

Information that Matters

*NHCF Summary of the Center's
work and impact in 2016*

Why the Center's work matters

In 2016, the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies enjoyed another year of original research, robust public engagement, and service as a vital source of insight and information for decision-makers across the state. We maintained our focus on our core areas of research, such as the state budget, demographics, and the economy. In addition, we broke ground on a new policy area: New Hampshire's water use and infrastructure. We shared our research with leaders from New Hampshire's business, non-profit, local government, education, and other sectors. We worked hard to strengthen our reputation as an unbiased resource for leaders and concerned citizens across the state. No other organization in New Hampshire performs such a service.

True to its original charge, the Center is improving the quality of public policy in New Hampshire. In an era where civic discourse is dominated by spin, the Center's thoughtful, non-partisan analysis is an increasingly important foundation to enable rational public policy debate. In short, the Center has provided, and continues to provide *information that matters*.

It was not a year without its difficulties. With the deaths of long-time board member Martin Gross and the Center's economist, Dennis Delay, the board and staff of the Center spent a significant portion of the year working through re-staffing the Center, and working through the Center's strategic direction. The Center hired Greg Bird as the Center's new economist, bringing additional capacity to meet its mission.

New work included an expanded focus on substance use, early childhood learning and energy policy in New Hampshire. Our efforts in these areas in 2016 are intended to serve as a foundation for a more aggressive engagement in 2017.

Our work in 2016

Here's a quick snapshot of our activities, by the numbers:

- We produced **7** original reports on a variety of topics of which **3** were columns for state media outlets summarizing our original research for a broad readership.
- We delivered **36** presentations across the state to business, non-profit and government groups.
- We appeared on **11** radio or TV programs, discussing our work, or providing analysis on key public policy topics in the state.
- We earned **42** appearances in state and national media that featured our work.

We engage the legislature on many issues – including the public policy implications of New Hampshire's demographics and the state's long term finances – but spend half our resources sharing our work with other important audiences across New Hampshire.

In addition, we continue to increase our efforts to work with the state's many media outlets to help them shape their long-term thinking about coverage of New Hampshire policy issues. We are frequent guests on statewide programs dedicated to coverage of public policy – including New Hampshire Public Radio's *The Exchange*, WMUR-TV's *New Hampshire's Business* and a weekly public policy show on WKXL radio.

Collaborations

Since our founding, we have endeavored to develop strong partnerships with like-minded organizations focused on New Hampshire's future. Those partnerships and collaborations help us expand our influence and amplify our work beyond the circle of policymakers who might ordinarily be our core audience.

One new engagement was with the national research firm RAND Corporation. The Center partnered with RAND to be its on-the-ground partner in public policy review and data support for its work on the cost-benefit of early childhood learning in New Hampshire.

Some of our long-standing key partners include Leadership New Hampshire, Leadership Seacoast, Leadership Greater Nashua (among other leadership groups across the state), the New Hampshire Forum on the Future, the Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire, the Endowment for Health, and the New Hampshire Coalition for Business and Education. In 2016, the Center began to engage in conversations with the New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education, the New Hampshire Historical Society and New Hampshire Humanities regarding potential collaborations.

Our funding

The Center relies on a broad base of donors and research grants to support our mission. By design, at least half of our funding comes from unrestricted donations, ensuring our independence and our ability to respond quickly to changing policy needs in the state. Your support helps guarantee the kind of thoughtful research and analysis we're known for, well into the future. For information about supporting the Center, visit our website: nhpolicy.org

Our Priorities

The Center's research agenda has evolved over the years, as circumstances change in the policymaking arena. We also elevate important issues that are not receiving sufficient attention. Here is an overview of some of our current areas of focus.

Engaging New Hampshire: Strategic Planning for the State

Our *What is NH?* report – which documents some of the major public policy issues facing the state – is the cornerstone of a set of programming which includes reports, presentations to community leaders, and engagement with news media editorial boards, and non-profit and for-profit boards of directors. Our work in this area is designed to ensure that the strategic decisions by New Hampshire's most important institutions are based on facts.

Aging and Demographics

Our research helps policymakers and others understand the impact of New Hampshire's changing demographics, including our aging population and the effect that will have on a range of key policy questions. Our research has fundamentally reshaped the public discussion on this critical topic. At the request of Legislative leadership, Board Chair Eric Herr and Executive Director Steve Norton facilitated a commission on aging, which has resulted in legislation to include a review of the effects of demographic change during all state budget and policy deliberations. Executive Director Steve Norton continues to be asked to talk to statewide non-profits, corporations, and other leaders to share the current status of New Hampshire's demographics and policy making environment.

New Hampshire's Economy

Many state businesses look to our analyses to help them better understand the trends underlying the economy. Our *Tailwind to Headwinds* work, which examined the shifting trends in the state's economic model, upended long-term policy thinking across New Hampshire's business, non-profit and public sectors. Our economic monitoring continues to focus on the evolving issue of opportunity – whether in terms of economics, education, or healthcare – facing Granite Staters. The Center's economist, Greg Bird, provided the New England Economic Partnership with our three-year economic forecast which was dedicated to the Center's former employee, Dennis Delay.

The State Budget

The state fiscal year 2016 brought enormous change to the state's budget. Significant increases in tax receipts (from the corporate and real estate taxes in New Hampshire) created opportunities for state investment that haven't been seen since the early 2000s. The Center's consistent monitoring of both the spending and revenue sides of New Hampshire's state budget provide an unbiased source of information to support their decision-making. Prior to the state budget's drafting, we prepared an updated analysis of revenue for the House and Senate Ways and Means Committee. In addition, we continued to be a resource for House and Senate committees as they grappled with difficult public policy questions such as the financial implications of expanding the state's Medicaid program and reducing the state's corporate tax rates.

