

State Policy Research Resources

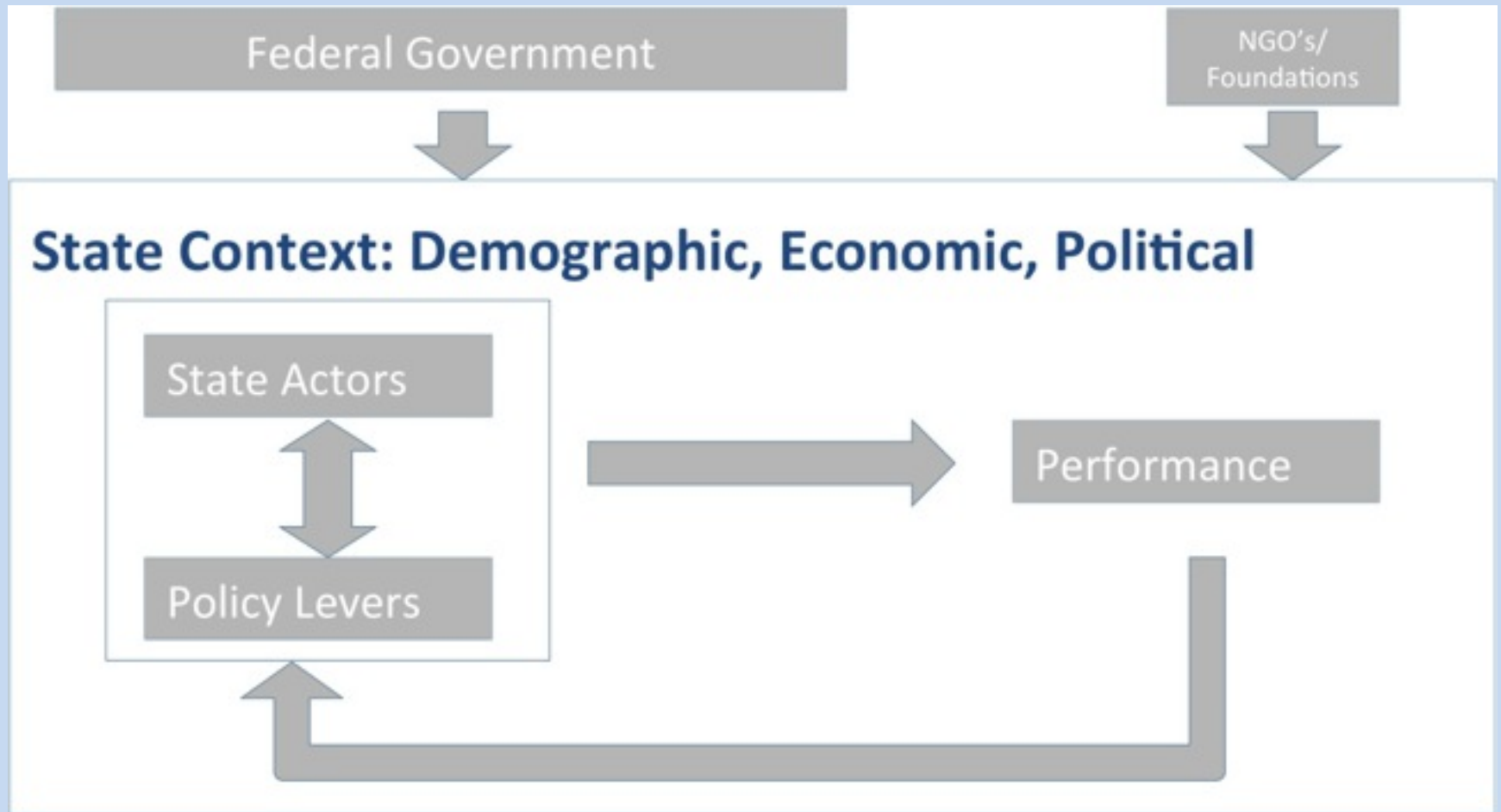
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What are the goals of policy research that explains state higher education performance?

- Understand state CONTEXT
- Understand state higher education PERFORMANCE
- Understand POLICIES in place in the state
- UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONTEXT, PERFORMANCE, AND POLICY
- Make informed policy recommendations

Conceptualizing State Policy Research



Thinking like a policymaker

- What do policymakers want/need to know?
(QUESTIONS)
- How do they answer these questions? (DATA)
- How do policymakers find these data?
(DATABASES and SOURCES)

Context

- What do we know about the state CONTEXT?
 - Demographic
 - Economic
 - Workforce
 - State Structure (Created by Policy)
 - Political Culture (History)

Demographic Context

- Data points to consider:
 - Population (change over time)
 - College-going population
 - Overall Educational Attainment
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - [U.S. Census Bureau](#)
 - [WICHE](#) (high school graduates)
 - [NCHEMS Info Center](#)
 - State offices that conduct demographic research

Economic Context

- Data points to consider:
 - Income (Household, Family)
 - New Economy Index
 - Income Inequality
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - U.S. Census Bureau
 - NCHEMS Info Center
 - [Postsecondary Education Opportunity](#)
 - State offices of economic and workforce development
 - [Bureau of Economic Analysis](#)

Workforce Context

- Data points to consider:
 - Employment (by industry)
 - Workforce growth projections
 - Unemployment rates
 - Net Migration
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)
 - NCHEMS Info Center
 - [Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce](#)
 - State Workforce Board
 - State offices of economic development

State Structure/Political Context

- Data points to consider:
 - Structure of Higher Education
 - Power of Governor, Legislature, Other Leaders
 - Business Community
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - [ECS state structures handbook](#)
 - [National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
 - State website
 - State business roundtable
 - State constitution/legal documents

Now you have data. So what?

