**Decision Making at the State and Local Level: Does Science Matter?**

**Susan Mason,** *Boise State University*

**Online Appendix**

**Example Invitation Letter for an Interview**

Date

Dear Mayor:

I am conducting research on how state and local government leaders use science to make policy decisions. When I am talking about science I am including the social sciences. Science is a way of knowing using a process. The scientific process looks for causation, is objective, empirical, and replicable. The scientific process or the process that you use and how you use it for decision making and crafting public policy is what we are interested in learning about for the research. The literature shows mixed usage of science by policy makers with some policy makers regarding science as extremely important and others regarding science as only one other source of information. Because you are (and have been) actively engaged in policy making, we would very much like to learn your views about several aspects involving the science–policy linkage with the American public policy making process.

We understand how valuable your time is and would truly appreciate your help with our research. For our work to be useful, we need the help of public leaders such as you. Thank you for considering this request.

Our work is scholarly in nature with the sole intention of expanding the foundation of knowledge with respect to the science–policy linkage as it applies to American public policy making. The information you provide will be tabulated into an aggregate dataset and you will not be identified as the source of your answers.

Would it be possible for me to call you sometime in the next several weeks to discuss the science–policy linkage as it applies to the way you conduct policy making? I have attached the questions in advance for your consideration. The entire interview would not take longer than an hour.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, you may send an e-mail to me at susanmason@boisestate.edu or call me at (208) 426-2658.

Sincerely,

Susan Mason

**Online Appendix: Interview Questions**

(1) Do you believe there are instances where science provides answers to specific policy problems?

(2) What is it about science (e.g., assumptions, characteristics) that makes science different than other ways of knowing?

(3) How important is it to you that your major policy decisions be supported by science?

(4) If you use science in making policy decisions, at which stage(s) of the public policy process do you look to science to help provide answers to policy problems (i.e., beginning, middle, or end)?

(5) What is your source of scientific information; that is, where do you get information about the science around the public-policy issues with which you work?

(6) In your view, are there any areas of policy making in which the use of science is viewed as more important because of the nature of the issue/problem?

(7) What factors (besides science) influence your public-policy decision making?

(8) If you had to estimate, what percentage of decisions do you make as a public official that are founded on science?