**Research and Policy Analyst Portfolio Example**

**Project Title:** Evaluation of the Opioid Abuse Reduction Initiative (OARI)

**Project Overview**

The Opioid Abuse Reduction Initiative (OARI) is a state-funded program aimed at reducing opioid abuse and overdose deaths in Georgia. The initiative includes public education campaigns, increased access to treatment and recovery services, and enhanced prescription monitoring programs. This evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of OARI in reducing opioid abuse and overdose rates and to provide policy recommendations based on the findings.

**Objectives**

1. Assess the impact of OARI on opioid overdose rates in Georgia.
2. Evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of treatment and recovery services.
3. Identify gaps and areas for improvement in program implementation and resource allocation.

**Methodology**

**Data Collection:**

* **Surveys:** Administered to healthcare providers, patients, and program administrators.
  + **Healthcare Providers:** Focused on prescribing practices, use of prescription monitoring programs, and perceived effectiveness of the initiative.
  + **Patients:** Assessed access to treatment services, satisfaction with recovery support, and perceived barriers to treatment.
  + **Administrators:** Evaluated overall program implementation and resource allocation.
* **Focus Groups:** Conducted with patients and healthcare providers to gain qualitative insights into their experiences and suggestions for improvement.
* **Secondary Data Analysis:** Reviewed opioid overdose data from the Georgia Department of Public Health and prescription data from the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP).

**Analysis:**

* **Quantitative Analysis:** Employed statistical techniques to analyze survey responses and overdose data.
  + **Descriptive Statistics:** Summarized survey responses and demographic information.
  + **Inferential Statistics:** Used regression analysis to examine the relationship between program participation and opioid overdose rates.
* **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts to identify common themes and insights.

**Key Findings**

1. **Overdose Rates:** Counties with high participation in OARI showed a statistically significant reduction in opioid overdose rates compared to counties with lower participation.
2. **Treatment Accessibility:** 78% of patients reported improved access to treatment services, but 25% still identified significant barriers, such as cost and availability.
3. **Healthcare Provider Practices:** 90% of healthcare providers reported using the PDMP regularly, and 85% felt it helped reduce inappropriate prescribing.
4. **Areas for Improvement:**
   * **Resource Allocation:** Providers and patients indicated a need for more funding for treatment centers and recovery programs.
   * **Public Awareness:** Some community members suggested increasing awareness campaigns to reach underserved populations.

**Recommendations**

1. **Increase Funding for Treatment Services:** Allocate additional resources to expand access to affordable treatment and recovery services, particularly in underserved areas.
2. **Enhance Public Education Campaigns:** Develop targeted awareness campaigns to educate the public about the risks of opioid abuse and available support services.
3. **Strengthen Prescription Monitoring:** Continue to enhance the PDMP and provide training for healthcare providers to ensure consistent use and effectiveness.
4. **Ongoing Evaluation:** Implement continuous evaluation processes to monitor the effectiveness of OARI and make data-driven adjustments.

**Conclusion**

The evaluation of the Opioid Abuse Reduction Initiative (OARI) demonstrates its positive impact on reducing opioid overdose rates and improving access to treatment services in Georgia. By addressing identified gaps and implementing the recommended strategies, the initiative can further enhance its effectiveness and support the goal of reducing opioid abuse and saving lives.