

**Improving the SC Commission for Minority Affairs
Agency Work Process To Better Serve
South Carolina's Minority Populations**

**Agency Project
For The
Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program**

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Introduction

South Carolina, like its neighboring states of North Carolina and Georgia, continues to undergo diverse changes in its population, racial, ethnic and cultural makeup. These changes are occurring within a context of [arguably] vast political and volatile economic changes. These changes pose challenges not only for our state elected officials, but also for agencies responsible for providing essential public services and information for key decision-making purposes.

The South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs' (CMA) mission is to "address the root causes of socioeconomic poverty and deprivation impacting the state of South Carolina's minority population". The Commission also serves as a "catalyst to work in partnership" with other state agencies that provide direct services. Third, the CMA disseminates information about the State's minority population(s), while not duplicating the services of other state agencies.

This project will discuss a recommended agency work process to assist the SC Commission for Minority Affairs, its [small] staff of Program Coordinators, and Board of Commissioners in better identifying the needs and new challenges facing each of the state's minority populations. The process will consider first the statutory changes occurring since 1993, the impact on current agency and staff processes, as well as budget appropriation changes and impacts. Secondly, a brief synopsis of the current agency work process will be provided. This agency work process takes into consideration the state agency limitations and external budget challenges that hinder the ability to allocate staff time or resources in order to form partnerships. Finally, the project will recommend a revised internal agency work process approach which can enable the SC Commission for Minority Affairs to obtain information from all communities, but especially impoverished communities where African Americans, Native Americans, the Hispanic-Latino and the Asian populations reside across the state.

Overview of the SC Commission for Minority Affairs (CMA)

The South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs was created in 1993 by the South Carolina General Assembly under the late Governor Carroll A. Campbell. The agency hired its first Executive Director and staff in January 1995. Ms. Janie A. Davis became the second Executive Director of the Agency in September, 1995 and continues in this position today. The agency during its early years, 1995 through 2000, had a staff of between three and five Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. The agency mission was established through statute to research and study the root causes of poverty and deprivation impacting the minority population in the state of South Carolina. This was limited primarily to the African American population. The Commission was successful in utilizing researchers on a limited, contractual basis to examine key issues impacting the African-American population. These issues included problems related to crime, the problems facing the African-American male, unemployment, access to health care, low income and wealth creation opportunities, and insufficient minority business development. The ability for the agency to be successful was historically tied in large degree to state budget appropriations. Agency appropriations increased incrementally during the first five years of the agency's operations, but experienced stagnation during the recession of early 2000.

Impact of Economic Changes on the Agency

The national economic changes occurring between 1999 and 2003 had a profound impact on the agency's operation and the ability to deliver research services. Specifically, the economic downturn in the South Carolina economy and in legislative budget appropriation priorities focused on providing direct services, limited new funds coming to the agency for research services during this period.

With limited staffing and resources, the Executive Director and staff's ability to formulate new partnerships with other state agencies, or pursue outreach with other contractual entities to conduct research related to issues of poverty and deprivation was hampered.

Statutory Expansion of the Minority Population In South Carolina¹

While the economic problems in South Carolina continued to impact the agency's staffing levels, the General Assembly made two new statutory changes, which would (also) have an impact on the staffing patterns and the CMA's work process:

1. The expansion of the CMA's statute to include the (growing) Hispanic-Latino, Native American, Asian and other populations, and
2. Responsibility of the State Recognition Program for Native American Indians in South Carolina.

The expansion of the state statute during the 2002 – 2003 Fiscal Year and mandates that the CMA include three other populations created a three-fold increase in agency responsibility – yet this occurred during a period when the state was just beginning to rebound from the economic recession periods from 1999 – 2003. State appropriations for the agency did increase. This was due to the diligent work of the Executive Director and Board. Two additional staff was hired respectively during the 2003 – 2004 and 2004 – 2005 Fiscal Year:

1. Program Coordinator - Hispanic Affairs
2. Program Coordinator - Native American Affairs.

During the 2000 – 2001 fiscal year, the Commission staff was successful in completing its first Strategic Plan for the African-American population. The Executive Director was successful in securing contractual services from academic researchers and professional consultants.

The Strategic Plan identified eight focus areas for the Commission as it seeks to address the issues of socioeconomic poverty and deprivation and its impact on the well being of minorities in South Carolina. These eight focus areas include:

- Structural Forces Impacting Families and Children
- Education Deprivation
- Chronic Unemployment and Underemployment
- Income and Wealth Creation
- Community-Economic Development
- Minority Business Development
- Health Status and Care
- Disproportionate Representation of Minorities in the Criminal Justice System.

