THE EFFECTS OF RESOURCE DEPENDENCY ON DECISIONS BY UNIVERSITY PUBLIC SERVICE ADMINISTRATORS FOR SERVICE TO THE STATE THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING

by

STACY BISHOP JONES

(Under the Direction of Libby V. Morris)

ABSTRACT

University public service administrators consider a range of factors in their decisions to revise or implement local government training programs in service to their state. Major among these factors are the influence of external stakeholders, university mission, metrics, labor and financial resources, and university location. Resource dependency also impacts administrators' decisions as revealed in organizational effectiveness, environmental awareness, and environmental constraints. The decline in state government dollars to support training local government officials affects the public service administrators' decisions as they experience external and internal forces in their environment.

Interviews of public service organization senior administrators, directors, and managers at three research universities, combined with document analysis from the universities' websites and document analysis from training profiles from the Consortium of University Public Service Organizations, uncovered that administrators experience the influence of external stakeholders. These external actors interact with the administrators' awareness of university mission, metrics

of effectiveness, labor and financial resource availability, and their own organizational placement in the university infrastructure for public service. The researcher in this study concludes that university public service organization administrators make decisions on local government training in a metaphorical box of influences that is impacted by strong external influences from the state legislature and local government associations.

INDEX WORDS:

Public service organization, local government, continuing education, local government associations, resource dependency, effectiveness, university mission

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DEDICATION

For David, who believes and encourages always.

For my mentor, Cardee Kilpatrick, who introduced me to the world of local government and serving in your own community.

For Hendley and Kaylor, who know that learning is also about practice and perseverance.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Local governments face increased demands for services from citizens while revenues decline and complex public policy challenges increase. For assistance in applied research, technical assistance, and training to address this changing landscape, local government leaders often turn to a university's public service organization (PSO) to assist with short- and long-term issues (Ward, 1983). These local government officials use outside sources to support their efforts when their staff may be overburdened and lack the time to address the problem or when they do not have the skills and knowledge. An outside source, like a university PSO, also adds a rational element to the mix of decision-making variables available to a government when it requests assistance (Ward, 1983). A PSO can serve as an objective partner and be a "buffer between rational and overtly political policymaking processes" (Ward, 1983, p. 51).

Meanwhile, public universities are experiencing a trend of declining public tax dollar support for higher education, which impacts the behavior of university administrators and faculty (Weerts & Ronca, 2006). Constraints from state revenue, competition for state resources, and the public's attitude toward universities all contribute to an unpredictable resource environment for the university (Zusman, 2005). To survive financially, universities must strengthen relationships with their state governments (Weerts, 2000). Working on state public challenges is one way a university may tighten its connections as Weerts (2011) said, "In order to become a state priority, colleges must become a solution to a problem, not another problem to solve" (p. 2). These

statewide problems also affect local governments, which then may seek the assistance of a university PSO to address the challenges. The purpose of this research is to inform university administrators about the effects of resource dependency on their decisions to offer local government training through their PSOs and what effects the PSO administrators may see on their state resources from their decisions to offer local government training.

Public universities, particularly land-grant universities, define themselves as institutions focused on teaching, research, and service (Mawby, 1996). Of the three missions, public service typically has a lower status than teaching and research, and thus, has fewer resources and less administrative support (Smith, 2000). Dunn and Whorton (1987) described a PSO focused on the mission of public service as a program in search of a paradigm. By the 1990s, a move from the traditional push of delivering knowledge to the public through public service began a shift to a model of engagement where the university and the community address societal needs together (Boyer, 1996).

With fewer state government resources and fewer university administrative resources, the selection of which training, technical assistance, and applied research to conduct are critical decisions for the directors of the university PSOs (Consortium of University Public Service Organizations [CUPSO], 2018b). Investment in the development of a new training offering that is not needed or not perceived as valuable can lead to significant costs, including dollars, time, and institutional reputation. At a 2018 national conference for the directors of these university PSOs, the program included a session on disruptions in training that allowed these leaders to discuss the challenges of meeting the demands for government training in different ways and the risks they face with limited resources (L. Hoke, personal communication, March 8, 2018). The issue of what to offer in government training by these university PSO administrators and their

training directors remains a current and complex issue impacted by changing demographics, acceleration of technology, globalization, and external resources (Cascio, 2017).

To maintain their place in a university ecosystem, a PSO must demonstrate its value to the university. The delivery of services, such as training for local and state government officials, defines a space for the PSO to show value; PSO leaders understand that the commitment of the university is at the center of any decision they make to offer training to local governments (Azzaretto, Smith, & Mohr, 1981). Leaders at the university promote public service when they communicate the value of engagement activities to both internal and external actors and when administrative resources support the public service engagement (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

When Thomson (2010) studied local government elected official training, they found university faculty played a significant role in the education and development of these governing officials. Thomson (2010) cautioned that entering into the development and execution of a training program for government officials should be done after considering finances, human resources, organizational and partner relationships, technological capacity, and leadership capacity in the assigned university center.

> Slack (1991) found studies were not helping practitioners to prepare for the future:
>
> Although several studies (Poister & Streib, 1989a; Slack, forthcoming; Whorton, Gibson, & Dunn, 1986) have focused on *current* assistance needs of local government, none have focused on the issue of future expectations. This seems a bit perplexing, given that an absence of discussion and planning during the 1960s and 1970s about future training needs probably contributed to local government's inability to adapt effectively and efficiently to the imperatives of cutback management during the 1980s. (p. 397)

Additional research about the roles for university PSOs in training and developing local government practitioners and elected officials is needed along with research on the effectiveness of the university PSO's training. As university PSO leaders approach public service by preparing and training local government officials, these leaders must focus, plan, and understand how their decisions impact training that matters the most to governance and operations while also balancing their university's mission and resources. University PSOs are often responsive to the current needs of local government officials but are slower to prepare for the future training needs of local government officials. Limited resources and competing priorities create challenges for PSO administrators as they evaluate their public service through local government training. Improved assessment of outcomes from training that addresses critical issues for the state or local government is needed (Weerts, 2011; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). In the absence of outcome assessments, Weerts and Sandmann (2008) questioned if "it is possible that institutions are using engagement as a public relations tag line to garner public and private support for their programs. . . . Our position is that engagement as a political strategy is working" (p. 100).

Statement of Problem and Purpose for the Study

Three hundred and sixty-one U.S. colleges and universities have described themselves voluntarily in the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for community engagement and may also fund dedicated PSOs that serve the state and local governments in research, technical assistance, and training (Brown University, 2019; CUPSO, 2019). In a 2018 survey, the total budgets of PSOs included a range from 5% to 60% of revenue from direct state budget funding with a median of 36.5% of funding coming directly from state appropriations (CUPSO, 2018a). In the same survey, university appropriations ranged from 6% of a PSO budget to 90%, with the median PSO budget receiving 32.5% of funding from the university (CUPSO, 2018a). Of the

responding PSOs, 90% reported receiving revenue from local governments. Whorton, Gibson, and Dunn (1986) noted the most critical element in the relationship between the university PSO and state and local government users was the issue of common priorities on subject and program areas. With more annual funding for PSO budgets coming from local governments, PSO administrators look for those common priorities.

Research exists around the frameworks for the operations of PSOs, the PSO university organizational structure, the value PSOs bring to the universities, structures for the PSO local government training programs, and the evaluation of PSO training. In this study of PSO administrators at three research universities, which are members of the national CUPSO and have a 2015 Carnegie Foundation classification for community engagement, I investigate the decision-making process to provide public service through local government training. This research has a focus on the university PSOs' local government training to narrow the focus and in recognition of the stakeholder differences between the state government and local government administration and their employees' and officials' training needs.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions of this study are:

1. What do university PSO administrators consider as they make a decision to launch or expand a training program?
2. How do external stakeholders influence the university PSO administrators' decision to launch or expand a local government training program?
3. How do influences internal to the university affect the PSO administrators' decisions about launching or expanding a local government training program?

The first research question is: What do university PSO administrators consider as they make a decision to launch or expand a training program? This question provides the opportunity to understand the self-described elements that PSO administrators consider for their selection of training programs to add to university PSO program offerings. This collected information may be an indication of the competing priorities faced by local governments with limited resources and universities desiring to engage with the state's community challenges.

The second research question is: How do external stakeholders influence the university PSO administrators' decision to launch or expand a local government training program? University PSO administrators often work with multiple external stakeholders, including university administrators and faculty external to the PSO, government associations, and multiple government officials, agencies, and entities. This information is valuable for PSO administrators to understand as they consider the impact of their training selection on their own state's outcomes. These stakeholders and community partners may hold key resources for a new training program. This research question informs the study and understanding of how external stakeholders impact decisions and it considers the external effect of the market.

The third research question is: How do influences internal to the university affect the PSO administrators' decisions about launching or expanding a local government training program? This question continues an inquiry into understanding how university senior administrators, policies, culture, finance, governance, or faculty influence the PSO administrators' decisions. This question explores how finite resources, such as money and labor, interact with more varied resources, such as relationships with significant internal stakeholders, policy priorities, mission alignment, and value to the university.

This study addresses the literature gap as it explores the decision-making criteria for the development of new local government training by university PSOs that are dependent on state government resources. To recognize this issue of decision making for a university PSO, Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory is a framework for understanding the effects the environment has on an organization. As an organization is deprived of a critical resource, such as state funding for operations, the organization will seek new resources. Since the PSO is dependent on resources for survival that it cannot create or produce internally, the PSO administrators look into the environment for those resources, and the offering of local government training programs may be impacted by this resource dependency. Resource dependency theory is based on three primary concepts: (a) organizational effectiveness, (b) the environment and its effects on resources, and (c) the constraints the environment places on an organization (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This framework includes social contexts, strategies for autonomy and the pursuit of interests, and issues of power and dependency (Davis & Cobb, 2010).

Significance of the Study

A university PSO that offers local government training must ensure that its training programming anticipates and meets the needs of the public servants in its state to maintain a regular flow of participants and clients. To maintain state support, these programs must also address solutions to state problems to remain relevant (Weerts, 2011). Investing in the launch of new training programs, whether workshops, seminars, classes, curriculum, or certificate programs, requires significant financial investment, needs assessments, costly labor resources, the development of knowledge and research in the needed areas, expanded marketing, and a delay in other programming due to limited resources. An understanding of how PSO

administrators engage in decision making for evaluating and selecting new or expanded university-based government training is relevant to PSO administrators, PSO directors, and scholars in both higher education and public administration.

The further education, training, and development of public service leaders remain central to the effectiveness of government organizations (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). The results of new training offerings by university PSOs can lead to increased knowledge and skill development for government participants, allowing for them to return to their communities and quickly implement process improvements, improve efficiency, supervise better, manage financial resources, govern more openly and collaboratively, and ensure the long-term viability of their community. Understanding the effects of resources on decision making for the university PSO administrator reveals the PSO's organizational effectiveness, environmental awareness, and environmental constraints. Each of these three resource dependency elements is critical to the PSO administrators for the survival of their university PSO through resources and reputation.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

With limited personnel and financial resources, local governments look externally to consultants or partnerships to help address complex public policy challenges and to help with the development of employees and officials in public administration. These local government officials frequently turn to university partners who want to be engaged in community challenges. Land-grant universities, in particular, uncover an intersection between the local government needs and the university's historical public service mission. Mason (1979) said the "political neutrality of a university and its stated objective to educate rather than to influence policy makes it less suspect than the professional consultant or even the departments of the state government" (p. 15). Through the university's public service and outreach efforts, local government officials find support in research, technical assistance, and training to address both short- and long-term challenges (Vanagunas & Keshawarz, 1985; Ward, 1983).

Definition of Terms

The terms related to a university PSO and government training programming may be unfamiliar. The following will help to define the meanings of terms in the research.

Public service organization (PSO): A public service organization at a university. This may include a named institute, center, department, etc., whose role is to provide assistance to its state or communities through applied research, technical assistance, or training. This work may be performed at various levels: local, regional, state, national, or international.

Local government training: Knowledge and skill development for employees, appointed officials, and elected officials of a town, village, city, county, or authority.

Technical skill training for local governments: Knowledge and skill development for employees, appointed officials, and elected officials of a town, village, city, county, or authority related to the specific duties of the job that leads to a tangible result (Association for Talent Development, 2018).

Legally mandated training for local governments: Any training required by federal or state statutes to be a requirement for an employee, appointed, or elected official to hold their position in the local government.

Leadership development for local governments: These programs may include experiences and training designed to allow the learners to enhance their abilities in self-guidance, leading others, leading teams, and leading organizations. These experiences may include workshops, lectures, multi-rater feedback tools, outdoor challenges such as team-building activities or wilderness challenges, developing networks, executive coaching, action learning through projects and process improvements, and regular reflections to explore meanings in the experiences (Day & Halpin, 2001)

Professional development for local governments: Any training program that may focus on knowledge or skill development that is tied to increased job performance and effectiveness and not tied only to technical knowledge. This training may also include soft skills development which does not have tangible product results (Association for Talent Development, 2018).

Elected officials: Individuals who earn a position in a government organization following a public election.

Public administrators: Individuals employed in the practice of operating government services and functions.

Classes, courses, workshops, seminars, etc.: These broad terms reference the various types of training available for participants and may range in the duration of time, location, enrollment processes and fees, level of instruction, and assessment levels. Many PSOs use these terms differently, but it should be understood in this research as a broad grouping of training incidences for participants.

Local governments needing administrative training for their employees and elected officials is not a new problem, but the focus of these training needs is shifting beyond the historical technical skill training or legally required training (Fairholm, Moe, Hought-Haddon, & Feldman, 2004). Today's local government leaders need to develop additional skills to solve public problems through collaboration, to increase partnerships across and inside of governments, and to work across boundaries (Jacobson & Warner, 2008). As local government administrators are considering their government's employee and elected official training, the instructors in these classes need to understand the political and administrative processes of local government and need to be able to help participants demonstrate their learning back to their supervisors and governments (Azzaretto et al., 1981). This knowledge of local government and adult education has helped university PSO training programs play a pivotal role in preparing government officials for their duties:

> If local government officials are in fact better representatives, leaders, and managers as a result of what they have learned in these training programs, then these efforts represent an important means by which to enhance accountability, responsiveness, and performance in local government. (Battaglio, 2008, p. 131)

Research on university PSOs that serve local government is a small subset of a larger body of knowledge around the public service missions of universities and colleges and is also a subset of the body of knowledge around continuing education in public administration. University public service is often categorized by the external recipient and which market sector in the state that is receiving the service: community, local government, state government, business, or industry (Crosson, 1983). Six categories emerged from the literature: (a) historical perspectives on public service at universities, (b) frameworks for university PSOs, (c) profiles of university PSOs that conduct training for local governments, (d) training needs for local government officials, (e) training programs available to local governments managed by a university PSO, and (f) the evaluation of the effectiveness of training efforts for local governments.

Historical Perspective on Public Service at Universities

According to Roper and Hirth (2005), "One-directional service—the university giving its intellectual products to a society—transformed to bidirectional engagement, a hybridized version of the original roots that emphasizes relationships and interactions between the university and its society" (p. 3). To understand how the university reached its current focus on outreach or engagement requires understanding how service is connected to the university. According to Eddy (1957), "The Morrill Act and subsequent Land-Grant College legislation were but a development of a precedent established many years before" (p. 22). When Congress allotted 30,000 acres for each congressional member to each state for the purpose of "practical and mechanical higher education" (Roper & Hirth, 2005, p. 5), some states formed new colleges to help educate students on agriculture and engineering. Support for this land-grant service mission continued into the 20th century when the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 was passed to provide

permanent funding for cooperative agriculture extension through the land-grant institutions. Federal support soon shifted to an increased focus on research following World War II (Roper & Hirth, 2005). By the 1990s, societal pressures pushed the university to return to its focus on community service as a part of scholarship (Holland, 1999; Roper & Hirth, 2005). Dr. Ernest Boyer, Chancellor of the State University of New York, said, "To sustain the vitality of higher education in our time, a new vision of scholarship is required, one dedicated not only to the renewal of the academy but, ultimately to the renewal of society itself" (as cited in Roper & Hirth, 2005, p. 11). Universities began developing partnerships between the academy and the outside world through a new focus on outreach and engagement that helped to build community partnerships through accessible, integrated, and coordinated resources, respect for partners, responsiveness to needs, academic neutrality, and a recognition of contributions from the community and the university (Kellogg Commission, 1999; Weerts, 2005).

Another key concept in the history of university PSOs is the Wisconsin Idea, which links the University of Wisconsin with its communities:

> (1) to provide advanced education to as many of its citizens as possible; (2) to create, invent, nurture, and implement new discoveries and ideas that benefit "the commonwealth"; and (3) to use the expertise of the university for the direct benefit of citizens and institutions. (Witte, 2000, p. 7)

In its earliest forms, the Wisconsin Idea led to the start of extension activities that took the knowledge and expertise of the university out to the farmers in Wisconsin for daylong technical farming classes (Witte, 2000). Over time, these extension practitioners evolved into those who work toward social change and those who focus on delivering or selling products or services in the marketplace (Roper & Hirth, 2005). Economic development at the university soon emerged

and focused on partnerships between academic and business interests (Roper & Hirth, 2005). Public universities began connecting economic development to continuing education. According to DeLalla (2013), "The engaged university often has its first steps of community engagement through the institution's continuing education unit. . . . Resources, focus, and funding need to be correlated to meet these engaged university needs" (p. 30). The university's continuing education efforts grew, and the university PSOs began taking different structures around the United States.

