might be of considerable value to policymakers in their consideration of this issue.

Implementation and Oversight: Tax Credits and Deductions

The legislative process is like the tip of the policy iceberg. Legislators, lobbyists and the media focus on new ideas and immediate concerns. But once policy is implemented, it is absorbed into a vast array of existing statutes, regulations and programs already on the books. How this complex network of statutes is functioning, whether it is achieving its objectives, is infinitely more important than what the legislature might do with modest statutory adjustments to those programs or adoption of a few new ones.

Until an ongoing program becomes a source of visible public controversy, program implementation and oversight are likely to attract far less policymaker attention (especially from the legislature) than they deserve. A policy center, as described in this report, might play a valuable role in helping assess the successes or failures of ongoing programs. It would not, of course, be capable of true program evaluation or auditing. These functions require considerable expertise, manpower and a capacity to perform original research (in this case evaluation) that would be beyond the purview of the policy center envisioned here.

To explore the potential role of a policy center in implementation and oversight we can look at the issue of tax credits and deductions. Each year, California spends billions of dollars through tax credits (or, to use the proper budget term, "tax expenditures"). Once enacted, those benefiting from tax deductions and credits fiercely defend them. Although the creation of a tax deduction or credit requires only a majority vote in the legislature, the elimination of such a program is considered a tax increase, thus requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature.

For these and other reasons, the legislature and governor rarely review tax deductions and credits once they are approved. Despite the urging of consumer groups, the legislature has failed to review these tax expenditures periodically or automatically "sunset" them. As a result, there remains a clear need for some periodic review of these programs.

A neutral policy center or broker working in this field might undertake the following activities.

- Periodically review the literature and synthesize the costs and benefits of various tax expenditure programs.

- Periodically identify specific tax expenditures for more detailed review, after discussions with policymakers, researchers and others. Selection would also depend on the availability of research to be reviewed.

- Determine whether a need exists—based on such factors as rising costs, expressions of public concern, alternative means of meeting the goals of a particular tax expenditure—for new research and cost benefit analyses of specific tax expenditures.

- Encourage the production of needed research and disseminate that research when it is concluded.

- Distribute a summary of findings to the media and editorial boards.

- Host a forum outlining the results of the annual review.

In undertaking such activities, a broker would not take positions on the various tax expenditures reviewed. Rather, a policy center would review the research of others and then synthesize and distribute the conclusions of that research. Selection of tax expenditures to be reviewed would be undertaken with care, according to defined criteria and perhaps with the assistance of a credible advisory board.

Alternatives to the Principal Proposal of Creating a New Information Broker

Establishing a new organization, in our view, is the best, but not the only, means of addressing the concerns raised in this report. A number of entirely different alternatives might also be considered.

Increased Funding of Legislative Staff for Research-Based Information Collection and Policy Analysis

One way to address some of the concerns expressed in this report would be for legislative leadership to devote more staff and resources to the policy-based research needs identified. Committee staffs could be strengthened with expert personnel. Leadership could hire key policy experts, create a new office of research brokerage, re-create the Assembly Office of Research or expand funding for the Senate Office of Research. Funds could be appropriated to provide legislative or agency fellowships to researchers on sabbaticals, or to hire academics in selected areas for two-year legislative sessions or for administrative roles.

Any of these approaches might help achieve some of the goals outlined in this report. However, these approaches might also have major liabilities.

Credibility. Under current circumstances, it would be difficult for an organization or group of individuals inside the legislature or the administration to achieve the bipartisan or non-partisan credibility needed to perform the tasks outlined in this report. Some protection against a drift toward partisanship would be necessary, if such an effort is possible at all.

Flexibility. An in-house service would probably not be able to attain and maintain the flexibility and independence required of the entrepreneurial broker outlined in this report. A government broker, among other things, would almost certainly have to accept numerous limitations in dealing the media and interest groups. While a non-government broker would still need to be vigilant over securing an image of objectivity, it would likely have greater flexibility in defining appropriate roles in the larger process.

A non-government broker would likely have greater flexibility in defining appropriate roles in the larger process.

Cost. In light of the current state budget crisis, discussions of increased spending for policy analysis are likely to fall on deaf ears. Even in better times, funding is always shaky and subject to budget cuts.

Increased Funding for the LAO

A number of interviewees viewed this as one option. The LAO could be given broader purview—beyond fiscal and budget matters—to look at a wider array of policy questions. Funds for reviewing fiscal bills might also be restored.

This approach, however, also entails some liabilities:

Cost: Because the LAO is funded out of a limited legislative budget, increasing funding for the LAO might require reduced funding for legislative operations.

Neutrality: Preserving the LAO's reputation for neutral, objective analysis is critically important in the current political environment. Encouraging it to operate more entrepreneurially by promoting a variety of information and analyses might be risky. This would be especially true if the audience of the new brokering service is presumed to include the media and interest groups. At this point in time, the LAO is a servant of the legislature only.

Marketing: In addition, as one journalist noted, government research agencies, including the LAO and California Research Bureau, do not market their research very well, in part, perhaps, because such marketing would appear inappropriate and controversial. The broker, as defined here, however, should be free to engage in outreach and marketing activities.

Direct Funding of Existing Research-Based Organizations

As suggested above (Chapter IV, #8, p. 32), rather than create a new organization, foundations could offer enhanced support to existing non-profit organizations—neutral or mission-driven—that bring research-based analysis to the policymaking process. Thus, foundations could increase their support for such organizations as the California Budget Project, Center for Governmental Studies and Public Policy Institute of California, or for academic institutions such as policy research units at the University of California or University of Southern California. Organizations using limited research-based strategies could be encouraged, via the incentive of increased funding, to increase their use of these activities.

As a further variant, foundations could promote research-based analysis by paying for appropriate training of grantee organizations. Grantees could be funded to train or take classes in the use of various databases. Alternatively, research institutes could be given grants to offer free training to qualifying organizations.

If these approaches proved attractive to foundations, they might choose to provide such funding directly or through a new grant making organization that pooled foundation resources and developed expertise in grant making for this general purpose.

All of these approaches offer potentially positive outcomes. None, however, would generate a central focus on research translation or brokerage per se. To the extent that research, in general, needed a central and focused promoter, the development of many smaller users might not serve the purpose.

Establishment of Sacramento Presence for PPIC or Other Think Tanks

A number of interviewees expressed the view that an enhanced presence in Sacramento of the Public Policy Institute of California would be of considerable value. PPIC researchers would have greater opportunities to explain their research in face-to-face contacts with policymakers. Policymakers, in turn, would have greater opportunities to request research or research syntheses and solicit research activities in different areas.

