



AcademyHealth

Advancing Research, Policy and Practice in PHSSR

April 13, 2011

Overview

- AcademyHealth & PHSSR
- The evidence imperative
- Data & methods in PHSSR
- Highlights of recent findings
- Priorities & next steps

AcademyHealth: Improving Health & Health Care

- Professional society for health services researchers and health policy analysts
 - >4000 members, >160 organizational affiliates
- Three mission elements:
 1. Support the development of HSR
 2. Facilitate the use of the best available research and information
 3. Assist policy and practice leaders in addressing major health challenges
- We work to both “push” the production of research and promote the “pull” by decision makers



What is Health Services Research?

- Health services research is the multidisciplinary field of scientific investigation that studies how social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and processes, health technologies, and personal behaviors affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and ultimately our health and well-being. Its research domains are individuals, families, organizations, institutions, communities, and populations.

--AcademyHealth, June 2000



Health Services Research

- *What works?*
- *For whom?*
- *At what cost?*
- *Under what circumstances?*



Programs Support the Mission

Methods development
Training
Interest groups
Student groups
Meetings and conferences



Improving the field

Research translation
Convening activities
Needs assessments
Briefs and reports



Using the best
available research
and information

Technical assistance
Learning networks



Assisting health policy
and practice leaders

Public Health Systems and Services Research

- Public Health Systems Research (PHSR) is a field of study that examines the organization, financing, and delivery of public health services within communities, and the impact of these services on public health.

Sources: Mays, G.P., P.K. Halverson and F.D. Scutchfield. "Behind the Curve? What we know and need to learn from public health systems research," J Public Health Management and Practice. 2003;9(3)179-182.



PHSSR

- *What works in public health systems/services?*
- *For whom?*
- *At what cost?*
- *Under what circumstances?*



Public Health System Quality

- “Quality in public health is the degree to which policies, programs, and research for the population increase desired health outcomes and conditions in which the population can be healthy.”

Consensus Statement, DHHS, 2008

PHSSR at AcademyHealth

- Fundamental to achieving AcademyHealth vision of *Improved Health and Health Care*
- Consistent with growing investment in prevention and population health
- Focus also on health systems' role in partnering with public health and expanding prevention services
- Relationship between HSR and PHSSR as sister disciplines



Overview

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- The evidence imperative

The Paradox of Too Much Evidence!

- Imagine a diligent policymaker decided that before providing advice on a particular social policy question, she was going to read all the relevant academic literature.
- Being a fast reader, she envisaged spending half an hour on each article that *Google Scholar* determined to be relevant to the question at hand.
- How long would this take?



The Flood of Evidence

- Reading solidly for 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, it would take a policymaker:
 - 18 months to get through the 6,000 articles on ‘early childhood intervention’,
 - 4 years to get through the 16,000 articles on ‘teacher quality’, or
 - 5 years to get through the 20,000 articles on ‘social housing’.



→ Understand how evidence is used in policy, *not whether*

- Conceptual

e.g. Disparities

- Instrumental

e.g. Effective programs to prevent obesity

- Symbolic

e.g. to defend previously held opinion



→ Uses of knowledge

- Documentation → what?
- Analysis → why and how?
- Prescription → what to do?

→ *“The potential contribution of research to the decisionmaking process has less to do with offering definitive solutions and more with improving the quality of the terms of the debate.”*