Agency Staffing Since the 2006 – 2007 Fiscal Year

In mid 2000, the Executive Director and Program Staff in Community Services, Hispanic-Latino Affairs, and Native American Affairs began to each develop strategic work processes to identify the needs facing each respective minority population within the state of South Carolina. These needs, issues and concerns would be identified and framed within the context of the eight focus areas mentioned earlier. As a result of the growing needs facing the citizens in South Carolina in general, and the three growing minority populations of the state in particular, the Agency's Executive Director initiated a budget request to increase the staff by hiring an FTE staff person responsible for coordinating research related to examining the causes of poverty and deprivation as well as its impact on the state of South Carolina. The agency's first full-time Program Manager for Research and Policy Analysis was hired during the 2006 – 2007 fiscal year.²

State Appropriations and Commission Budget Cuts: FY 2003-2004 Through FY 2008-2009

Charts 1 and 2 provide respectively, the total budget appropriations and the percentage change in budget appropriations for the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs over Fiscal Year periods FY 2003 – 2004 through FY 2008 – 2009. State Budget appropriations during the five year period increased by 83.5%, from \$346,424 (FY 2003-2004) to \$635,832 (FY 2008-2009), with the FY 2003-2004 highest percentage appropriation (57.44%) occurring with the addition of the Hispanic-Latino and Native American Affairs Program Coordinators during the 2005-2006 Fiscal Year. Since 2006-2007, the Commission only received one other major appropriation (FY 2007-2008). This amount totaling \$167,551 (a 31.53%) increase was appropriated to hire the Agency's Program Manager for Research and to establish a \$100,000 research fund to contract for research faculty to conduct research.

The CMA has had to absorb several budget cuts in state appropriation and funding. Chart 2 reveals that agency appropriations decreased initially 3.26% at the beginning of the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year. Since the end of the first quarter of the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year, the agency has had to make up to three budget cuts of 12.5%, 7.0% and 2.0%. These events have made it difficult for the agency to expand its research capabilities, form new partnerships with other state agencies and private sector entities. Budget cuts also hinder the staff work process and limits program and service delivery. Finally, the ability for the CMA to implement a comprehensive, population specific improved work process is also curtailed by fluctuations in the agency budget.

