

# 2020 Playbook

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17 Ways the Next President  
Can Accelerate Economic Mobility  
Using Evidence and Data

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*OCTOBER 2019*



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## CALL TO ACTION

For decades, Presidents in both political parties have agreed on the importance of fact-based decision-making:

“ We've applied data and evidence to social policy to find out what works — scale up when it works, stop funding things that don't, thereby fostering a new era of social innovation.” – **President Barack Obama**

“ Government should be results-oriented – guided not by process but guided by performance ... Where we find success, we should repeat it, share it, and make it the standard. And where we find failure, we must call it by its name.” – **President George W. Bush**

Now that we have access to more information than ever before, we need to focus our government on making decisions based on rigorous evidence and data. This need to invest in what works is especially true if we are going to make progress on the great national challenge of our time: increasing economic opportunity.

Despite significant public and private investments in our communities, the place where someone is born and raised and his or her race and ethnicity continue to significantly impact their upward mobility. Global economic forces, systemic discrimination and injustice, and the complexity of influencing human and societal behavior are also preventing far too many from reaching their full potential.

Government needs to harness the power of evidence and data to create stability and pathways for growth in every community in America. Although governments at all levels control the most important levers to accelerate upward mobility, they are clearly not increasing opportunity at the pace and scale our nation needs. But unprecedented levels of evidence and data provide a way to increase the speed and effectiveness of government investments, thereby offering a path to meaningful progress in improving mobility that spending-as-usual cannot.

Fortunately, a growing number of policymakers from across the political spectrum have been using evidence and data to improve outcomes and make our government more effective and efficient over the last several years. Since 2015, Congress has passed landmark bipartisan legislation that is helping identify and invest in what works in K-12 education (the **Every Student Succeeds Act**), foster care (the **Family First Prevention Services Act**), juvenile justice (the **Juvenile Justice Reform Act**), opioid prevention, treatment, and care (**SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act**) and federal agency operations (the **Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act**).

Federal departments and agencies are also continuing to build the capacity they need to use evidence and data in their budget, policy, and management decisions as documented in Results for America's *2018 Federal Standard of Excellence* as have the state

governments featured in the *2018 State Standard of Excellence*. And at the city level, over 100 mayors — Democrats and Republicans — have participated in Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities initiative with 14 cities receiving a *2019 What Works Certification* for their data-based decision-making.

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But the next Administration needs to do significantly more. According to a March 2019 poll conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, 89% of all Americans believe that government should use evidence and data to inform its decisions and 86% think government should shift dollars toward programs that work and away from those that don't. Moreover, 86% of Americans also say they would be more likely to support a candidate who focused on investing taxpayer dollars in what works.

Results for America stands ready to brief presidential campaigns on the polling information, policy recommendations, current federal evidence-based policies and programs, and examples of local, state, and national evidence-based interventions in this 2020 Playbook. Further, we can help connect campaigns to the local, state, and national government and nonprofit leaders who are on the cutting edge of using rigorous evidence and data to improve outcomes. We hope this 2020 Playbook will inspire and challenge every candidate running for our nation's highest office to do all they can to harness the power of evidence and data to get better results faster for the American people.

Sincerely,

**Michele Jolin**  
CEO & Co-Founder  
Results for America

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**David Medina**  
COO & Co-Founder  
Results for America

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# AMERICANS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT INVESTING IN WHAT WORKS:

## 2019 NATIONAL POLLING RESULTS ON EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

In March 2019, [NORC](#) at the University of Chicago conducted a poll of approximately 1,000 nationally representative respondents on attitudes and beliefs related to evidence-based policy. (You can find more information about this monthly NORC poll [here](#).)

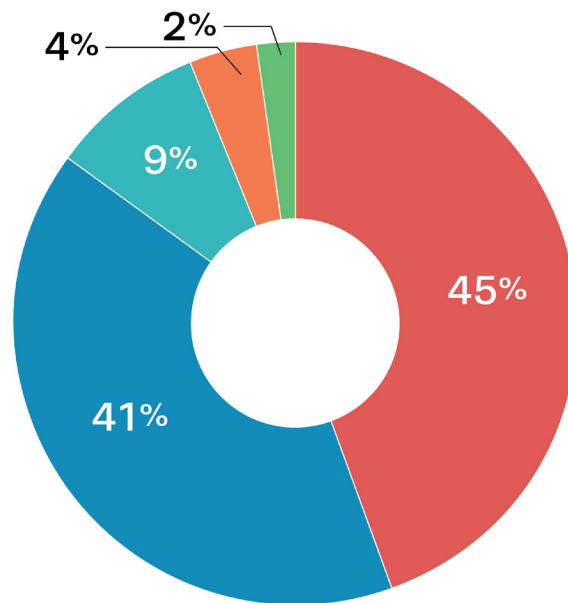
These polling results indicated that although trust in government is at an all time low, Americans overwhelmingly want political candidates and government policymakers to use evidence and data to increase economic mobility and make government more effective and efficient.