Frameworks for University Public Service Organizations

After World War II, universities' role in society had changed, and a rapid proliferation of funding semi-autonomous institutes and centers on campuses began (Ikenberry, 1970). The organizational structure of the university had to evolve to respond to "new sources of financial support, new constituencies, different faculty aspirations and role expectations, growing needs of administrators to exert academic leadership, increased urging from external sponsors, and rising needs for institutional status and prestige" (Ikenberry, 1970, p. 518). Ikenberry (1970) reviewed 51 land-grant universities and their 907 institutes and centers to determine growth and funding patterns, areas of concentration, autonomy in the university, and insights for improvement. Ikenberry (1970) found:

> [the] emergence of institutes and centers, first as a vehicle for the conduct of research but more recently for instruction and service as well, introduces the first significant organizational alternative to the discipline-based department and may hold significant clues for improved institutional functioning. (p. 520)

In a similar pattern of growth, a proliferation of university public service programs emerged after the 1960s (Sellers & Bender, 1979). While extension and continuing education had matured in universities in a more systematic manner, public service and outreach had not

developed systemically despite rapid growth in the number of service institutes; university officials had no consensus on the best organizational structure, funding, or delivery method for public service and outreach (Sellers & Bender, 1979). Weerts and Sandmann (2008) also found little research "to shed light on the impact of mission and context on an institution's ability and inclination to accommodate an engagement approach to public service and outreach" (p. 75).

The university's mission, organization, methods of delivery, administrative influence, funding, staffing, institutional status and rewards, facilities, and program of work influenced university PSOs to serve state or local governments (Sellers & Bender, 1979). These characteristics led to varied frameworks for organizing a university PSO that had a focus on government service through applied and basic research for immediate needs and long-term problems, technical assistance, and training (Ward, 1983).

In one of the more significant studies on university PSOs, Dunn, Gibson, and Whorton (1985) conducted a survey of presidents of Research I and Research II universities, defined by the Carnegie classification system as doctoral-granting universities with the highest or higher level of research activity. They questioned the priority service areas for public service and the university's senior administrator's prioritization among applied research, training, and technical assistance. Dunn et al. (1985) found university presidents more highly prioritized university public service programs for businesses over public service programs for state and local governments. The presidents perceived no extensive demand for services from either state or local government, and they prioritized applied research over training. They also found land-grant universities did not place a greater priority on service programs for state and local government officials than the non-land-grant universities (Dunn et al., 1985).

In a follow up to their 1985 work, Dunn and Whorton (1987) conducted a quantitative study of 88 university institutes and centers that served state and local government through research, technical assistance, or training. Their findings showed institutes or centers that employed tenure-eligible faculty placed a higher focus on research over the other service elements of technical assistance or training (Dunn & Whorton, 1987). Smith (2000) found the same:

> Universities include public service as a significant component of their mission, and often consider it as important as teaching and research. Nevertheless, for most of them, public service has a lower status than traditional teaching and research and received correspondingly fewer resources and less administrative support. (p. 18)

The interests of the faculty and academic staff affect the emphasis among research, technical assistance, and training, with training being the least valued by faculty. Yet, many university PSOs continue to offer government training as part of their public service, and government officials continue to attend the training offerings from these PSOs. Variability in the government training offerings exists along with varying areas of emphasis among the university PSOs.

Profiles of University Public Service Organizations Involved in Government Training

The literature includes profiles of some university PSOs that conduct training for local governments in addition to their technical assistance and applied research work. Smith (2000) discussed the training offerings for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and its School of Government. The UNC used tenure-track faculty for instruction and offered more than 230 classes, seminars, and specialized conferences annually. They offered a school for

newly elected municipal and county officials and a 150-hour course in municipal and county administration.

Battaglio (2008) reviewed four states' (Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and North Carolina) university-based training programs through interviews with program directors. He documented each university's featured local government training programs for elected and appointed officials. His documentation reflected enrollment numbers for the programs, funding, staffing, and the variety of programs offered for municipal or county government employees. Battaglio looked at the University of Tennessee, University of North Carolina, University of Georgia, University of South Carolina, and Clemson University. Variety existed between the universities. For example, the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government conducted more than 850 programs a year and reached more than 25,000 participants. The UNC's School of Government sponsored over 200 classes reaching over 14,000 officials (Battaglio, 2008).

In a much earlier work, Phillips (1977) surveyed 70 university institutions and created similar profiles of university PSO local government training programs. Rutgers University's Government Service Training Program offered over 67 specific courses in 11 areas (Phillips, 1977). Phillips also profiled the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) School of the University of Texas and its Office of Conferences and Training that produced short-term seminars, institutes, and conferences that reached over 1,400 participants.

Through the passage of time between Phillips (1977) and Battaglio (2008), university PSO local government training programs have significantly increased in the number of classes offered and in the number of participants reached. This growth would indicate a period of growing support for university public service in this area of local government training since

1977. The increased numbers of training programs and classes offered at these institutions suggested significant investments of university resources into the development and execution of local government training. However, these profiles provided limited evidence of how the decisions were made to offer specific training or to select one program over another; the profiles provided a simple look into examples of training programs and enrollment numbers.

Local Government Officials' Training Needs

After reviewing profiles of university PSO training programs for local government officials and their volumes, the next step was to consider what types of training needs these programs, classes, seminars, workshops, and conferences address. The learning needs of the local government official, the size and governance structure of the local government, or a state legislative mandate influenced the selection of the university PSO local government training programs (Battaglio, 2008). Many of the university PSOs offered training in management development, leadership development, economic development, technical skills, and public administration (CUPSO, 2017).

The size of the local government and its governance structure impact the training needs for the elected and appointed officials. Slack (1990) found the training needs in smaller municipalities were greater than, but not different from, those of the larger cities. Slack also noted cities managed by elected mayors had different needs for training than the cities managed by an appointed, professional city manager. This variability across the size and structure of the local governments adds increased challenges for a university PSO to meet the needs of each municipality in their state where "the actual capacity of the outreach unit may not always correspond with the actual needs of local government practitioners" (Slack, 1990, p. 454).

Whorton et al. (1986) surveyed university PSOs providing service to state and local government, local government managers selected from the International City Management Association (ICMA) membership, and executive and legislative officials in all 50 states to examine the extent to which each group used the public services from the university PSO. They also looked at the effectiveness of those PSO services and how closely the priorities and perceptions of the effectiveness of the university PSO administrators matched the state and local government respondents' priorities and perceptions. Whorton et al. (1986) found the most critical element in the relationship between the university PSO and the state and local government official was the issue of common priorities on subject and program areas. Local government managers' priorities differed from those of the university directors.

Whorton et al. (1986) divided the subject matter priorities into 22 categories, including one on economic development. This category had the widest divergence between the state and local government officials and the university PSO administrators' responses. Only 31% of university PSO administrators rated the subject of economic development as a high priority, but 69% of local government managers rated it as a high priority (Whorton et al., 1986). This gap between local government officials' training needs and the PSO administrator's focus may create a space for delivering a training program with little demand or impact. A similar gap can exist inside the local government between what the employee and his supervisor identify as training needs.

Haas (1991) analyzed the results from a survey of county employees and supervisors on their perspectives on what trainings should be offered to employees. The survey highlighted the potential uses of training pre-assessments of employees and supervisors in an organization. Haas' (1991) local government survey of over 1,900 clerical employees and over 130 clerical

supervisors in Santa Clara County, California, assessed the participants' views on training offered for employees. The results indicated significant differences in the prioritization of training needs between the employees and the supervisors in this California county. Supervisors selected interpersonal skills training as the highest priority for the employees, but the employees selected technical skills as their top priority. This difference in priorities for training indicated that supervisors focused on the interpersonal training needs in the workplace. Employees were more likely to see technical skill development as a pathway for their own career advancement (Haas, 1991).

Arkansas State University researchers conducted a survey of Arkansas county and city managers to assess their local government's administrative training needs and technical assistance needs. The survey also captured these managers' opinions on the role of the university in providing such assistance and training (Vanagunas & Keshawarz, 1985). The study suggested that officials in rural county and city governments placed a priority on a need for administrative training and technical assistance (Vanagunas & Keshawarz, 1985). The respondents expressed goodwill toward the universities that assisted them and indicated their preferences for instruction among three university staffing alternatives: university faculty only, individuals with local government experience in the administrative topic area, or a combination between university faculty and local government practitioners. Seventy-nine percent preferred a combination of faculty and local government staff and 19% preferred the local government practitioners. Only 2% preferred exclusively university faculty as the instructors (Vanagunas & Keshawarz, 1985).

Mason (1979) profiled Cornell University's local government training program and found the strongest need for educational training for local government members was for elected boards and councils. Even with their responsibility for budgets, taxing, law and ordinance making,

appointments, and complex decision making, access to training for these elected members was limited in New York. Cornell's program met a community need by training these elected officials.

The various studies of local government training needs show that gaps exist between the priorities for training. The variance was present between what the universities and what the local governments perceive as a top priority. The training needs varied between local government employees and supervisors and between governments of different sizes and governance structures. With all this variance, university PSO administrators have many options as they consider what local government training to offer by invitation, directive, partnership, or market opportunity.

Types of Training Offered to Local Governments by Universities

Choosing what type of training to offer remains an important decision for university PSO administrators. The types of trainings vary according to content, participants, and the latest research. In the literature, various structures for local government training programs were present. Azzaretto et al. (1981) detailed five training programs at one of the University of Georgia's PSOs, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government: financial management training, the certified municipal clerk program, supervisory development, code administration and enforcement, and a certification program for tax appraisers and assessors. These programs were offered in residential conferences and institutes, certifications, and executive development programs (Azzaretto et al., 1981).

Phillips (1977) investigated the training programs at the University of Tennessee's PSO, the Institute of Public Service, and the University of Texas' LBJ School. The University of Tennessee's Institute of Public Service developed training in partnership with other government

agencies including a finance class for local government officials, an introductory course on the Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Act for government administrators, and a program for county officials with the Office of the Comptroller. The LBJ School of the University of Texas' offered annual training events in governmental accounting and finance, a County Auditors' Institute, an Institute for Tax Assessors, and a City Management Institute (Phillips, 1977).

Many studies exist that are specifically related to the Certified Public Manager (CPM) program that is offered by many university PSOs. According to "What is the National Certified Public Manager Consortium?" (2016), the CPM is a national credential based on a curriculum of 300 hours of instruction designed to prepare managers for careers in federal, state, or local government. Teasley's (1988) article included reflections on the short- and long-term benefits of the CPM program for the learner. Conant (1995) undertook a 16-state study of CPM programs for comparisons in program structure, program administration, funding, participant profiles, accessibility, size of programs, and delivery of programs. Paddock (1997) explored benchmarking for the CPM program across 15 states and described the best practices discovered. Fairholm et al. (2004) assessed the District of Columbia's CPM program to provide information to assist government organizations in their own transformational efforts. Each of these studies showed the university's role in administering, instructing, and evaluating the CPM program and showed the variances from university to university even when the program was part of a national certification.

Spindler (1992) analyzed the structure of 80 university-based programs in management development training for state and local governments offered through their university PSOs or the master's in public administration (MPA) programs accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Administration (NASPAA). The findings from the quantitative survey detailed

the purpose of PSO management development programs: to develop technical skills and to understand more theoretical approaches to management development (Spindler, 1992). This study also documented the variety and lack of standards in management development training for local governments by the university PSOs. Spindler suggested the diversity in clientele for the programs and how the PSOs delivered the training influenced the program philosophy (1992). Further research on whether standards are needed for these types of development programs was indicated (Spindler, 1992).

Jacobson and Warner (2008) completed a significant literature review across multiple disciplines, including leadership, governance, public administration, and public service, to look at management development programs. Through this review, they documented studies that indicated a need for a different approach to training and education for local government managers. They suggested a new approach to this management development training to further develop the role of a manager as a community builder and not just a government administrator (Jacobson & Warner, 2008).

More recent university PSO local government training curriculum has focused on leadership development to support government officials learning to work in flattened structures and in collaborative problem solving (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). An example is the Public Executive Leadership Academy at the UNC School of Government. This academy has focused on developing community leadership and developing the abilities of local government managers to lead change in their community (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). Similarly, the Kansas Supervisory Leadership Training program, sponsored by the University of Kansas' Public Management Center, has emphasized skill development for supervisors in the areas of individual leadership development, traditional organizational challenges, such as coaching and conflict

management, and emerging leadership skills, such as collaboration (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013).

University PSO government training has diversity in the variety of methods for offering training, including programs, classes, seminars, workshops, and conferences. Many of the studied programs focused on leadership development, technical skill development for a particular government job, financial skill development, and collaborative problem solving. Government officials, similar to traditional college students, also want learning objectives that match their needs for career preparation (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Finding the right mix of training for the governments has required university PSOs to select some training programs over others. The literature did not indicate how university PSO administrators make those decisions, but suggested the evaluation of training effectiveness remains important for the continuation and survival of programs.

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Training Efforts for Local Governments

Dunn and Whorton (1987) found university PSO government training programs lacked professional norms against which to measure. The lack of norms could be problematic in evaluating performance and effectiveness or lead to a lower perceived value by the university (Dunn & Whorton, 1987, p. 9). Even as the field of public administration grew in its professionalization:

> it seems to have had a more marginal effect on the functions of the public service institute. In particular, continuing education activities as a subfield in universities do not seem to have a clear self-awareness, have a small corpus of theory or knowledge about their activities, have few broadly held generalized social ideals about what they should do, are less affected by the national academies and societies in terms of celebrating the

> subfield's leaders (either individuals or programs), and tend to lack uniform standards. (Van Wart, Holzer, & Kovacova, 1999, p. 69)

Without these professional norms, evaluative comparison of programs between universities was not present in the literature and remained a gap for performance improvement.

University PSOs turned to their clients, the local government officials, to help establish goals for the training programs. Jacobson and Warner (2008) used focus groups from a variety of locations in North Carolina to identify training objectives that worked in university provided government training and education:

1. to help participants work collaboratively to solve public problems;
2. to foster partnerships inside and outside government; and
3. to resolve conflicts by working across boundaries including work with elected officials, communities, and nonprofits. (p. 153)

Upon completion of their focus groups with local officials and analysis of the training needs highlighted in the groups, Jacobson and Warner (2008) developed a training model that ensured that facilitative leadership, governance, and public service were themes in all curriculum design.

Thomson (2010) considered the effects of local government training provided by a university PSO by looking at both the effect on the university and the effect on the government officials. Thomson used three data sources: (a) a survey of training programs for local elected officials from 23 states, (b) a survey of local elected legislators from Michigan, and (c) personal observations from a university-based institute for local elected officials. The results showed universities filled a large role in training for local elected officials. Thomson also found university PSOs had room for growth that could lead to better governance by the officials they trained while also increasing goodwill for the university. Showing a return on investment for the

training or immediate improvement in the delivery of services or job performance was critical to sustained participation in local government training (Gess & Sanders, 2008; Schumaker, 2004).

Evaluating the effectiveness of local government training delivered by the university PSO was essential to process improvement and to the continued demonstration of value to the university and its administrators. Measuring effectiveness remained a gap for many university PSOs. As university presidents and administrators at the provost level have changed, PSOs have the additional challenge of demonstrating effectiveness to new leaders who want to see measured and visible impact (Hoke, 2018). Public service organization leaders continue to work to better assess their training effectiveness and to develop training that is most relevant to the needs of the participants and the challenges that local governments face in their state.

Theoretical Framework

Public universities, particularly land-grant universities, define themselves as institutions focused on teaching, research, and service (Mawby, 1996). How each university defines goals, focuses efforts, and allocates resources on each part of the three-part mission varies, but what is common across the universities is the strong effect that the external environment has on the decisions made in each area. Universities face challenges from the external environment because they secure operating resources externally. This forces the university to think differently and consider varied frameworks as the organization gathers resources (Rey & Powell, 2015).

As public universities have long relied on state governments to provide critical resource allocations for their operation, the trend of declining public tax dollar support for higher education has a significant impact on the behavior of the individuals working in the university (Weerts & Ronca, 2006). Constraints from state revenue, competition for state resources, and the public's attitudes around universities all contribute to an unpredictable resource environment for

the university (Zusman, 2005). Universities must strengthen relationships with their state governments to survive financially (Weerts, 2000).

In the absence of strong state support, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) found higher education faculty, in a time of unstable resources, exhibit market-like behaviors to secure their own funding streams to continue their research interests. The effects of this academic capitalism shifts the focus of faculty work, impacts the reward and tenure system, and changes the prestige levels of the academic disciplines best able to secure more market support (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

In the three-part mission of public universities, public service is considered the least prestigious, and public service is often the least studied in scholarship on the effects of the environment on resources (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005). However, at land-grant universities, public service is mandated and can serve to raise awareness and support for the university while increasing market niches (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005).

This study on university PSOs is focused on universities that provide government training for local governments. If this specific niche of public service training increases prestige for the university and the PSO, raises awareness of services, or increases resource allocations both internally and externally, more administrators and managers of these university PSOs may make decisions to enter the marketplace with new government training programs. These administrators may also find their university's top administrators support their decision to offer this training for its positive effects on the resources of the university.

To illuminate this issue of decision making for university PSOs, Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory is a framework for understanding the effects the environment has on an organization. As an organization is deprived of a critical resource, such as state

funding for operations, the organization will seek new resources. Since the university PSO is dependent on resources for survival that it cannot create or produce internally, the PSO looks into the environment for those resources.