Education

Our work in New Hampshire's education systems has been varied – from our landmark work analyzing the state's high school drop-out rates to more recent work on school facility spending and public higher education. In 2014, our analysis of the trends shaping the school system and student well-being in Manchester helped spark conversation, new thinking, and policy change in the state's largest community. In 2015, our work turned to focus on the implications of declining enrollment on the cost of, and potential consolidation among, New Hampshire's schools. In the face of potential challenges to the state's education adequacy formula, our work in 2016 turned to understanding the financial and educational outcome implications of legislated changes in the state's education funding adequacy formula.

Health Policy and Finance

New Hampshire's healthcare systems have been at the core of our work since our founding. National healthcare reform and state reform (including the elimination of the state's Certificate of Need program) have introduced a level of uncertainty into the healthcare market here in New Hampshire. In 2016, we focused our efforts on the financial status of New Hampshire's hospitals, along with an analysis of the community benefit implications of changes in the hospital market structure as a result of a spate of mergers and consolidations. The Center also continues to focus attention on the debate regarding the state's Medicaid program, both in terms of its fundamental structure as well as understanding the impact of the controversial expansion of the state's Medicaid program to able bodied adults.

Municipal Government

Years of budget difficulties at the state level have resulted in significant reductions in state outlays to cities and towns across New Hampshire. In all our work – including the state budget, the education adequacy funding formula, publicly subsidized health care – we try to bring a municipal government focus. In addition, in 2016 we produced our annual summary of trends in local finances, which helps state and municipal leaders understand the impact of funding decisions at the state level.

New Hampshire's Environment

In 2016, we continued to disseminate our work on the state's water resources, including surface water, drinking water, and water infrastructure, and have sought to connect these issues to other policy areas including municipal finance and demographic change.

Community Outreach & Support

Producing original research and analysis is the foundation upon which all our work rests. We are also committed, however, to sharing this information with as wide a range of audiences as possible. We are regularly consulted by New Hampshire's leaders in the public, private and non-profit sectors who seek our insight and expertise as they navigate their own strategic questions.

Among the audiences we served in 2016:

- **New Hampshire Non-Profits**
 - Providing strategic presentations to (among others):
 - New Hampshire Public Television board of directors
 - New Hampshire Public Radio
 - AARP leadership
 - Endowment for Health
 - New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
 - Stay Work Play
 - Responding to data requests from (among others):
 - Northern Forest Center
 - Community Development Finance Authority
 - New Hampshire Public Radio
 - Community College System of New Hampshire
 - Collaborating with others in the policy arena to amplify our research:
 - We began exploring the possibility of collaborating with the New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education, the Humanities Council, and the New Hampshire Historical Society.
 - We are a core member of the New Hampshire Coalition for Business and Education, a group dedicated to improving the quality of the state's education system.
 - We are a member of the New England Public Policy Center's technical advisory board.
 - We continue to partner with the New Hampshire Women's Foundation, providing data for their *Gender Matters* publications that focus on issues related to gender in New Hampshire.
 - Educating the state's Leadership groups:
 - We presented overviews of New Hampshire's economy, state budget, education system and health care systems to Leadership New Hampshire, Leadership Seacoast, and Leadership Greater Nashua.
- **New Hampshire Businesses**
 - Educating businesses regarding the state's economy, including (among others):
 - Fidelity Investments
 - New Hampshire Bankers Association
 - Salem Chamber of Commerce economic development team
 - Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce
- **New Hampshire Civic Leaders**
 - We provide regular speaking appearances for:
 - Local select boards, city councils, budget committees, etc.
 - Chambers of commerce
 - Local political events/political groups
 - Voter/candidate forums
 - We receive regular requests from town/city administrators and elected officials for data on municipal finance, crime, education, and demographic trends.

- **New Hampshire Political & Policy Leaders**

Officials in the legislative and executive branches are among our most important points of contact for influencing good policy in the state. We are consulted by legislators, their staff, agency directors and members of the Executive Branch for our analysis of various topics. In 2016, that included:

- Providing overviews of major state budgetary issues to committee leadership in the House and Senate.
- Meeting with the Governor and her staff to discuss long-term trends in the state.
- Meeting with senior leadership in the state Department of Health and Human Services to discuss state health policy.
- Sharing our work on public education with legislative leaders.
- Serving on Governor Hassan's Consensus Panel on Revenue Estimates.
- Providing data and analysis for Representative Neal Kurk's committee created to review demographic trends and New Hampshire policy.

Staff

Stephen A. Norton, Executive Director. Mr. Norton joined the Center in October 2005. Between 1998 and 2005, he worked for the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services in a variety of capacities. Prior to that, Mr. Norton was a research associate at the Urban Institute, a non-profit think tank, in Washington, DC. He is a native of Gilford, NH.

Greg Bird, Economist. Mr. Bird was formerly the policy analyst at the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute. Prior to that he was an economist in the West Chester, PA office of Moody's Analytics, analyzing U.S. regional economies as well as the U.S. housing market. He is also the New Hampshire forecast manager for the New England Economic Partnership.

Cathleen K. Arredondo, Office Manager. Ms. Arredondo joined the Center in June 2005. She has nearly 30 years of experience in business and customer service.

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