A PPIC "storefront" in Sacramento could, at least in theory, perform many of the services outlined for the broker described here. Providing such services, however, might conflict with PPIC's own stated mission and desire to maintain some distance from the day-to-day policy formation process, and it would certainly entail the assumption of additional roles for PPIC.

Even if PPIC determines that the broker functions described here are inappropriate for itself, it might consider establishing a more visible outlet for itself in Sacramento— if just to disseminate its own existing research information. This would attract support from some Sacramento policymakers.

As an alternative, one or more Washington, D.C.-based think tanks might be encouraged to open Sacramento branch offices. With additional funding, organizations such as the Brookings Institute or Urban Institute might be willing to consider such a step.

Enhanced Role for Major Universities in Sacramento

Several of California's leading universities have direct or indirect presences in Sacramento. One or several of these might be willing or able to perform the brokering activities outlined here. Indeed, as noted earlier, at least two of these entities, the University of California and the University of Southern California, have expressed direct interest in pursuing this or related ideas.

The University of California: The UC currently operates a program, known as the California Policy Research Center, which performs a limited amount of research for state policymakers. The UC clearly intends to expand its Sacramento-related activities. It has purchased a building near the Capitol and will be bringing students (starting with undergraduates) and faculty to Sacramento. A UC representative is currently proposing that the UC form a statewide consortium of research organizations to perform a multitude of functions, including some of those discussed in this report.

University of Southern California: USC's School of Policy, Planning and Development (SPPD) operates a graduate program in its facility near the Capitol. The program draws students largely from Sacramento's professional community, including many from government offices. USC has recently renewed its commitment to its Sacramento program, and the School of Policy is planning to form a new policy institute based in Sacramento.

California State University, Sacramento: The Center for California Studies at Sacramento State operates the Capital Fellows Program and has modest funding for policy research. Its director has expressed interest in enhancing this research and would likely be interested in further discussions along these lines.

> Leading California universities are expanding their commitments to state government research and even policy analysis.

All these avenues should be explored. It is a positive sign that leading California universities are expanding their commitments to state government research and even policy analysis.

As discussed in Chapter I, however, there are a number of reasons why a university might not be the most appropriate host of the information broker function described here. These concern pressures on faculty to achieve academic tenure, funding streams, flexibility, and potential cultural differences between the university and policymaking communities.

Most universities, for example, would not award tenure or support advancement for faculty members who spend their time preparing and distributing short and concise summaries of existing academic research. Faculty members are trained to engage in long term research projects, generating book length publications or articles for academic journals. Few might be willing to tackle the short-term needs of the proposed Sacramento policy center. Most university development offices would insist on pre-clearance of policy center funding projects to ensure that they do not conflict with other faculty proposals. Fund-raising "triage" may delete Sacramento policy proposals if it is felt that they might diminish the appeal of other, longer and more prestigious research projects. Finally, cultural differences between academia and policymakers are often significant (see Chapter I).

If California universities would be willing to create tenure track positions in a Sacramento policy center, encourage faculty members to prepare short-term research syntheses and spend their time interacting with policymakers, and supply fund-raising staff to support the new center in ways that are separate from university fund-raising, then this option would appear more feasible.

Changes in the Legislative Process

As discussed in Chapter II, the legislative process could be made more conducive to the receipt of research-based information and policy analysis. Committee hearings could be more effectively scheduled. Hearing rooms could accommodate Power Point data presentations (thus encouraging the presentation of data). Bills relating to specific policy areas could be heard on the same day.

These proposals might encourage the greater communication of research-based information to the legislature. Even if effectively implemented, however, this approach would only partly address the concerns and issues raised here.

Adjustment in Term Limits

Lengthening legislative terms—whatever the drawbacks of doing so—would almost certainly have positive effects in terms of the development and maintenance of policymaker and staff expertise. This solution, needless to say, is beyond the scope of this report.

Overcoming Political Barriers

Will the policy syntheses of a Sacramento policy center be used? This question cannot be answered easily.

A Sacramento policy center might find substantial barriers to the use of its information (see discussions in Chapter II). Term limits, intense partisanship, a perceived need to elevate political over policy considerations, a lack of experience or expertise in certain staff positions (especially in the Assembly), a tendency of the media to focus on political controversies rather than policy merits—all might combine to make the dissemination and consideration of research-based information extremely problematic.

Reasons for Optimism

Interviewees have advised, however, that policymakers, especially at the staff levels, would find the research summaries of a Sacramento policy center to be extremely valuable. Initially, some policymakers in both legislative and executive branches and a greater number of staffers would use this research. Over time, more and more policymakers would draw and rely upon this research.

Whether or not research brokerage services would be judged valuable and used is not a "black or white" matter. Encouraging the production of more relevant research, and encouraging its use in policymaking, will likely be an incremental process. The goal of a Sacramento policy center would be to increase gradually the utilization of research-based information, to the point where, at minimum, the absence of such information would become a liability.

> The goal of a Sacramento Policy Center is to increase the utilization of research-based information to the point where the absence of this information would be a liability.

It is hard to imagine even from the most cynical perspective how the proposed research brokerage would not add value. The current rapid turnover in legislators and staff, encouraged by term limits, and the current atmosphere of intense partisanship, all suggest a need for the proposed services.
In the ideal world, reliance on research-based information should eventually become a considerable asset, if not a

requirement for successful advocacy of policy and programs. This can only happen over time, as increasing numbers of policymakers come to expect that policy decisions be based on research.

> The information broker should not wait to be called; he should be a neutral, trusted source who provides information in a timely and effective manner.

The entrepreneurial nature of the broker function outlined should also increase utilization of the service. The information broker should not wait to be called. He should make his own contacts, learn who values what and, to the maximum extent possible, provide information in a timely and effective manner. Similarly, a credible posture of neutrality, as outlined earlier in this chapter, should also prove helpful in overcoming barriers to both dissemination of materials and utilization of them. Many interviewees expressed a strong interest in succinct information from neutral, trusted sources. For this reason, efforts to maintain a neutral image will be critical for the new broker.

While many think of policymaking as primarily a legislative task, executive branch agencies play pivotal roles both in the generation of policy discussions, in advocacy and certainly in the implementation and oversight of policy outcomes. As a number of interviewees suggested, the executive branch might, in many cases, be considerably more hospitable to a neutral policy broker than some elements of the legislative branch. Executive branch agencies are likely to have research staffs, even if modest in size, and considerable expertise in their issue areas. With the exception of a handful of political appointees, employees in these agencies are not subject to term limits and will be more likely to focus on long-term core issues than on short-term political impacts. Executive branch staffers are an excellent audience for a research broker.

One key to success, according to a researcher in a UC public policy school, is to identify key individuals in administrative agencies interested in institutionalizing links with the research community. To facilitate the larger linking of policymaker and research communities, he suggested ongoing exchange programs for policymakers and researchers and an annual award for the California researcher who produces the greatest value for the policymaking process.