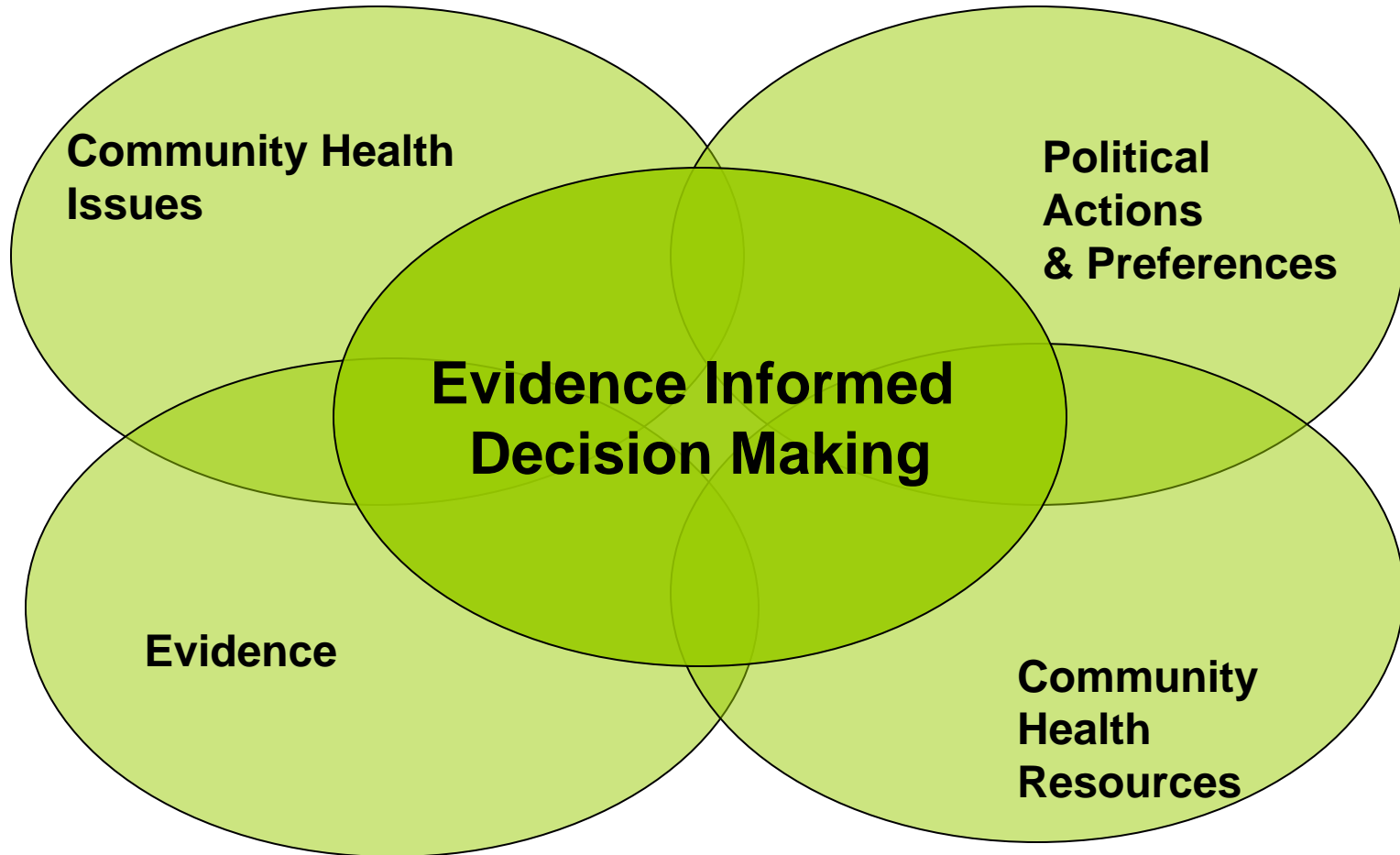


Evidence-based Public Health

- What is needed?
- Who is addressing the need?
- Identifying Gaps
- How do you translate the evidence into policy?



The Role of Evidence



Overview

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- **Data & methods in PHSSR**

AcademyHealth Assessed PHSSR Data and Methods Needs

- First assessment of its kind in PHSSR
 - Literature Review
 - AcademyHealth PHSR Interest Group Survey
 - Key Informant Interviews



Assessment IDs Challenges and Opportunities for PHSSR

- Resolving definitional issues and scope
- Need to develop appropriate measures
- Continuous need for methods training and continuing education
- Opportunities to conduct research in practice-based settings

