

South Carolina Hospital Association

*The RCT from a Practitioner's Perspective:
Nurse-Family Partnership in South Carolina*



Things J-PAL asked me to talk about

- Why are RCTs for policymakers and not just academics?
- How were you able to successfully launch the NFP evaluation?
- How have you thought about building research and evidence into policymaking more broadly?

Rough outline

- How are policy priorities actually set?
- What are the barriers to evidence-based policy?
- Why is EBP/rigorous evaluation important anyway?
- How did this all lead South Carolina to SIBs/PFS?
- How was South Carolina's project structured?
 - Preconditions and partners
 - Successes and sacrifices
- How do you better integrate research and evidence into policymaking?

Setting policy priorities

Models of policy development?



- The smoke-filled room

Models of policy development?



HERITAGE ACTION FOR AMERICA SCORECARD DASHBOARD

“NO” ON LAME DUCK CONTINUING RESOLUTION (H.R. 5325)

SEPTEMBER 28, 2016 G+ 4 Like 38 Tweet

This week, the House will vote on a 10-week continuing resolution (H.R. 5325). The Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zika Response and Preparedness Act falls far short of conservative expectations.

- Interest group pressure

Models of policy development?



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- Appeals to emotion



Models of policy development?



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- Press as “agenda-setter”



NEWS PEOPLE'S POST | ATHLONE
Tuesday, 10 September 2013

CHARITY: CHRISTINE REVELL HOME IN DIRE NEED

Do it for the children

NIKITA SYLVESTER

A facility providing significant services to little ones in need is now calling on the public for much-needed resources.

For the past 27 years Christine Revell Children's Home has been caring for children who are either abandoned, abused, neglected, orphaned or who have been affected by HIV/Aids.

The children are taken in from as young as birth up to the age of five.

The home was started by community worker Christine Revell when she identified a need for a nursery section where teenage mothers could take their babies whom they opt to have adopted.

Heavily reliant on donations and sponsorships, the home has, however, been battling to make ends meet with only the subsidy they receive from the Department of Social Development.

Home director Alicia Rhoda says they are appealing to the public to open their hearts and assist them with various donations. “The department provides us with about 60% of our funding to stay afloat, but our daily needs remain a concern,” she says.

The organisation needs, among others, food, medication, disposable nappies, clothing, bedding and educational material.

Rhoda says last year they had a sponsor who donated infant formula for 12 months. This totalled to about R3500.

The home no longer has this sponsorship and is forced to add this sum to their budget.

She explains that they are not at risk of closure but are doing everything in their power to prevent being in a financial crisis.

The organisation strives to provide the children with a home environment in which they can experience the love and stimulation they have been lacking.

This, however, cannot be done without the help of others.

With the constant climb of rates and taxes, Rhoda says their expenses continue to rise while the incoming funds are decreasing.

“Each year we receive less donations from the public. We are hoping the community will support us as every little commitment helps,” Rhoda says.

One of their plans is to get 500 people to commit to donating R100 each month for 12 months.

This will be in the form of a pledge.

With many scams doing the rounds, Rhoda says they are aware that many people are very cautious when it comes to making financial donations.

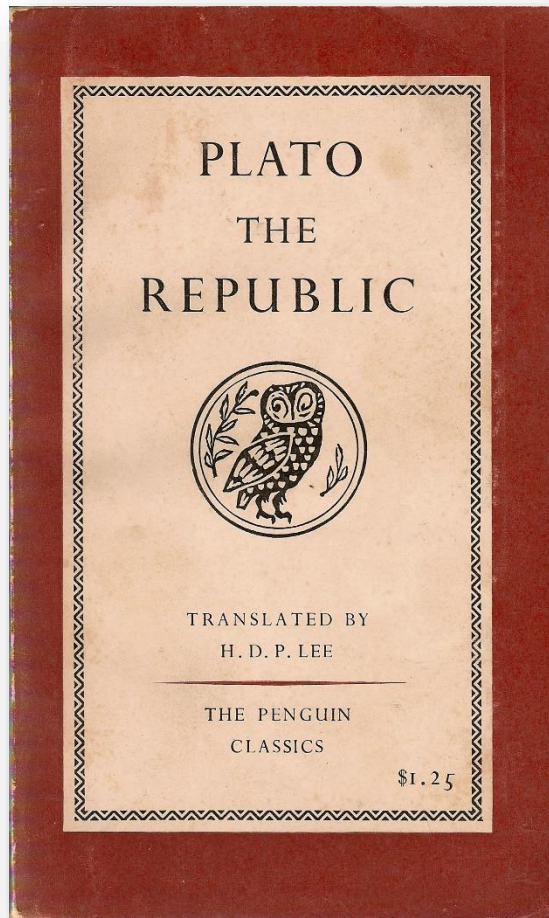
The home can also make an arrangement for donors to pay their suppliers directly for the monthly goods they purchase.

“They would then be certain of what they are paying for and the cause they are supporting,” Rhoda says.

Anyone who wishes to support the home can contact them on (021) 697 1748.