Resource dependency theory is based on three primary concepts: organizational effectiveness, the environment and its effects on resources, and the constraints the environment places on an organization (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). To understand how the university PSO may be evaluated for its organizational effectiveness, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) stressed the strong difference between effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness is an external question that addresses whether the organization created acceptable outcomes. Efficiency is an internal standard that Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) described as a measure of how well the work is being done, given the resources provided and the outputs produced. In the research area of the university, this efficiency measure is often the record of publishing, citations received, and prestige of publications (Jaeger & Thornton, 2006). While all quantitatively significant for efficiency, the numbers do not explain or indicate the effectiveness of the work to the varied groups and organizations that are concerned with the university since "The most important aspect of this concept of organizational effectiveness is that the acceptability of the organization and its activities is ultimately judged by those outside the organization" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 11). The university's effectiveness is assessed by society and coalitions that evaluate the appropriateness and usefulness of the outputs including graduates, research, or public service activities, such as local government training (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). As society considers a university's effectiveness, Votruba (1996) proposed universities need better assessments of service and outreach to show organizational effectiveness:

> First, to what extent does a particular outreach program or service have a demonstrable effect on the intended audience? What difference did it make? Second, to what extent did the outreach program or service enhance the research and teaching mission of the university? If the outreach program is to become a fully integrated element in the overall academic mission, then the university should put the highest priority on outreach programs that accomplish both objectives. (p. 35)

The second concept in the resource dependency theory includes understanding the organization's environment or context. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) described two principles to understand the environment of the organization: (a) how an organization can describe and measure its environment and (b) how the environment is known and how it will influence decision making. The organization responds to what it sees and believes about the environment, and this reaction is shaped by the existing organizational and information structure (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This suggests that, for university PSO administrators, the flow of information, what information is collected and analyzed, and its level of engagement with the environment will greatly affect how the administrator perceives their environment. According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978)

> Organizations may misread interdependence, misinterpret demands, remain committed to past practices, or fail to see the various conflicts in demands. While attention is inevitably retrospective, focused on the process of creating meaning out of past action and using structures and information adapted to dealing with past problems, it is possible to develop procedures for assessment that may overcome some of the problems commonly encountered in designing organizational actions. (p. 89)

Finally, resource dependency theory is concerned with the constraint of actions. An action is considered "constrained whenever one response to a given situation is more probable than other response to the action, regardless of the actor responding" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 14). These constraints that organizations experience are also valuable tools for narrowing down the many decision options that are available to the organization and its administrators. The behaviors of organizations are constrained by physical characteristics, social influence, information and cognitive capacity, and personal preferences (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In a study of mayors from different cities, the impact of the individual mayor had little effect on the city's budget priorities in comparison to the effects that external factors, such as the economy and labor market, had on the city budget (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). These external constraints had more effect on resource deployment than the individual actor, the mayor, had on shaping the city's budget. All leaders and administrators experience some level of constraint in how they respond to the environment and will have certain actions that are more probable in response to the environment (Birnbaum, 1988; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Organizational effectiveness, organizational environment, and constraints affect university public service. In their study of a land-grant higher education institution in the South, Jaeger and Thornton (2005) found university public service work was impacted much like university research work had been, with faculty having to seek external funds and do more applied work over basic work. Their study included faculty focus groups who felt that university resources and support were limited for public service despite its equal stated position alongside research (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005). In response to a decrease in resources for research and public service, faculty in the study found public service to be an extra activity noting that "When resources for public service are not made available, there may be little motivation for faculty,

particularly those with extension appointments, to seek funding for public service initiatives" (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005, p. 59).

Faculty in Jaeger and Thornton's (2005) study also described the challenge of external funders imposing their priorities on the public service program development. Since resources available from external funders were viewed as a survival mechanism for public service work, the faculty expressed a loss of control when they accepted those funds. One participant said:

> Projects are pretty much linked to funder priorities and meeting funders needs is primary. . . . We have been successful in meeting projected grant and contract outcomes, but we have less freedom in setting and pursuing goals that might better serve the state when we are restricted by funder priorities. (Jaeger & Thornton, 2005, p. 60)

University PSOs can secure additional resources from their environment through contracts and grants or by charging a fee for service. Jaeger and Thornton (2005) found faculty were concerned that university public service efforts may not address the areas of greatest need in the state as the fee for services meant many who needed the university's assistance simply could not afford to pay. The more resource-deprived areas of the state might not have the funds to participate in government training despite their need.

In a time of continued declining resources from the state governments to fund the public service efforts at public universities, university PSO administrators face the challenge of securing new resources, adjusting priorities, and reducing faculty engagement as public service resources decreased (Holland, 1999). In Jaeger and Thornton's (2005) study, a faculty member in agricultural and resource economics said:

> Dependency on outside resources can be both good and bad. The benefits are that you can expand your programming to new issues and bring in resources that the university is

> incapable of providing. Some degree of reliance on outside resources keeps your programs competitive and on the cutting-edge. If your programs are competing for outside resources and winning, then that is a sign that you are doing something right. Outside funding needs to be balanced with stable and reliable funding from the University. Non-competitive funding enables you to keep your program focused on educational objectives that may not be important to outside agencies. If you are always chasing money, your program could become incoherent. You'll do anything to get the money. (p. 64)

While Jaeger and Thornton's (2005, 2006) research on resource dependency and university public service provided an example of this theoretical framework, this study of PSO administrators' decision-making process around local government training further advances university PSO scholarship. By examining, analyzing, and sharing this research, future university PSO administrators will have access to data on decision making and its impact on resource dependency that may assist them in making better decisions for their organizations and reducing environmental dependence.

Resource dependency theory implies organizations with leaders, who can better align organizational behaviors to the resource environment and the resource opportunities, can reduce their resource dependency (Coupet, 2013). University PSO administrators need to continue to find methods to expand their academic mission, be more imaginative in serving individual and government learning needs, and diversify their funding streams (Walshok, 2012). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggested five pathways organizational leaders may consider to alleviate or decrease environmental dependence: mergers, joint ventures, boards of directors, political action, and executive succession. Weerts (2000) suggested universities need to carefully consider

outreach organizational structure, changes in faculty reward systems, and adjustment of financial resource allocations. In a study of the University of Georgia's public service and outreach efforts, Weerts (2002) found the university's public service was visible to legislators and the university received higher than predicted levels of state appropriations during the period of analysis.

In a 2018 staff presentation to the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the University of Georgia Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, Dr. Jennifer Frum (2018), said:

> You are most critical to our institution. At the local level, you would be surprised how much of an influence your local elected official is to higher education. When we do our job well, it has impact. . . . If PSO went away tomorrow, who would notice? Would anyone care? You need data to back up your impact and to show how you are moving the needle on key indicators for the quality of life in Georgia. Are we more efficient? Are we more effective? Are we the better value for taxpayers?

This quote emphasizes the challenges university PSO administrators face. Rey and Powell (2015) wondered if university PSOs adapt and change to fit environmental requirements or attempt to alter the environment to fit the institution's capabilities. Weerts (2000, 2014) questioned whether university leaders will find new ways to perform outreach and public service in their state and thus have a greater state investment in the university. The decision to offer local government training as a part of the mission work in public service is a decision made in the framework of resource dependency and its effects on organizational effectiveness, the environment, and constraints.

Gaps in the Literature

In considering the gaps in knowledge of university PSOs that train local governments, I found limited information on how the PSO administrators determined what training needs to address, which training programs to offer, or what criteria they used to make those decisions. In an environment with multitudes of possible training needs for local governments, limited resources for university PSOs, limited resources for training in local governments, and university presidents who prioritized applied research over training (Dunn et al., 1985), PSO administrators have to make resource decisions that determine the availability and variety of local government training they will provide.

Jacobson and Warner (2008) provided insights into organizational lessons learned at UNC's School of Government from their research into training and development for local governments and how UNC faculty approached their training work. First, the School of Government had to be responsive to its clients. Second, the process of redesigning local government education was a time-intensive task. Third, developing and having a plan with a model in place became a powerful tool both in the programs and in the School of Government. Fourth, measuring and evaluating the local government education programs remained an important element. Fifth, collaborating with the municipal and county government professional associations brought many benefits. The UNC focused on developing excellence in leadership and governance by working with local government managers on their government operations and helping those same local government leaders to collaborate with other community leaders (Jacobson & Warner, 2008). Even with these five steps considered, a PSO administrator has competing priorities between the university and these local government needs and must consider all this in the resources available.

A gap still remains in how university PSO administrators make decisions to create and deliver new training for local governments; administrators may ask, “What specific organizational structures, personnel policies, and financial mechanisms will clarify the role and function of public service and enable service to be performed effectively?” (Crosson, 1985, p. 3). Whorton et al. (1986) concluded, in an environment of decreasing university funding, the PSO must decide on what type of assistance local managers need and what mode of delivery would be best to maintain service to local governments.

Van Wart et al. (1999) found “although articles on training, education, and learning are substantial and seemingly growing (especially those focused on education), articles with an overview or state-of-the-art perspective on training provided by universities are lacking altogether” (p. 80). Discovering the criteria that administrators use for making the important decision about what the university PSO will offer in training for local government is an area in need of further research and an area that will provide valuable information to PSO administrators as they make resource allocation decisions in their service arenas. Leading these organizations requires communicating the value of the local government training and aligning the needed resources to allow for the continued public service to the local government community (Weerts, 2011). The tension between proving effectiveness in public service to university administrators and also to external community members, like state legislators and local government officials, requires significant navigation by PSO administrators.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to document the effects of resource dependency on PSO administrators' decisions to offer local government training through their university PSOs. Many research universities fund PSOs that serve the elected and appointed officials of local governments through research, technical assistance, and training, allowing the university faculty to work closely with important government leaders. This research also considers what effects PSO administrators may experience on their internal university resources following their decisions to offer local government training. Using a basic, qualitative study, this research focuses on the experiences of PSO administrators at three research universities as they considered the effects of resources on their own decision making. This research also includes document analysis from websites of the universities and training profiles provided to CUPSO to provide insight into influences and decision-making for the PSO administrators.

The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What do university PSO administrators consider as they make a decision to launch or expand a training program?
2. How do external stakeholders influence the university PSO administrators' decisions to launch or expand a local government training program?
3. How do influences internal to the university affect the PSO administrators' decisions about launching or expanding a local government training program?

The first research question is: What do university PSO administrators consider as they make a decision to launch or expand a training program? This research question provides the opportunity to understand what influences or information administrators consider for their selection of a new training program to add to the university's PSO program offerings. With many sources of information, the PSO administrator makes decisions and either advances a training program or determines that the program will not begin. It is important to question what factors are considered as the PSO administrator makes this decision.

The second research question is: How do external stakeholders influence the university PSO administrators' decisions to launch or expand a local government training program? PSO administrators often work with multiple stakeholders, including university administrators and faculty, government associations, and multiple government officials, agencies, and entities. As universities increase their outreach and engagement in their state, these stakeholders may also be a significant community partner that is part of the two-way exchange between the university and the community to solve a pressing state issue (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). In my second research question I address the need to understand how the various stakeholders specifically impact the administrators' decision making based on current relationships, partnerships, and engagements. This information is valuable for PSO administrators to understand as they consider the impact of their training decisions on stakeholders who may hold key resources for the new training program.

The final research question continues the inquiry into the influences internal to the university that affect decisions made by the PSO administrators. This question is: How do influences internal to the university affect the PSO administrators' decisions about launching or expanding a local government training program? This question explores how finite resources,

such as money and labor, interact with more varied resources, such as relationships with significant stakeholders, university mission, university priorities, and value to the university.

Gaps in the Literature

In considering the gaps in knowledge on university PSOs, limited information exists on how PSO administrators determine what local government training needs to address, which training programs to offer, or what criteria to use to make those decisions. Public service organization administrators operate in an environment with competing training needs for local governments, limited resources for the university PSO, limited resources for training local government officials, and university presidents who prioritize applied research over training as a service to the state (Dunn, Gibson, & Whorton, 1985). Public service organization administrators have to make resource decisions that determine the availability and variety of local government training they will provide based on information they gather about their environments. These decisions may then affect continued resource distribution from internal and external stakeholders. The influences of mission and market significantly impact universities, and university administrators need to manage the two forces (Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005). In my research, I seek to understand how the mission and market also impact university PSO administrators' decisions, specifically in the launch of local government training programs.

Methods and Research Design

Using a basic qualitative study, the researcher conducted interviews with university PSO administrators, analyzed data from a national PSO association, CUPSO, and analyzed data from university websites about PSO local government training programs. For the purpose of this study, the following are the definitions used for varying levels of administrators at a university.

Senior university administrator: These administrators may hold the title of a university vice president or associate provost. These individuals have responsibility for the PSO functions at their university and local government training is one portion of their many, varied responsibilities. These individuals all have terminal degrees and reached their positions through more traditional academic routes having served as university faculty. These senior university administrators are not as frequently engaged with CUPSO as other categories of university administrators are.

Public service organization director: These university administrators have the responsibility for a PSO unit that focuses on serving government clients through applied research, technical assistance, and/or training. The PSO directors may also hold academic appointments. These directors have terminal degrees and are typically the most active members in CUPSO.

Training manager: These administrators hold the primary responsibility for specific training programs offered by the university PSO that serves local government clients. The training managers have responsibilities for multiple government training programs and have arrived, most often, at their current positions after being a practitioner in government. These managers are responsible for planning, managing, executing, and evaluating the local government training programs in their portfolio. These training managers may be engaged with CUPSO upon the invitation of their PSO director.

University public service organization administrators: this a collective term that represents the individuals who are senior university administrators, PSO directors, and training managers.

For this study, I conducted interviews with a PSO director, a training manger, and a senior university administrator from three research universities who are also members of CUPSO. Basic, qualitative studies are undergirded with the principle of understanding how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through the interviews, I understood how university PSO administrators made decisions regarding new training programs for local governments and how they described their own decision-making processes. Prior to beginning any interviews, I submitted a proposal to the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board, explaining how I intended to conduct interviews and protect the participants from any harm (Gullemin & Gilliam, 2004).

Sample Selection

The sample selected for this research represented three research universities who participated in the national 2017 review of training programs conducted by CUPSO and were active members of CUPSO as of March 2019. Twenty training programs, representing 16 institutions, were included in the review, and seven of these institutions represented land-grant university programs. Due to inherent program bias, I did not select my own university as a setting. From the remaining institutions, I selected three from the Southeast to allow for comparisons between institutions located in a similar area in the United States and to decrease interview costs. The specific selection of the three research universities was intentional to minimize possible variations in university missions or university size that could be present among the whole sample from CUPSO.

The participants were the university PSO director, their training manager, and the senior university administrator over the PSO function at the university, either the provost or a vice president. Given that each university was organized differently, I worked with each PSO director

to determine the appropriate training manager at their institution for the interview and to select the appropriate senior university administrator that worked with the PSO unit. I purposefully selected individuals in certain roles at each university in the sample to best help best address the research questions (Creswell, 2014). With this design, I interviewed three administrators from each of the three universities for a total of nine interviews.

Data Collection

This study used two data collection methods: qualitative interviews and qualitative documents. The use of qualitative interviews was a good choice for this basic, qualitative study because the researcher was not able to directly observe the university PSO administrators as they made decisions. The interviews allowed me to hear the administrators' historical recollections of their experiences and for me to direct the line of questioning (Creswell, 2014). Collecting qualitative documents allowed me to easily access a source of data without intruding on or altering a setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews

I used a semi-structured interview format to gather personal accounts of the university PSO directors' experiences in decision making as they considered the addition or expansion of local government training programs. This type of interview allowed me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). The same semi-structured interview protocol was used for the interviews with the PSO directors' designated training manager and with the senior university administrator who oversaw the PSO, either a provost or a vice president. The second set of interviews with the training managers provided more clarity about the decision-making process either through similar comments or by highlighting differences between the bureaucratic levels

in terms of sensitivity to the environment. The senior university administrator interviews provided more data on resources and internal influences as viewed at the institutional level.

I collected data from March to May 2019. Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2019 at the CUPSO annual conference in Portland, Oregon, if the interviewees were in attendance. For the interviewees not attending the CUPSO annual conference, I arranged an interview at their university office. Each interview was voice recorded on an iPhone using a voice recorder application. There was one exception for a senior university administrator, and handwritten notes were used to capture the responses. Prior to conducting the interviews, I contacted each individual via email to request an interview, provide the information about the study and informed consent, and confirm an exact choice for the interview location: CUPSO national conference in Portland or university campus. A copy of the informed consent form is included in Appendix A.

For each institution, I interviewed the PSO director or the training manager first, followed by the senior university administrator. Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. I used an interview protocol to guide the interview but recognized that the narrative in the interview went in new and unexpected directions requiring adjustment to design along the way (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003). The interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

The interview protocol questions were designed to address influence factors that the university PSO administrator may encounter in decision making. Beginning with questions about the background of the administrators themselves allowed for insight into their pathways to their current PSO roles. Followed by a set of questions about the PSO's training programs themselves, the questions addressed the PSO administrators most recently launched programs and what they saw as the most significant programs in their portfolios. Further question sets focused on

inquiring into decision-making process, stakeholder engagement and influence, resources needed for a new program, and power and influence gained from a training program.

Following each interview, I generated a transcript for availability for analysis through the transcription service TranscribeMe. I reviewed each transcript again by listening to the audio recording while reading the TranscribeMe transcription. Any corrections needed between the audio and written report were made, and the transcript files were saved in a word format. I also saved the original audio recordings. One interview only included a transcript from hand-recorded notes taken during the interview.

Interview Data Analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "All qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative in the service of developing common themes or patterns or categories that cut across the data" (p. 297). Collecting qualitative data should be done in a simultaneous process with analysis allowing for an emergent design. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested qualitative researchers should begin analysis early as they start collecting data. They also said the organization of the data should begin early and be completed once all the data are collected. The researcher should create categories and themes from the findings of the study.

During the collection of data from the interviews, I made notes on a paper copy of the interview protocol. Following the interview, I made notes on themes I heard or additional questions that needed exploration on the same interview protocol sheet. I captured my own initial comments and reflections on the concepts, issues, and themes from each interview. As interviews were completed, I digitally sent the audio files to TranscribeMe who returned the transcripts in a 24-hour period.

In reviewing the transcripts after the interviews, I again reviewed the purpose of the study and read data from each transcribed interview. I then wrote a digital memo to myself to capture reflections, hunches about the data, and additional items that needed to be asked for the next interview or considered during data document collection. After reading each interview transcript, I repeated the same memo process.

This study included an inventory of all data sets to document accurately what was collected in interviews, documents, and researcher memos. This inventory was kept as one set of printed hard copies, one set stored in the cloud, and one set stored electronically on my university computer. This placement of multiple locations for the original data sets protects the integrity of the data and protects from theft, file corruption, or deletion (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To manage the data, I used coding to more easily retrieve specific pieces of data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe coding as the assignment of shorthand for various parts of the data, increasing the efficiency of retrieval. These shorthand notes, captured in the margins of transcribed interview notes or handwritten on paper documents collected, allowed me to analyze data in an inductive manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I consolidated, reduced, and interpreted the interview transcripts and the content in the documents.