Chart 1: Total CFMA General Funds Appropriations

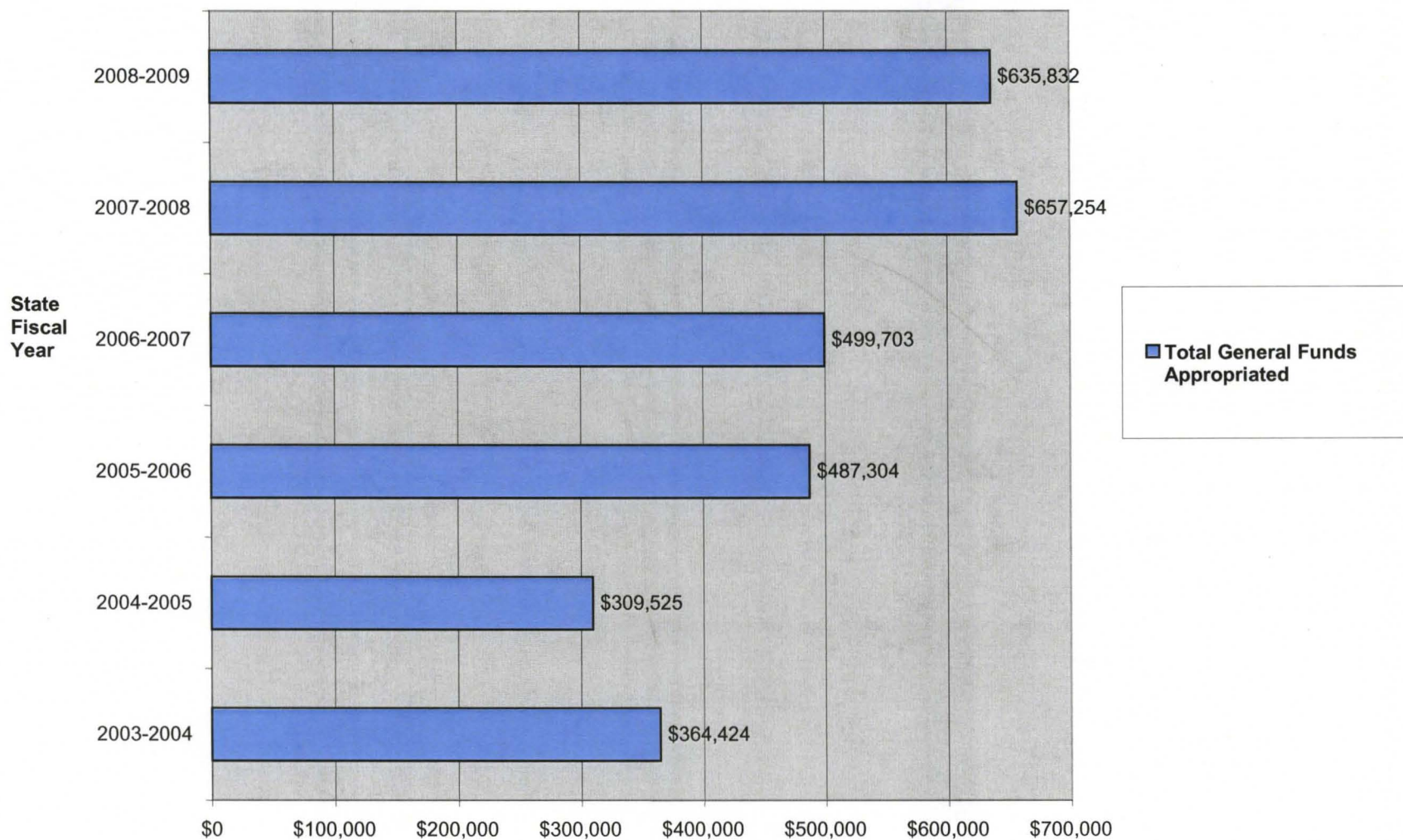
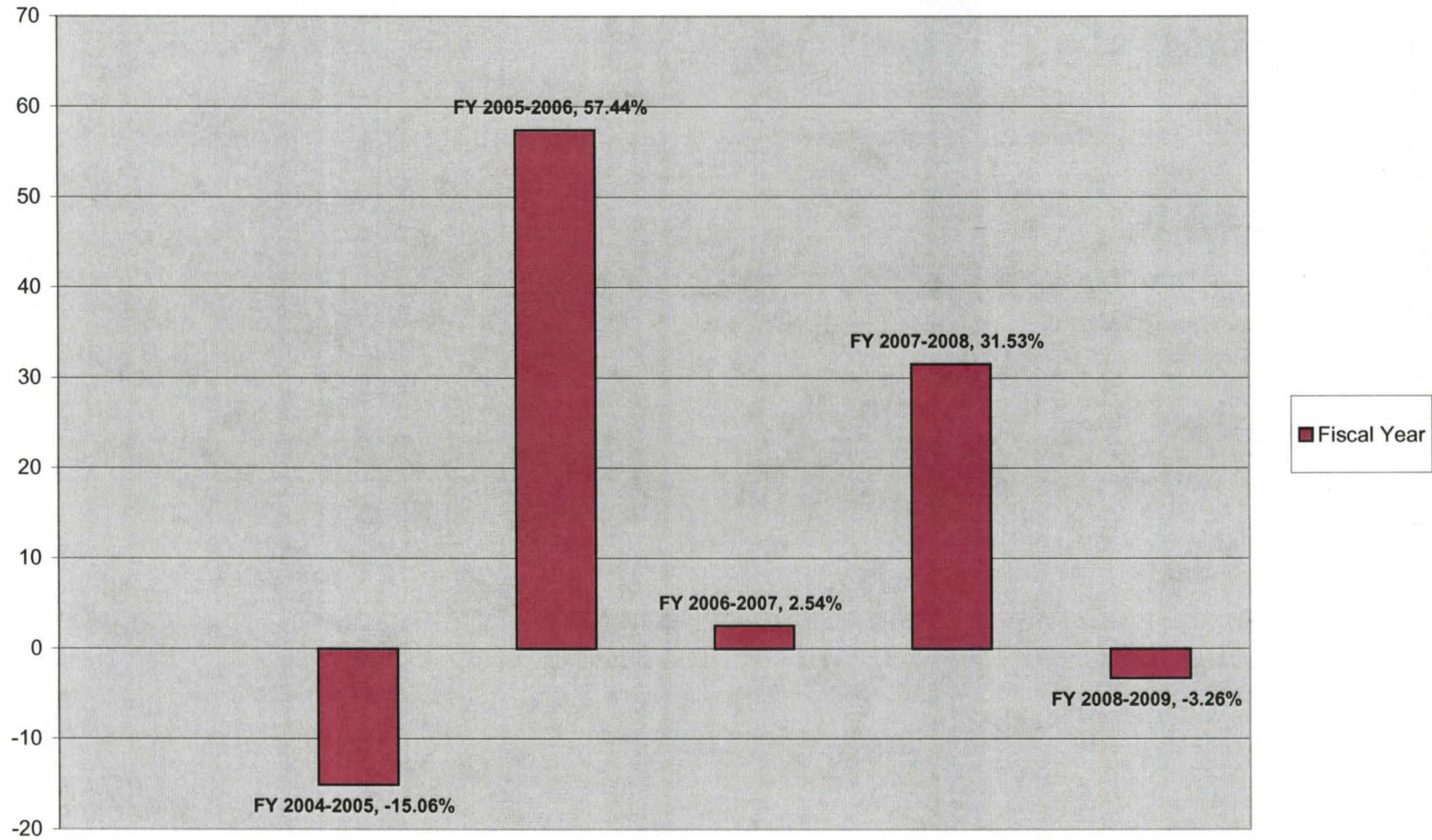


Chart 2: Percent Growth In SC Appropriations to the CFMA



CMA Agency Process Improvement Through Staff Coordination: A Research Model^{4, 5, 6}

The previous section mentioned that the SC Commission for Minority Affairs had developed and completed a Strategic Plan with eight focus areas, which was written for the African-American population. The Plan currently serves as a model for the agency, in particular the framework for the Commission for Minority Affairs' eight focus areas for research and policy analysis related to addressing the causes and impacts of socioeconomic poverty and deprivation. This framework of eight focus areas is now standardized for all four minority populations: African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic-Latinos, and Asians with a focus on improving the well being of these populations and the state of South Carolina. This section provides a brief discussion of an agency work process improvement strategy. The agency process framework is shown as Figure 1. Upon the agency Executive Director's hiring of the Program Manager for Research and Policy Services in July 2006, this research framework and workflow process was developed for the agency.⁷

Paul R. Timm and Rick C. Farr in *Business Research: An Information Guide* discuss the importance of establishing ground rules for conducting [business] research. The authors also provide a thorough discussion on the proper development of research approaches to the collection of key data, and the transformation of data into relevant information. Timm and Farr also provide a basic model and diagram for conducting primary research. Collectively, the recommendations and information provided in Farr and Timm's publication provide a general framework for the Agency Research and Staff Coordination Diagram for the Commission.