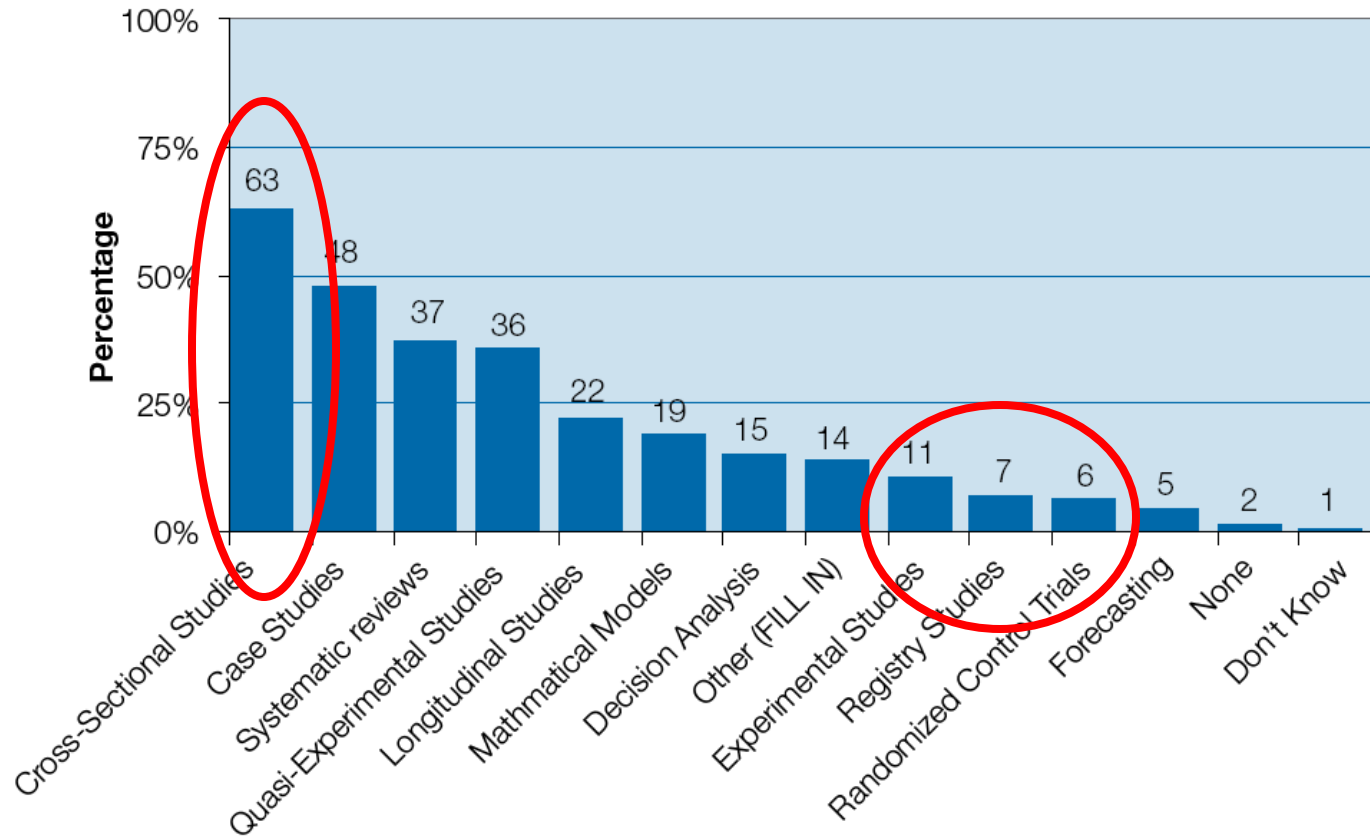


Literature Review Finds Methods Needs

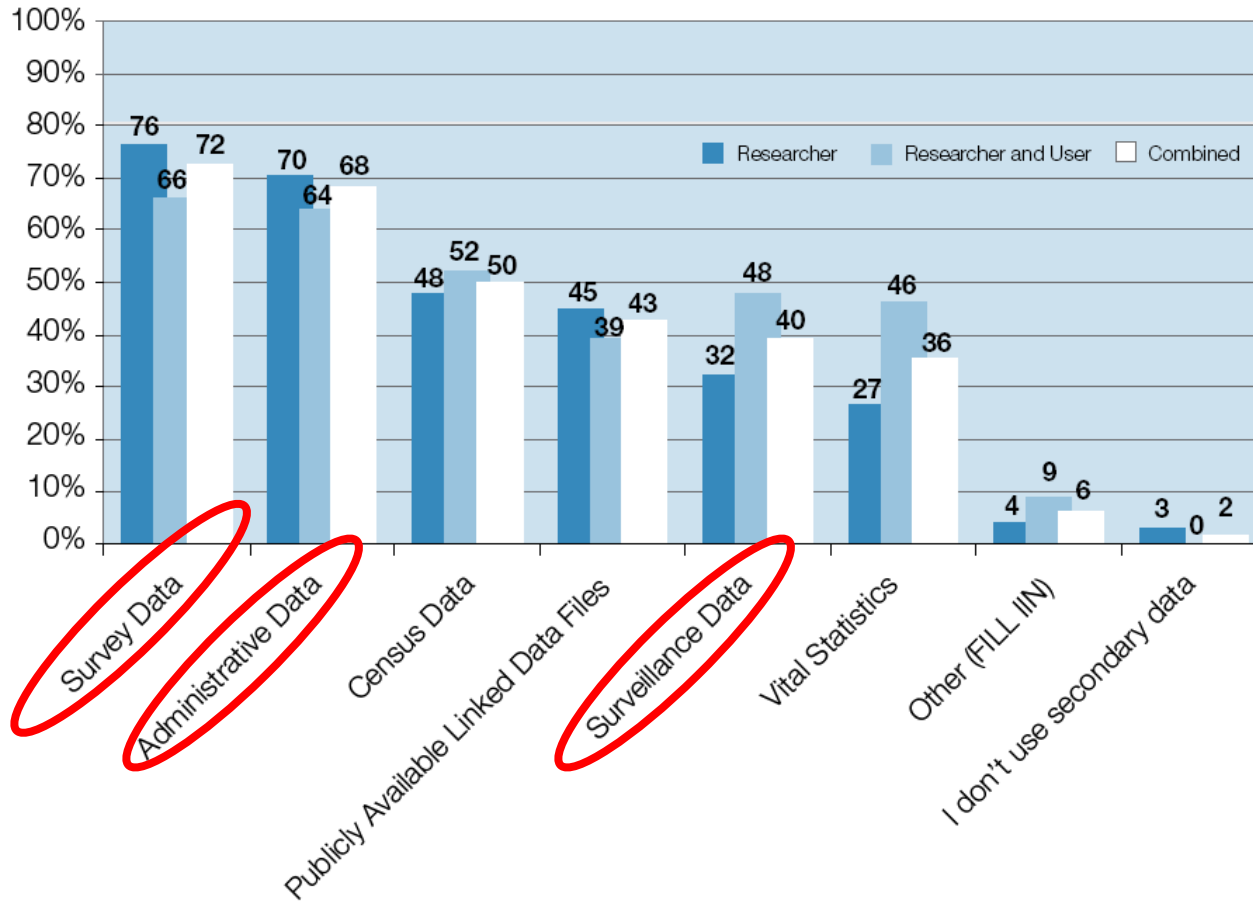
- There are only a small number of PHSR papers focused on methods and methodological developments, though trends indicate this number is growing.
- Nearly two-thirds of the research articles reviewed use quantitative methods, more than a third use qualitative methods.



Commonly Used Study Designs in PHSR



Types of Secondary Data Commonly Used in PHSR



Survey IDs Barriers to Advancing PHSR Methods

- 69% of researchers were not aware of masters' or doctoral-level training programs focused on training in PHSR
- 70% said continuing education in PHSR would be beneficial for the field.



Key Informant Interviews Add Context

- Barriers to conducting more rigorous research include data limitations and definitional and measurement issues
- Some said field needs a refresher in basic statistical methods, while others focused on the need for training in econometric methods, analysis of geo-spatial data, and mixed methods.



- *“We don’t necessarily need specific methods. In PHSR you need different levels of data on community, financing, and environmental factors—the data sources are there but we need to be more creative in their use.”*
- *“We have the methodological capacity, it exists from the HSR side of the house”*



Assessment: Future Directions

- Encouraging research in practice-based settings
- Address data limitations
- Standards of evidence-based practice that could guide the field toward rigorous research standards
- Ongoing practice, policy, and research dialogue necessary



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PHSSR Impact: Local Health Spending

- Communities that invested more in public health delivery from 1993-2005 experienced slower growth in medical care spending and larger reductions in mortality from leading preventable causes of death.

-Glen Mays, UAMS



PHSSR Impact: Partnerships

- Important elements that enhance connectivity in LHDs: network membership, network interaction, the role of health departments, frequency of interaction, strategic value, trust, and reciprocity
- The tool (PARTNER) currently in use in LHDs

-Danielle Varda, University of Colorado



PHSSR Impact: Quality

- Minnesota Public Health Collaborative for Quality Improvement provided resources, tools, technical assistance and training on quality
- Conducted 8 projects, 7 of which achieved quality improvement

-William Riley, University of Minnesota



PHSSR Impact: Regionalization

- The benefits of the regional local health department (LHD) model identified by LHD directors in a statewide survey include the ability to better leverage resources, to build a stronger local structural capacity, and to provide public health services to underserved communities.