I identified segments of data I defined as any meaningful piece of data that revealed information relevant to a research question. The segments of data were also interpretable on their own without additional information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I worked to develop categories and themes from the identified segments of data. Coding contributed to this process and was done in an open-coding manner by labeling passages of text and being able to retrieve similarly labeled passages. Upon completion of open coding, I added analytical coding I made for

interpretations and added meaning to the open codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this process, I named categories, determined the number of categories, and then placed data segments into categories. While I created categories and themes through this analytical coding, I continued to pay attention to any bias that I may have brought into the study. The naming of categories and themes came from three sources: the researcher, the words of interview participants, and the literature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

With the categories selected, I moved each data segment into the appropriate category using the computer program NVivo (Version 12). The use of a computer program provided an organized filing system for the data and analysis, a more rigorous method of examining the data, and a way to visualize the relationship among codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The categories allowed for each data segment to be mutually exclusive, have enough categories for all relevant data, be sensitive and descriptive of the data, and be conceptually congruent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also stored the memos in NVivo for ease of analysis and used NVivo's wordcount feature to look for themes among the words used by the administrators.

Document Analysis

As a part of this basic qualitative study, I completed a document analysis. Creswell (2014) showed document analysis helps a researcher understand the words of the participant, is unobtrusive to the participant, and can represent a data source to which a participant gave much attention during its creation. Identifying what documents to review and how to source them was a key concern for the researcher.

The first documents to be analyzed were the training programs named in the national CUPSO training program review. Since 2017, members of CUPSO have completed a voluntary, detailed profile on many of their most significant training programs to share best practices and

information for other universities considering new programs. These documents, stored in a membership section of the CUPSO (2019) website, included descriptions of training programs, the rationale for starting a training program, the intended audiences for training, the budget for the training program, the development and membership of an advisory committee, the historical narratives for beginning the program, and results or impact from the trainings. The profiles were analyzed by placing data into an Excel spreadsheet and reviewing for the similarities of answers across the programs based on the responses. A sample CUPSO training program form is included in Appendix C.

During the semi-structured interviews, I asked the administrators to identify their most significant local government training program. Based on the answer, I analyzed documents available on the university's website or in printed collateral marketing materials about the program. I also reviewed the university's website for other local government training programs and their marketing information or materials on those programs. The review of the university websites provided an additional source of data. The analysis included looking for themes reflected in the interviews or the CUPSO profiles as another method for validating the other two datasets.

Validity and Reliability

I desired for this study to be authentic and to have findings that other university PSO administrators can trust to act on in their own settings. To have that trust, the researcher must ensure the study has reliability, internal validity, and external validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Reliability, or the extent to which the findings can be replicated, is a challenge because human behavior is never a constant and what one experiences may be different from the next

person (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The aim of reliability is to ensure the results are consistent with the data collected. I created an audit trail through an electronic research journal that is a detailed log of my processes, showing how data were collected, how I selected analytical categories, and how I made decisions throughout the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A researcher uses internal validity to question whether their findings will match reality, which is holistic, multidimensional, and constantly changing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used triangulation to address the study's internal validity. The triangulation of the data from the semi-structured interviews, the document analysis of interviewees' university PSO training marketing materials both in print and online, and the CUPSO training program profiles enriched the understanding of the experiences from the interview narratives. Using multiple sources of data, including interviews and documents, I compared the data segments and looked for the convergence among the data. Triangulation increases credibility and quality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Another method used to ensure internal validity was member checks or respondent validation, where I asked for feedback on preliminary findings from the people interviewed. Member checks decreased the possibility of misinterpreting someone's comments and allowed for the respondent to question any bias that may emerge in the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I have also explained and shared my reflexivity, or researcher's position, throughout my research as another method of internal validity. In addition, this research study was conducted in a peer review process through a dissertation committee at the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education. Each member of the three-member committee read and commented on the findings. This process also protected internal validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

External validity in research is the extent to which the findings of one study can apply to other entities or situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To address external validity in this study, rich descriptions provide enough detail that another person can determine if the elements in the research match their situation and if the findings can be transferred to their setting.

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

As I framed my research, I reflected and analyzed where my interests in this topic began and why those interests have continued. I am employed by a university PSO, the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, as a training manager. In this role, our unit provides training to over 12,000 unique government individuals annually. These trainees participate in one of the more than 600 programs, workshops, or classes that we teach or provide. Each of the participants is an active government official from either a state agency or a local government in Georgia.

Professionally, I have had a career working with local government or in local community development prior to joining the University of Georgia. With this reflection, I am aware that my professional background focused on local government, and my own bias that local government is the government closest to the people and the one that can have the most direct impact on citizens' lives. These experiences may lead to a personal bias to emphasize a greater value for the training of local government officials over state/federal government official training. This bias may affect how I understand the decisions university PSO administrators make to select a state training program over a local program for implementation when faced with limited resources.

My experience working at the University of Georgia includes serving in a full-time public service faculty appointment for 7 years and serving 7 prior years as adjunct public service

faculty. I also worked for 4 years as a consultant for the Carl Vinson Institute of Government providing training instruction and served 4 years as an undergraduate student assistant for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. I have also been involved with Georgia 4-H, a program of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, for over 35 years. This long-standing connection to the state of Georgia's flagship university and land-grant institution has led me to heavily value the land-grant mission and public service to the state. This bias may affect my understanding of university PSOs administrators' decisions when profit or volume is chosen over mission and service.

As a nontenure track, public service faculty member at the University of Georgia, most of my Carl Vinson Institute of Government colleagues and I began our university careers after serving in the field as government practitioners. My path to this position did not follow a tenure-track design as is common at some university PSOs. I approach my work from a practitioner background, having worked in government, and I have a bias for this type of applied knowledge over an academic-only pathway of research and scholarship. Interview subjects in my research, who are university PSO directors that approach their work from an academic or research background, may view me as lacking critical field experience.

I also recognize I have a preferential bias for the state of Georgia. I have lived in Georgia since the age of four, and I have resided within 50 miles of the University of Georgia my whole life. Being so Georgia-centric could lead to bias that the University of Georgia is doing great service in Georgia without as much awareness of what other states are doing or the varying local government cultures present in other states that may affect university PSO administrators' decisions.

My age, 47, also affects my view of the world. My views on delivery methods for the training of local government officials is affected by my age. In my own experiences in my university PSO, baby-boomer local government officials often want to receive their training in a traditional classroom setting versus millennial officials who have shown a stronger affinity for online training opportunities. As a member of neither generation, I often enter discussions on training delivery in a facilitator role to help frame the discussion in a way to honor both the traditional and online classrooms.

After considering these elements and their effects on me as a researcher, I am more aware of my worldview as a constructivist; I seek to determine meaning through the views of the participants in my research (Creswell, 2014). As the researcher, I disclose my employment as the associate director for government training at a large, land-grant university's PSO that serves local governments with noncredit training and education. With 18 years of experience as either a trainer or an administrator in a PSO, I have had exposure to my own institution and the network of other university PSO directors though my own active affiliation and involvement with CUPSO.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Findings

The purpose of this study was to better understand the decision-making considerations of PSO administrators when launching or expanding a local government training program for officials in their state. I addressed the following questions in my research:

1. What do university PSO administrators consider as they make a decision to launch or expand a training program?
2. How do external stakeholders influence the university PSO administrators' decisions to launch or expand a local government training program?
3. How do influences internal to the university affect the PSO administrators' decisions about launching or expanding a local government training program?

In this chapter, I present the analyzed data from transcripts of semi-structured interviews with nine university PSO administrators in three different levels of university administration at three different public universities. I also analyzed data from the interviewees' PSO websites and their training profiles submitted to the CUPSO. I changed the names of the three institutions to protect anonymity of responses from the nine administrators.

The first institution is Northern University, a land-grant institution located in the South that traces its early roots to the late 1700s. With approximately 50,000 undergraduate and graduate students and over $480 million dollars in research and sponsored program expenditures, Northern University has three campuses, two specialized centers at two other campus locations, and two system-wide institutes, including one for public service. Information on the student

demographics and budget of the university is provided here, but the source is omitted as to not betray confidentiality.

Northern University's PSO operates as a stand-alone institute, separate from any one campus in the system. Northern University receives its funding through state appropriations to the system which are then distributed to the PSO. Northern University's PSO employs approximately 200 people across multiple centers or units. I interviewed administrators affiliated with Northern University, including a senior university administrator, a PSO director, and a training manager.

The second institution, Western University, is also a land-grant university and is governed by its own Board of Trustees. Information on the student demographics and budget of the university are provided here, but the source is omitted as to not betray confidentiality. Founded in the mid-1850s, Western University has over 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students. In 2016-17, Western University administrators budgeted $114 million for all its public service activities to provide noninstructional services to groups external to the university. This expenditure represented 9% of the total university budget. In 2019, the annual operating budget for Western University was approximately $1.3 billion.

Also located in the South, Western University's PSO that serves local governments is an institute that reports directly to a senior university administrator. This institute, with 12 employees, focuses on economic development and government training. I interviewed a senior university administrator, the PSO director, and a training manager at Western University's institute.

The third southern institution is Eastern University, which had its start in the 18th century and currently has 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The university has a research

budget of over $1 billion annually. Information on the student demographics and budget of the university are provided here, but the source is omitted as to not betray confidentiality. In 2015-16, the budget for Eastern University reflected $164 million on public service expenditures or 5.6% of the total university budget. The PSO that serves local government is a school on the Eastern University campus. With a mix of 50 faculty members and professional staff, this PSO provides both graduate student education and local government official, noncredit trainings. Eastern University's PSO is led by a PSO director who is also a dean that reports up to academic affairs. I interviewed the PSO director, a senior university administrator, and a training manager whose primary role is administrative for both noncredit oversight and faculty affairs. While not a land-grant institution, Eastern University has a strong history of public service built into its historical roots as a flagship institution for its state.

While each of the PSO administrators had their own narrative, the data showed many similarities as these individuals considered local government training as an outreach service of their university. The Western University PSO Director reflected, "If we had to do only one thing, it would be our training because I think that's the biggest impact we have." Engagement with the environment through both internal influences and external influences led to much of the information that guided PSO administrators in their decision making. These engagements would come from the university, interest groups, measures the PSO collected and analyzed, history, or even directly from the state's legislative body. Yet understanding the environment did not eliminate constraints like limited financial and labor resources and territorial lines between government associations and the university PSO.

Through interviews and document analysis, I realized six main findings that were considerations for the university PSO administrators as they evaluated the launch or an

expansion of a local government training program. First, the influence of external stakeholders was a dominant consideration when working with government associations. Second, the state legislature exerted the most influence as external stakeholders when they were involved with the PSO programs. Third, the metrics used to evaluate the effectiveness of a training program also had an effect on PSO administrators' decisions. Fourth, the influence of the mission of public service provided a guiding compass for decisions. Fifth, the organizational location of the PSO contributed to the variety of internal influences the administrators experienced or avoided as they made a decision. Finally, the access to financial and labor resources at a programmatic level remained a strong influencer on the decisions that administrators made.

Finding 1: The Influence of External Stakeholders—Government Associations

The interviewed university PSO administrators described their markets not as individual consumers but as collections of local government officials who perform the same job duties. These collections were known as government associations in their states, and they represented positions such as elected officials, tax assessors, personnel administrators, managers, payroll clerks, municipal clerks, law enforcement personnel, economic developers, etc. These associations are best described as interest groups that advocate for the education or policy issues related to that specific job function in a local government.

The PSO director at Eastern University talked about government associations as influencers: "The stakeholders—it usually would be two of our closest partners historically, the [Municipal League] and the Association of County Commissioners. We really pay close attention to those folks when it involves local government training." The training manager at Northern University said:

> We've got just every association you can think of we're involved in some form or fashion. . . . So we have relationships with the different associations . . . there is a parks and rec group in the state. . . . We would go to them and say, "Hey. We see this. We know you're providing this to your association. We need to provide it to cities, too. Can we work in conjunction?" Like we do for business tax with the Department of Revenue. We also had a contract with a [agency] for flood insurance seminars that we provided statewide. We didn't provide the instructor. They did. We advertised and we provided locations and we handled any of the logistics . . . we'll partner with different groups based on the need.

The associations were described as valued partners. In their role in the external environment of the PSO, the associations had a tremendous amount of influence that could show itself in the development of new programs. The training manager at Western University described how working with one association to provide local government training for its members led to an affiliated association asking if they could also have training services from the PSO: "He was then president . . . [of the] Association of Public Personnel Administrators. . . . And then he said, 'Mary, do you have any board training?' I mean, I've got a whole notebook . . . I just went and I started putting something together." The administrators described being very responsive to requests for training from the local government associations whether it was for new content or new training locations.

Similar to the data from the interviews, the document analysis of the CUPSO training profiles showed similar influence from the external stakeholder group of government associations. The request of an association to start a training program was cited most frequently as the reason for the start of the programs. Of the training program profiles analyzed, 38%

indicated that the association requesting a training program was an influence on the creation of a new training program by the PSO.

A PSO may also approach the association about tightening the partnership with the university. For Eastern University, one government association donated a gift of $500,000 to the PSO's leadership development program to develop a tighter partnership between the PSO and the association. The PSO director saw the benefit of a strong relationship:

> It's largely that we've built this incredibly trusting relationship with their executive director who values what we do . . . I think that's hugely important, not just financially but in terms of the support for the programs, getting people to the programs, making sure that the programs are as good as they can be because they have input in a way that they never had before.

For Eastern University and Western University, the PSO also partnered with a government managers association to not only provide training but to also manage the operations of the association. This tight partnership meant both PSOs had increased access to local governments' top decision makers. These managers controlled the training budgets for their governments and could direct funds for their personnel to participate in future trainings by the PSO. The managers also served as key constituents for the PSO for research, applied work, and information on trends and needs in the state. The PSO director at Western University said

> We're talking to them about managing their association and . . . the only way that that makes sense to me was that we would develop a professional-level program as a part of that. And they wanted that, too, but when you have an association, and you got all these people that are doing their own jobs, and so they need somebody to help them do that.

> And that's what's happened with all these associations. They want training, but they need somebody to do it for them. And so that's our role.

In describing the PSO's management of the government managers association, the Eastern University PSO director said:

> I think the partnership with the association, which is we've worked with them but it's never been intentionally a partnership in the way that we're describing it now, in the way they're seeing it now. And I think over time, that will have as big an impact as almost anything we've done. Twenty years from now . . . we'll be looking back and going, "That partnership has been hugely important for our local government training." All the work that we do . . . if we do it right which I think we will, it will really pay dividends, not just for us, but for the state.

Association leadership or representatives also held seats on advisory committees for local government training programs the PSO was offering. The CUPSO training profiles showed that 67% of the training programs had an advisory committee. Of those programs with an advisory committee, 65% provided seats for associations on the advisory committee. As shown in Table 1, the roles of advisory committee members included governance of the program, help with recruitment of participants, help with fundraising to support the program, and help with deciding on content for the program. The profiles indicated help with content and recruitment of participants were the most common roles for advisory committee members. With 65% of the sample that had advisory committees including seats for government associations, the advisory committee member representing that association had an opportunity to provide feedback and influence directly on the PSO local government training program.

Table 1

CUPSO Training Program Profile Question—What Is the Role of the Advisory Committee Members?

Response	*n*	% of total responses
Response: governance of program	11	22%
Response: help with recruitment	13	26%
Response: help with fundraising	5	10%
Response: help with deciding on content	20	40%
Response: Other	1	2%

Note. 30 training program profiles $n = 50$.

The advisory committee members provided input for content, instructors, and for marketing. One PSO director said the people filling the seats for an advisory committee helped to create a marketing arm for a new program

> It's powerful because, for us, having those associations there, they're going to be our best publicity as far as PR or public relations. If we can get . . . their buy-in early, and let's be honest, if they can brag that they've had their fingerprints on this program from the infancy and it's a success, they're going to take the success as their own and therefore, they're going to invest more into it. There's a lot of egos with our associations, and so being able to make them feel part of the beginning and the decision-making in the beginning . . . . At the end of the day, they felt like they had helped develop a program. And so that's been very powerful going forward because at their association meetings, at their big conferences, they're sure when they introduce themselves, that they'd let people know that they are an advisory board member of the new program.

The associations were also described in terms of their market value for the PSO to reach potential enrollees for training programs. “Those relationships help us get the information that the cities need out there,” stated the training manager at Northern University. The administrators each described the value of being able to reach directly to the members of the associations to inform training opportunities. The Western University senior university administrator said:

> [We] don’t want to lose associations; we see them as low hanging fruit. Why are associations important? They serve people too. Like we do. They are a source of research, studies, and are partners to get things done. They are a source of revenue too.

The PSO director at Western University described many associations that he worked closely with in his role and shared that the association brought a market to the university’s programs while the university brought added value to the association’s membership:

> One advantage is that your target market already has a relationship with the association that generally respect the association or of all the associations to some extent. But we make it better. We provide a service to them . . . . We get the reputation [of the] association that we’re working with. And we provide value to that association so that we give something and we get something. Of course, they’re able to market for us to reach the people that we need to reach. But doing it the way that we do it we just say we’re not going at it on our own. We’re working with the associations.

The analysis of the PSO training program websites and marketing materials also indicated close connections with the associations for specific training programs. As an example, a webpage for Eastern University’s county finance officer certification program discussed, not only the long history of the two government associations involved in the creation of the program over 30 years ago, but also the specific roles the associations and the PSO play in the program. In

this case, Eastern University provided administrative and consultative support to the association that retained the governance of the program. Another example at Northern University highlighted two associations' roles in sponsoring the county official training program that the PSO administered and governed. The webpages for training programs involving associations at Western University also shared information about the relationship between the PSO and the association. For a program that Western University offered for government personnel managers, the webpage described the PSO's role as support and sponsorship; the two involved associations held governance over the training program to focus on issues pertinent to public personnel management in the state.

If a government association played a role in the training program, the PSO websites I analyzed showed that the association's role was defined and easy to find. The PSO websites also indicated the responsibilities that the PSO itself had in the program, whether in governance, administrative support, sponsorship, or instruction. The influence of these external stakeholders was visible beyond just the roles but also included association brand awareness through the posting of the association's logo and providing website links directly to the association from the PSO website or on the PSO marketing materials.