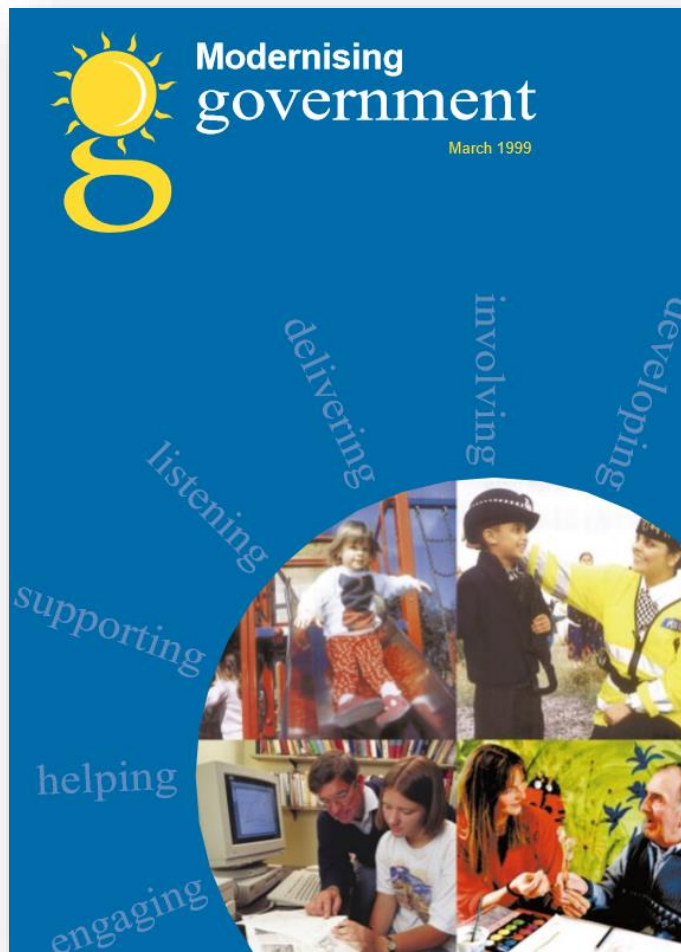
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Models of policy development?



- “Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils — no, nor the human race, as I believe — and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.”

Models of policy development?



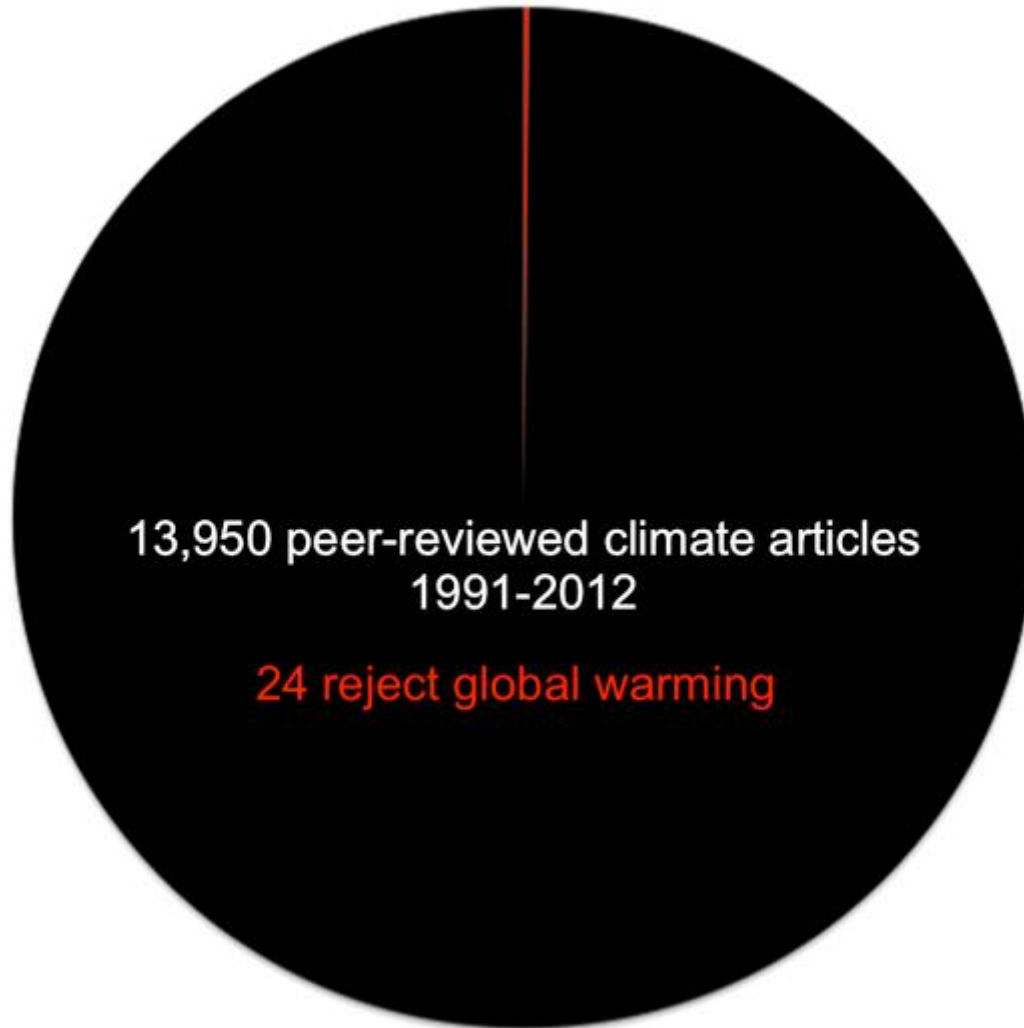
- “Government should regard policy making as a continuous, learning process, not as a series of one-off initiatives.
- We will improve our use of evidence and research so that we understand better the problems we are trying to address.
- We must make more use of pilot schemes to encourage innovations and test whether they work.
- We will ensure that all policies and programmes are clearly specified and evaluated, and the lessons of success and failure are communicated and acted upon.
- Feedback from those who implement and deliver policies and services is essential too.”