-Li-Wu Chen, University of Nebraska



PHSSR Impact: Disparities

- State-level data could identify and track state-level disparities for most of the LHIs.
- Because indicator data often are aggregated at the state level, users have limited ability to differentiate among diverse population groups and produce local estimates.

-Marsha Gold, Mathematica



PHSSR Impact: LHD Capacity

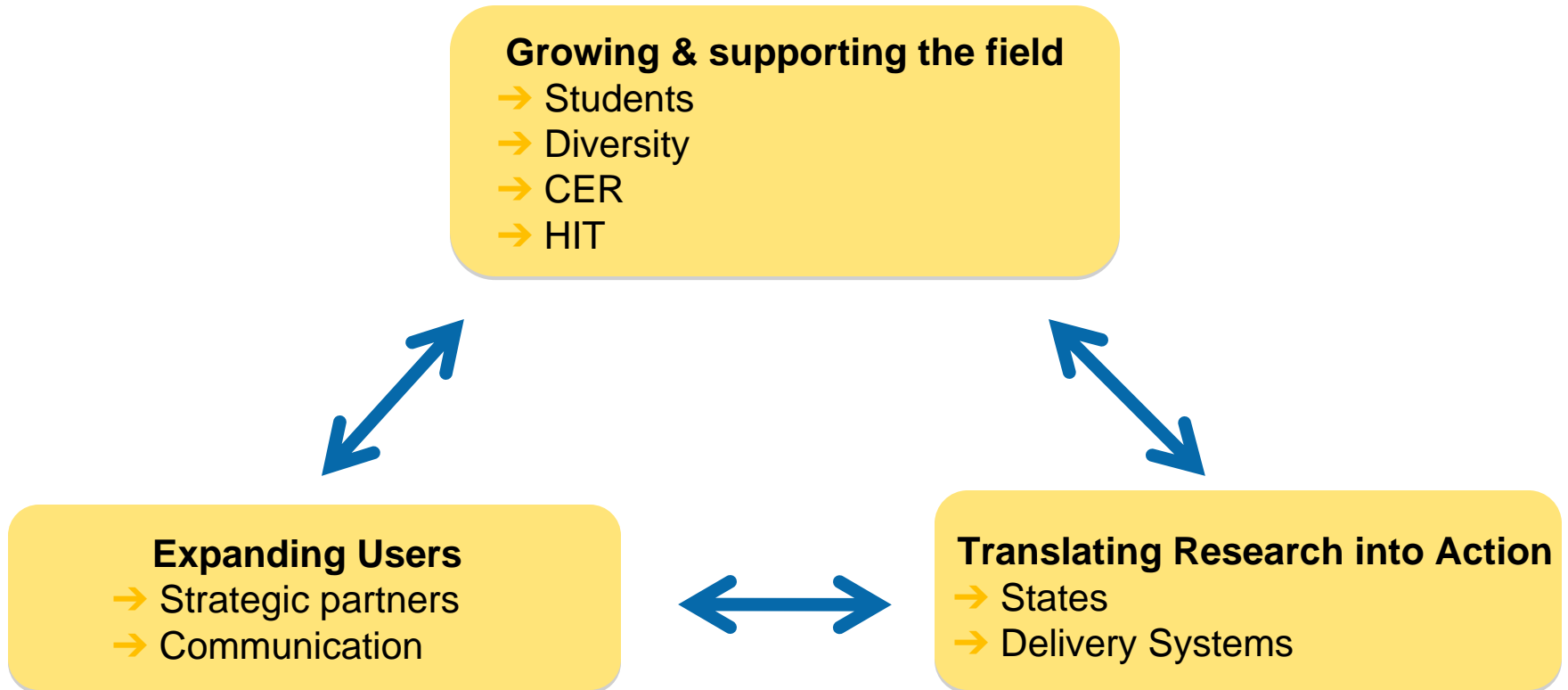
- Needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- Developed detailed community multi-cultural profiles to analyze relationships between population characteristics and existing public health capacity
- What are the promising strategies?
 - Claudia Schur, Social & Scientific Systems