A New Model for Research Brokering

No existing organization that we have discovered performs precisely and only the functions recommended here. While some organizations certainly engage in some of the activities outlined in this report, there is no existing model that performs the tasks that we are proposing.

In short, there may be no other organization that envisions its primary mission as an entrepreneurial, neutral broker of research-based information that was produced by others.

CHAPTER VII

Structure and Funding

This chapter makes recommendations on the structure, organization, budgets and funding sources for a Sacramento policy center. These issues are unavoidably linked. Greater funding may allow one particular organizational structure and budget, while less funding might dictate another.

Structure

The following recommendations assume that the Sacramento policy center would bridge the gap between the research and policy communities, strive for bipartisanship and/or nonpartisanship in its activities, address multiple policy issue areas based on the availability of funding, seek a president and project directors experienced in both the research and policymaking communities and devote a significant portion of its resources to external communication with policymakers, the media, researchers outside the capitol and civic organizations.

Stand-Alone or Association with Existing Policy or Research Organization

We have previously discussed the options of creating a stand-alone organization or linking the policy center with an existing organization (university or existing policy research organization). Linkage might provide the new Center with the benefits of economies of scale, greater visibility and enhanced credibility. A stand-alone organization might have the advantages of flexibility, freedom to shape its own image and ability to raise funds without fear of conflicting with a parent organization's needs.

We do not have a preference at this point in time. As suggested earlier, the resolution of this question might be best delayed until the purpose, function and activities of the policy center are more established. A key issue, in any case, will be funding and whether independence or affiliation creates clear benefits in this regard.

Public Charity Status

The proposed Sacramento policy center should be incorporated in California. It should apply to the Internal Revenue Service for an advance ruling as a 501(c)(3) public charity. This will require it to demonstrate in advance that it can reasonably expect to receive funding from a wide range of diverse sources,[2] and it will require the Center to continue this diversification of support in future years. (Funding is discussed in more detail below.)

The policy center could be structured as a 501(c)(3) operating foundation, but this structure would be less desirable. Although operating foundation status would allow the Center to receive the bulk of its funding for one or a few sources, it would make it difficult to attract other contributions.[3]

Organization

The policy center should be organized for maximum flexibility and fund-raising appeal.

Board of Directors

The policy center's Board of Directors should consist of 7 to 11 members. (California law requires a minimum of 3 directors to oversee a corporation's activities.) A board with 7 to 11 directors is large enough to attract a diversity of talent, yet small enough to be efficient. The Center's President should be a member of the board.

The Board of Directors should consist of prominent members with experience in fund-raising, politics (e.g., former Governors, Assembly Speakers or Senate Presidents Pro Tem), academic research (e.g., university presidents), publicity and public relations. The Board should meet at least four times a year in Sacramento.

Advisory Board

The policy center should also build an advisory board of political officials and researchers to assist it. Advisory Board members should be selected to give the policy center maximum bipartisanship, credibility, visibility and fund-raising capacity. Advisory Board members should be sitting elected officials, former elected officials, experts in substantive areas addressed by the Center and members of civic organizations. The Advisory Board should meet at least once a year in Sacramento.

Selecting current and former elected officials from both major political parties will provide an important signal that the policy center intends to remain bipartisan. This will also communicate that elected officials believe the Center's mission to be important, and that they intend to rely on its research.

Staff

The ideal leader of the policy center should be a president with significant experience and visibility in both research and policy communities. He or she should oversee all the Center's activities, give the Center a visible public voice, and oversee fund-raising and board relations.

Vice presidents or project directors should oversee each of the policy center's substantive policy units (e.g., health care, education, insurance, infrastructure, etc.). A policy unit should initially consist of a Vice President and two experienced researchers in each substantive field. Additional researchers can be added with additional funding. Each policy unit will be able to draw upon experienced office staff for logistical support (printing, contacts with legislative offices, etc.).

Organize the policy center into policy units so the center can flex based on availability of funding.

Organizing the policy center into substantive policy units will allow it to add or subtract units based on the availability of funding. Raising an additional $300-350,000 a year, for example, might allow the addition of an "environmental" or "transportation" unit. As issues come and go, these substantive units can be added, subtracted or merged into other units, providing both flexibility and fund-raising appeal.

Policy center staff should include an experienced fund-raiser. This specialist in development will handle foundation appeals, corporate fund-raising, special events and possibly even a direct mail membership-based system. Adding a second fundraiser should be considered if an endowment is to be generated.

Policy center staff should include an experienced writer and public relations specialist. He/she should have extensive experience in journalism, policy and Sacramento politics. The writer will review or edit all policy briefs and op-ed articles, as well as handle external relations, publicity and press contacts for the Center.

Policy center staff should include an office manager, who will handle bookkeeping, financial matters (insurance, purchasing, etc.) and employment. The Center should outsource payroll, accounting and legal services.

Policy center staff should also include an Information Technology (IT) specialist and web master. This staff member will manage the policy center's website, which will contain all the Center's policy papers, indexed by subject and date. He/she will also prepare email alerts to notify subscribers when new policy briefs are added to the website.

Budgets

This report has attached two preliminary budgets—a one-time budget to cover start-up costs, and an annual operating budget (see Appendix D).

The proposed start-up budget of $144,000 covers furniture, computers and other equipment, a conference room for staff and small meetings, office supplies, a telephone system, a security system, kitchen equipment and other miscellaneous items. Some of these costs may be reduced if used equipment is located, or if space is shared with another existing organization or partner.

The proposed annual operating budget of approximately $2 million covers a basic staff of 16, rent, telephone, a substantial printing budget ($40,000), professional services, equipment (copier, fax, scanner, server), postage, travel, advertising, insurance, conferences with researchers from outside of Sacramento and website development.

As an alternative, a Sacramento policy center could be started with a budget of around $1 million. This lower-cost alternative, however, would have to focus on a narrower range of issues (one or two), would have to combine certain staff functions (e.g., combining fund-raising and press into one person), and would have to make other related cut backs.

The attached budgets are proposed based upon certain assumptions:

- The policy center will begin operations on a stand-alone basis and not be affiliated with another organization (e.g., university, think tank, etc.). Should this assumption change, the policy center would require different budgeting—some expenses might decrease and others increase, depending on the arrangement reached.

- The policy center will begin operations by addressing at least 3 major policy areas. It will be multi-project oriented, not a specialist in just one substantive area.

- The policy center should be professionally staffed with sufficient resources to "make a difference" from the outset. Early impressions are important. Ideally it should begin operations with a President, 3 experienced project directors, 6 substantive researchers and an experienced support staff, including fund-raising, press and publicity and a prominent web presence. The first year or two of operations will be important in announcing its presence, credibility, balance and bipartisanship.