Barriers to evidence-based policy

Categories of barriers

- Conceptual
- Operational

Issue polarization, rejection of evidence

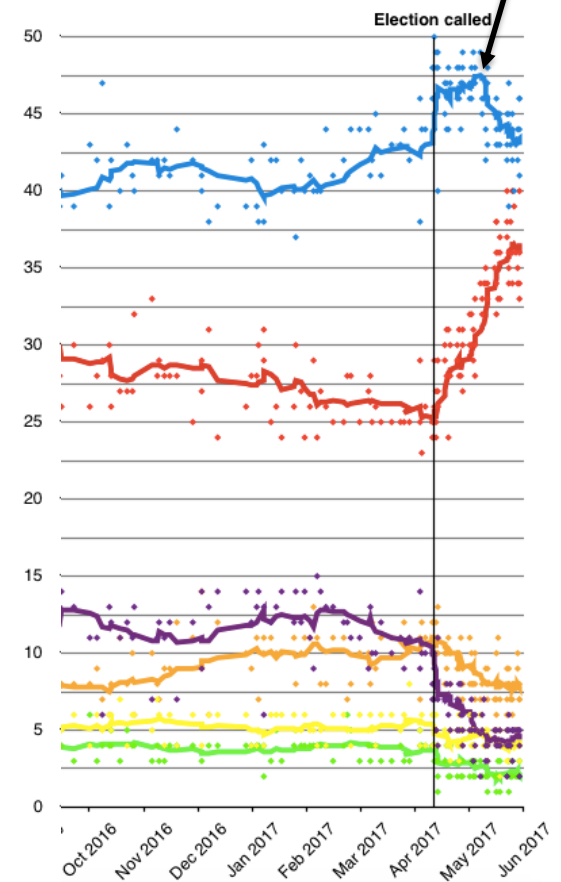


Reputational risk

- Political risk for government, reputational risk for other participants

The "Dementia Tax"

The Cone Nonprofit Power Brand Top 10				
Power Brand 100 Rank	Organization	Brand Value \$ Million	Revenue Rank	Brand Image Rank
1	YMCA of the USA	6,393.6	1	6
2	The Salvation Army	4,702.9	3	2
3	United Way of America	4,516.9	2	3
4	American Red Cross	3,146.2	7	5
5	Goodwill Industry International	2,534.8	6	18
6	Catholic Charities USA	2,361.1	4	53
7	Habitat for Humanity International	1,768.0	9	4
8	American Cancer Society	1,359.8	11	1
9	The Arc of the United States	1,223.6	5	96
10	Boys & Girls Clubs of America	1,168.3	8	21



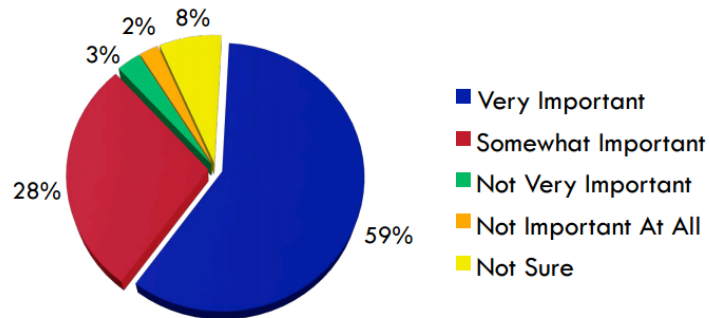
Decision-makers' unfamiliarity or discomfort with research methods

- Americans say that candidates should understand science – they often don't, and maybe that's rational
- Particular concern w/randomizing

EVIDENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: LEARNING LESSONS FROM HEALTH? 97

Candidates Should Have a Basic Understanding of Science

How important do you think it is that candidates for President and Congress have a basic understanding of the science informing public policy issues?