Eileen Flanigan and Jon Scott's book entitled *Process Improvement: Enhancing Your Organizations Effectiveness* provides a detailed discussion on the importance of an organization's ability to identify and serve both its internal customers and external customers, developing a clear understanding of your current work flow [and] processes, as well as the development of project plans with the appropriate action steps, process and outcome measures.

Figure 1 provides an initial integrative research model for process improvement for the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs.⁸ The process improvement incorporates the primary research model application of the scientific method.

Internal Agency Work Process

Timm and Farr's Primary Research Models provide the research framework for obtaining information from each minority population in which the Program Coordinator staff is charged to serve. Within the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs, the Program Manager for Research and Policy Services utilizes the Research Framework in Figure 1 to assist each Program Coordinator with providing information and resources to their respective population(s).

Figure 1 provides three primary levels in which the agency work process is coordinated and information is disseminated internally within the agency and externally throughout the state to the various minority populations. At the lowest level of Figure 1, research is coordinated through a process of first identifying *existing state agencies providing direct services, as well as federal resources and programs* currently available. Where possible, linkages are provided within the agency to disseminate this secondary information on programs and services to the relevant agency staff person.

Internal decisions are made by each Program Coordinator to provide this program and resource information to their respective population(s). The staff utilizes two primary vehicles to disseminate secondary resources and program information through their work processes:

1. Secondary information can be provided on the CMA's website.
2. Secondary information is disseminated through bi-monthly and quarterly Program Coordinator meetings with each population's Advisory Committee. (Where possible, Program Coordinators also make site visits to communities, especially in cases where these population's constituents cannot attend meetings or lack access to technology).

At the next two highest levels (purple and light blue blocks) internal customer coordination with staff is done through individual meetings with each Program Coordinator and combined staff meetings on a monthly basis (and more frequently when necessary) (Light blue blocks). The Program Coordinator for Research and Policy Services works with the Executive Director and each staff member to (note the three purple blocks):

1. Identify the issue(s) related to the eight focus areas on poverty and deprivation
2. Work closely with the staff to identify the relevant secondary statistical data program resource outcomes and services needed to address the issue impacting the specific population, and
3. Recommend a coordinated approach to solve the particular issue related to alleviating poverty and deprivation. This third step typically involves linking with one or more state agencies which provide direct services or programs.

The top level of Figure 1 encompasses the work process flow and coordination at the agency level (note the yellow, white, rose and lime green blocks).

At this level, internal work flow and staff initiatives of the Program Coordinator staff is reviewed by the Executive Director. Staff assignments are prioritized through a two stage process:

1. Staff priorities for each minority population are set by the Executive Director with input from the Board of Commissioners regarding agency priorities.
2. Staff assignments and research priorities are set by the Executive Director to ensure that each population is served as written in the state statute.

External Work Process to Assist Each Minority Population

Much of the information collected and disseminated by the agency Program Coordinator staff is derived from either federal statistical data sources with secondary data, or through established relationships with state agencies that produce their own statistical data.⁹ These ongoing relationships between existing state agencies is an essential requirement for assisting the Program Manager for Research and Policy Services with providing up-to-date statistical information, and making it both accessible and available for each population the Commission for Minority Affairs serves. However, the CMA also develops unique research specific to each population's needs, which calls for the collection of primary research data.

The Agency Research staff does conduct primary research in accordance to the Agency's Strategic Plan. The external work process for the agency utilizes the primary research model provided by Timm and Farr. The model including its five steps and two key decision points is shown on the next page. Currently the CMA, through research of the Program Coordinators and the Program Manager for Research and Policy Services is involved in conducting primary research with each minority population. The specific external work process involves the collection of primary data on each population.¹⁰

A BASIC MODEL FOR PRIMARY RESEARCH

An application of the scientific method in the basic model of primary research (see diagram below) is made up of five steps (boxes) and two decision points.