Staff the Center to *make a difference:* early impressions are important.

Budgets can, of course, be increased or decreased. If the concept of a policy center generates widespread support, the budget can be increased to allow the center to tackle additional policy modules or beef up staff in existing substantive areas. The penter could also add additional fund-raising, outreach, publicity and web capabilities. If a policy center is to be created, it is important that it be funded adequately to make an impact from the outset.

If funding is scarce, the center might begin with a focus on just one issue area, with a capacity to expand in the future. Limiting scope to one issue area would reduce annual operating costs to about $1 million. Alternatively, two issues might be included for $1 million with some reductions in intensity of coverage and in publicity or fund-raising functions.

Funding

Funding a Sacramento policy center will not be easy, especially with a state economy that has slowed and stock market portfolios—in particular, portfolios of California foundations—that have shrunk in value. Moreover, it is important that a Sacramento policy center receive initial commitments of longer-term funding—for at least 5 years. With longer-term funding, Center staff can focus on research summaries without worrying that their jobs will disappear in a few years time. Without it, policymakers and researchers may not accept a policy center as a serious and permanent addition to the Sacramento scene.

The following funding sources should be considered to support a Sacramento policy center:

California Foundations

The principal source of start-up funding for a Sacramento policy center would appear to be California's leading policy-interested foundations. Although California in 1998 had almost 4,000 foundations, with $52 billion in assets and $2 billion in annual grants[4] (some of these numbers have undoubtedly decreased in the last few years), many of these foundations are not focused in pubic policy questions. As a result, start-up funding for core Center operations may initially rest on the shoulders of California's leading policy-interested foundations, such as the James Irvine Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

Once established, however, a policy center may be able to draw on targeted grants from foundations that specialize in specific policy areas. California's health care foundations (California Endowment, California Health Care Foundation, Kaiser Family Foundation, California Wellness Foundation), for example, might support a module (project director plus two experienced researchers) of healthcare expertise.[5] Foundations interested in low-income issues (e.g., Weingart Foundation) might support a module focused on poverty issues. Foundations emphasizing environmental issues (Kirsch Foundation, Goldman Fund, Turner Foundation) could fund policy efforts in their own substantive areas.

In other words, foundation funding could consist of two components: initial start-up and core operational support from California's leading policy foundations, and targeted specific area funding from foundations concentrating on narrower policy issues. By structuring the policy center's operations around substantive modules, the center can attract new funding from new foundations as specific interests arise.

Corporations and Corporate Foundations

California's corporate foundations are generally smaller than their counterparts at the national level and give only about half of the grants given nationally. Yet corporate foundations provide about six percent of California grant making. The largest in terms of grants (as of 1998) are Wells Fargo ($25 million), Levi Straus ($17 million), Times Mirror ($8 million) and ARCO ($8 million).

Corporate foundation grants may be problematical as a source of significant support. Corporate foundations tend to avoid grants for issues that might become politically visible or controversial. Some corporate foundations also seek to avoid grants that might conflict with the interests of their parent organization. It is possible, of course, that a policy center might attract a number of small corporate foundation grants (e.g., $5-10,000) in response to an annual Sacramento dinner invitation, particularly if supported by leading political figures, but these sums cannot be counted upon for start-up expenses or even a significant portion of annual operating expenses.

Direct corporate grants are even more difficult to obtain, for similar reasons; however, limited support of an annual fund-raising event might be feasible. Conflict of interests may be diminished by keeping corporate grants relatively small and diversified, so that a policy center might not be seen as dependent on one particular funding source. A policy center should only accept corporate grants "without strings." The resulting research must be perceived as neutral and be disseminated to the general public (not just a sponsoring organization). The research should also address broad public issues and not just a narrow problem affecting a specific corporate sponsor.

Government

Governments often pay for outside research, and some policy centers or think tanks accept and even aggressively seek such contracts. While this issue was not addressed in detail with interviewees it is clear there may be different views on the advisability of a Sacramento policy center receiving government support. On the one hand, some forms of such support might jeopardize a policy center's independence. On the other hand, many government grants may come with no "strings," and provide substantial financial support.

Overall, we believe a policy center could, once it is established, accept modest amounts of government funding for at least some types of projects—those that do not in any way conflict with a "neutral" mission. The benefits of such funding probably outweigh the disadvantages, assuming the Center is scrupulous in maintaining its independence from partisanship.

Individuals

Major support from individuals is possible but difficult to obtain. There are, to be sure, a number of wealthy individuals who might make major contributions—even towards an endowment—for a Sacramento policy center, but it will take time and concerted effort to identify these individuals. As discussed earlier, the concept of "neutral" brokerage may be less than compelling for the average individual donor. The policy center fundraiser should be charged with developing this approach in subsequent years, and center organizers should also seek to explore this possibility (see discussion below).

> The need for foundation funding may be important because the concept of a *neutral* broker may not generate ideological support.

Direct mail fund-raising from a large base of smaller contributors (e.g., $50 to $100) is also possible, perhaps sweetened with distribution of a periodic policy center magazine or electronic copies of policy center briefing papers. More likely, however, it will be difficult to generate significant individual contributions, because the policy center will not represent clearly liberal or conservative viewpoints or advocate strongly held views on galvanizing issues (environment, children, etc.) typically necessary to raise individual contributions.[6] Indeed, because the concept of neutral broker may have difficulty generating ideological support, the need for strong foundation support may be that much greater.

Creation of an Endowment

Some policy organizations are fortunate to have an endowment that supports much of their activities (e.g., Brookings Institute, Public Policy Institute of California). Although desirable, endowments are difficult to obtain. Wealthy individuals occasionally endow research organizations, and foundations might contribute a portion of an endowment if the recipient had a well though out plan for raising the remainder.

A Sacramento policy center would require an endowment of $40-50 million to generate enough income to support an operating budget of $2 million a year. Of course, a lesser endowment could make a contribution toward operating support, and raising the balance would be significantly eased.

Although a policy center might explore the creation of an endowment during its development stage, it might be more feasible to do this once a center has received initial funding and is able to demonstrate the success of its approach. It should discuss the creation of an endowment with supporting foundations, to determine whether foundation grants towards this end are feasible.

Conclusion

The most likely funding trajectory would be to raise major foundation grants to build and operate the policy center for several years. Once established, the center and its fund-raising staff should actively explore targeting foundation grants for specific policy areas, corporate support, individual grants, government support and the creation of a long-term endowment.