- In what ways is this state's context unique?
- What is the most important story that the state context sets up?
 - Given a state's demographic, economic, workforce, and structural context, what might be some of its important higher education issues?

Performance

- How does the state's higher education (system) PERFORM?
 - Preparation
 - Participation
 - Affordability
 - Completion
 - Research Competitiveness

Preparation

- Data points to consider:
 - High school course taking
 - High school assessment scores
 - High school graduation rates
 - State-level data and nationally comparable data
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - [College Board \(AP\)](#)
 - [Education Week](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Education \(NAEP\)](#)
 - State Board of Education

Participation

- Data points to consider:
 - Enrollment
 - Enrollment by sector
 - Enrollment intensity
 - Chance for College
 - Working-Age Adult Enrollment (25-49)
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - [NCES/IPEDS](#)
 - NCHEMS Info Center
 - State Higher Education Board website
 - Postsecondary Education Opportunity
 - Chronicle Digest

Affordability

- Data points to consider:
 - Tuition and Fees
 - Need-Based Grants
 - Merit-Based Grants
 - Loans
 - College Costs as Proportion of Family Income
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - [NASSGAP](#)
 - [Delta Cost Project](#)
 - [SHEEO SHEF](#)
 - State Higher Education/Financial Aid website
 - [College Board Trends in College Pricing/Financial Aid](#)

Completion

- Data points to consider:
 - Completions/Degree Production
 - Certificates
 - Associate's Degrees
 - Bachelor's Degrees
 - Graduation Rates
 - Transfer Rates
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - NCES/IPEDS
 - NCHEMS Info Center
 - [College Results Online](#)
 - [Complete College America](#)
 - [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#)

Research Competitiveness

- Data points to consider:
 - State Investment in Research Universities
 - Higher Education Expenditures by Sector
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - NCHEMS Info Center
 - National Center for Education Statistics
 - State Research Alliance/Roundtable
 - Delta Cost Project
 - WebCstar (NSF data)

Contextualizing Performance

- Where do performance GAPS exist?
 - Between state and other states (or the nation)?
 - Among groups within the state?
- How does the state's higher education performance align with the state's broader priorities?
 - College access
 - Economic Competitiveness

POLICY

- What are the main higher education POLICY issues in the state?
 - Finance
 - Transitions
 - Capacity
 - Context
 - Accountability

Finance

- Data points to consider:
 - State appropriations
 - State budget
 - State expenditures
 - Financial Aid
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - SHEEO SHEF
 - State Budget Office
 - Delta Cost Project
 - NASSGAP

Transitions

- Data points to consider:
 - Transfer/Articulation Policy
 - K-12 to higher education pathways
 - Entry/Re-entry for adult learners
 - Postsecondary to workforce pipeline
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - State P-16 or P-20 council
 - [Data Quality Campaign](#)
 - SHEEO
 - Complete College America

Capacity

- Data points to consider:
 - How does the state utilize its institutions
 - In-state vs. Out-of-state enrollment
 - Efficiency/Productivity
 - Use of Technology
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - State higher education board
 - NCHEMS Info Center
 - NCES/IPEDS
 - Delta Cost Project

Context

- Data points to consider:
 - Tax policy
 - Political culture
 - External forces
 - Broader policy context
 - Focus on underrepresented groups
 - Other public policies that have an impact on higher education
- Recommended Data Sources:
 - SHEEO
 - Media clips
 - Interviews

Telling the Story

- What policies help to explain performance?
- How does context inform performance?
- How does performance – in turn – inform policy?

Common Challenges

- What are some of the common challenges in conducting state policy research?
 - Changes over time
 - Policy
 - Performance
 - Incomplete data/Bad data
 - Primary vs. Secondary Sources
 - Putting data into perspective
 - Avoiding the “data dump”

Putting It All Together

- Compiling a briefing book
- Using this background research to prepare for interviews
 - Identifying the right people to interview
 - Identifying the right questions to ask

Potential Interview Participants: State Higher Education Leadership

- State Higher Education Executive Officer/Staff
- State Community College System Leader/Staff
- Independent College Association Leader/Staff
- Chief State Student Financial Aid Officer/Staff
- Regional Higher Education Leader (MHEC/
SREB/WICHE)

Potential Interview Participants: State Political Leadership

- Governor's Policy Director or Advisor
- State Senator (D/R)
- State Representative (D/R)
- Leader, Black Caucus
- Leader, Latino Caucus
- State Budget Officer

Potential Interview Participants: Institutional Leadership

- Leader, Public Research University
- Leader, Public Comprehensive University
- Leader, Community College
- Leader, Historically Black College or University
- Faculty Member, Public Research University

Potential Interview Participants: Other Education Sectors

- Chief K-12 School Officer/Staff
- P-16 or P-20 Council Leader/Staff

Potential Interview Participants: Other State Education Partners

- State Research Group Leader
- State Business Roundtable/Organization Leader
- Philanthropic Organization Leader

Other Potential Interview Participants

- Workforce Training Board Leader/Staff
- Governor's Office of Student Achievement
- Professional Standards Commission
- State Expert/Historian

Next Steps

- Explore data sites
- Figure out the questions you want to ask
- Identify the data you need to answer the questions
- Scour the data
- Decide what is important to the story and what is not