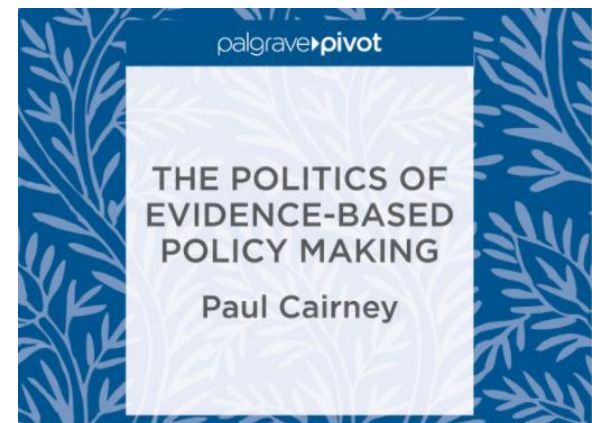
Source: A Research!America and ScienceDebate.org poll of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in September 2015.

Zogby
Analytics

Science
debate
dot org

RESEARCH
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Third, there is a lower tendency to use formal modelling in salient areas where many beliefs are already entrenched, and when policymakers do not like the unpredictability of the results of modelling. Fourth, even sophisticated models tend to be confined to individual subsystems or government departments; issues may be cross-cutting but the analysis reinforces silo thinking (2008: 350). Finally, boundedly rational policymakers are often sceptical about, or unreceptive to, the results of advanced modelling, particularly if they don't understand the process and can't work out easily how the results were produced. The dominant mode of presentation is simple qualitative description, 'driven by the need to present easily digestible analysis to the decision maker if one wanted the assessment to be instrumentally useful ... this desire for simplicity among politicians diminishes the attractiveness of the very assessment tools that politicians have been so keen to advocate and nurture' (2008: 348–50; see also Cervený et al. 2011).



Constituency politics

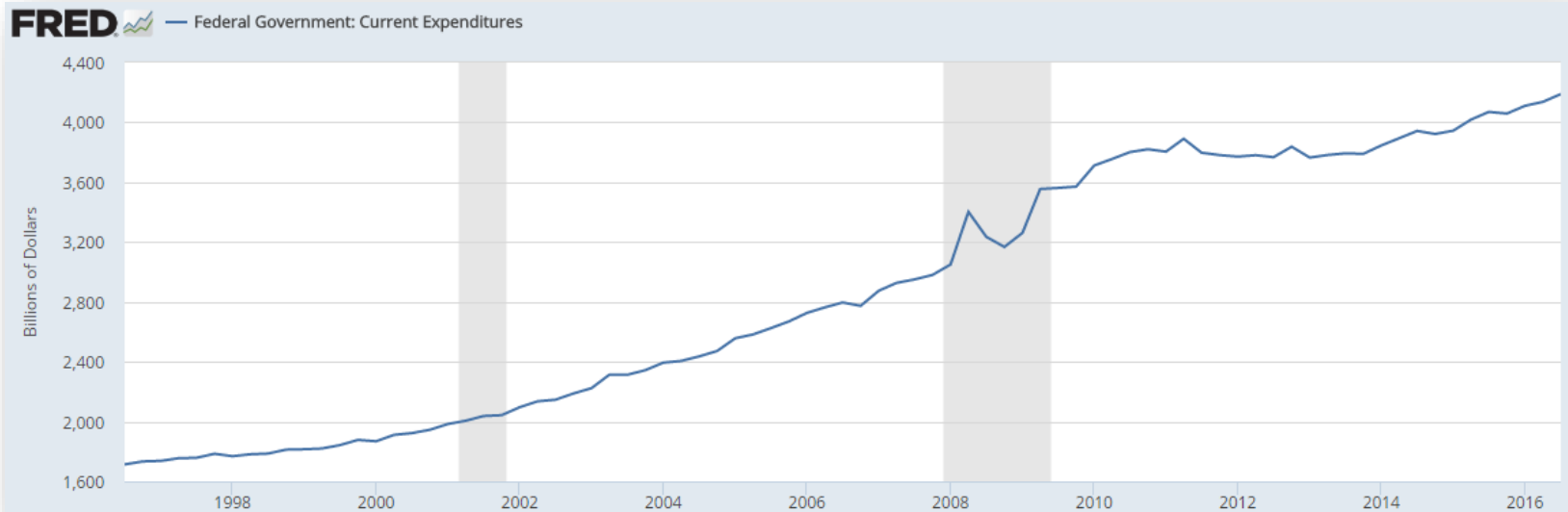
- Legacy providers have a built-in constituency, but who advocates for evidence-based methods?
- Inertia...



Lobbying's top 50:

Fifty companies and industry groups shelled out more than \$716 million to lobby the federal government and Congress last year, according to data provided to The Hill by the Center for Responsive Politics.

The eye-popping total represents nearly a quarter of all federal lobbying dollars in 2016 and a slight increase over 2015, when the 50 biggest spenders doled out \$715 million.