CHAPTER VIII

A Policy Case Study: Transition From High School to Higher Education

The following is a case study that examines the need for and potential functions of a Sacramento policy center with respect to one issue: encouraging high school students to transition to college. This study was prepared with the assistance of Gerald Hayward, Director, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), Sacramento Office, and former Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.[7]

Problem Statement

California's vaunted Master Plan for higher education is not producing the desired results. California ranks 36th out of 50 states in the ratio of baccalaureate degrees awarded to high school graduates within six years and 46th in the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded per 100 undergraduates.

In addition, California faces significant growth in the number of new students of college going age. Over 700,000 additional students are expected to seek admission to California's institutions of higher education by the end of this decade. This projected increase is larger than the entire higher education populations of all but four or five other states. To put it even more starkly, California will have to accommodate a number of additional students roughly equivalent to the total number of students currently enrolled in the state of Illinois. The problem is regional. Five Southern California counties, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego and San Bernardino, contain three-quarters of the state's projected growth.

The composition of the new student body will be an additional challenge. California's higher education population is already unique. More than half of the state's college students are minorities, and that number is increasing. Near the end of the decade, if current projections hold, there will be more Hispanics graduating from high school than whites. The largest growth in the Hispanic population will occur in those same five Southern California counties.

One of the critical factors limiting student access to and progress through higher education is the lack of preparation in K-12 so that students are able to do college level work upon admission. The "open-access" community colleges face the brunt of the problem. Vast sums are spent each year on remedial courses that students need before they can succeed in college. That not only diverts money from other purposes, but it also extends the time youngsters must stay in college to gain a degree.

Related to the problem of underpreparation are poor connections between high schools and colleges, caused by lack of counseling services, arcane requirements for admission and placement, and lack of coordination among the segments. Although much energy is devoted to this problem, progress is slow. The transition from K-12 to higher education remains a major stumbling block to efforts in solving the access problem.

Finally, the state's fiscal crisis and political climate make this issue even more problematic. At a time when demand is soaring, higher education has had to absorb reductions in support while student fees have dramatically increased. Both actions will curtail access. Several of the K-12 initiatives that have enjoyed early success have been slowed by the budget shortfall. The governor and the legislature so far have been unable adequately to address the structural problems that underlie the state's fiscal crisis, and it appears that it will take several years to get the state back to financial stability and strength.

Methodology and Results

Given this brief summary of one of California's most pressing problems, we interviewed 8 individuals knowledgeable about California education policy.[8] The purpose of the interviews was to take a current pressing issue in one field—in this case, the transition from high school to higher education—and see if the establishment of a Sacramento policy center could better address this problem. The interviewees represented a talented cross section of individuals knowledgeable about the policymaking scene in Sacramento. The interviewees represented both political parties, both houses of the legislature, the Wilson and the Davis administrations, K-12 and higher education, the Office of the Legislative Analyst, and the California Postsecondary Education Commission. Each interview began with a brief summary of the problem and a set of structured questions.[9] Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour.

Where Would One Now Turn for Policy Information?

The majority of respondents stated they would turn to the segments of higher education: University of California, California State University, California Community Colleges and the California Department of Education. Next on the list was Policy Analysis for Education, a UC Berkeley, Stanford and UC Davis education think tank. More than one interviewee cited the Legislative Analyst's Office, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the Public Policy Institute of California, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities. Mention was also made of RAND, West Ed and the Senate Office of Research.

Significantly, the one institution most logically associated with the transition from high school to college, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, was mentioned as a place that one might have looked, but its past ineffectiveness and recent severe budget cuts have rendered it irrelevant in many eyes. Four interviewees spoke of CPEC negatively and only two mentioned it as the place to seek policy relevant information.

How Useful Would the Information Be?

Most of the respondents felt that the information would be of limited utility, particularly to policymakers. A couple of respondents felt the information would be adequate but that the political climate was not conducive to thoughtful policy development. Critics of existing data sources concluded that they were not objective (if from the segments), recycled, not hard-hitting; and likely to lack relevance to policymakers.

Is There a Need for a Policy Center on This Issue?

All but one respondent answered affirmatively. But all issued a caveat: a policy center's success depends on the credibility, lack of bias and political astuteness of the director and the staff. Producing quality research (either original or sponsored) and providing balance over a sustained period time were seen as keys to success.

Would Information be Utilized by Policymakers?

The answer to this question reflected the frustration the interview panel felt over the current political climate in Sacramento. Many were concerned that the intense ideological nature of the policy debates might cause some policymakers to ignore useful policy information. Most felt, however, that in spite of the current climate, the information would be increasingly used over the long haul if it was credible and policy-relevant—perhaps at first by a few more thoughtful members but by more over time. At least one respondent felt that it is precisely because of the ideological nature of the current political climate and the inexperience generated by term limits that such a Sacramento policy center is more vital now than before.

Potential Functions

Question Five addressed the nature of such an organization. Interviewees were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most important, a list of eight potential policy center functions.[10]

The first three related functions were rated significantly higher by the panel than the others.

<u>Educating</u>—providing research information in a compelling way for policymakers, and providing policy issue information in a compelling way for researchers. The "educating" function was rated a 4 or 5 by seven of the eight respondents.

<u>Brokering</u>—translating research materials into policy relevant formats in an appropriate timeframe. The "brokering" function was rated 4 or 5 by 6 of the 8 interviewees. Several acknowledged the importance of timeliness but also noted the difficulty in meeting it.

<u>Neutral analyses of longer-term issues</u>—focusing on "big picture" policies. This function was rated 4 or 5 by five of the 8

interviewees. It was seen as more valuable than neutral analyses on shorter-term issues, which was rated a 4 or 5 by only two. Most respondents felt that focusing on longer-term issues would be wiser, especially in the near term, since short-term issues may tend to draw the policy center into the immediate political debate, which may hamper its larger goal of presenting an unbiased face. Respondents may have cited a need for longer-term analysis because many in the education community are focused on follow-ups to the Master Plan and on expectations that a new commission to study education financing will soon be created.

<u>Clearinghouse</u>—providing and maintaining up-to-date databases with accurate, reliable and verifiable information. While some felt this was an important function for a policy center (three rated it a 4 or 5), most expressed the feeling that this was something that could be provided by other agencies, and that the costs of maintaining databases would be prohibitive and could overwhelm the other important functions. One respondent noted that data is not in short supply in Sacramento, but analysis of existing data is scarce.

<u>Fund other organizations</u> to do specific research-based analyses. The importance of this function split the respondents. Three rated it as a 4 or 5 but four rated it a 1 or 2. Advocates for function argued that especially at first, the policy center might have to farm out analyses to other groups until its own research capacity could be built. Others argued that it should spend its dollars only on building up its own capacity—that every dollar spent on an external researchers meant less on building its own capacity.