Being tightly coupled with associations brought a lot of investment of time into relationships that could change based on who was in the leadership role at the associations. With the university PSO training programs so tightly woven into the operations of the association, neither partner made changes easily. The PSO director at Western University shared:

> It's not just putting on these training programs. It's about going every quarter to all the associations and sitting through their board meeting and making a report . . . to do a lot of relationship building . . . it's a lot of time that you do . . . you're not just putting on a

> training program, you're nurturing the relationships. But I think what that does is builds a lot of support for you and what you're doing. If you need time, you need help, they're there. They're with you . . . you don't know where their association begins and ends. . . . We're symbiotic. We're working together. We're bound up pretty tight. So, I don't know how we could do what we do in our training programs without these associations. And I don't know why the association would exist unless they had us to do their training program.

These relationships could also be competitive in nature, as an association may choose to pursue new funding streams by offering its own training without assistance from the PSO. "With the county . . . association, it's fairly territorial in things and so as long as we were doing things that they weren't doing, then they were okay with it," said the PSO director at Western University. Eastern University felt the same pressures with its municipal association, "I think it's an organization that has some budget pressures of its own and feels like maybe it should be doing some of the things that we do. So sometimes we step on each other's toes that way." The PSO administrators did not want to compete against associations in the training marketplace but instead wanted to partner or collaborate. A PSO director said:

> We go where the needs are. If somebody's already doing a program that's successful, I'm not going to say, "We're going to do it too. We're going to compete with you." . . . . This is my philosophy from the beginning is that when it comes to . . . training in the state . . . . We don't compete. Meaning I'll collaborate with anybody because there's a lot work to do.

Finding 2: The Influence of External Stakeholders—The State Legislature

The state legislature had a significant influence on PSO administrators' decisions about training programs. Sometimes state legislation even required the PSO to work with a particular statewide, local government association like Northern University's PSO and its municipal league. Some state legislation named the exact roles the PSO had in the delivery of a training program for local government officials. Having connections in the state legislature also mattered to the PSO administrators.

While none of the three university PSOs in this study were directly funded by the legislature and state appropriations, the data suggested relationships with legislators increased some credibility of the PSO's work to its own university leadership. For the Eastern University senior university administrator, she recalled the PSO director talking about a legislative experience during university budget cuts:

> [The director] went over to the legislature at one point to talk to them about-- just advocating for the university . . . . He told the story at the time of talking to a particular legislator who was kind of railing against Eastern University and, "You guys are just rich and we're going to take some of your money because we have to. And it doesn't matter that much." . . . . Then he turned to [the director] and said, "But not you. I like you." . . . . I think those relationships that are formed by the [PSO] with all those local officials, I think have to have an impact on their view of the university, and so I think indirectly it pays off for us.

The PSO administrators described many of their government training programs beginning with a mandate from the legislature for a certain segment of local government officials to complete training in a given topical area and for that training to be administered by the university

PSO. Not only did these legislative mandates increase the number of programs that the university PSO offered to local governments, the mandate guaranteed a steady supply of participants who needed to be in compliance with the state law. While new employees in local government realized they needed training, they also experienced what a training manager at Northern University described as the "legislature putting an overlay on them of what they're required to have every year for initial and continuing education." Even though the mandates for training often lacked sanctions, local government officials still participated, as a Western University administrator noted:

> We have a state law . . . that requires that newly elected county commissioners have 50 hours of training, and there's no real sanction other than not being embarrassed that you didn't attend. . . . We have 98% of our county commissioners having had mandatory training, which I think is remarkable.

For the Eastern University PSO, the addition of a legislative mandate meant a program with immediate demand:

> Four years ago, the legislature created a requirement that people who are going to be in certain positions in local government had to get ethics training. So, we created a training to address that need. . . . For us, that is like the best example. There's a legal requirement that somebody get the training so you know immediately there's going to be some demand for it. There's a market for it, and so you go and do that.

But two administrators also remarked that sometimes the legislature, through a mandate, can give the PSO a program topic in which the PSO currently has no expertise: "Sometimes they create a requirement to do something which we have no expertise in, that's really—that's

strange. So, we're just lucky that they think of us as somebody who would do some of that stuff."

The influence of the state legislature, through legislative mandates to the university PSO to offer a training program, was evident in the webpages and marketing materials for programs with legislative mandates. Legislative mandates were highlighted on PSO training webpages to inform potential participants, for example:

> The program requirements are based on the Certified Municipal Finance Officer and Education Act of 2007 (the Act). The Act has been amended twice since 2007. . . . All municipal governments should have had a CMFO, qualified exempt individual, or an employee designated as the person to obtain continuing education hours by January 1, 2013. Every incorporated city must have one person designated as the person with financial oversight and have an active account in the State Comptroller's online system . . . CMFO enrollees must physically attend the first course titled "Government Environment." This is currently being scheduled for delivery every January.

The influences of the state legislature on the PSO administrators to offer a training program are evident in the CUPSO training program profiles too. In the analysis of 30 training program profiles, 19% of the CUPSO training program profiles cited a legislative mandate as the reason for the start of that training program. Only the influence of a government association and the option of "other" had more frequency in the CUPSO training profiles (see Table 2).

Finding 3: The Influence of Metrics

In my theoretical framework, one of the ways that Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) noted organizations understand their environment is through the way they structure information systems. The information that is regularly collected by the organization has the effect of focusing

Table 2

CUPSO Training Program Profile: Question—Why Did You Create This Particular Training Program?

Response	*n*	% of total responses
Response: Trade/Government Association Request	14	38%
Response: Legal mandate	7	19%
Response: University mandate	1	3%
Response: Generate Revenue	3	8%
Response: Other (included responses for a request by an agency or addressing a known need for training)	12	32%

Note. 30 training program profiles (n = 37)

the organization's attention on that information. What gets collected matters to how administrators in an organization respond to their environment. At various times, but in no regular cycle, the PSO directors and training managers employed needs assessments through a survey to potential attendees or through inquiry after a training program about other needs the participants may have. However, in the course of my analysis, the measures cited most frequently by the PSO administrators in interviews, websites, or CUPSO training profiles were not needs assessment results but the counts of people attending a local government training, the longevity of a training program, or the end-of-program evaluations. Metrics influenced the PSO administrators' decisions about the launch or expansion of a local government training program.

A noted influence on the PSO administrators and their decisions involved metrics and how to measure the impact of their training programs. The senior university administrator at Western University admitted the difficulty in measuring PSO activity. In the absence of other

measures, he had to rely on the counts of the number of people served by the PSO and for government training programs, that metric was the number of participants who attended a training program. He described that having a zero for head count would definitely mean no impact, so counting people is one way to show reach. In the interviews with the PSO administrators, many noted the number of attendees in the program or a total enrollment number for the PSO. The inclusion of a number in their dialogue about a program appeared to be their way of describing not only volume but also an implied impact that the more people who attended a training meant more impact for their state. The PSO administrators appeared to judge a local government training program as successful if it had a good attendance number. A PSO training manager shared what he thought a senior university administrator would say about his programs, "[Our PSO] does all this outreach and they teach 200 courses a year and reach 11,000 people. Isn't that great?"

Only one of the PSO administrators was able to cite a quantifiable impact to the state during the interviews. For demonstrating impact, Northern University completed a study of its Certified Municipal Finance Officer (CMFO) training program and found impact from the training beyond a simple count of attendance. This empirical research study brought quantifiable results of the training impact into Northern University's environment and was cited in the interviews and in a recent publication produced by the PSO to send to its constituents (citation withheld to maintain anonymity of site). The senior university administrator said:

> A review of the CMFO program showed, as a result of that training and certification, that the number of audit findings in our state has been drastically reduced and the severity, when there was an audit finding, was much reduced. And the Comptroller's Office has attributed a reduction in the amount of undiscovered fraud in our state as a result. And a

> matter of fact, the comptroller, in talking about the program one day, said, 'To put it in terms of a . . . football fan, it's a game-changer . . . to have our state comptroller say that, I think, illustrates that this is certainly one that has had tremendous impact in our state.

The researchers in that study focused on the frequency of findings in local government audits before training and after training. The study helped to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum for the training program and to show direct fiscal impact for the state.

The influence of the CMFO study and its associated metrics were evident from the interview transcripts with all three PSO administrators at Northern University, who all referenced the study. The newsletter for the Northern University PSO also included a direct link to the study. The results from the empirical study influenced the PSO administrators' continued focus on this training program and appeared to inform their future directions around finance training.

The history of a training program, from its roots to its current status, was also an influential metric. The PSO administrators equated the longevity of a program as an indicator of quality or impact in the state. Programs repeated annually, and the PSO administrators shared that many of the training programs were not being updated as frequently as they should be or not until a partner requested an update. Table 3 reflects training programs discussed during the interviews that included specific references to start dates.

The analysis of the PSO training program websites and marketing materials, however, did not show an emphasis on the longevity of a program. The pages and materials analyzed only referenced start dates if the date was part of the state official code or the enabling legislation for the training program. While the longevity of the training programs influenced the PSO

administrators, they did not appear to use that longevity measure as a marketing message for recruitment of participants.

Table 1

Training Programs Referenced in Interviews With Start Dates

University Name	Training Programs mentioned in transcripts	Start Date
Western University	County Commissioners Training	1994
	Economic Developers Training	1984
Eastern University	Local government consulting	1931
Northern University	Government Management Institute	1989
	Government Executive Institute	1984
	Local Government Leadership Program	1985

The CUPSO training profiles analysis showed the frequency of the type of effectiveness measures PSO administrators used to evaluate training programs (see Table 4). The PSO administrators received feedback on their training programs most frequently through an end-of-class evaluation given to the training participants. The second most frequent response to measure the effectiveness of the training was an end-of-program testing or certification process. Only one training program profile indicated any follow-up with the participant six months or more after a training to evaluate the effectiveness of a training. With this information, the PSO administrators are influenced by end-of-program evaluation data to gauge the effectiveness of their programs.

The website and marketing material review for Eastern and Western University did not show any published measures of effectiveness for the PSO training programs such as promotions following training, decreased errors, or tabulated course evaluations. The effectiveness of a

training program was often only an anecdotal quote from a participant like this one at Eastern University:

Table 2

CUPSO Training Program Profile Question—How Do You Measure the Effectiveness of Your Training?

Response	*n*	% of total responses
Response: Participant questionnaire immediately following training	26	62%
Response: Participant questionnaire six months or more post-training to assess use	1	2%
Response: Certification or testing of knowledge gained	8	19%
Response: Post-training interviews with participants	4	10%
Response: Post-training interviews with co-workers or constituents of participants	1	2%
Response: Other (Six-week follow-up email; alumni tracking)	2	5%

Note. 30 training program profiles ($n = 42$).

> Having our whole executive staff attend this high-level executive training has fostered greater discussion in our organization and given us—as a team—a better understanding of how to make council-staff relationships operate more effectively.

Northern University's PSO webpage for a new management program that had just completed its pilot year included five testimonials like this one from a manager who participated in the program

> The [management] program far exceeded my expectations. It provides a fresh, new approach to learning; the program administrator has been phenomenal; and the class instructors have brought a new way of learning to many different subjects. One of the greatest takeaways from this experience with the program is certain tweaks to my

> management style and an implementation of various procedures that have enhanced operational efficiencies. . . . I expect that I will be implementing other operational procedures in early 2019.

Even though Northern University had the empirical study on its finance officer program, its webpages for the program did not include that information. To find the study or its reference required downloading the PSO's digital newsletter from a whole different section of the website.

Finding 4: The Influence of Mission

In my interviews about the launch or expansion of a local government training program, the historical roots of the PSO were evident and highly influential. The PSO administrators talked about their university's land-grant history or the special history around their own institution as a core element of how they addressed the mission of their own PSO's work. Servicing the state was experienced as an imperative from their land grant or historical roots, but also, as a response to their state's own needs, frequently described as economic development. The senior university administrator at Western University said "I believe if we want to be truly great, to solve real world problems . . . be solid in discipline and service oriented. We are the land grant in [our state] and impact every county and we need to do it well."

The senior university administrator at Northern University summarized the sentiment of mission fit: "On the market side, we're open to all kinds of market-driven opportunities, as long as they serve a need in the state that fits our outreach mission and our mission to benefit local government, business, industry, and law enforcement." These PSO administrators found their university's mission and their own program's public service history as influences on their training decisions.

While the PSO administrators talked about their mission and history in the interviews, the imprints of their missions were less visible in their websites and marketing materials. In my analysis, the mission was often left to a single page on their websites and was not present on the training program pages. For the potential training participants registering for a class or reviewing a course catalog, they may never realize how much history is underlying the program or class they are about to start. The analysis of 76 training program webpages found only six mentions of mission, or less than 8% of the total. While the mission was present in the analyzed transcripts as a strong influence on the start of the program, the web-based marketing of the programs was less influenced by the mission affinity.

Finding 5: The Influence of the PSO's Organizational Location

Operating outside of the more visible teaching and research functions of their universities, the PSO administrators described maneuvering with autonomy as they grew or expanded their local government training portfolios. While senior university administrators were aware, generally, of the more visible programs the PSO offered, they did not direct actions for the administrators in the PSO. They primarily provided access to fundraising, political capital, or mission review. A PSO director said:

> Our provost is fairly hands-off on the actual things that we do. . . . I do a monthly report about all the things that we're doing. . . . We inform him, and we have meetings, and he knows generally what we're doing. But the specifics of it, he does not dictate to us what we do or tell us we can or can't do things. He pretty much has been pretty laissez-faire.

For the training manager at Western University, she also saw the university as mostly unaware of the PSO's work. "Nobody on campus really knows. I mean, because it's an academic institution,

and they don't really realize what all goes on through outreach. . . . They definitely don't know what we do in cities and counties."

The Eastern University senior university administrator described the PSO's training work: "I think what's interesting is, that to me, those programs are kind of like the epitome of public university support for the public." Yet, she went on to describe how the university saw the PSO and said, "I think just in general if you ask what is the central mission, I'm not sure that they would point to this kind of activity." The Northern University senior university administrator described autonomy at his institution:

> I'm not uncomfortable telling our president, "Hey, there's this new thing we need to do. We're going to get after it." I would ask if they had any input. It's unlikely they would. We have had probably more autonomy than we should, to be honest. But part of the reason we have that is, it's not quite a two-way street yet. We're really the ones when we cooperate with another part of the university system, we're usually the ones reaching out.

The analysis of the CUPSO training profiles showed that only one training program, of the 30 reviewed, was launched as a university mandate (see Table 1). On the corresponding web page for that training program, the messaging did not reference the university's involvement other than the PSO staff as trainers for the program. The document analysis suggested that the PSO administrators' distance from the university administrators and location on the periphery of the university strategic focus allowed for decisions to be more influenced by other factors than the university's directives. In summary, a PSO administrator said:

> I'll have the legislators that will call randomly each month and will say, "What do you all need?" And I will have to say, "You will need to ask the University" . . . which is killing me inside because I know what we need, and I know that our needs will never meet the

> top of the list that [the university] sends out to the legislator for the budget. [The PSO] will never be on that list. And so we will continue to work hard. We will continue to get small grants and contracts.

Being able to respond directly to the market by working directly with external constituents, associations and local governments allowed for the PSO administrators to operate with autonomy, but also limited direct financial support from their university's state funding.

Finding 6: The Influence of the Access to Financial and Labor Resources at a Programmatic Level

Another influence on the PSO administrators' decision to launch or expand a local government training program was access to financial and labor resources for the specific training program. This influence also included the ability of the program to cover its own expenses or to generate net revenue that other programs could access. The administrators described having to make enough to cover the cost of the program but also expressed their desire for a program to have some dollars left over to support other public service programs for more rural or less affluent local government agencies' officials. An Eastern University training manager said:

> As administrators, we're going to ask the questions about can we cover our cost with this? For the last decade, we've asked more often, can we actually get extra revenue from this training? Is this an audience that's willing to pay a slight premium over what we would typically charge? And if it is, that's a plus for the course. It's not the reason we're going to decide to do it, but it's certainly a plus for a course.

The PSO director at Northern University described the challenge of impacting the state's rural counties

> I think that no matter how much we lowered the cost, there're some really distressed counties that still would not [attend training]. They have zero as the balance line in their budgets for training. And so, we would have to scholarship some of those severely distressed counties. However, I would like to see us eventually lower the cost to get, not just more counties and cities to participate, but more individuals from those counties. . . . How many years is it going to take us, without additional resources, to do that?

Despite desires to do more training programs and to provide service to more of the local governments in their state, the administrators also acknowledged budgets are tight. Challenges to offering more training or expanding programs included limited state funding, lack of dedicated training spaces, and labor capacity. While the administrators all recognized increased need and demand for their services, they felt unable to move to the market unless the training program could self-fund or they could redirect resources. The Western University PSO director said, "This year, our last staff meeting, we just said we have got so much going on, and we're short staffed. . . . We can't do it this year. We're going to have to do something else." His training manager shared his concerns and shared "I said I am seriously thinking about cutting back on all the classes and making programs go two years instead of offering all four or all five classes in a year. I said unless we get more people, we cannot and I can't."

With fewer state appropriated dollars coming to the PSO through the university budgets, covering the daily operations and overhead was critical for the administrators. "Somebody's not going to get paid at the end of the year if we don't," said one administrator. While another PSO administrator noted:

> There's an overhead component built into everything we do, program support, all of that sort of stuff. So, in terms of faculty making decisions about courses in their area that

> really is just a new course, kind of like what they've done before but in terms of the group, it really is based on an assumption that registration fees will—so their time is already covered. . . . The idea is, the course will generate revenue based on a formula that includes a lot of different overhead costs and discretionary items.

For the programs in the CUPSO training profiles, I noted that of the 30 training programs reviewed, 10 reported they made a profit, seven reported they made enough revenue to cover expenses, and six reported they needed a subsidy to support the program. Only 23 program profile responses included answers to the question about the financial state of the training program. In the programs done in partnership with associations, it was not clear exactly how the profits were reinvested. A PSO administrator, acknowledging a profit on some trainings, knew that his PSO would reinvest those dollars back into a smaller community with fewer dollars for training:

> Because if I can get [a large city] to sign a contract, and we can send somebody there and they're going to pay $10,000 for the week, then not only is that going to pay the staff time, then I'm going to be able to make a little bit of money off of that program, to then invest in these smaller cities that we're not getting a dime from, but we're still offering services for free.

