



ASSOCIATION FOR
PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS
& MANAGEMENT

Lunch Plenary: Promoting Justice Through Philanthropic Research and Action

Moderator: Juliet Musso, University of Southern California

Panelists: Jon Baron, The Arnold Foundation

Adam Gamoran, William T. Grant Foundation

Mike Laracy, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Kelly Anne McGeary, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Raquel Thueme, Ruth Mott Foundation

Session Summary: Brianna Keys, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

Question posed to panelists: How is your organization is promoting justice through philanthropic research and action?

Jon Baron: Evidence-based research has found that many federal programs have had little to no meaningful impacts on those they are supposed to service. Thus unless evidence-based research is employed, there will be little impacting the economic disparities that exist in our country. For example, a small pilot study program found that incorporating FAFSA completion into tax return filings at H&R Block at no extra cost not only significantly increased financial aid applications, but also significantly increased college enrollment among low- and moderate-income individuals (for more information see: Bettinger, Long, and Oreopolulos, The FAFSA Project: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA Experiment and Next Steps).

Kerry Anne McGeary: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has a strategic mission to “develop a culture of health”. This means that everyone deserves to live the healthiest life possible. RWJF knows that to accomplish this, it needs a developed action plan, requiring evidence-based research. A central component of developing a culture of health has been making the distinction of equity versus equality. Thus, the Foundation is moving beyond health care to influence health outcomes.

Michael Laracy: Though the Annie E. Casey Foundation has had many well-known conservative connections, it has always stressed the importance of bi-partisanship to advance the agenda of child welfare throughout the U.S. The Foundation believes in being directly involved in public policy development and though it tries to avoid “politics”, it does focus on influencing and moving policy.

Raquel Thueme: While the Ruth Mott Foundation does not fund many large research projects, it does use research in its operations. The Foundation's new strategic plan focuses on the neediest geographic region of Flint, MI. They have garnered resident feedback to determine the strategic goals and will continue to seek feedback to determine what is working and how to adapt their policies to most effectively meet the community's changing needs.

Adam Gamoran: The William T. Grant Foundation's mission is to use research to promote opportunities and the advancement of young people, ages 5 to 25 in the U.S. The Foundation promotes evidence-based research to affect policies, though stressing the importance of needing high-quality evidence to lead to real change. The foundation is now researching how research can effectively influence policy, i.e. what conditions need to be present for research to be used to influence policy decision-making. If you accept that inequality in the U.S. is excessive, that excessive inequality is harmful, and that inequality is responsive to effective policies, then you must acknowledge that research to develop effective policies is important to promote the reduction of inequality.