<u>Convening</u>—providing opportunities for researchers and policymakers to get together to discuss topical issues. The convening function drew high marks from only two respondents. Others were more skeptical of the ability to get policymakers and researchers to sit still long enough to have good discussions on significant policy issues. Many pointed to the relative paucity of policy-oriented legislators and felt that, although this could be a good activity for a few, the time and money could probably be better spent on other activities.

<u>Providing research-based analyses</u> from a point of view—where policies are driven by an explicit set of policy values. While most acknowledged that having some point of view was widespread among other think tanks, most rated this as a very low priority (five rated it either 1 or 2). They saw a "point of view" as obstructing the non-biased, non-partisan stance that most felt was especially valuable.

<u>Forming commissions to study in depth key issues</u>, such as this one. This "commission forming" function was rated the least important function by the panel. Most felt this role would have little positive policy impact and be much more trouble and cost than it was worth. Maintaining a support system for any such commission would dilute research efforts.

In sum, a policy center that focused on the educating, brokering and translating of information and served to bridge the gap between the policy making and political worlds was seen as having great utility on an issue like the transition between K-12 and higher education. The focus should be on providing neutral analyses of important issues, with a higher priority for larger, big-picture issues. Functions like convening researchers and policymakers, maintaining clearinghouses of information and funding others to do research generated a more mixed response. Appointing commissions and providing analyses from a "point of view" were seen as decidedly less valuable.

Preferences

The final set of questions posed a series of choices for respondents to make.[11] In summary form the panel expressed the following preferences.

The policy center should be neutral, but values should play some role in its activities. Respondents distinguished a value like "providing equal access to all eligible and motivated students in California to a quality higher education" from an ideological bias. The former was seen by respondents as an example of a value that would not be troublesome. The neutrality of analyses was seen as extremely important, with balance seen as the crucial element.

The policy center should start with a limited focus and then expand to a broader agenda as its capacity grows. The panel stressed the importance of not letting the agenda overwhelm the center's ability to provide credible, politically savvy research.

The policy center should focus on policy issues and leave process issues to others.

The policy center should be active purveyors of its work. Several mentioned that CPEC failed precisely because it was too passive in its dissemination efforts.

The policy center should be a free-standing organization to insure its independence and credibility. This was viewed as particularly important concerning the issue of transition between K-12 and higher education. University-based analyses might be suspect on issues such as this one, which vitally impact them.

The policy center should be located in Sacramento—where the policymakers are.

The policy center should be media-focused. This is a hugely important activity, especially as a policy center starts its activities.

The policy center should have a mix of original research and research done by others. Both are important.

Additional Comments

Finally, interviewees were asked to make any additional comment they wished. Several pointed observations that weren't covered elsewhere were made.

- Deal with tough issues, make tough recommendations. Don't be Vanilla! More organizations fail because they fail to take strong positions than fail because they were too strong.

- Don't underestimate the difficulty of this task. It will take a long, sustained effort to establish the credibility such a center must have. Be patient but with a sense of urgency. Be prepared for failure, there will be many failures to impact policy for every success.

- Such a center is critical, especially now when term limits have shortened institutional memories.

- Such a center will be important if it can explain in a compelling and thoughtful way how much inexperienced policymakers don't know about issues.

- A credible policy center can fill the information gaps and, in doing so, help overcome the today's negative political climate.

- The Center's success may depend on how it deals with its potential competitors. The ability of the center to coordinate with others working in this field and reduce redundant and overlapping information will be crucial for its success.

Policy Case Study and Overall Report Findings Compared

The findings in this case study, examining an actual higher education policy dilemma, comported very closely with the views of other policymakers as reflected in the larger report. Their conclusions were similar on virtually every dimension. The brokering function was deemed of greatest value. Providing analysis from an ideological point of view was valued least. The convening function was deemed of value by both groups.

The one area in which there was a decided difference between the two groups of interviewees was the high value the education group placed on neutral analyses of larger, "big-picture" policies as opposed to the relatively low value attributed to this function by the broader policy group.[12] Among the reasons for the high ranking by the education group, two stand out. The first is that in education generally and higher education particularly, most of the policy analytical work has been short-term, often only from one budget year to the next, and segmental, frequently focusing only on the impact of policies on one of the institutions (e.g. the Community Colleges, K-12, UC, CSU, etc.), rather than across institutions. The particular policy discussed in the case study, the transition from high school to college, is a sterling example of a policy area that has been sorely neglected, and, in fact, is now a problem precisely because of the failure to address the issue earlier and across all the segments. The need for longer-range work may have been seen as more necessary than in other policy fields.

The second apparent reason for the education group's interest in longer term research is that the recent work of the Committee to Review the Master Plan has begun to emphasize the need for more comprehensive, longer-term policy reviews, with a review of how schools are financed being high on the agenda of those with whom we talked. This issue really depends on high quality analytical work on a much broader scale than more usual policy-related research efforts.

Interviews Conducted

- Gary Hart, former Secretary of Education in the Davis Administration.
- William Furry, former Senior Consultant to the Secretary of Education in the Wilson Administration.
- Robert Moore, Executive Director, California Postsecondary Education Commission.
- Mike Rickets, Chief Consultant, Assembly Education Committee.
- Kathleen Chivira, Consultant, Senate Committee on Education.
- Roger Magyar, Education Consultant, Assembly Minority Caucus.
- Paul Warren, Legislative Analyst's Office.
- Stephan Blake, Executive Director of the staff for Master Plan Review.

CHAPTER IX

Next Steps

The James Irvine Foundation provided generous funding for this feasibility study as part of its ongoing commitment to informed public policy in California. In initiating this study, however, the Irvine Foundation has reached no pre-ordained conclusions about its findings, has made no commitment to fund such policy center, and has formed no preconceptions as to what shape such a center might take or who might be involved in creating it.

Transitioning a Sacramento policy center from concept to reality, and creating a new organization that will perform the research broker role envisioned in this study, will require a number of steps. These include circulation of the report for additional comment, discussing funding options with a number of leading California foundations, meeting with potential academic, non-profit and governmental partners, initiating implementation conversations with Sacramento political leaders, beginning discussions concerning membership on the policy center's board of directors and advisory board and preparing a funding proposal for submission to California foundations.

Although the following steps are listed sequentially, many depend upon each other and might best be undertaken collaboratively and simultaneously.

Circulation of Report for Additional Comment

This feasibility study was based on well over 100 interviews with researchers, policymakers, elected officials, journalists and civic leaders, as well as advice from members of the study's highly qualified advisory board. Now that the report's recommendations have been crystallized, there will be value in circulating it for additional comment to legislators and executive branch officials, lobbyists, academics, reporters and civic leaders. CGS will also place a copy on its website (www.cgs.org) and solicit on-line comments.