An additional influence for the PSO administrator was the faculty or staff themselves and being able to find an employee who would manage a new training program. The administrators described constraints in their decision making around faculty or professional staff. The decision to start a new training program or expand a training program was constrained by finding a current faculty interested in the client group or new topic or faculty tolerance for the idea and its impact on them personally in regard to travel. A PSO director described his faculty's

programmatic responsibilities, “If it’s ‘we’re the client group’ and the faculty member has developed a set of programs and courses, training programs for that local government client group, how they manage that, add, subtract, is pretty much up to them.”

The administrators described their roles as looking for the right faculty or professional staff for a program and supporting ideas that flow upward from their staff for programs. The Eastern University PSO director said:

> If a faculty member says, “I want to do this,” and it doesn’t take away from some other faculty member’s ability to do their work, and it requires support that I’m willing to provide that doesn’t hurt somebody else’s support, then it’s all systems go. . . . Basically, the way we operate is if a faculty member wants to do something, I see my job as trying to figure out how to make that happen. . . . Faculty are working across different disciplinary areas which I think makes for stronger programs. And so, when that happens, they don’t necessarily have to come to me although sometimes they do. But what they need to do is get buy-in from other folks to make it work. . . . Sometimes I can help in the facilitation of that. But not in terms of saying to people, “You got to do this.” Because it just doesn’t work.

Concerns over staff burnout and travel requirements to provide training at locations across their states influenced decisions for the PSO administrators. As faculty or staff in the PSO aged, they did not want to travel as frequently or wanted to travel less distances from their homes. Covering states with greater geographical distance from the PSO location to the government locations meant an instructor could be on the road all week when trying to train multiple local governments in a topic. To compensate for travel, one university PSO conducted most of its training in its own campus facilities. A second institution was currently searching for

a lease for its own space for training events and to centralize its training program event locations to the new space, reducing the travel for the staff.

In the analysis of the CUPSO training program profiles, the responses to the question of format for a training included online at own pace, webinars, in-person, and other. Of the 30 programs reviewed, all 30 were conducted in-person and none were in an online format only. The PSO directors and training managers said in their interviews that they had considered increased online offerings but had found that their local government participants were not as interested in those trainings. In-person, stand-and-deliver training, remained the primary mechanism for providing training, leading to the influence of the faculty and staff resources on the decision to launch a new program. PSO directors and training managers had to consider the new program's effect on the travel and time away from home for their employees since most training programs still required stand-and-deliver formats for their faculty and staff to deliver the content.

Summary of Findings

This research yielded six major findings; however, I did not find that all six were of equal influence or were weighted the same by PSO administrators as they made various decisions. Decisions and actions were affected by the type of training need, the timing of the training request, and even the location or jurisdiction where the training would be conducted. Although the government associations and the state legislature could exhibit a strong influence, they were not a constant source of influence, and their involvement was variable. As the PSO administrators moved from one training program to the next to address the learning needs of local government officials, they did not afford themselves the time to address measuring effectiveness as a tool for future market opportunities or for sustained market activity. While that

absence of measuring effectiveness could be seen as a limitation, my findings suggest that the absence of those metrics may also assist the PSO administrators to stay clearly focused on the institution and unit's mission to serve as a guiding star for decision making.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

I believe that my research with university PSO administrators provides knowledge that reflects the current environments and limited resources these administrators face in making decisions about local government training programs they will offer in their state. I also believe that the administrators' experiences at each institution were unique and reflective of the individuals selected for participation in interviews as part of this study. While the knowledge created will be informative for university PSO administrators who are considering new local government training, I know that the decisions these administrators make are impacted by time, place, and people, all of which are in a constant state of change.

A university PSO that offers government training in its service must ensure that its training programming anticipates and meets the needs of the public servants in its state and contributes to the effectiveness of the government organization (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). The results of training offered by university PSOs can lead to increased knowledge and skill development for government participants, allowing for them to return to their communities and quickly implement process improvements, improve efficiency, supervise better, manage financial resources, govern more openly and collaboratively, and ensure the long-term viability of their community. Investing in the launch of new training programs, whether workshops, seminars, classes, curriculum, or certificate programs, requires a significant financial investment, needs assessments, costly labor resources, the development of knowledge and research in the needed areas, expanded marketing, and a delay in other programming due to limited resources.

The university PSO that offers local government training sits solidly on the foundation of its home institution. Often woven tightly in the mission of public service to the state, the university PSO serves its local governments through training, applied research, and technical assistance. The administrators of these PSO units must consider many factors as they look at meeting or responding to the training needs for local government practitioners and elected officials in their state.

To describe my conclusions, I use a metaphor and visual image to illustrate the relationships and elements that impact the university PSO administrators' decisions as they consider local government training programs (see Figures 1 and 2). The PSO bundle of local government training can be described as an open container sitting in a transparent *box of influences*. The container is not full but does have content in it that represents current training programs for local governments that the PSO offers. The flooring of the box, which the container sits on, represents the university that supports the PSO and serves as its foundation. This bottom of the box provides labor and resources that make it possible for the container of training to have a fixed location inside the university. All around the open-container of PSO training is a permeable, transparent, flexible box with sides that allow for air to flow in and out. The walls of the box represent constraints that the environment has on the PSO in regard to its training. The box has four side walls: a wall of metrics, a wall of labor representing faculty and staff, a wall of finances, and a wall of the marketplace. The lid of the box is the university mission. Since the box is permeable, the influences of external actors are able to push into the box and fill the container of training programs, push the container, or avoid the container all together. Those external influences are government associations and the legislature.

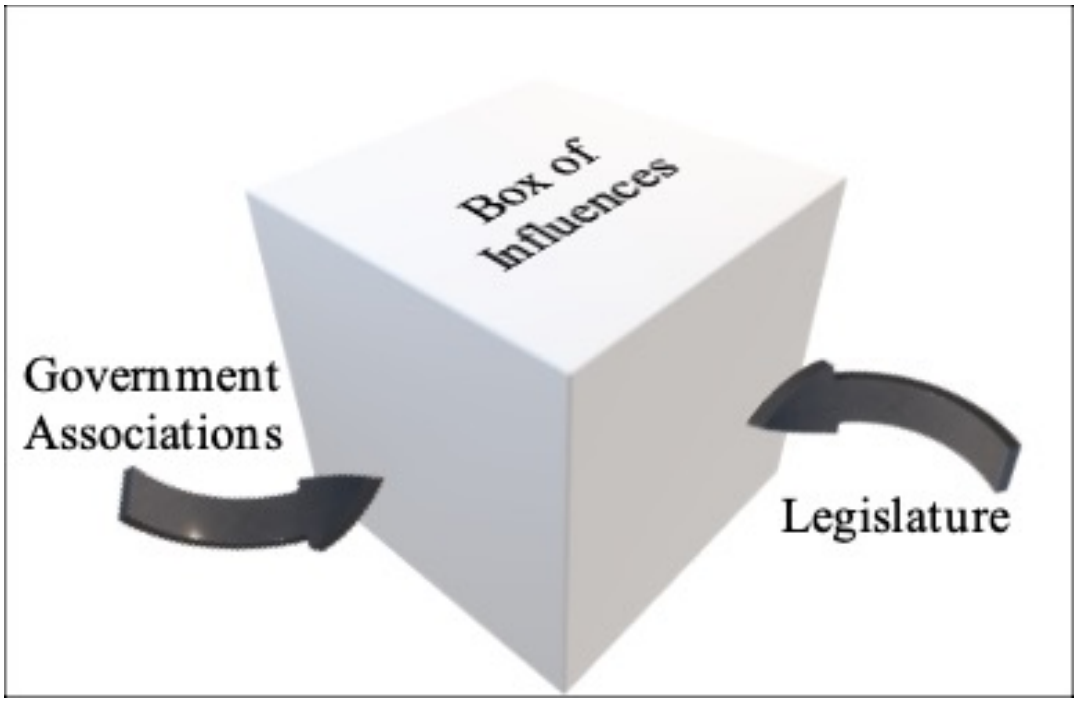

Figure 1. Exterior view: Box of influences on PSO administrators' decisions to offer local government training.

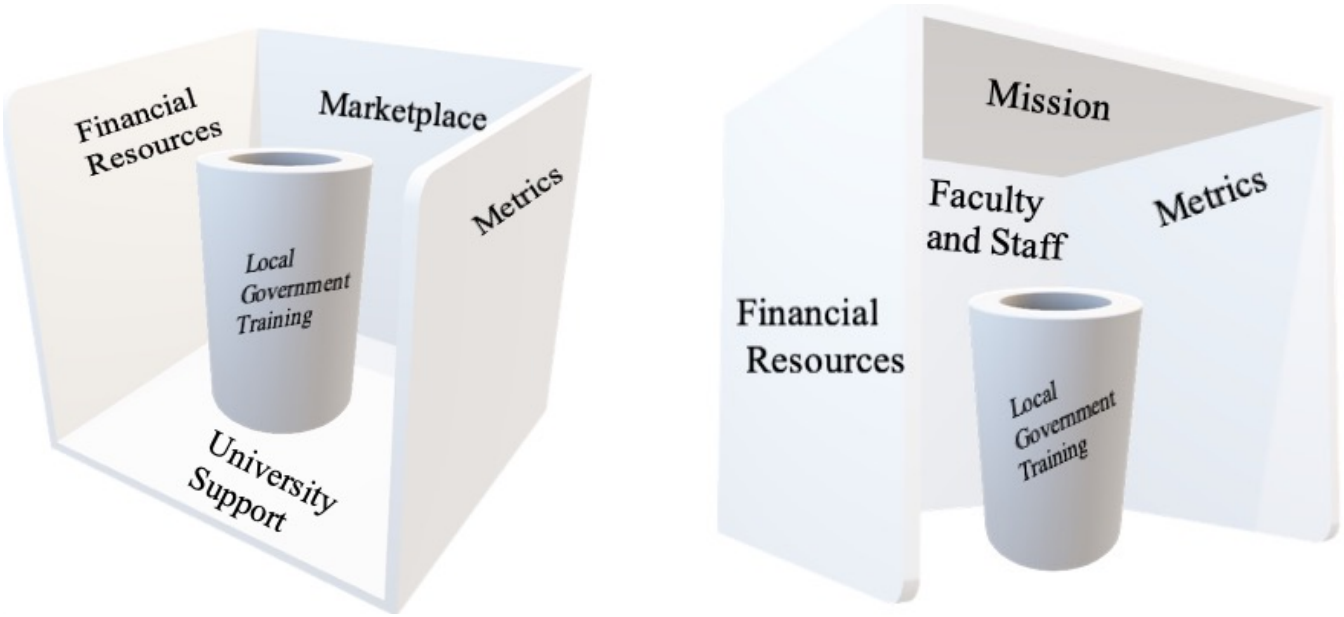

Figure 2. Interior views: Box of influences on PSO administrators' decisions to offer local government training.

The purpose of this study had a focus on understanding the decision-making considerations of university PSO administrators when launching or expanding a local government training program for officials in their state. I addressed the following questions in my research:

1. What do university PSO administrators consider as they make a decision to launch or expand a training program?
2. How do external stakeholders influence the university PSO administrators' decisions to launch or expand a local government training program?
3. How do influences internal to the university affect the PSO administrators' decisions about launching or expanding a local government training program?

The Floor of the Box: The Influence of Being Part of a University

To begin to understand a university PSO administrators' decisions to offer local government training requires looking at the bottom of the box in the model. The PSO's inclusion as part of the university is a unique position to begin operations. While private sector consulting firms, nonprofit organizations, and government associations themselves could offer similar training, the PSO is part of the university and benefits from its connection to a state institution with brand recognition, high reputational value, and resources. The PSO also receives some funding from the university to support its labor and operations.

In my theoretical framework of resource dependency, this floor of university support is an example of environmental constraints. Because the PSO is part of the university, this constraint increases the strong likelihood of predictable responses when environmental actors impact the PSO. Loyalty to the institution, brand protection, and alignment to university priorities all impact the decisions the PSO administrator may make. Sellers and Bender (1979)

found the university's mission, organization, methods of delivery, administrative influence, funding, staffing, institutional status and rewards, facilities, and program of work influenced how university PSOs served local governments. Ward (1983) found these university characteristics led to varied frameworks for organizing a university PSO, including its offerings of government training. In this study's data, the affiliation with the university is a strong determinant in decision-making. My research Finding 5: Influence of the PSO's Organizational Location is visualized through this metaphorical placement of the PSO training in a box that rests solidly on its base of university placement. Sometimes the PSO and its administrators' decisions in the box were not as visible to the university administrators who may have focused their attention on other priorities like teaching and research. This allowed for increased autonomy for the PSO administrator in responding to the surrounding environment, a characteristic of the resource dependency theory.

The Top of the Box: The Influence of Mission

While the university served as the floor of support for the PSO, the mission of the university served as the lid of the transparent box with the open container of PSO training sitting inside the box. In this study's data collection, the influence of mission was strong and frequently cited during the interviews as a key influence on decisions. In my analysis, I found the mission to be a ceiling for the decisions and a cap to the expansion and reach of the PSO administrators' decisions to offer local government training as described in Finding 4: Mission. A senior university administrator said mission fit mattered: "On the market side, we're open to all kinds of market-driven opportunities, as long as they serve a need in the state that fits our outreach mission and our mission to benefit local government." If a proposed local government training aligns with the mission, often originating from the history of the institution, the PSO

administrator is more likely to launch the new training program. Past literature also reflected the influence of mission on the operations of the PSO through the historical perspectives that affected universities tied to land-grant mission, the Wisconsin Idea, and economic development. DeLalla (2013) also found a university often showed its community engagement efforts first through the institution's continuing education efforts. The local government training programs described in this study were continuing education efforts for government administrators.

A senior university administrator described his decisions as relying on the mission: "If we have mission lapse, our priorities will be developed by others. I have to dig in and advocate and be loud and defend." He knew that failing to honor the mission came with a loss of credibility among faculty and staff if his decisions were not rooted in the mission. This type of description about mission also reflected my theoretical framework in resource dependency. The top of this box, mission, served as a constraint of actions. An action is considered "constrained whenever one response to a given situation is more probable than other response to the action, regardless of the actor responding" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 14). The PSO administrators felt the influence of mission in their decisions about training and described using mission as a tool for narrowing down the decisions they may consider. With their missions focused on their own states, they had goals to better the lives of people in their state by working with public officials to improve the government. To summarize their origins, one PSO administrator knew his PSO "started with what can we do for cities and counties in this state." This focus on mission served as the ceiling for the metaphorical box of influences and as a constraint. Without that ceiling, PSO administrators could easily compromise mission by pursuing the market without limitations.

A Wall of the Box: The Influence of the Marketplace

With mission as the lid or ceiling of the transparent box of influences, one of the walls of the box is the marketplace. The influences from the market come as individual requests for training from an individual or an individual government wanting services for their own jurisdiction. The PSO administrators hear these requests and may respond to them based on requests from local government managers, representing the market, who desire to purchase a training directly from the PSO. The challenge here for the administrator is that the governments most able to purchase services may not be the governments most in need of the training services. The less affluent communities, many times more rural or having a smaller population, struggle to have funds to purchase training services. This wall of the market is ever-present in the decisions the PSO administrators make. They must consider who will attend a training, what can the market afford for the training, where and how should the training be conducted in the market, and how sustainable this program is in the market.

For example, the effect of the external environment was present in decisions about how to conduct training and whether a class should be offered online as explained in Finding 6: Influence of the Access to Financial and Labor Resources at a Programmatic Level. Of the 30 CUPSO programs reviewed, all 30 were conducted in-person and none were in an online only format. The administrators had considered increased online offerings but found that their local government participants were not as interested in those trainings. In-person, stand-and-deliver training, remained the primary mechanism for providing training according to a PSO training manager:

> When it's the really small cities, usually, they don't have the technology, so we can't just put something online for them. They need to come in. But then, there may only be three

> people that are actually employed with that city. So, if you take one of those away, that's where it gets so difficult.

Regardless of the flexibility of the mission to allow for the PSO to serve communities and government officials individually, the market influences from the individuals were harder to respond to directly. The PSO administrators knew that reaching individual purchasers of training would require additional marketing; the quest to fill new training seats was ever-present in their minds. While increasing the fees for a class could help to cover the cost of the training program, the fear of increasing costs for training beyond what the market can bear are best summarized by this PSO director:

> And so there's a limit to how much you want to raise your fees because you're raising to a point where places that need your training can't afford it. So we're very sensitive to that. And so our fees are probably lower than our peers I'm sure. But we have a lot of places that really would be troubled by increased fees.

The marketplace wall of the box of influences is always present and captures the individual training requests that the university PSO administrators consider; however, it remains a wall that is a limiting factor on the decisions that the PSO administrators make about offering training. Dunn, Gibson, and Whorton (1985) also found university presidents perceived no extensive demand for services from local government. If the wall is fairly empty and few public officials are requesting training or looking to purchase a service, the PSO administrator notices this influence and makes a decision not to offer low-demand training. However, if the wall is covered in requests for a training to address a learning need, the PSO administrator sees those external requests and may conduct a market study or host an advisory committee to learn more to consider the decision to launch a new training program.

The ability of the PSO administrator to synthesize and quantify market requests for training is an example of resource dependency theory and the understanding of the environment and its effect on resources. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) described organization leaders' needs to understand the environment and how that understanding then influences decision making. The effect of individual government requests or requests from individual government officials for a local government training is increased awareness of the external environment. This awareness allows the PSO administrator to create meaning from the number of similar requests from the market. If he collects and analyzes the data from the market requests, he feels the influence of the market to either move to action to provide training or not to provide the training.

A Wall of the Box: The Influence of Metrics

The second wall in the metaphorical box of influences is a wall of metrics. In my theoretical framework of resource dependency, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) described two principles to understand the environment of the organization: (a) how can an organization describe and measure its environment and (b) how is the environment known and how will it influence decision making. The organization responds to what it sees and believes about the environment, and this reaction is shaped by the existing organizational and information structure (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This suggests that, for university PSO administrators, the flow of information, what information is collected and analyzed, and its level of engagement with the environment will greatly affect how the administrator perceives his environment.