Not enough interventions to scale

- USDE's Institute for Education Sciences, 2002-2013
- 77 RCTs without major study limitations
- Topics: "Various educational curricula, teacher professional development programs, school choice programs, educational software, and data-driven school reform initiatives"
- Findings:
 - 9% of interventions produced positive effects
 - 91% found weak or no positive effects



Low-Cost RCT Competition

Demonstrating How Low-Cost Randomized Controlled Trials
Can Drive Effective Social Spending:

Project Overview and Request for Proposals - 2014

Lack of capacity to identify, manage EBPs

- Fewer resources to attract, retain desirable staff
- Rigid and time-consuming procurement processes

APRIL 22, 2016 | PRESS RELEASE

Laura and John Arnold Foundation launches \$15 million competition to use evidence-based programs to “move the needle” on major social problems

HOUSTON, TX—As part of its effort to encourage governments to make decisions based on rigorous research and reliable evidence, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) today launched the Moving the Needle Competition, which will provide funding for state and local governments and nonprofit organizations that implement highly effective social programs in an effort to “move the needle” on pressing problems such as poverty, education, and crime. The competition was highlighted today as a key evidence-based initiative in a [White House announcement](#) about My Brother’s Keeper, a federal effort to address persistent opportunity gaps and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential.

*So why is evidence-based policy
important?*

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GOVERNMENT

IF YOU THINK THE PROBLEMS WE CREATE ARE BAD,
JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE OUR SOLUTIONS.

Why is evidence-based policy important?

- Limited resources available for public services
- Legacy programs may actually be harmful



'Scared straight' and other juvenile awareness programs for preventing juvenile delinquency

Programs such as 'Scared Straight' involve organized visits to prison facilities by juvenile delinquents or children at risk for becoming delinquent. The programs are designed to deter participants from future offending by providing firsthand observations of prison life and interaction with adult inmates. This review, which is an update of one published in 2002, includes nine studies that involved 946 teenagers, almost all males. The studies were conducted in different parts of the USA and involved young people of different races whose average age ranged from 15 to 17 years. Results indicate that not only do these programs fail to deter crime, but they actually lead to more offending behavior. The intervention increases the odds of offending by between 1.6 to 1 and 1.7 to 1. Government officials permitting this program need to adopt rigorous evaluation efforts to ensure that they are not causing more harm to the very citizens they pledge to protect.

South Carolina's path to SIBs/PFS

Objectives of SIB/PFS project

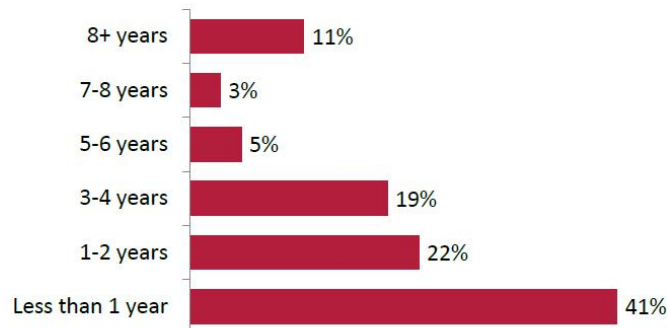
- Improve connection between spending and outcomes
- Gain “free” access to national expertise
- Force staff to think differently
- Bind successors to existing priorities
- “Train” provider community for risk-sharing
- Bring private-sector methods to address public problems, while preserving accountability

Providing stability and continuity

- PFS projects can extend across administrations
- Associated scaling can create durable infrastructure

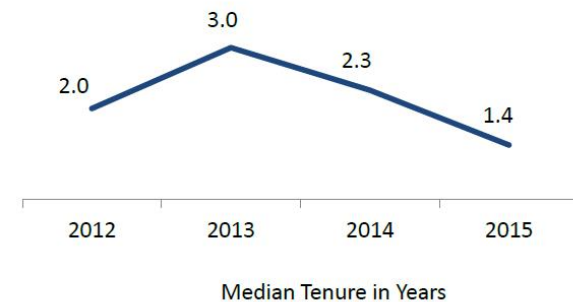
Majority of Medicaid Directors are new to position

How long has the current Medicaid Director served in their position?