Follow-up conversations should focus less on specific recommendations (e.g., should a policy center be created, where it should be located, what functions should it undertake) and more on implementation. Participants might be asked to comment on ways to make a policy analysis center acceptable in Sacramento, how to help it function more effectively, which issues it should address, how it should be launched, whether association with a university is a plus or minus, how it could be funded, etc. Comments could be incorporated into a further iterationof the report.

Initial Discussions with Leading California Foundations

The strength and credibility of a Sacramento policy center would be reinforced by support and funding from California's leading foundations. The next step, therefore, would be to discuss this report with leading California foundations to obtain their comments on the report's recommendations, to discuss methods of implementation and to determine their interest in helping to create a Sacramento policy center.

Building a Sacramento policy center will obviously require significant funding, both for start-up and ongoing operations (see Appendix C for sample budgets). California foundations are best positioned to supply this funding in the policy center's early years of operation. Support from a range of leading foundations will also provide credibility and neutrality to a policy center's operations.

Initial Discussions with Potential Partners

Questions of funding are closely related to questions of partnerships. Although this report principally recommends creation of a stand-alone policy center as a "broker" between the academic and policymaking communities, it also recommends that serious consideration be given to an exploration of alternative partnerships with academic or civic organizations.

Partnerships are possible with one or more academic institutions, such as University of California, University of Southern California and/or Stanford University, or with Washington, D.C.-based think tanks such as Brookings Institute or Urban Institute, or with California non-profits such as the Public Policy Institute of California or Center for Governmental Studies. Such partnerships would have certain advantages (see discussion of advantages and disadvantages in Chapter V-A-8, "Stand-Alone or Affiliated Center"). First and foremost is the possibility that affiliated organizations would contribute funds or fund-raising to support the effort.

Representatives of both the University of California and University of Southern California have expressed interest in strengthening their Sacramento policy presence and in further discussing the brokering concepts outlined in this report. One option to be discussed is whether California foundations should provide funding to one or more universities to help them create the proposed Sacramento policy center, or to supplement their existing Sacramento research facilities to undertake the "research broker" functions recommended in this report. If UC or USC, for example, were to commit a significant portion of the funding necessary for the proposed policy center, then this alternative would become attractive.

Discussions might also be arranged with other non-profit research organizations. Representatives of the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C. indicated they have given thought to opening a branch office. If thought desirable, this discussion should be pursued. PPIC has also considered, and for the time being has rejected, the notion of opening a Sacramento based office. The Center for Governmental Studies has also considered this idea and, for several years, had a small office in Sacramento. These and other partnerships might profitably be discussed. Most significantly, these discussions may generate ways to obtain long-term funding for a Sacramento policy center.

Discussions with Political Leaders and Academic Researchers

Additional discussions should be arranged with Sacramento political leaders to determine how a new policy center might be launched, what issues it should initially tackle, and how it can best integrate itself into the Sacramento policy environment. Discussions should also be arranged with academics interested in policy issues to discuss how best to begin summarizing their research.

Board of Directors, Advisory Board and Staffing

Some preliminary thought should be given to the composition of the Board of Directors, the Advisory Board and key staffing positions. Identification of a steering committee of potential board members, for example, would engage their efforts in fund-raising and organization at an early stage. Similarly, identification of key staff might also engage their efforts in helping form the proposed Sacramento policy center. A prestigious group of supporters could accelerate the launch of this project.

Preparation of Foundation Proposal

Finally, detailed proposals should be prepared and submitted to all foundations interested in supporting a new Sacramento policy center. The proposals should describe the enormous impact that a neutral research brokering organization could have on California public policy, and it should emphasize the invaluable contribution California foundations could make by supporting this badly-needed project..

Endnotes

[1] The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) had 15 institutional members at its inception in the late 1970s. The organization now has about 85 institutional members.

[2] The Policy Center could either meet the general support test, which would require it to generate one-third of its funding from public sources (e.g., individual contributors), or it could meet the facts and circumstances test by generating at least 10 percent of its funding from at least five sources in equal amounts.

[3] Contributors to operating foundations do not receive the same legal protections against charges that funds may have been misspent as they do when making contributions to public charities.

[4] James Ferris and Marcia Sharp, "California Foundations: A Snapshot," USC Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, in cooperation with the Foundation Center (Feb. 2001).

[5] "California's 20 healthcare foundations, created through the conversion of non-profit health organizations since the late 1980s, possess assets of $6 billion, and make grants of $170 million." Ferris & Sharp, supra.

[6] The Heritage Foundation raises approximately one-third of its annual $30 million budget from foundations, one-third from corporations and one-third from individual contributors ($50 to $100) contacted via direct mail. The Heritage Foundation is able to generate this support because it stands for strongly articulated conservative viewpoints. A more balanced Sacramento Policy Center would not have this advantage.

[7] See http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/research/PACE/hayward.html for biographical information

[8] See list of interviews at end of Chapter VIII,

[9] See questions 1-4 at end of Chapter VIII.

[10] See Question 5 at end of Chapter VIII.

[11] See Question 6 at end of Chapter VIII.

[12] It is important to note that neutral analyses of shorter-term issues were valued by the educator group, just not as high on their list of priorities.

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President
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Modesto, CA

Interviewees

Interviewee	Affiliation	Manner	By
David Abel	President, Metropolitan Issues Forum	In person	WZ
Dick Ackerman	California State Senator	In Person	WZ/SB
Kevin Bassett	Chief of Staff, California State Assemblyman Cox	In person	WZ/SB
Scott Baugh	Former Republican Assembly Minority Leader	Phone	WZ
Stephan Blake	Executive Director of the Plan Review	In person	GH
Henry Brady	Goldman School of Public Policy, UC Berkeley	Phone	WZ
Craig Brown	Lobbyist, Robinson and Assoc.: former Budget Director under Gov. Pete Wilson	In person	WZ
Nick Bollman	Executive Director California Center For Regional Leadership	In person	TW/WZ
Bruce Cain	Executive Director Institute of Governmental Studies UC Berkeley	In person	WZ

Rich Callahan	Assistant Dean, USC Sacramento Center	In person	WZ
Joe Canciamilla	California State Assemblyman	In person	WZ
Larry Castro	California State Legislative Analyst Office	Phone	WZ/RB
Tony Cannon	Attorney, Pillsbury Winthrop	Phone	TW
Gil Cedillo	California State Senator	In person	WZ
Kathleen Chivira	Consultant, California Senate Committee on Education	In person	GH
Andy Coburn	Muskie School, Univ. of Southern Maine, Portland, Me.	Phone	WZ
David Cohen	Co-Director of the Advocacy Institute, Work DC Washington, D.C.	In person	TW
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Questions Asked

1. Where do policymakers now turn to get policy-relevant information on this topic?

2. Is this information useful for policymakers? Is it timely? Is it reliable? If not, how might it be improved?

3. Is there a need for an outside, non-partisan, research and policy savvy, Sacramento-based organization to deal with this issue? If not, how should the problem be addressed?