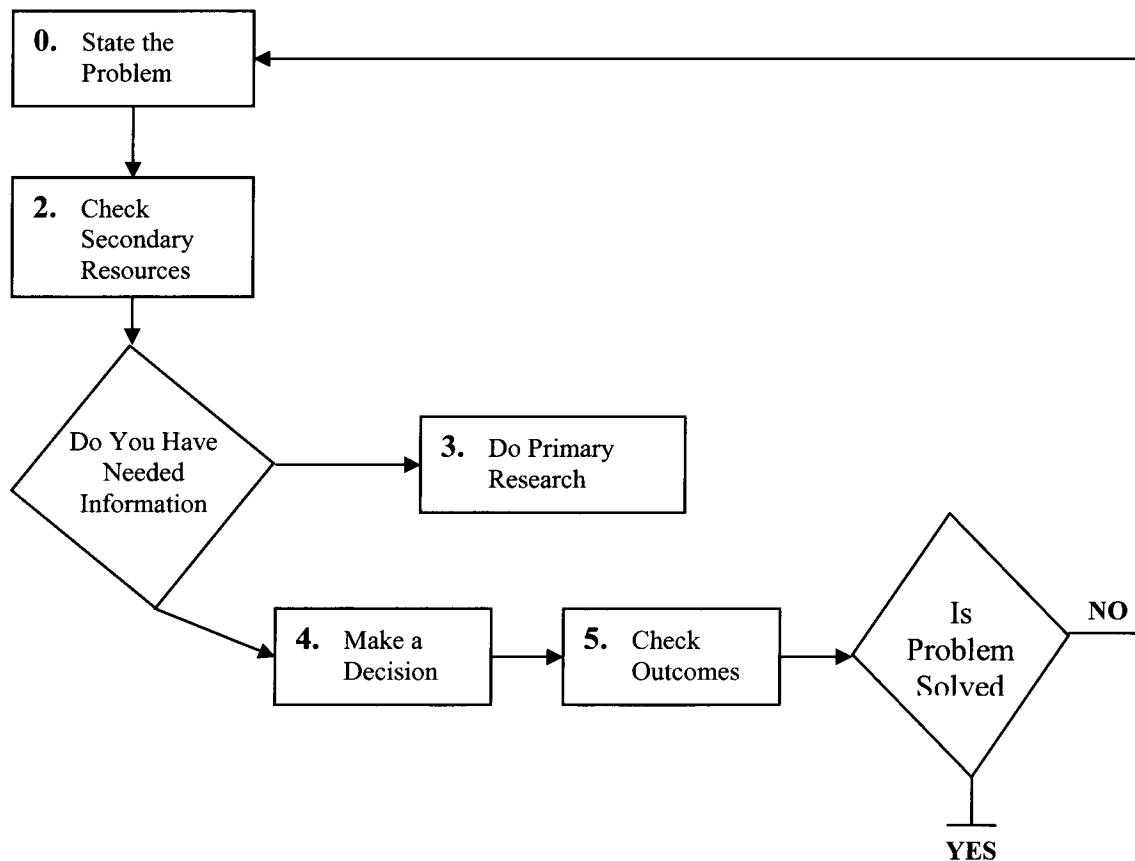
THE FIVE STEPS ARE:

1. State the problem
2. Check secondary sources
3. Do primary research
4. Make the decision
5. Check the outcomes

THE TWO DECISION POINTS ARE:

1. Do you have needed information?
2. Is the problem solved?

BASIC MODEL FOR PRIMARY RESEARCH



Specifically, each minority population has one or more needs, which is linked to the eight focus areas of the Commission's current Strategic Plan. (Recall the Strategic Plan from which the eight focus areas were derived was written first for the African-American population). In accordance with the primary Research Model of Timm and Farr, secondary data, as well as the identification of programs and services provided through existing state agencies is identified and compiled. This information is disseminated by each Program Coordinator to each population. Primary research is currently being conducted on a continual basis, with each minority population at various stages. Because the needs vary for each population, the Program Manager for Research has developed two research tools for primary research and data collection:

1. A (27-page) Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment Survey^{11, 12}, and
2. A three page Community Resource Directory Inventory Survey.

These data collection tools are currently utilized by agency staff to collect population specific information that can be shared in simple reports to communities: African-American, Hispanic-Latino, and Native American tribal leaders and citizens. This same information is also summarized in detailed, complex research reports for state agency officials, members of the General Assembly (upon request), research universities as well as other key agency partnerships.

Utilizing Primary Research to Improve Customer Service

The South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs' Research and Program Coordinating staff has a unique task in providing up-to-date, relevant research and policy analysis related to addressing issues of socioeconomic poverty and deprivation. An equal challenge is to provide these research services to meet the needs of various populations, while functioning as a non-direct service agency.

This means that the staff and Executive Director can only partner with direct service state agencies, and recommend services through information dissemination, research and analysis.

A major part of process improvement involves improving customer service. Flanigan and Scott speak about the importance of organizations being able to develop two types of feedback and incorporate this into the organization's work process:

1. Obtaining internal feedback from key staff involved with day-to-day provision of a service, program, or other activities to customers, and
2. Utilizing feedback from external customers to improve agency work processes and tasks which contribute to meeting customer needs.

The SC Commission for Minority Affairs currently utilizes its Advisory Committee structure to obtain initial feedback on customer concerns within each minority population. This feedback involves two types at the community level:

1. Receipt of customer feedback on general concerns related to poverty and deprivation issues; and
2. Receipt of customer feedback on current legislative impacts and changes, and how this can have negative outcomes on the community.

Figure 2 provides a revision to the Diagram of Agency Research and Staff Coordination to obtain input from these two types of customer feedback.

Presently, the Program Manager for Research and Policy Services provide preliminary research into these voiced concerns. In addition, the staff works diligently to stay informed on changes at the community level across the state through its current Advisory Committee structure. Where possible, the Executive Director works with staff, delegating staff assignments to create new partnerships with those state agencies providing direct services to each population.

Conclusion

This document has provided an initial discussion of the current staff work and research process undertaken by the Program Manager for Research and Policy Services and each Program Coordinator. It also has provided a discussion on how the current process improvement approach within a state agency can incorporate research to obtain customer feedback on what services it should be providing to each minority population. While not mentioned, part of the process improvement strategy may require the addition of new staff and a major expansion of the Agency. However, the current economic and political climate does not appear to permit staff expansion (while needed to provide expanded services each population) to occur. In this regard, the Executive Director has developed an expanded agency organizational chart including additional Full Time Equivalency (FTE) positions. This information has been presented by the Executive Director to members of the CMA Board of Commissioners in Strategic Planning sessions, and received Board approval.¹³ This means that until the Commission can receive additional appropriations and other funding, the agency staff will continue to utilize best practices to collect, implement and disseminate information to each population in keeping with the agency's mission to help reduce and alleviate poverty and deprivation.