Median Medicaid Director tenure shifts year to year

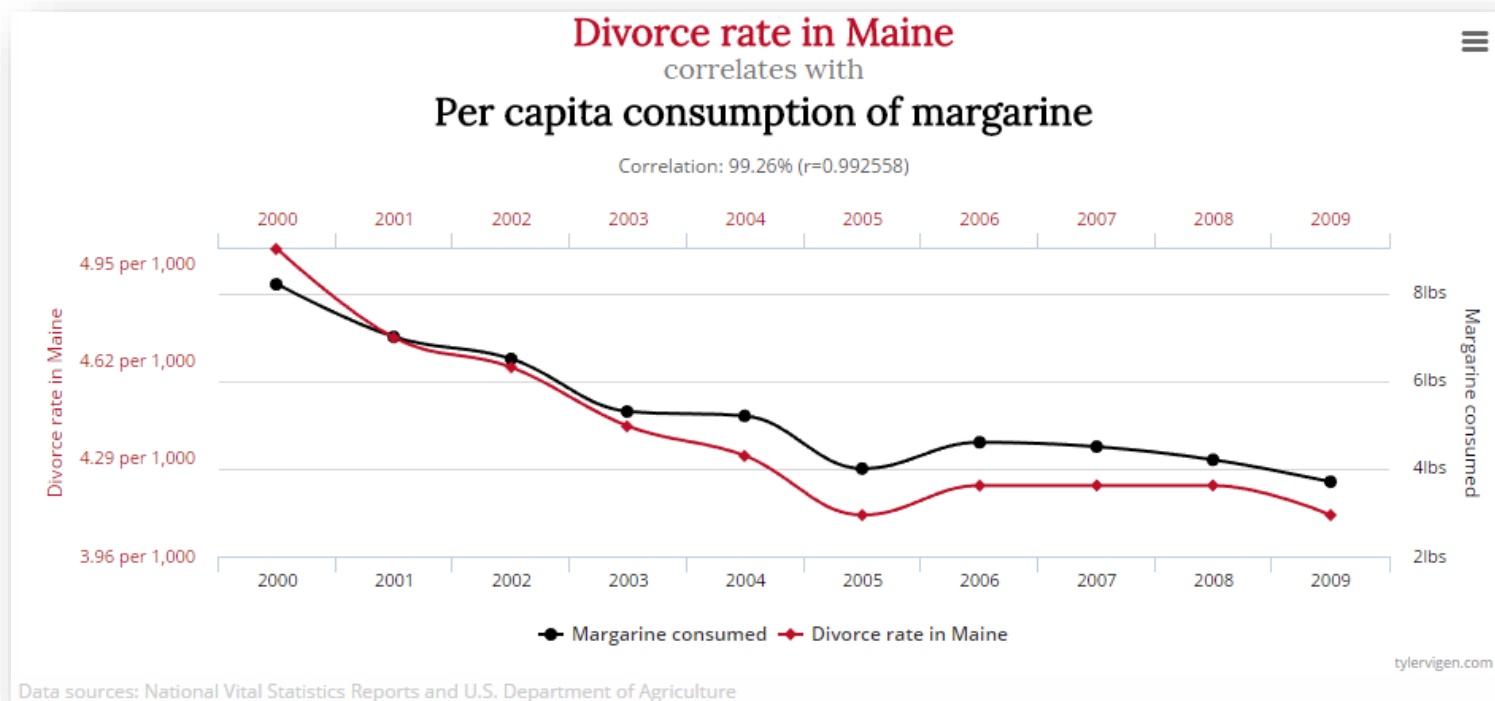
Median Director Tenure [2012-2015]:



(Charts: Andy Allison's NAMD presentation, Fall 2015)

Promoting intellectual rigor

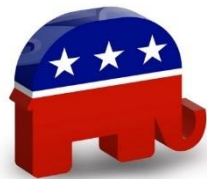
- PFS projects require a coherent logic model
- Causal linkage between successful implementation and outcome payments



Other benefits of the PFS approach

- Potentially insulate a project against out-year cuts
- May allow for innovative and politically delicate tactics that the public entity could not directly pursue
- Provides access to capacity (quality and quantity) in ways that may not otherwise be available

Something for everyone?



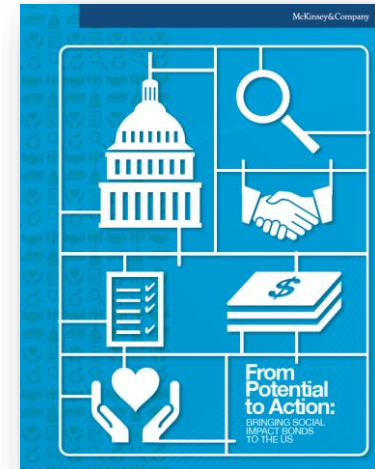
- Cost savings for taxpayers
- Public-private partnership
- Offloading of risk



- Social welfare benefits
- Innovative/creative program offerings
- Capacity/caseload expansion

How PFS found South Carolina

- **May 2012**
 - McKinsey's report released
- **December 2012**
 - Harvard Kennedy School SIB Lab's initial call for proposals
- **February 2013**
 - South Carolina submits an application to expand access to Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) services
 - NFP already in place in South Carolina, with nonprofits studying growth
- **June 2013**
 - South Carolina announced as one of six in the first cohort



Why NFP?

- Results found in at least 2 of 3 long-term RCTs:
 - 20-50% reductions in child abuse, neglect, and/or injuries
 - 10-20% reduction in mothers' subsequent births during their teens and early twenties
 - Improvement in cognitive and/or educational outcomes for children born to mothers with low mental health, confidence, and/or intelligence
- Experience with rigorous evaluation, willingness to be subjected to it again
 - New RCT to test effectiveness of 25% cheaper model
- Institutional capacity, ability to accept limited financial risk

Project overview

- Structure of our “Pay-for-Success” arrangement:
 - \$30 million over 5 years, per-visit basis
 - Up to \$7.5M in additional success payments
 - Built upon a §1915(b) Medicaid waiver
 - Major philanthropic support from the Duke Endowment, Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and others
 - Independent randomized controlled trial to measure impact