4. If a credible policy oriented organization were established, would California policymakers use it.

5. I am going to read to you a list of possible functions such a Center might undertake. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most useful, rate them.

    a. Convening-mixing researchers and policymakers
    b. Educating-providing research information in a compelling way for policymakers and providing policy issues in a compelling way for researchers.
    c. Serving as an Information Clearinghouse—up-to-date databases with accurate, reliable and verifiable information.
    d. Brokering-translating research materials into policy relevant formats in an appropriate timeframe.
    e. Providing neutral analysis on short-term policy choices—focusing on policy options and balance.
    f. Providing neutral analysis on longer-term issues—focusing on the big picture.
    g. Providing research-based analysis from a point of view—where policies are driven by an explicit set of policy values.
    h. Funding other organizations to do specific research-based analyses
    i. Forming commissions to study in-depth key policy issues, such as this one.

6. The next set of questions cover some other items for which we seek your advice, if such an organization were to be formed:

    a. Should the organization be value-driven or neutral?
    b. Should the organization focus on one or multiple issues?
    c. Should the organization focus on policy substance or process (convening, etc.)?

d. Should the organization be an active promoter or more passive supplier of information?
e. Should the organization be a freestanding non-profit or tied to a larger entity?
f. Should the organization be housed in Sacramento or elsewhere?
g. Should media be a prime focus or not?
h. Should the organization undertake significant original research or should it rely more on research done by others.
i. Any additional comments?

Publications and Projects

Reports

Political Reform That Works: Public Campaign Financing Blooms in Tucson (CGS 2003).

Public Financing of Elections: Where To Get The Money? (CGS 2003).

Public Financing Laws in Local Jurisdictions (CGS 2003).

Electronic Filing and Disclosure Update (CGS 2002).

A Statute of Liberty: How New York City's Campaign Finance Law Is Changing the Face of Local Elections (CGS 2002).

Alluvial Amnesia: How Government Plays Down Flood Risks in the Push for Development (CGS 2002).

Dead on Arrival? Breathing Life Into Suffolk County's New Campaign Finance Reforms (CGS 2002).

On the Brink of Clean: Launching San Francisco's New Campaign Finance Reform (CGS 2002).

Eleven Years of Reform: Many Successes, More to Be Done: Campaign Finance Reform in the City of Los Angeles (CGS 2001).

Access Delayed Is Access Denied: Electronic Reporting of Campaign Finance Activities (CGS 2000).

Campaign Money on the Information Superhighway: Electronic Filing and Disclosure of Campaign Finance Reports, CGS/National Resource Center for State and Local Campaign Finance Reform (CGS 1996-1999).

Promises to Keep and Miles to Go: A Summary of the Joint Meeting of the California Citizens Commission on Higher Education and the California Education Roundtable (CGS 1997)
.

Books

Investing in Democracy: Creating Public Financing of Elections In Your Community (CGS 2003).

***Affordable Health Care for Low Income Californians*:** Report and Recommendations of the California Citizens Budget Commission (CGS 2000).

***Toward a State of Learning: California Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century*,** Recommendations of the California Citizens Commission on Higher Education (CGS 1999).

A 21st Century Budget Process for California*:* Recommendations of the California Citizens Budget Commission (CGS 1998).

A State of Learning: California and the Dream of Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century**,** California Citizens Commission on Higher Education (CGS 1998).

Opportunity Through Technology: Conference Report on New Communication Technology and Low-Income Communities
(CGS/Connect LA 1997).

A Shared Vision: A Practical Guide to the Design and Implementation of a Performance-Based Budget Model for California State Health Services, California Citizens Budget Commission (CGS 1997).

The Price of Justice: A Los Angeles Area Case Study in Judicial Campaign Financing*,* California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1995).

Reforming California's Budget Process: *Preliminary Report and Recommendations***,** California Citizens Budget Commission (CGS 1995).

California at the Crossroads: Choices for Health Care Reform, Lucien Wulsin, Jr. (CGS 1994).

Democracy by Initiative: Shaping California's Fourth Branch of Government, California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1992).

To Govern Ourselves: Ballot Initiatives in the Los Angeles Area*,* California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1992).

Money and Politics in the Golden State: Financing California's Local Elections, California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1989).

Money and Politics in Local Elections: The Los Angeles Area, California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1989).

The California Channel: A New Public Affairs Television Network for the State, Tracy Westen and Beth Givens (CGS 1989).

Update to the New Gold Rush, California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1987).

The New Gold Rush: Financing California's Legislative Campaigns, California Commission on Campaign Financing (CGS 1985).

Media Projects

Connect LA: A bi-lingual, web-based system of information and services for low-income users and communities of color (CGS 1998-present) (www.ConnectLA.org).

Video Voter: A new system of interactive video information on candidates in federal, state and local elections (CGS 2001-present) (see www.cgs.org; www.videovoter.org).

Digital Democracy: An email-based system of communication between citizens and elected officials on public policy issues (CGS 2002-present) (see www.cgs.org).

PolicyArchive.Net: A new web-based archive of public policy research (CGS 2002-present).

The Democracy Network: An interactive web-based system of political information for elections in California and other states (CGS 1996-2000) *(www.dnet.org)*.

The Democracy Network: An interactive video-on-demand system of candidate information on Time-Warner's Full Service Network in Orlando, Florida (CGS 1996).

City Access: Report on the Design of a New Interactive System of Local Government (CGS 1995).

The California Channel: A satellite-fed, cable television network providing over six million California homes with gavel-to-gavel coverage of the state legislature (CGS 1989-1993) (www.CalChannel.com).

A new

Sacramento Policy Center

A CGS Feasibilty Study

This CGS report proposes the creation of a new Sacramento policy center. Term limits, the loss of experienced staff, budget cuts and increased partisanship have significantly cut California state government's access to policy research. The proposed new center would improve California's policymaking processes by identifying, summarizing and transmitting succinct summaries of high quality research to Sacramento decisionmakers.

This CGS report recommends that a new Sacramento-based policy center be created to act as a neutral broker of policy information between academic researchers and policy makers. The policy center would:

- **Identify important policy issues and create concise summaries of significant research in those areas.**
- **Disseminate research summaries at opportune times and in useful formats to California government policymakers and staff, media, interest groups and civic organizations.**
- **Inform academic researchers of policy-related research needs and encourage them to generate research on these topics.**
- **Produce neutral policy analyses and convene policy leaders to help build consensus around difficult policy questions.**

This CGS report recommends that the policy center initially focus on research areas including healthcare, education, long term economic forecasting, physical infrastructure, state and local government relationships and insurance.

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