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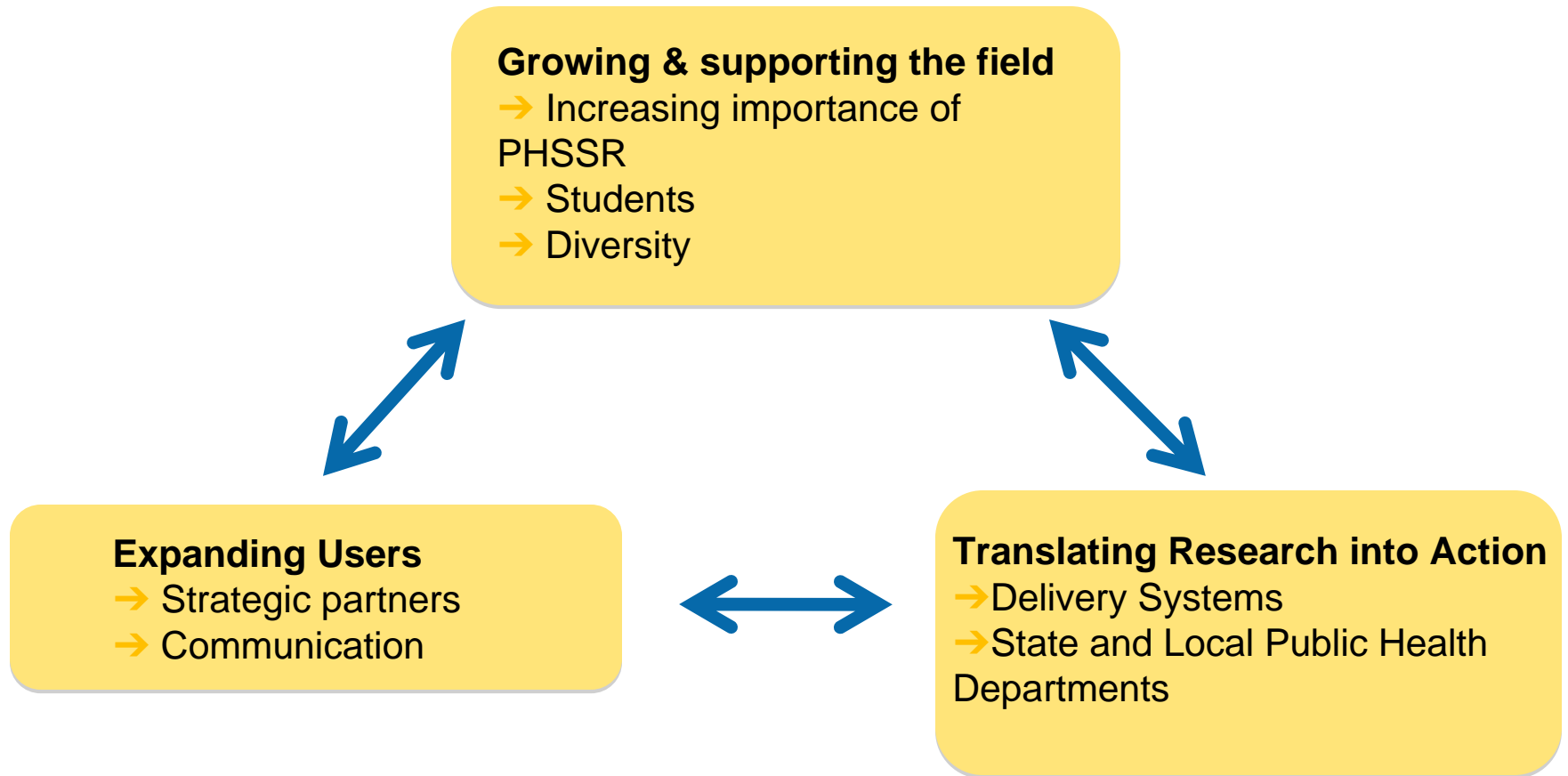
AcademyHealth 2011 Priorities: *Grow the Field, Expand Reach & Impact*



Building Diversity in the Field

- Multiple dimensions
 - Disciplinary, career stage, geography, race/ethnicity
- AcademyHealth & Aetna Foundation Support Minority Scholars
 - 15 scholarships per year, 80 applicants in 2010
 - 1,900 registrants for free disparities research webinar series
- More than 1,100 participants in Disparities Interest Group

AcademyHealth PHSSR Priorities: *Growth, Reach & Impact*



Building the Field of PHSSR

- Raising a collective voice
- Supporting new researchers
- Building and growing data infrastructure
- Providing training and methods support



Questions

- How does PHSSR advance population health agenda in Triple Aim?
- How can AcademyHealth best focus its efforts to support PHSSR?
- What are the priority research questions?
- What else can we do to build the field?





AcademyHealth

Questions?

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