End Notes

1. Both Charts provide respectively total agency appropriations and the percentage change by Fiscal Year for the SC Commission for Minority Affairs from the 2003-2004 Fiscal Year until the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year.
2. Mr. Benjamin Washington Jr., Program Manager for Research and Policy Services, was hired on July 16, 2006.
3. Source: SC Commission for Minority Affairs Agency Accountability Report, September 2008.
4. See **Business Research; An Informal Guide**, Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-70, by Rick C. Farr and Paul R. Timm.
5. See **Process Improvement; Enhancing Your Organizations Effectiveness**, Parts I through IV, pp. 1-70; by Eileen Flanigan and Jon Scott.
6. Also, this section was written utilizing course notes and lecture material in the two-day training on Process Improvement, Systems and Processes, on April 9-10, 2008.
7. See the Appendix. The narrative synopsis of the Agency Research and Staff Coordination Diagram for Figure 1 is provided on two pages. Mr. Benjamin Washington, Jr. developed this process and diagram in December 2006 and January 2007, within the first seven months of hiring.
8. Flanigan and Scott make the distinction between organizational success being determined by understanding who are the (agency or organization's) internal customers and external customers. Figure 1 incorporates a work flow process with the internal customers representing the four CMA agency staff of Program Coordinators working with each minority population (light blue blocks). The external customers for who the agency staff would be serving are the needs of African-American, Native American, Hispanic-Latino, and Asian populations, and the communities in which they live in the state.
9. To avoid listing each state agency, the South Carolina Budget and Control Board's Data Warehouse is the primary data consortium in which participating state agencies share and allow access to administrative data based on cooperative agreements. See the Appendix for the Integrated Data System model.
10. Mr. Benjamin Washington, Jr., Program Manager for Research and Policy Services has written a comprehensive Community Needs Assessment Instrument. This instrument is currently being administered and piloted to the Native American population to assist the states 27 tribes, groups and interested organizations with developing their own tribal-specific Strategic Plan.

11. Also, individualized assessments and survey instruments have been developed for the Hispanic Affairs Program Coordinator. Finally, a new small survey to identify community Resources and Services provided the non-profit organizations and minority businesses is also being developed. These are available for review upon request.
12. The SC Commission for Minority Affairs has entered into an agreement with SC Department of Health and Environmental Control to address health issues and concerns in the Native American and Hispanic Communities.
13. The Commission held five agency-level strategic planning meeting work sessions in conjunction with its annual Board of Commissioners and staff training in 2007 and 2008. The Commission has also held strategic planning work sessions with staff to focus on better ways to improve service delivery.

Appendix Documents

Figure 1: SC Commission for Minority Affairs - Diagram of Agency Research and Staff Coordination to Address Poverty and Deprivation in South Carolina

