

UNIT DESCRIPTION: The Public Policy Center

- is an outreach and engagement unit
- serves the state and communities in Nebraska, as well as the nation
- provides policymakers with information through the conduct of original research as well as from the existing literature and policy practices in other jurisdictions
- links those with policy needs to expertise at the University

FIVE PRIORITY AREAS OF RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

Note: These areas were selected because they address critical interests of residents of Nebraska and the nation. Many of our projects focus on issues confronting diverse populations, including underserved and underrepresented groups in the state and nation. Center faculty, staff, and students are equipped to make a difference in each of these areas, reflecting the University's and the Center's commitment to excellence and achieving significant impact on policy-related matters. Below are the five areas with examples of recent activities related to each priority area.

1. Behavioral Health and Human Services

- Research & administration of the "State Infrastructure Grant" for child and adolescent behavioral health services
- Strategic planning for development of policies and practices for Behavioral Health Division of NDHHS
- Research on impact of southeast tornado disaster in May 2004 on volunteers and first-responders
- Create "psychological first-aid" curriculum models for SAMHSA for use by hospitals
- Risk communication strategies related to behavioral health matters for disasters and other critical incidents

2. Public Participation in Policymaking

- Deliberations in Lincoln on labeling of Genetically Modified Foods (8/05) and Future of Lincoln (2/05)
- Evaluate CDC's citizen and expert consensus process for establishing priorities for pandemic flu vaccine distribution
- Part of nationwide *By the People* effort, a PBS public affairs initiative, in partnership with NET-TV
 - Working also with UNK, discussions on education policy issues in Kearney (10/05) and Wayne (4/06)
- Work with Kettering Foundation, National Conference of State Legislatures, and Council on Public Policy Education on deliberative dialogue initiatives

3. Application of Information Technology to Health and Human Services Delivery Systems

- Cost-benefit analysis and creation of Nebraska Information & Referral system accessible via phone or internet (2-1-1)
- Working with software vendors and the national Alliance of Information and Referral Systems to develop interoperability standards for industry and I&R providers
- Evaluation of the expansion and coordination of information and referral systems in the mid-South Delta region
- Develop and implement a patient-centered, health information exchange for Panhandle region healthcare providers

4. Access to Government Services: Minority and Justice Implementation Committee

- The mission of the MJIC is to achieve four primary aims:
 - address racial disparities in both the juvenile and adult justice systems
 - ensure equal access to justice
 - increase the diversity of Nebraska's judicial workforce
 - increase the diversity of Nebraska's legal profession

5. Water Science, Law, and Policy

- Strategies for two Polk County communities to collaborate on the reduction of arsenic in the drinking water systems
- Humanities Council grant to NET-TV, PPC, and UNK to hold deliberative discussions on water policy issues
- Work in partnership with water scientists at UNL on projects involving adaptive management and public participation

Benchmarks and Timetables

- Portfolio of 8-12 grants and contracts, with external funds totaling between \$1.0-1.5 million annually
- Peer-Reviewed Conference Presentations and Publications -- 5-10 annually
- Indicia of national recognition, such as invitations to serve on national committees, and highlighting of Center's activities and work products by national or governmental organizations, within 3 years