

What is this document?

This document contains guidance to support you in completing your state's submission for the *2023 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence* (State Standard of Excellence).

What is the State Standard of Excellence?

The State Standard of Excellence:

- Sets a national standard – a “north star” – for how state governments can consistently and effectively use evidence and data in budget, policy, and management decisions to achieve better, more equitable outcomes for their residents. Annually, Results for America invites all 50 states to submit practices for potential inclusion.
- Recognizes states for their evidence-based and data-driven efforts to advance more equitable outcomes in workforce, education, health, criminal justice, child welfare, and economic mobility sectors, among others.

Read more about the State Standard of Excellence and the state practices featured in the 2022 State Standard of Excellence [here](#).

What are the 2023 State Standard of Excellence criteria?

There are 12 criteria we will use for analyzing practices submitted for 2023:

1. **Evaluation Leadership.** The government has a designated leader and/or team responsible for coordinating evaluation policy and use of findings (e.g., Chief Evaluation Officer).
2. **Data Leadership.** The government has a designated leader and/or dedicated team responsible for coordinating the governance, collection, sharing, and analysis of data (e.g., Chief Data Officer).
3. **Investment in Capacity to Learn What Works.** The government invests at least 1% of program funds in evaluations [and evidence building] and uses evaluation findings to advance the agency's mission.
4. **Evaluation Policy and Learning.** The government has an evaluation policy and a learning agenda to support the building and use of evidence.
5. **Data Policy and Practices.** The government has documented, user-friendly policies and practices to expedite internal and external data sharing, linkage and access.
6. **Investing in What Works through Grants and Contracts.** The government defines and prioritizes evidence of effectiveness in grant programs or contracts in order to achieve equitable outcomes.
7. **Investing in What Works through Direct Services.** The government directly administers evidence-based interventions (i.e. government employees deliver interventions) in order to achieve equitable outcomes.
8. **Investing in What Works through Budgeting.** The government has a budget policy that prioritizes evidence of effectiveness in order to achieve equitable outcomes.

9. **Performance Management.** The government uses performance management practices to improve the operational decision-making process and create a culture of accountability in order to achieve equitable outcomes.
10. **Results-Driven Contracting.** The government uses strategies to structure, evaluate, and actively manage contracts strategically, using data to help leverage procurement as a tool to achieve equitable outcomes.
11. **Community Participation.** The government has practices for proactively engaging and empowering residents and community partners to inform policy development, program design and delivery processes with an emphasis on historically underserved communities.
12. **Identifying Key Outcomes and Tracking Progress.** The government has a strategic plan or priorities with measurable goals to achieve equitable outcomes that were informed by underserved communities and the government tracks progress on these key outcomes.

What is new in 2023?

In order to simplify the State Standard of Excellence and incorporate your feedback from last year, we have made the following changes for 2023 criteria:

- Integration of criteria on performance management and data use
- Integration of criteria on evaluation use into other evaluation-related criteria
- Integration of criteria on data policies and data infrastructure
- Removal of criteria on culture, innovation, and repurposing for results
- Addition of criteria on community participation and direct administration of evidence-based interventions by government employees

States that have made significant investments in what works (as reflected in the grantmaking, budgeting, and direct services criteria) will significantly increase their likelihood of earning status as a Leading or Honorable Mention state. The MSWord file that you receive will contain any qualifying investments that we're currently aware of. You may submit the details for additional investments in what works.

How do you submit updates for 2023?

We will use the same update process as 2022. You will:

- Receive an MSWord file containing the practices that were featured for your state in 2022. These practices have been reorganized into the new 2023 criteria and include suggested guidance for select criteria, which has been indicated in red font.
- Submit updates by emailing us a revised version of this MSWord file that contains any updates to practices that were featured in 2022 as well as any new practices that you recommend be newly featured in 2023. We ask that you please note these updates and additions by using track changes and/or using a different color font for any revisions.

What should you include in your updates for 2023?

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you update your practices for 2023:

- Include relevant hyperlinks to publicly documented content. These serve as artifacts of practices that other states and the evidence community can learn from directly. Any publicly available documents can serve as qualifying documentation, including:
 - Executive orders, legislation, or guidance
 - Budget and grant documents
 - Government web pages
 - Case studies prepared by third parties
- Only include practices, policies, and programs that are currently underway (no later than September 2023). Do not include proposed activities or efforts yet to be funded or implemented via the budget, for example.
- To the degree possible, link to results, impact, or other measures of success (case studies, evaluations, research reports, data analysis, blogs, memos, etc.).
- Make clear references to activities funded or supported by the American Rescue Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (ARPA SLFRF) (link to the Recovery Plan or a recent budget).
- Share evidence-based practices that seek to advance more equitable outcomes or processes.
- Keep responses concise (no more than 250 words for each criteria) that are brief and responsive to the 2023 criteria listed above.

What is this year’s timeline?

Date	Milestone
Late-April	RFA provides guidance to states
June 13	States submit recommended updates to RFA
July 7	RFA provides an updated draft to states
August 1	States submit revised drafts to RFA
Early Fall	Results shared with states and public launch of findings

Who can we contact with questions?

You can email Sarah Needler at sarah@results4america.org or the RFA State team at states@results4america.org.