# Towards Research-Informed Practice and Practice-Informed Research: Lessons from Wisconsin

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**Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium**
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# Building Blocks for Academic/Agency Partnerships

- Partnerships require infrastructure and resources to support sustained engagement

- With engagement, partnerships can develop trust, and a ***shared understanding*** of…:

  – Useful and interesting questions

  – Appropriate methods

  – Satisfactory answers

    ***…and how these vary across different partners***

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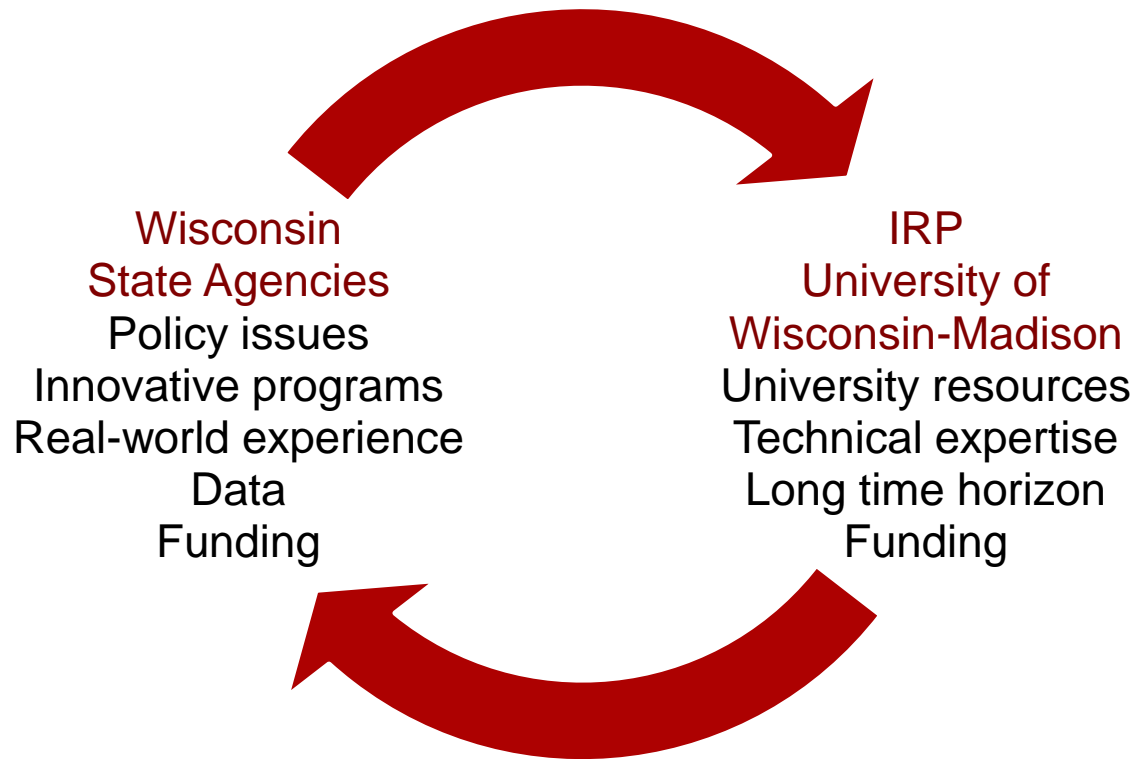UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

# Wisconsin Example:
## UW IRP and Wisconsin Human Services Agencies

- **IRP History**: Created in 1966 during the War on Poverty to support basic research, training, and evaluation of anti-poverty policy

- **IRP Funding**: IRP core infrastructure funded by U.S. DHHS and the UW; research projects funded by grants and contracts from foundations and state and federal agencies

- **Resources:**
  - Researchers:  IRP staff supported through specific project funding; IRP Faculty Affiliate supported through specific projects and as part of their faculty appointment
  - IRP Research support staff: includes specialize programmers with expertise in Wisconsin administrative data
  - Data Core: Integrated administrative data system, evolved from a series of large-scale evaluation projects conducted by IRP for the State of Wisconsin; designed to maximize the utility of administrative data for research and program evaluation

# Logic of Collaboration

***Collaboration Supports Policy Development and Academic Research***



Wisconsin
State Agencies
Policy issues
Innovative programs
Real-world experience
Data
Funding

IRP
University of
Wisconsin-Madison
University resources
Technical expertise
Long time horizon
Funding

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# Administrative Data Infrastructure: Partnership Product and Input (1)

## To create the data system:

- State of Wisconsin agencies (DCF, DWD, DOC, DPI, DOR, and others) provide data

- IRP provides specialized programming staff, technical support staff, specialized hardware and software