Project overview

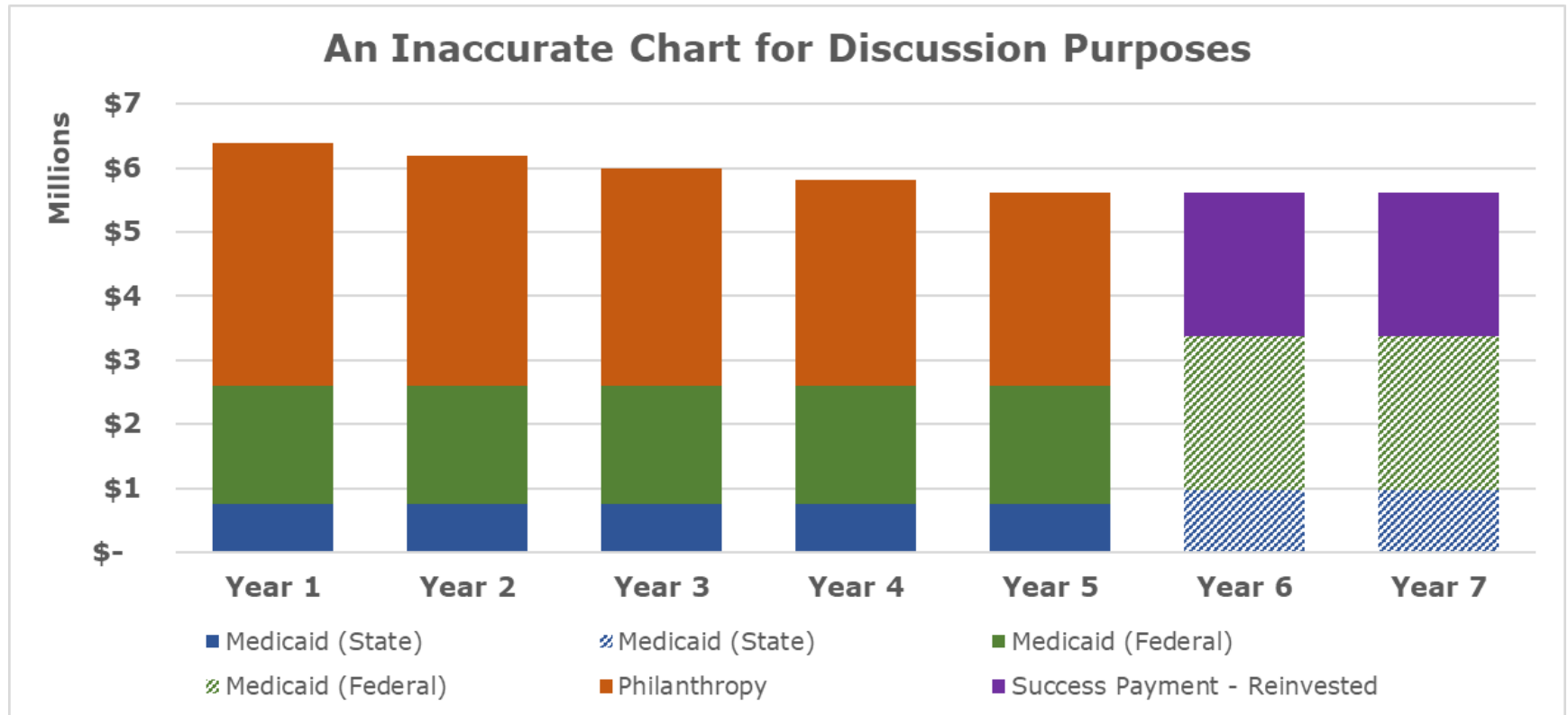
- What does the Medicaid waiver accomplish?
 - “Non-statewideness” and freedom of choice exception
 - Selective contracting with 6 implementing agencies
 - Enhanced rate and additional visits for NFP nurses
- Roles of the key participants:
 - 3-Way Contract: SCDHHS, NFP NSO, Children’s Trust
 - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
 - J-PAL – with funding from LJAF
 - GPL (Harvard Kennedy School Gov’t Performance Lab)
 - Social Finance US

Project overview

- Two versions of the cost-benefit analysis
 - Societal
 - CMS “waiver math”
- Full success payments start if NFP can at least:
 - Reduce preterm births by 15%
 - Reduce child injuries by 26%
 - Increase birth spacing by 20%
 - Provide at least 65% of services to members in targeted LIZCs

Hypothetical future budget

- Philanthropy helps transition to lower per-unit costs
- Any success payments to be reinvested



Looking back at our project

Preconditions for success

- Executive support
 - Alignment of budget, program, and procurement
- Outside assistance (Government Performance Lab)
- Committed and deep-pocketed philanthropy
- Provider in right mindset (ready for risk, change)

