



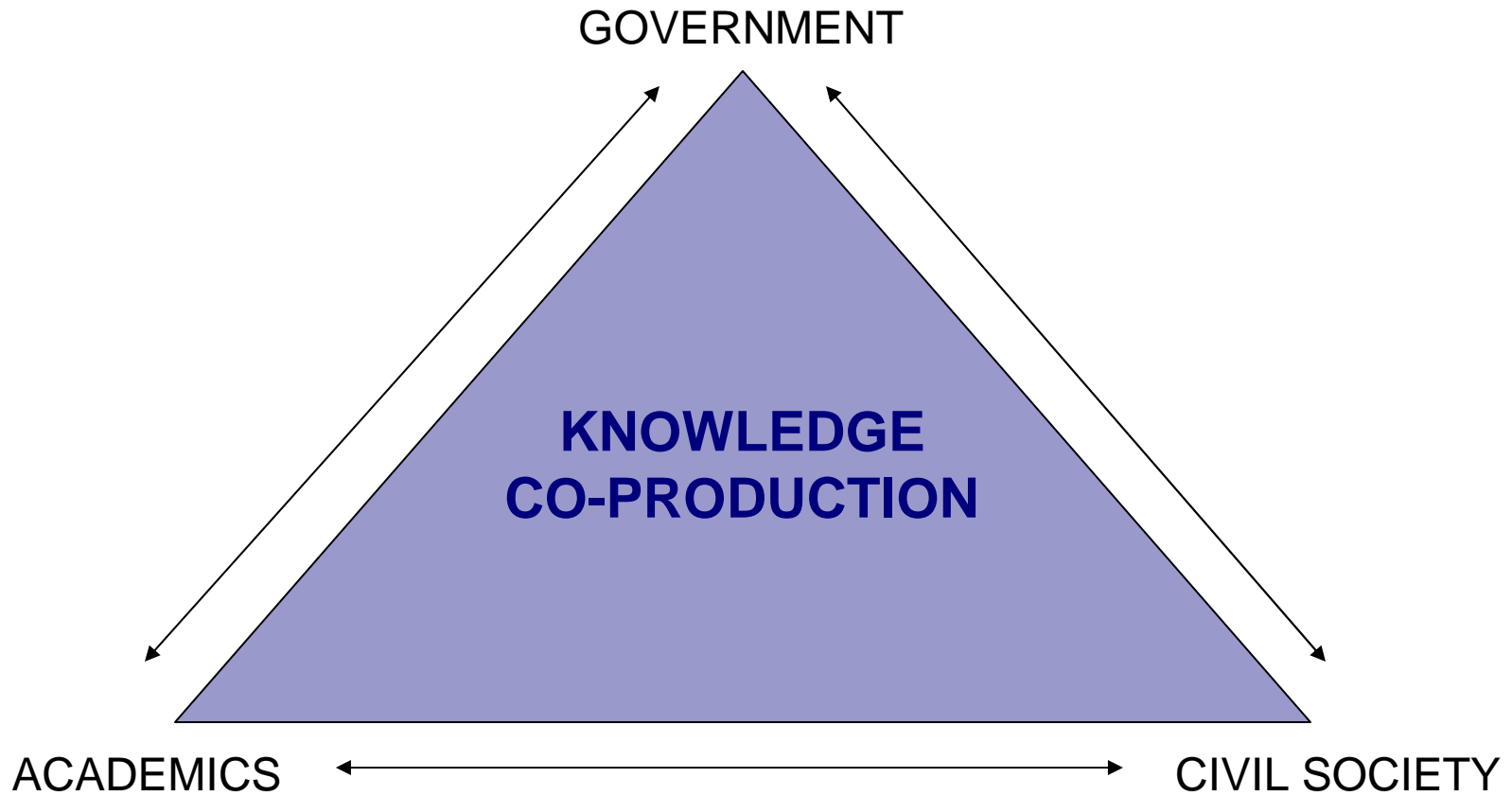
Reflections on Moving Poverty Research to Policy

Cynthia Needles Fletcher
Iowa State University



Effective public policy

- is anchored in rigorous knowledge (academia)
- recognizes the responsibility of the state for citizen welfare (government)
- acknowledges the contributions of civil society (voluntary associations of citizens)



Source: UNESCO, 2007



Policy Research Stories from the Trenches

- commissioned or contracted research for policy-makers
- Ivory Tower research with policy implications
- use and misuse of policy-relevant findings



Commissioned or Contracted Policy Research Stories

- established relationships and reputation
- legislative study committees and agency connections
- mutual interest in value of new knowledge and policy
- timetables honored
- effective (understandable and usable form) communication
- *sometimes* used to inform policy and programs



“Ivory Tower” Research that “Finds” Policy Relevance Story

- interest in identifying policy impacts of research
- connections to stakeholders and policy-makers
- patience and perseverance



Iowa Department of Transportation Strategic Planning Process

2001 – 2002: HHS-funded methodological study on survey design, response rates and transportation module development

Spring 2007: seminar and discussion with DOT staff

Summer 2007: supplemental analysis and response to questions

Fall 2007: draft strategic plan prepared

Fall 2007 – Spring 2008: process interrupted by new legislative priority

Summer 2008: draft strategic plan under review by Commission

Fall 2008: plan will be vetted in regional meetings

Winter 2009: proposals/budget submitted to Iowa General Assembly



Iowa Department of Transportation Strategic Plan *Draft*

...includes section on “Understanding Iowa”

- Population
- Employment
- Income (includes section on Low-Income Persons in Iowa)
- “Understanding Iowa” Implications

“With Iowa’s minority, disabled, and low-income populations being located in both metro and non-metro areas, it is important to determine what improvements and services could help meet their mobility needs and access to jobs.”



Use and Misuse of Policy-Relevant Findings Story

- study of rural health care utilization posted on web
- anti-immigration organization misrepresents our findings on their webpage and cites ISU report
- rural hospital administrator contact
- draft letter identifying misrepresentation
- organization revises their webpage and keeps ISU citation



Reflections

- Co-production of knowledge is the most effective way to generate policy-relevant knowledge – civil society has an important role, but can be overstated.
- We need to open up social science without dumbing it down—“make social science *more social* and *more scientific*.” (UNESCO, 2007)
- There is an inevitable gap between social science questions and policy questions.
- Even assuming we produce policy relevant knowledge, there is no guarantee it will be used or used effectively.