- Funding is provided by UW, grants and contracts from federal sources (often in response to joint UW/Agency proposals), state grants and contracts, and foundations

# Administrative Data Infrastructure: Partnership Product and Input (2)

## To identify the questions of interest:

- IRP staff and faculty affiliates meet regularly with agency leadership and staff

- Sustained research agreements for specific programs (e.g. Child support, child welfare)

- Regular briefings and opportunities to check in

- Contracts for specific programs and projects (e.g. Educational disparities, CSPED evaluation)

- Quarterly "Learning Exchange"

- Ad-Hoc TA provided by IRP staff and faculty (some state funded, some not)

- Ad-Hoc consultation provided by state agency leadership and staff

# Administrative Data Infrastructure: Partnership Product and Input (3)

The IRP Data Core requires and sustains the partnership:

- Provides a unique resource for agencies that cannot otherwise link and analyze across systems: sustains state support of Data Core data access and funding

- Provides a unique data resource for research that cannot otherwise be completed: sustains commitment and interest of academic researchers

### *Yours, mine, and (increasingly) ours.*

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# Institutional Constraints Shape the Partnership

- **Example 1: Data may only be used to inform policy and program administration.** State agencies are not permitted to provide data access for research not relevant to the agency's mission, so researchers need to understand and explain utility.

- **Example 2: Research results must be made public.** IRP faculty and staff are not permitted to submit research for clearance by funders, so agencies must value and accept independence.

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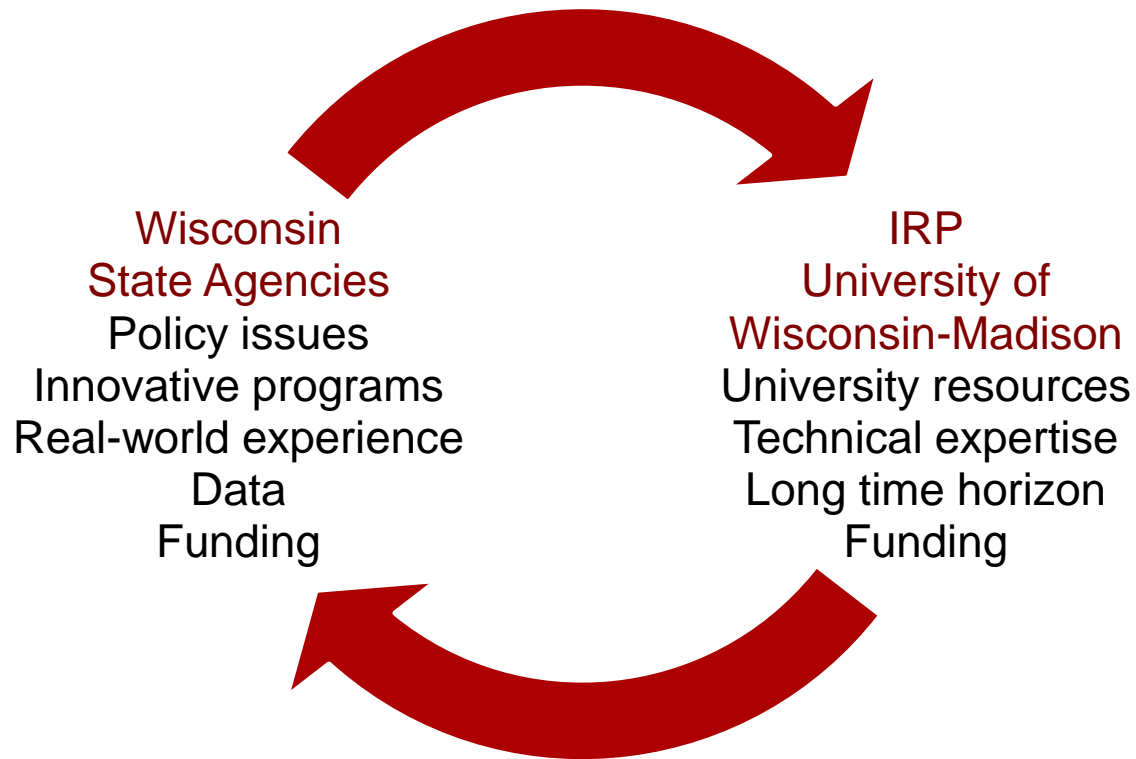UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

# Examples of Collaborative Projects

- Educational outcomes for children in foster care
  - Seed: Agency request for TA

- Child Welfare/Child Support Collaboration
  - Seed: Staff question (during WTG Fellowship, following Federal support for data construction)

- National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)
  - Seed: Federal RFA

*Each has (or is expected to) support policy innovation and academic research products.*

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