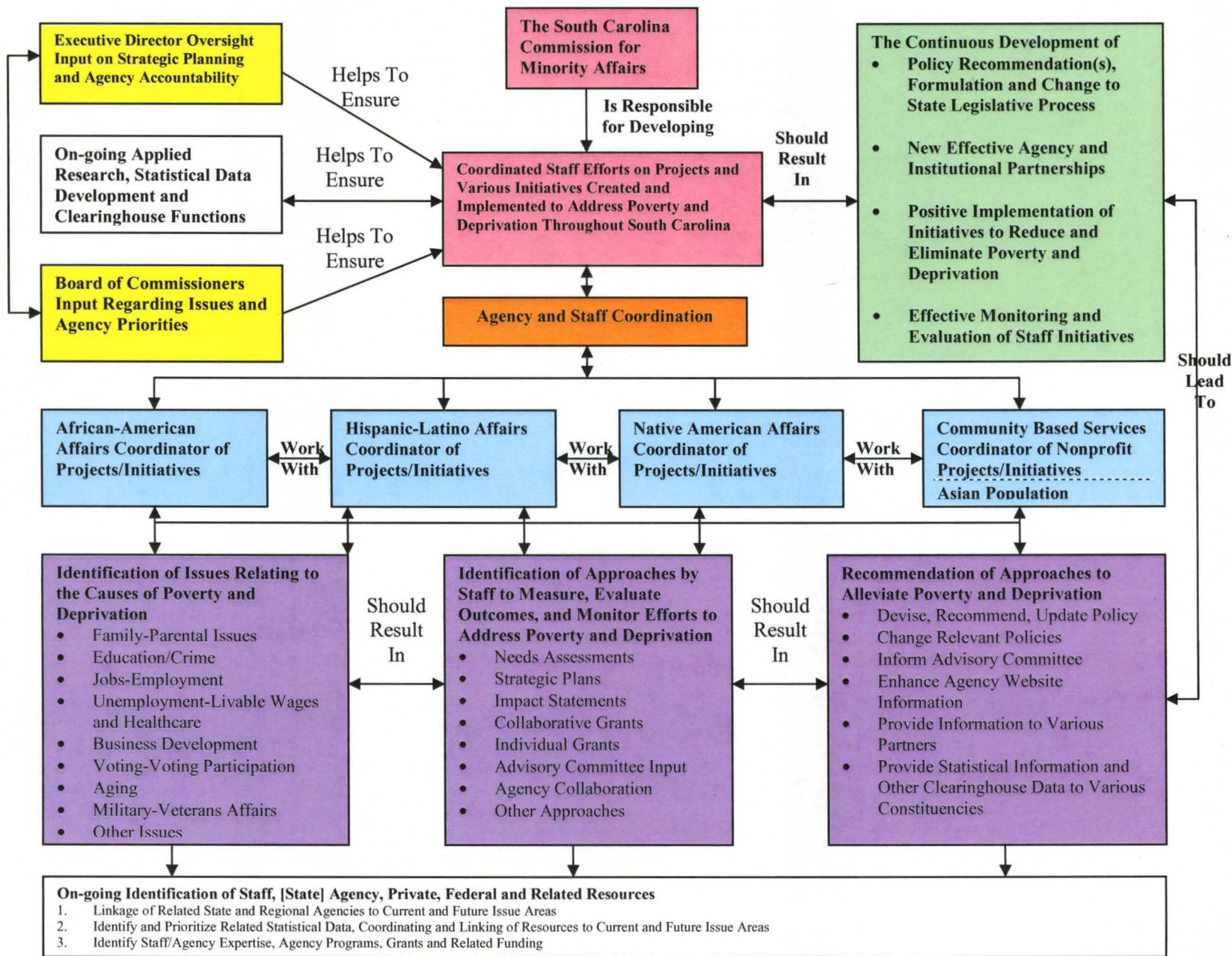


Figure 1: SC Commission for Minority Affairs - Diagram of Agency Research and Staff Coordination to Address Poverty and Deprivation in South Carolina

Synopsis of Agency Research and Staff Coordination Diagram

The diagram provides a schematic representation of how the Commission for Minority Affairs can coordinate its staff and programming efforts within a research, data analysis and input process. The staff of the Commission can develop strategic planning priorities to systematically work in partnership to address poverty and deprivation in South Carolina. The diagram is composed of four levels, each, which work interdependently:

Level 1: Executive Director Oversight, Board of Commissioners Input and Applied Research (First Three and Middle Three Blocks) – At this level, the Board of Commissioners work in partnership with the Executive Director to provide input regarding current problems, and issue areas that impact poverty and deprivation within the communities and counties in their respective Congressional Districts across South Carolina. Based on the identification of these issues and problems, priorities regarding areas of research and analysis can be developed. The subsequent research and analysis should provide relevant statistics and findings that can help to ensure that staff efforts on projects and initiatives can help to inform the Commission’s current Strategic Plan. In addition, on going research and analysis regarding issues of poverty and deprivation can help the Executive Director and each staff Program Coordinator to develop and recommend policy changes to representatives from the General Assembly. Finally, applied research and analysis will enable the agency to monitor, evaluate, change and implement (where appropriate) elements of the Strategic Plan. These research efforts will assist the staff Program Coordinators with the development of relevant agency and program statistical data, needs assessments, impact studies and other research related documents to help achieve the agency statutory mission of addressing poverty and deprivation.

Level 2: Program Coordinator Collaboration of Agency Projects and Initiatives (Middle Four Blocks) – At this level, each Program Coordinator is involved with current projects and initiatives related to addressing some aspect of poverty and deprivation. Each Program Coordinator will work together with the Deputy Director-Program Manager for Research to identify the relevant statistical data, applied research and the appropriate methodologies pertinent to the timely completion of existing or new project initiatives. In addition to the individual Program Coordinator project(s) and initiative(s), the Deputy Director-Program Manager for Research will help each Coordinator to work in collaboration with each other to identify areas of commonality within projects to help achieve individual minority group and collective resolution of community problems of poverty and deprivation. The Deputy Director-Program Manager for Research will discuss and receive approval for research approaches from the Executive Director and provide recommendations to Coordinators to help ensure that goals, objectives and outcomes measures achieve agency accountability in accordance to Malcolm Baldrige criteria.

Figure 1: SC Commission for Minority Affairs - Diagram of Agency Research and Staff Coordination to Address Poverty and Deprivation in South Carolina

Level 3: Issue Identification, Approaches, Recommendations for Addressing/Alleviating Poverty and Deprivation (Bottom Three Blocks) –At this level, each Program Coordinator will work in a dual role of identifying the issues relating to the causes of poverty and deprivation within their respective minority population, and (where applicable) common issues relating to poverty and deprivation common to all minority population in which the Commission is mandated to serve by state statute. The Deputy Director-Program Manager for Research with input from the Executive Director will develop staff priorities of research and analysis in order to aid each Program Coordinator in accomplishing individual projects with agency partners, staff and representatives from the General Assembly.

Level 3: Issue Identification, Approaches, Recommendations for Addressing Poverty and Deprivation (Continued): Staff efforts and applied research through the Deputy Director-Program Manager for Research should result in: (1) the identification issues related to the causes of poverty and deprivation, (2) the identification of approaches by staff to effectively and continuously measure, monitor, and evaluate outcomes efforts to address poverty and deprivation and (3) the recommendation of approaches to alleviate poverty and deprivation. This last step should lead to a process of the continuous development of policy recommendations, new effective agency partnerships, the effective monitoring of staff initiatives, and the positive implementation of initiatives to reduce and eliminate the effects of poverty and deprivation across South Carolina. This process is represented by the connection of the third block on Level 3 with the top right block on Level 1 of the diagram.