For the PSO administrators in this study, the understanding of their training environment did include metrics but very little evidence of impact from the training beyond testimonials. Understanding their training programs' effects on the betterment of citizens' lives in their state through the improvement of local government is critical to the PSO administrators. They need to

know how the work their institution is doing is changing their state. Showing a return on investment for training to the local governments is critical to sustained participation in local government training offered by an external entity (Gess & Sanders, 2008; Schumaker, 2004); yet, they did not have measures that could show that picture empirically with the exception of one study of finance officers' training and its impact on city audit findings.

Thomson (2010) considered the effects of local government training provided by a university PSO. His results showed while universities filled a large role in training for local elected officials, the university PSOs had room for growth in their training programs and how they could lead to better governance for the local governments. Another complicating factor for the university PSO is the lack of professional norms for evaluating performance and effectiveness (Dunn & Whorton, 1987). Without being able to show definitive effectiveness or to compare their own performance against peers, the PSO administrators reverted to more simplified counts or testimonials as the preferred metrics, providing a more limited understanding of their environment.

In Finding 3: The Influence of Metrics, administrators, in interviews, in their CUPSO training profiles, and in their websites and marketing materials, struggled to show meaningful impact from their training programs. They quoted past participants' positive testimonials as proof of impact. They cited attendance numbers and how many years the program existed. Having participants that returned multiple times to additional training programs indicated the continued impact of the university PSO local government training efforts. The PSO administrators referenced end-of-course evaluations completed by the training participants at the end of the training program, suggesting these were a metric they valued.

These metrics portray a limited picture of the external environment for local government training and the PSOs' impact. Without more robust impact studies of their training programs and their effect on the improvement of local government, the PSO administrators allow the influence of the count of people, the number of years a program has happened, and the end-of-course evaluations to serve as their perception of impact. The outlier in my research was the impact study completed by Northern University on the finance officers' training programs. More studies like this one can increase the awareness of the environment for PSO administrators and allow for new metrics to influence their decisions. Perhaps the PSO administrator would choose to invest more time and resources into training programs with higher measured impact.

The numbers of participant counts or years of service do not explain or indicate the effectiveness of the work to the varied groups and organizations that are concerned with the quality of local governments that participate in university PSO training. Because "the most important aspect of this concept of organizational effectiveness is that the acceptability of the organization and its activities is ultimately judged by those outside the organization" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 11), the university's effectiveness is evaluated and assessed by society and coalitions that evaluate the appropriateness and usefulness of the outputs of public service activities like local government training (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The influence of metrics on the PSO administrator is reflective of two elements of resource dependency: organizational effectiveness and the environment and its effects on resources.

A Wall of the Box: The Influence of Financial Resources

With limited resources for operations due to declining state funds allocated for public service at universities, the PSO administrator must seek external funding through sponsored work, grants, or sales and service. The addition of sponsored work indicates the PSO's

willingness to conduct training for a specific client group like a single county or city or a government association. The pursuit of grants allows the PSO administrator to secure funding to provide training based on his own team's interpretation of a needed area for government official development. The most frequently used method for securing funding is to sell a training program to an individual government official and for his government to pay the fee for attendance and participation. Jaeger and Thornton (2005) quoted a faculty member in their study who said:

> Dependency on outside resources can be both good and bad. The benefits are that you can expand your programming to new issues and bring in resources that the university is incapable of providing. Some degree of reliance on outside resources keeps your programs competitive and on the cutting-edge. (p. 64)

In Finding 6: The Influence of the Access to Financial and Labor Resources at a Programmatic Level, the PSO administrators described their concerns about earning enough money to cover the budget for the PSO and being able to meet the payroll. They also described concerns over selling enough seats in a training program. These financial limitations influence the PSO administrator's willingness and readiness to launch a new training program. They must consider whether they will have the funds for the program to last longer than a year, "We do face challenges. Since the early days, we've sort of been on the precipice. The idea is that if you don't raise your revenues, you're in real trouble." Balancing the request for training with the real financial picture is a task the administrators often kept to themselves, "I tried to sort of take away that pressure for the staff and said, 'Don't worry about it. I'll worry about it. You worry about putting on good training programs.'"

In my theoretical framework, the effect of finances serves as a constraint to action. Regardless of the person serving as a PSO administrator, making a decision that negatively

affects the ability to meet payroll expectations is likely to be avoided. On the flip side, a decision to offer a training program that will have easier-to-sell seats and increases the ability to cover payroll and budget expectations is more likely to move forward. The influence of financial resources is significant and reflects resource dependency for the PSO.

A Wall of the Box: The Influence of Faculty and Staff

Individual government officials request a new training program or a government administrator wants to hire the university PSO to conduct a training for their jurisdiction. While the concept sounds like an opportunity for work that aligns with the mission, the PSO is limited by its faculty and staff expertise and their willingness to consider a new program. As a request is brought to the PSO administrator, they must consider faculty and staff interest in the new training. This interest is often tied to the faculty or staff's prior research and their instructional or practitioner background. In Finding 6: The Influence of the Access to Financial and Labor Resources at a Programmatic Level, I found that PSO administrators' abilities to find a match of faculty or staff talent, along with the faculty or staff having an interest in the new training, played significantly in their decision-making criteria. Similarly in my literature review, Dunn and Whorton (1987) studied 88 university PSOs that served state and local governments in research, technical assistance, or training, and they found that tenure-track faculty placed a higher emphasis on research over training opportunities. This individual focus for the faculty or staff employed by the PSO influences the PSO administrator as he makes decisions on training. He may look more favorably on a training request for local governments if he is aware of a match between the training competencies and the research interests of his faculty and staff. I should note that not all PSOs employ tenure-track faculty; yet, my findings indicate a strong influence by the employees regardless of rank on the PSO administrator's decisions.

This wall of the box of influences is focused on the influence of faculty and staff on the training programs. Without a strong commitment from a faculty or staff member, the PSO administrator will choose not to offer a training. The PSO administrator knows forcing a new program on a faculty member is ineffective and leads to compromised outcomes for the governments served.

The anticipated reactions from faculty or staff being assigned a training program that is not in their area of expertise or interest is an example of a constraint in the resource dependency framework. Since the PSO administrators understand the expected responses from the faculty and staff, they are often constrained in the options they have to launch the new program. They must convince, implore, change, or modify the program often to get the commitment they need from the PSO employee. A PSO administrator said:

> My role is not typically to say we're going to do this program. Sometimes it is to say, here's a program. Here's something I've been hearing. What do you all think? . . . . The decisions about the programs that we launch are really, primarily—most of them, not exclusively—but most of them are decisions by faculty.

This wall of faculty and staff interest serves as a constraint to the decision the PSO administrator may make despite the environment. Faculty and staff support are a constraint in the resource dependency framework and lead to a predictable decision by the PSO administrator to delay a training program if there is no faculty or staff interest.

Outside of the Box: External Forces

The box of influences, with its six sides of university foundation, mission, marketplace, metrics, labor, and financial resources, surrounds the PSO open container that is filled with local government training programs. Each university has a varied collection in its container as

evidenced in the CUPSO training profiles, the PSO administrator interviews, and the analysis of web and marketing materials. Those six influences, the six sides of the box, impact the decisions that the PSO administrator makes to offer government training or what he will place in the open container as his university's PSO government training programs.

However, two external forces swirling outside of the box often have the greatest influence on what fills the open container. These forces permeate the box and push on the walls until their influence is felt. The external forces of the influence of government associations and the state legislature most directly and quickly impact the decisions a PSO administrator makes for the future of local government training in the state.

External Forces: The Influence of Government Associations

Government associations influence the PSO administrators' decisions most evidently at the director and training manager level. While senior university administrators may be familiar with the relationships, the directors and managers engage most directly with the associations. The local government employee who attends training may find that he does not know where the association ends and the university PSO begins. Often, the two organizations are so tightly joined in partnership that the end user sees them as one unit. This tight coupling brings many strengths to the university PSO. In Finding 1: The Influence of External Stakeholders—Government Associations, four benefits of working closely with the association are present.

First, the government associations serve as a source of current information on local government officials and their learning needs. Since the associations are most frequently focused on one to two levels of government officials, each association has a specialty in local government and inherently has knowledge about that area to share. For example, the municipal associations known frequently as municipal leagues, focus on the learning needs of elected

municipal officials and managers in municipalities. An association of tax officials will be more focused on the technical training elements of tax assessment and collection. The PSO administrators often rely on government associations to share what their members have expressed as learning needs, trends in the job arena, and suggestions for additional new programming.

The government association's endorsement or partnership with the university enhances the legitimacy of the PSO training program. By working together, the members of the association trust the new training program the university is offering to be catered to their learning needs since their association has represented them in the development of the training. The association understands what the government official needs to know to do his job more effectively. Whorton et al. (1986) also found common priorities on subjects and program areas to be a critical element in the relationship between the PSO and the local government officials, who are often the members of the associations. Without the government association partnership, the PSO would have to develop its own credibility with the association membership through direct networking one-on-one throughout the state. The PSO would need to spend more of its energy and efforts to demonstrate its own legitimacy. The PSO administrator may even be willing to take a loss on a program at the beginning in order to have the association as the partner. When asked about that relationship, a PSO director shared what his local government association said, "It feels to us like y'all may be actually taking a loss on this program," and I said, "This partnership was important enough for us to do that." Working together as the university PSO and the local government association strengthened the legitimacy of the new training efforts.

Second, working directly with a government association on a local government training program allows the university to grow its revenue from training more quickly and easily. The

PSO does not have to source a market for its training program and thus, marketing expenses can be reduced. The sales cycle for selling a seat in a class is reduced as the association knows exactly who would be interested based on its own membership roster. A PSO director described this relationship:

> One advantage is that your target market already has a relationship with the association that generally respect the association . . . but we make it better. We provide a service to them. . . . We get the reputation of the association that we're working with. And we provide value to that association so that we give something and we get something. Of course, they're able to market for us to reach the people that we need to reach. By doing it the way that we do it, we just say we're not going at our own. We're working with the associations.

Third, as many of the PSO administrators referenced, finding faculty and staff to commit to a new training program can be difficult. Accessing instructional talent can be a limitation too. Slack (1990) also said, "The actual capacity of the outreach unit may not always correspond with the actual needs of local government practitioners" (p. 454). Working closely with the government association can allow the university PSO to leverage its own staff resources with those of the association. This process may include having association members serve on the advisory committee for the new training program, having association members share in governance of the program, or having association members eligible to assist with the actual training delivery as instructors or guest lectures. In one CUPSO training profile, the effectiveness of the advisory committee that included the PSO faculty and representative from a government association was described: "The committee is very effective, undertaking a revamp of planning

and curriculum . . . to offer refreshed content and materials. The committee was able to plan and develop this curriculum while meeting the needs of two stakeholder organizations."

For some associations, the trainings conducted by the PSO are also a time for the association leadership to be visible to its membership and to show value for the dues paid. The association leaders may ask for space in the room, to be part of the program, or to have a seat at the design of the curriculum. While this type of request could be seen as a conflict, a PSO director shared that his training program was better after the influence from the association:

> Our staff, our faculty and staff now have a much closer relationship with their faculty and staff because we co-designed and co-delivered the program. And they felt like they were up front just as much as we are—we were in ways that were good for them and that were appropriate for them and felt like they were adding value.

Finally, working with an association impacts metrics. A PSO training program conducted with the support or partnership of a government association increases participation rates. In the absence of empirical findings on impact, numbers of participants count as a measure of success for the PSO administrators. A partner who can bring an increased attendance count is a strong influencer on the decisions the PSO administrator makes.

Despite the four strong positive effects of the influence of government associations, the PSO administrators also face challenges as the associations exert their influence. Competition and territorial disputes, shifting leadership, and different missions can influence the university PSO administrator. Balancing these challenges against the strengths of the partnership is not a simple task.

One of the greatest challenges arising from the external pressure government associations apply to the PSO is possible competition or territorial disputes. During interviews, each

institution referenced the challenge of the association relationship if the association leadership decided they wanted to compete and not collaborate with the university PSO. These encounters or discussions led to the university PSO administrators backing away from the conflict and stating strongly that they would not compete if the association were already running a training program for a targeted sector of government officials. However, if the university already had a training program and the association decided it wanted to compete in the marketplace, the administrators described great difficulty in these decisions. They did not want to lose control of their content but were keenly aware of the financial challenges that could ensue if the training were available through the association in addition to the university. Finding 1: The Influence of External Stakeholders—Government Associations included many examples of fear of competition. “It’s fairly territorial in things and so as long as we were doing things that they weren’t doing, then they were okay with it,” said the PSO director at Western University. An Eastern University PSO administrator felt the same pressures with an association, “I think it’s an organization that has some budget pressures of its own and feels like maybe it should be doing some of the things that we do. So sometimes we step on each other’s toes that way.” The PSO administrators did not want to compete against associations in the training marketplace but instead wanted to partner or collaborate. A PSO director best summarized the territorial challenge with associations by saying, “This is my philosophy from the beginning is that when it comes to . . . training in the state . . . we don’t compete. Meaning, I’ll collaborate with anybody because there’s a lot work to do.”

Another challenge from the influence of the government associations is the transition of leadership. Many local government associations have volunteer leadership and few or no paid staff. The transition from one elected group of officers to the next creates change that can affect

the training programs. For associations with full-time professional staff, changes in executive leadership can also lead to changes in the working relationships between the association as priorities shift. This challenge was also evident in Finding 1: The Influence of External Stakeholders—Government Associations.

Government associations bring four key benefits to the university PSO's local government training programs: legitimacy through current, valued information, revenue growth, increased capacity for instruction and curriculum development, and improved metrics. The PSO also faced the challenge of managing competition and leadership transitions with the government association. As an external actor and a force blowing into the Box of Influences, the government associations are closely tied to the PSOs' resource dependency. The association, as an external stakeholder, evaluates and assesses the appropriateness and usefulness of the PSO local government training programs as described in Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory. Regardless of the numbers of participants or dollars earned through training, ultimately, the association has a strong voice in determining the effectiveness of the university's PSO training work. When an association continues to work with the university PSO to provide training for its membership or to partner on training for its members, the association is stating its support for the organizational effectiveness of the university PSO. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) suggested five ways that organization leaders could reduce their environmental dependence. One of these methods was to create a joint venture; a second was to have external actors to serve on the board of directors. The way that PSO administrators describe their association training programs may be described as a joint venture, with the PSO and the association launching training together. Many of the CUPSO training profiles also showed that the associations had

seats on the advisory bodies for the university PSO, in effect filling a board of directors' role and having more commitment to the PSO training program. One PSO administrator in my study said:

> Having those associations there, they're going to be our best publicity as far as PR or public relations. If we can get them in their buy-in early, and let's be honest, if they can brag that they've had their fingerprints on this program from the infancy and it's a success, they're going to take the success as their own and therefore, they're going to invest more into it.

As the PSO administrator looks to manage his environment, the government association is a powerful influence and one that determines the effectiveness of the university PSO.

External Forces: The Influence of Legislature

Perhaps one of the quickest ways for a PSO administrator to make a decision about local government training is for the state legislature to require or mandate the training for a group of officials by the PSO, as I found in Finding 2: The Influence of External Stakeholders—The State Legislature. In his research, Battaglio (2008) also found that a state legislative mandate influenced the university PSOs' training programs. Once written into state code, the effects of legislative mandates are significant on participation in training, which can make it easier for the PSO administrators to launch a program knowing they have a guaranteed market. This effect worked even if the state code had no penalties for noncompliance. During interviews, one administrator shared that over 98% of county commissioners attended legislatively mandated commissioner training that the PSO provided even though there were no penalties for noncompliance. The Northern University training director shared, "municipal employees and officials have different levels of experience coming in and they also have the legislature putting

an overlay on them of what they're required to have every year for initial and continuing education."

PSO administrators often worked closely with individual legislators in their route to the state legislature. Many state legislators earned their elected positions after serving a local government or jurisdiction as a public servant. During those local government periods, many learned how to do their jobs through attendance at a university PSO training and were appreciative of the learning they had. As they rose to the state legislature, they still recalled the university PSO fondly for its delivery of training according to the PSO administrators.

Sometimes the legislative mandates for training of local government officials are passed into law without any awareness by the PSO administrators. They must respond quickly to initiate the new program as required by law. Most often, no state funds are included with the new mandate and the PSO must create the training program and recover costs through the registration fees.

Resource dependency is evident in this external influence from the legislatures. If the state legislatures did not view the university PSO as effective, they would not grant oversight or accountability for local government training programs to the PSO. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) stressed that an organization's effectiveness and its activities are judged by those outside of the organization. An Eastern University PSO administrator, in response to a question about the legislature and training said, "We're lucky that usually when the legislature thinks about those things, they often have in mind that we do some things like that." Being perceived as effective by the legislature suggests that the legislature views the work of the PSO as having acceptable outcomes.

The Metaphorical Box of Influences: A Checklist

A university PSO administrator could look at the metaphorical box of influences and understand the constraining influences of the box. The walls keep the PSO in a structure that responds in a predictable manner to its environment as described using Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory. Yet this box is permeable, and its walls are pushed by two external forces, government associations and the legislature. With that knowledge, the PSO must generate its own revenue to sustain its existence. Working from in the box, the PSO administrator feels the winds of the associations and legislature when they enter the box. How he responds affects the decisions he will make to address local government training.

Table 5 is a suggested checklist for PSO administrators as they consider the addition of a new local government training program based upon the metaphorical box of influences. A point is awarded or deducted based on the answers given. Scores closer to eight indicate a greater likelihood for the PSO administrator to choose to launch a new training program.

Implications for University PSO Administrators

A university PSO administrator holds a unique position in the university ecosystem, an opportunity to serve the state in an external-facing role. As the university PSO administrators, particularly the directors and training managers, consider a decision to launch or expand a local government training program, they look at many elements including the fit to the university mission, the effect the program would have on their metrics, the availability of resources, the market demand for the program, and whether external forces are pushing them toward or away from a decision.