Successes and sacrifices

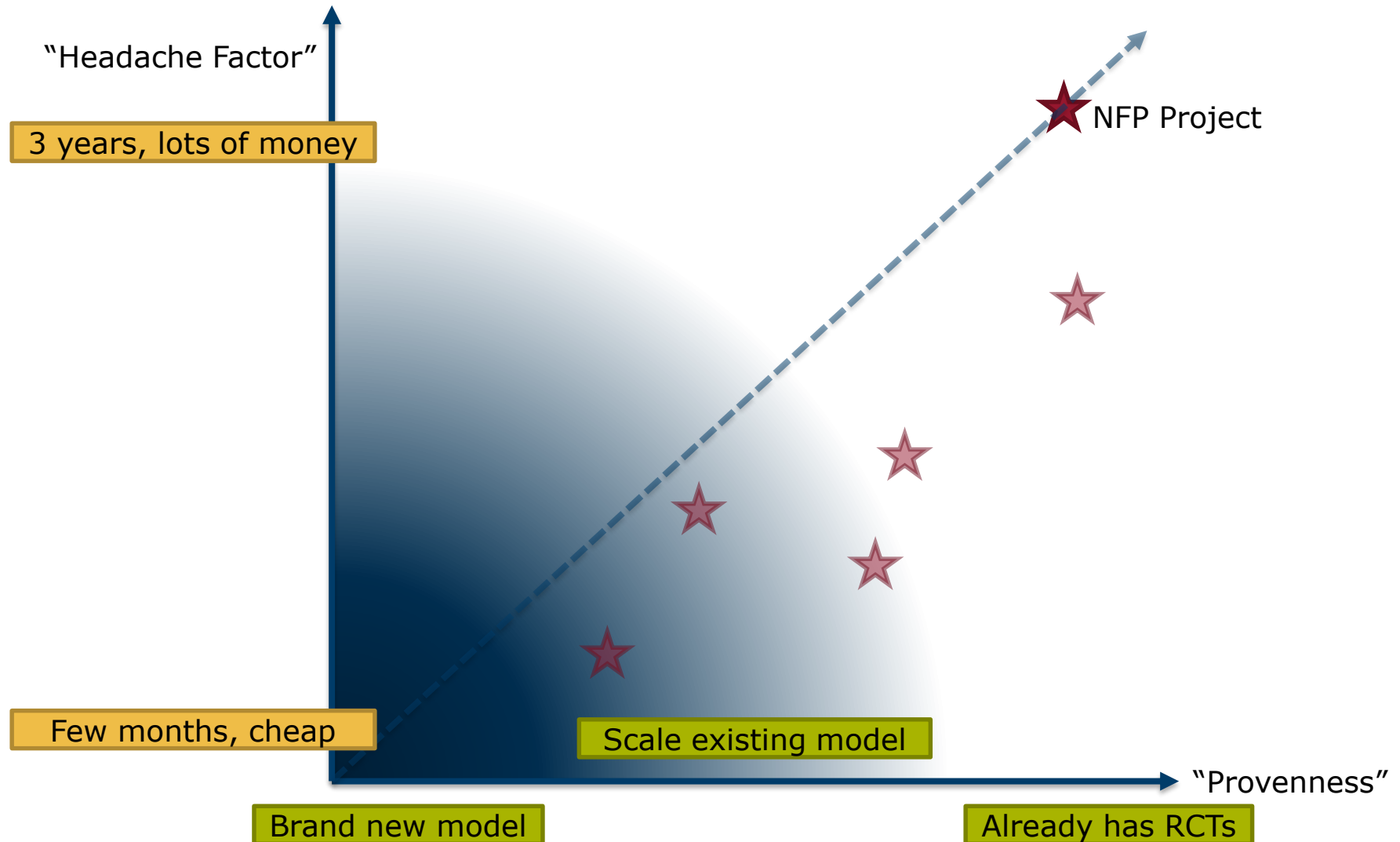
- Success
 - One of the biggest PFS projects in the world
 - Major expansion of proven model
 - State: Achieved all policy goals with minimal risk
- Sacrifice
 - Flipped from “SIB” to “PFS” – dumped investors
 - About 1/3 of state’s potential spending is not contingent on results
 - No federal match for success payments
 - Fuzzy path to long-term sustainability

*Better integration of research and
evidence into policy-making*

Next steps for South Carolina

- Ongoing relationship with GPL
 - GPL finds candidates for state to consider, hire
 - Moving towards a full portfolio
- Working with J-PAL on additional projects
 - State and Local Innovation Initiative (MAT)
 - Using “found randomization” to study whether MCO star ratings actually affect health outcomes
 - J-PAL Shark Tank
- Requiring that First Steps transition to EBPs
- “Coordinated System of Care” waiver

Next steps for South Carolina



Prioritizing evidence-based policy

- Through the ballot box
- Institutionally
 - Centralized initiative vs. agency-specific
 - Budget instructions
- Some progress inventorying proven methods
- Embedding in undergraduate/graduate curricula
- Getting providers, philanthropists ready

Ongoing obstacles

- The urgent gets in the way of the important
- Practitioners still aren't doing a good job translating their work or the importance of EBPs for politicians
 - Approachable, tangible, and comprehensible
- Federal obstacles are real, although overhyped
- Hardly a problem today, but "too much" EBP could stifle innovation at some point
- It often isn't the money