Level 4: On-Going Identification of Staff, [State] Agency and Related Resources (Bottom Block) - This level, while situated at the bottom of the diagram, forms the foundation from which the other three levels rest. The Commission for Minority Affairs relies on collaborations with various agencies, individuals, and institutional partners to identify staff and related resources to help address and alleviate poverty and deprivation within and across the state of South Carolina. These include other state agencies, related federal agencies, the corporate and private foundation [sectors], research universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's), community based organizations and the faith community. Each of these partners can assist the agency in identifying and prioritizing issues related to poverty and deprivation, and its current impact(s) on individuals, families and communities in South Carolina. Applied research can and will be used to provide in-depth analysis of how the identified issues and problems impact individuals, families and communities, and equally important the State. Applied research can serve as the vehicle in which statistical data is collected, coordinated and linked with identified agency and staff expertise, and resources to address current and future issues of poverty and deprivation. Staff Coordinators can utilize the statistical data and research findings to work in conjunction with agency partners to identify federal grants, corporate and foundation support to leverage limited state resources to help alleviate poverty and deprivation. This will enable the Commission to achieve its long-term goals and maintain accountability to the citizens of South Carolina and representatives of the General Assembly.

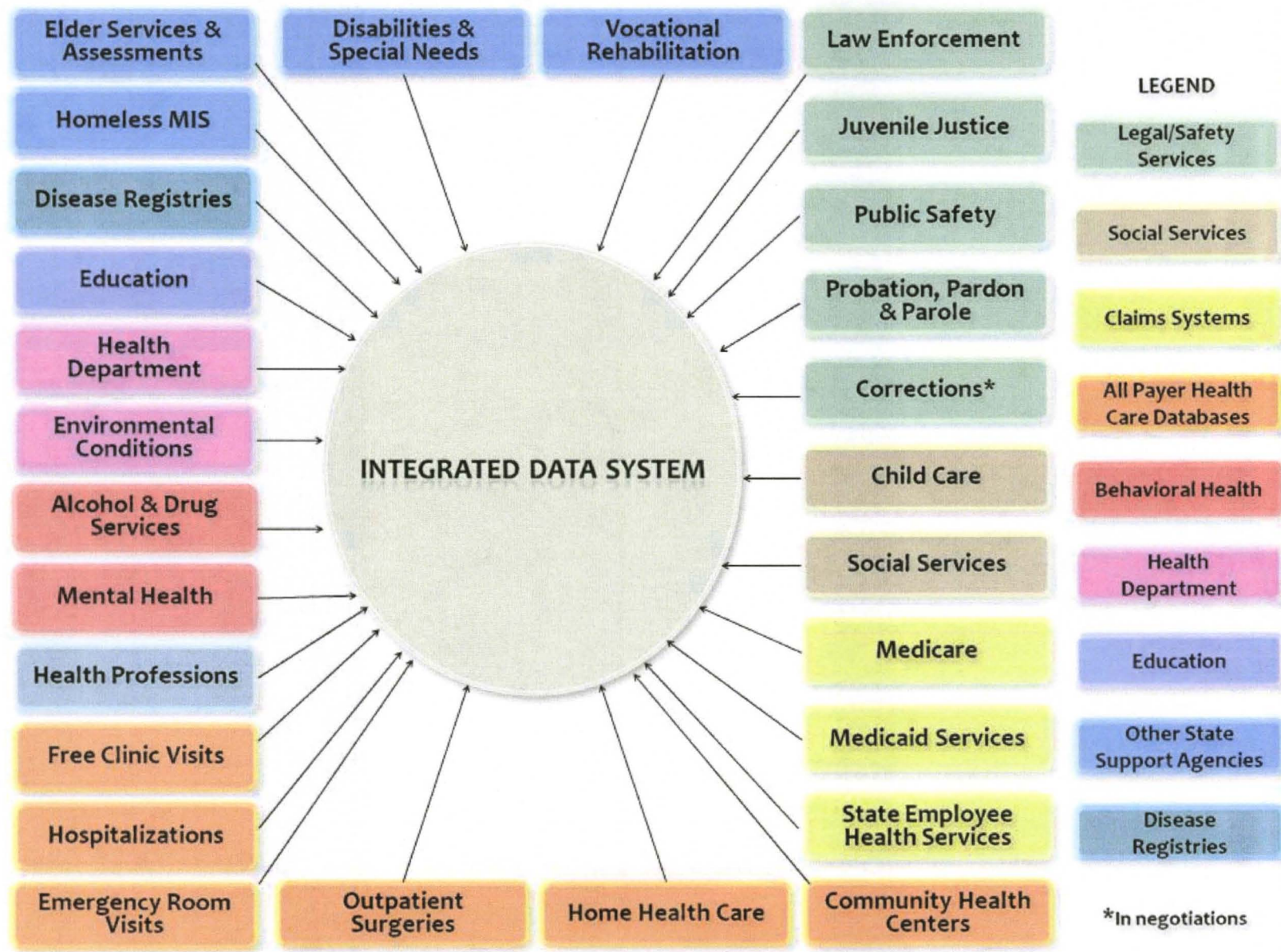


Figure 2: SC Commission for Minority Affairs – Revised Diagram of Agency Research and Staff Coordination to Address Poverty and Deprivation in South Carolina