The external stakeholders of government associations and the state legislature significantly impact the PSO administrators' decisions. The desire to partner rather than compete

with an association emerged as a dominant criterion in decision making for the PSO administrators. The state legislature's influence often came as a legal mandate for local government officials to participate in training offered by the PSO and not at the request of the PSO administrator for the legal mandate to exist.

Table 3

Checklist for New Local Government Training Programs.

Checklist for new training programs item	Values	Score
Will the legislature mandate this training or include it in state code?	Yes = +1 No = 0	
Has a government association, with members, approached you about this training?	Yes = +1 No = 0	
Does a government association already provide a training in this space?	Yes = -1 No = +1	
Have you had requests from the market of individual government officials or an individual city/county requesting this training?	Yes = +1 No = 0	
Do you have a faculty or staff member who would champion this training program from his own professional interest?	Yes = +1 No = 0	
Do you have additional financial resources you can allocate to this new training program?	Yes = +1 No = 0	
Will this new training program increase your metrics (example: total participants trained, impact in the state, geographical reach)?	Yes = +1 No = 0	
Does this training program align with the university's mission or the university's strategic priorities?	Yes = +1 No =0	
	Total Score (sum to the right)	

The internal university influences served as reality checks for decision making. The internal university influences are not pushing forces in the launch or expansion of a local government training program. The university did not yield additional resources for the PSO as it launched or considered the launch of a program. However, the influence of the university mission and the PSO's function as part of the university did serve as guiding principles in the decisions PSO administrators made. If the new training program met the university mission test, the PSO administrator was more likely to move forward with the program.

A PSO administrator who is considering the launch or expansion of a local government training program can use this study as a tool. By assessing the influences from the external environment and the constraints that the environment brings, the PSO administrator makes a more informed decision that serves the university and the state better. By choosing more sustainable investments for new local government training programs, the PSO administrator enables the future of the organization.

Limitations of This Study

This research study provides an opportunity to understand the influences on PSO administrators as they launch new local government training programs. Yet, this study is limited in its sample size. The study included interviews with PSO administrators from three institutions in the South. The validity of the results may be most applicable to similar institutions of size, mission, and geographical location.

The document analysis from the national organization, CUPSO, provided some perspective from a national lens but was limited in the number of training profiles that had been submitted to CUPSO by its members. University PSO institutions that do not participate in CUPSO may have different influences on their work. Since institutions were anonymous in this

study, the document analysis from the websites and marketing materials had to be used in aggregate to protect the anonymity of the PSO administrators.

Variations in PSO administrators' responses to environmental influences may be based on geography, size of the institution, the history of the PSO, the mission of the institution, the legislatures in each state, and the prevalence of government associations and their own longevity. Additional studies are needed in these areas.

Future Studies

Building upon the knowledge created from this study, future research will increase the understanding of variances between the universities, the area of the country, and the missions of the PSOs as they experience influences from the environment. Future research in the area of PSO administrators and their decision making could focus on an analysis of the metrics used by the PSO to measure impact. Using a larger national sample from CUPSO could create knowledge around the measures and lead to improved tools for evaluating impact beyond the metrics observed in this study. A quantitative study of the influences in this study's Checklist for New Local Government Training Programs (see Table 5) could create a more accurate scoring mechanism for evaluating a decision to launch a training program. Additional in-depth case studies of PSO institutions and their administrators could provide knowledge about the interplay between the university, which is the floor in the box of influences, and the other walls of the box for that institution.

Interestingly, the effects of the marketplace were not as evident in this research as I would have expected. As these PSO administrators responded to requests for training, they demonstrated high levels of productivity in response to the needs of the government officials of their state. However, they did not demonstrate environmental scanning or pre-planning to

address or anticipate learning needs. Nor did they allocate reflective time after a training program to consider the marketplace and what could be next. Future research should investigate if the marketplace has a stronger influence based on the type of institution and whether the professionals at the institution are afforded opportunities for scholarship around the outcomes of their local government training programs.

The external forces pushing on the box of influences are also an area of additional research focus. The legislature, when it mandates training for local government officials, has a strong effect on a PSO. Research into the criteria used by the legislature to select which government officials need training and how to assign it to a university partner would help PSO administrators understand the political and social context of those decisions by the legislature.

Likewise, the government associations that serve the local government are a significant influence on the PSO administrator and his decision to launch a training program or not. Additional research with the full-time executives of the larger associations and the volunteer leadership of the smaller associations in a state could create knowledge about the values shared between the associations and the university PSO that make partnerships work for training. This research could also further develop the knowledge of obstacles that can damage a partnership.

The limited literature that addresses the organizational effectiveness of the PSOs delivery of local government training programs is also an important area for future research. Scholars may have overlooked an area in need of further research that could also demonstrate a university's commitment to the public good. PSO administrators move from one local government training program to the next in a utilitarian manner affording themselves very limited reflective introspection. While there is a substantial body of literature on the importance and effects of teaching and research on the public good, the mission of public service is less well

articulated and understood. A more thorough and ongoing analysis of the effectiveness of training offered to local government officials could expand the literature and contribute to our understanding of the public service mission and its importance to the public good.

Additionally, future research is also needed around other theoretical frameworks for understanding decisions made by PSO administrators. I recommend that researchers consider institutional theory as another framework to understand the effect of external forces like the state legislature and local government associations on the PSO administrators' decisions as they consider compliance. Institutional theory could also frame research about possible isomorphic behaviors among the PSOs involved in CUPSO as they understand each other's programmatic selections in local government training.

Conclusion

Through this research, I sought to understand how PSO administrators engage in decision-making for evaluating and selecting new or expanded university-based government training. The findings are relevant to PSO administrators, PSO directors, and scholars in both higher education and public administration. The participants and document analysis revealed that resource dependency remains a strong foundation to the decisions that university PSO administrators make and interacts with other environmental influences to shape decision-making. To garner support and effectively lead and manage PSO programs, administrators must regularly communicate the value of local government training, and its value as part of the university's service to the state. The effectiveness of the PSO service is heavily influenced by the environment and those external to the organization. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) said, "That which is measured is attended to, and that which is not measured is ignored" (p. 81). Without the

proper metrics, the university PSO administrator has limited measures to demonstrate the effectiveness of the work.

As the metaphorical box shows, the environment, both inside and outside of the university, affects the PSO administrators' decisions. Without faculty and staff interest and support for a local government training and available financial resources to launch the government training, the PSO administrator decides against beginning a new training program. However, when the influence of the external legislature or external government associations is present, the decisions of the administrators are affected. Resource dependency constraints are evident in the actions taken as the government associations and legislature request local government training. The PSO administrator manages those external exchanges and the demands they have of the university PSO. In these cases, the PSO administrator responses may be more political and less market-focused.

Despite the challenges of resource dependency, PSO administrators that offer local government training expect that the work they are performing is a service to the state. Balancing the influences of faculty and staff, financial resources, metrics, the market, university support, and the mission, while also experiencing the strong influences from the external environment in the state legislature and local government associations, requires a university PSO administrator to exercise leadership in decision making. The Northern University PSO director summed it up best when asked why his university continued to provide local government training, "Because we have the relationships that we do with these local government folks, they depend upon us to do their jobs . . . that's rewarding."

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT FORM

University public service organization training for local governments: Resource dependency effects on decision making for the development of new training programs

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

			lvmorris@uga.edu
Principal Investigator:	*Libby Morris* *Institute of Higher Education* *706-542-0415*	**Co-Investigator:**	*Stacy Jones* *Institute of Higher Education* *706-542-9771*

We are doing this research study to learn more about the decision-making process of university administrators involved with public service who provide local government training in their public service work. We are investigating the decision-making experiences of these university administrators as they consider the development of new local government training programs. This basic qualitative study is looking at the effects of resource dependency on the decisions made.

You are being invited to be in this research study because of your role in your university's public service as an administrator. Participants for this study are invited based on their experience as a senior-level administrator who oversees the university's public service efforts, or as a public service organization administrator, or as a public service employee engaged in developing training for local governments in your state. Participants must be employed full-time by one of the universities in the study and the university must be an active member in the national Consortium of University Public Service Organizations.

If you agree to participate in this study:

- We will collect information about your personal experience with decision-making at your university related to the provision of local government training in your state as part of the university's public service efforts.
- We will ask you to participate in an interview with the co-investigator. It will take about 60 minutes. This interview will be audio-recorded.
- We may ask you to provide documents about the training programs discussed in your interview such as marketing materials, evaluations, budgets, etc.
- We will follow up in 1 month by asking you to review the detailed transcript from your interview and provide any clarification or edits.

Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to take part or stop at any time without penalty. Your decision to refuse or withdraw will not affect any benefits you may receive from participating in the interview. Your decision to participate will have no impact in your participation in any University of Georgia programs.

There are questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can skip these questions if you do not wish to answer them.

Your responses may help us understand the resource dependency effects on decision-making for public service organization leaders and provide information to other administrators at other universities and colleges about the effects on local government training for the state. These decisions may improve training outcomes for local government officials leading to improved governance and performance in our communities.

We will take steps to protect your privacy, but there is a small risk that your information could be accidentally disclosed to people not connected to the research. To reduce this risk, we will not name you or your institution, but instead we will assign a pseudonym for you and your university. Following the transcription of your interview, your identifying information will be removed and replaced with the pseudonyms. We will destroy the audio recordings and maintain only the transcription with the pseudonyms. A master list with your identifying information and your pseudonym will be kept under password protection by the investigators only and will not be included in the final report. This document will be stored by the co-investigator for no less than five years.

The information collected, that has had the identifiers removed, may be used for future studies without additional consent by the investigator(s) only.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____I do not want to have this interview recorded.
_____I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Please feel free to ask questions about this research at any time. You can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Morris at 706-542-0415, lvmorrisl@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Introductions and explanation of study again. Confirm signature on consent forms and permission for audio recording.

Topic: Background

Tell me about your experience working in university public service and outreach
- An introductory question to get the interviewee talking
- Probes: how long have they worked in this field?

Tell me about your prior work and education background
- Probe – Do you describe yourself as an academic or practitioner or a combination? Why do you see yourself that way?
-

Tell me about the unit you work in now?
- Probe: What is your role there if not answered in first question? How do you describe that role?

Topic: Governmental Training

I want to talk now about your local governmental training programs. (Note – interviewee may have mentioned programs for state or federal, so may need to remind that the focus of this interview is on the local government sector)

Tell me about the training programs you currently offer for local governments
- Probe – which one of these programs is most significant? How do you define significant?
- Probe – which one of these programs is most personally rewarding to you?

From these training programs we have discussed, let's talk about one that you have been involved in launching or expanding.

NOTE: This should lend itself to a specific example of a training program that can then be explored in the next line of questions for depth and to guide the discussion

1. Probe – if they have not launched or expanded one, can they describe the last one that the unit launched or expanded?
2. Probe – what was your role in the process?

3. Probe – who all was involved in that process of launching or expanding? Who were the stakeholders? How did you identify stakeholders?
    a. Internal participants
    b. External participants
4. Follow-up on any participants mentioned to understand clarity of the role or organization that person/group represents

Topic: Decision Making

How did you or the PSO make the decision to launch/expand that training program?

1. *Note: this question is designed to see how the interviewee describes the decision-making process (what is mentioned organically – resources, directives, mimicry, management, political, labor, etc.) – probes will be secondary as they may provide additional information but are not the top of mind experience*
2. Probe – who was involved?
3. Probe – what was involved? (Market studies, conference presentations, research, focus group, fundraising, foundation support, etc.?)
4. Probe – how are decisions made at your university?

Decision-making can vary from institution to institution. How are decisions made at your institution regarding new training programs?

When you think about this training program, who do you describe as stakeholders today?

- Follow-up Probe – are these the same stakeholders as during the time to launch/expand? What has changed? Why have the stakeholders changed?

What effect did the stakeholders have on your decision to launch or expand your training program?

- Probe – how did you decide which stakeholders' voices were most important in your decision?

How did you communicate with stakeholders during the plan to launch/expand, during the launch/expansion of the program, and in follow-up after the launch/expansion of the program?

- Note: this question is inquiry into whether stakeholders are present at entry that do not remain as engaged once up and running

Topic: Resources

I would like to talk now about resources. Choosing to launch/expand a new training program requires resources. Tell me about your experience with resources for your training program.

How did access/lack of access to resources impact your decision to launch/expand the training program?

1. Follow-up – which of these resources are internal to your unit?

2. Which of these resources are external to your unit?
3. If you had more resources, would you have made a different decision?

Tell me about some training programs you would like to launch/expand but have chosen not to yet.

1. Probe – why? What affected the decision to not act yet?

Topic: Power and Influence

When you reflect on this training program, how has it affected Public Service's reputation on campus?

- Probe – do you have increased resources from this program?

How has it affected your reputation among local governments?

With these changes in reputation, tell me about how that has affected any of your other work.

APPENDIX C

Sample of CUPSO Training Program Profile

CUPSO
CONSORTIUM OF UNIVERSITY PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Thank you for sharing information on your training program(s) with other members of the Consortium of University Public Service Organizations. We hope that you, in turn, will learn from the experiences of peers at other institutes and centers and that all participants will find ways to strengthen their respective programs.

Instructions:

- Please complete a separate form for each of your training programs. If you only have time for one or two, that's fine, we still want to hear from you!
- Please complete as many of the questions as possible. If you don't have the information, or are short on time, please answer as much as you can. We still want to hear from you and will benefit from the information you are able to share!
- Please email completed forms and any attachments to Linda Hoke, CUPSO Director, at lhokesgpb@gmail.com.
- Information will be posted on the Member Resources section of the CUPSO website, which is accessible to CUPSO members only via administrator-generated registration and a member password.

Thank you!

Title of Training Program:

Contact:

Contact Person:
Title:
CUPSO Affiliated Center/Institute:
University:
Email:
Phone:

Background:

How long have you been offering this particular training program? (Check one)

☐ Less than 1 year
☐ 1-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ More than 10 years

Why did you create this particular training program? (Check all that apply)

☐ Legislative mandate
☐ University mandate
☐ To generate revenue
☐ Trade/government association request
☐ Other (please explain):

If this training is affiliated with a national or regional certification, program, association, etc., please tell us about that group.

Advisory Committee:

Do you have an advisory committee for this program?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, what is the composition of the advisory committee (# and type of members)?

# of Members: _____

Type of Members:

What is the role of advisory committee members? (Check all that apply)

☐ Governance of program
☐ Help with recruitment
☐ Help with fundraising
☐ Help decide on content
☐ Other (please describe):

How effective is the advisory committee? (Please describe)

Format:

What is the format of the training program? (Check all that apply)

☐ Online at own pace (asynchronous)
☐ Webinar (or other real time online, synchronous)
☐ In-person
☐ Other (please describe):

How often do you offer this training? (Check one)

☐ Once a year
☐ Twice a year
☐ More than twice a year

How many sessions are involved in each "cycle" of the training program?

Over what period of time? (i.e. does the full program take place over the course of a year, six months, two days…)

How many hours is each session?

What is the total length of time of the training program in instructional hours?

Approximately how many participants are involved in each program "cycle"? (Check one)

☐ Less than 20
☐ 20-35
☐ 36-50
☐ More than 50

Marketing/Promotion:

What types of strategies do you use to market the program? (Check all that apply)

☐ Promote through our own institute/center website
☐ Direct mail. Frequency?
☐ Email. Frequency? _____
☐ Promote through other organizations (which ones?)
☐ Advertise in publications (which ones?)
☐ Other (please describe):

Which strategies do you think have been most effective and why?

Registration:

How do you collect registration information for this training? (Check all that apply)

☐ Online through university
☐ Mail in through university
☐ Affiliate collects registrations
☐ Other (please describe):

If you use online registration, what specific software do you use?

Content:

Please list major curriculum components/themes.

Trainers:

Who delivers the content for this training program? (Check all that apply)

☐ In-house center/institute faculty/staff
☐ Contract with other faculty/staff from within university
☐ Contract with providers from outside the university
☐ Other (please describe):

Are there specific speakers that you would recommend to other CUPSO members? Please list speaker and topic area (and contact information, if available).

Course Credit & Recognition:

Do you offer any type of course certificate, certification or credit? (Check all that apply)

☐ Certification of completion for meeting attendance requirements
☐ Certification requiring knowledge testing (through what organization?) _____
☐ Continuing education credit (who is the authorized CEU provider?) _____
☐ Other (please describe):

Do you offer any type of public recognition for completion? (Check all that apply)

☐ Certificate
☐ Desktop award
☐ Press release to local media
☐ Graduation ceremony
☐ Promotional item/SWAG

☐ Class photos on display
☐ Recognition at a statewide event
☐ Other (please describe):

Evaluation:

How do you measure the effectiveness of your training? (Check all that apply).

☐ Participant questionnaire immediately following training
☐ Participant questionnaire six months or more post-training to assess use
☐ Certification or testing of knowledge gained
☐ Post-training interviews with participants
☐ Post-training interviews with co-workers or constituents of participants
☐ Other (please describe):

Costs:

What is your budget for this training?

$ _____ Personnel
$ _____ Non-personnel
$ _____ Total

What does this include? (Check all that apply)

☐ Instruction
☐ Room rental, AV and other facility costs
☐ Meals
☐ Lodging
☐ Other (please describe):

What approximate share (%) of the total budget is covered by each of the following (and/or $ amount, if available):

_____ Participant fees
_____ University
_____ Institute/center
_____ Local government or agency
_____ State government or agency
_____ Foundation(s)
_____ Other nonprofit or association
_____ Corporation(s)
_____ Other (please describe):

What is the approximate cost per participant? (Total cost divided by number of participants, not just what participants pay themselves)

$ _____

How much do you charge participants for this training?

$ _____

Do you offer discounts or scholarships?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, for what type of participants?

Do you have an outside source of funding for any scholarships?

Overall, would you say the program (Check one):

☐ Requires a subsidy from our institute/center to cover expenses
☐ Breaks even, but not much more than that
☐ Makes a profit

Attachments:

We encourage you to upload attachments that would be beneficial to peer institutes/centers (with the expectation that they in turn will share their materials with you!). These may include:

Course outline or syllabus
PowerPoints
Reading lists
Marketing brochure
Application form
Screen shot of web page promoting the program
Screen shot of registration page
A photo of any recognition you may give for program completion