Strong majorities also support investing taxpayers dollars in evaluations to determine what works – and shifting funding toward results-driven solutions and away from efforts that consistently fail to achieve desired outcomes.

### 86% of all Americans are more likely to support candidates who rely on evidence when making decisions

1. If you knew that a political candidate or elected official, such as your Mayor, Governor, Congressperson or the President, was moving government spending to programs that have been proven to work, how likely would you be to support and vote for that person in the next election?

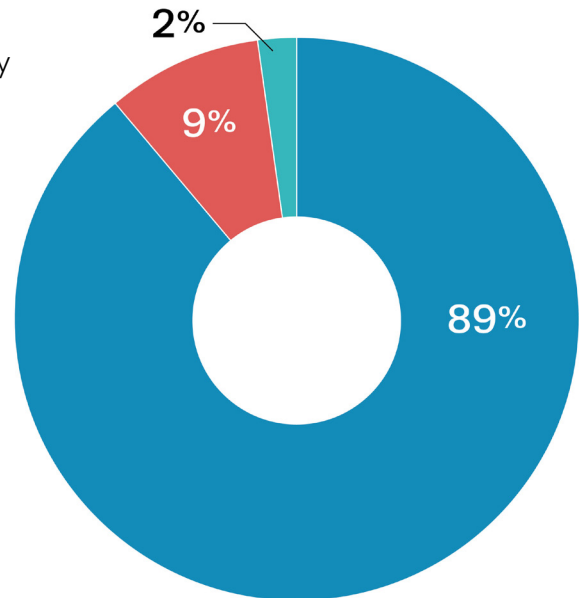
- a. Very Likely **41%**
- b. Somewhat Likely **45%**
- c. Not Very Likely **9%**
- d. Not at All Likely **4%**
- e. Don't know/refused/skipped **2%**



**89%** of all Americans believe policymakers should use evidence when making decisions

2. When policymakers make decisions, should they the best evidence available to determine what will get the best results?

- a. Yes **89%**
- b. No **9%**
- c. Don't know/refused/skipped **2%**



**84%** of all Americans support investing one penny of every federal dollar to determine if the other ninety-nine cents are being spent effectively

3. Do you support setting aside **1%** of funding for government programs to determine if they are effective or not?

- a. Yes **84%**
- b. No **14%**
- c. Don't know/refused/skipped **2%**

**86%** of all Americans support shifting taxpayer dollars toward solutions that work and away from those that consistently fail

4. Do you think government should shift dollars toward programs that work and away from those that consistently fail to achieve desired outcomes?

- a. Yes **86%**
- b. No **11%**
- c. Don't know/refused/skipped **2%**

Only **8%** of all Americans believe that policymakers rely on evidence when making decisions

5. To the best of your knowledge, what most drives policymakers' decisions about how to spend taxpayer dollars to address the needs or problems facing the American people?

- a. Boosting popularity or earning more votes **42%**
- b. Intuition or hunches about what will work **3%**
- c. Past spending decisions **6%**
- d. Influence of lobbyists **34%**
- e. Evidence about what works **8%**
- f. Other – please specify **4%**
- g. Don't know/refused/skipped **3%**

## HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

Increasing economic mobility is the challenge of our time, but government investments are clearly not expanding economic opportunity at the pace and scale our nation needs.

The 17 policy recommendations in this Playbook are designed to help federal, state, and local governments harness the power of evidence and data to identify, develop, support, and scale proven interventions to increase economic mobility more quickly and comprehensively for all, and to make our federal government more effective and efficient.

We urge presidential candidates to include all of these recommendations in their campaign proposals. Although these ideas would work most effectively if implemented together, each can also be included as a separate stand-alone proposal within any economic mobility or government reform plan put forth by a presidential campaign.

[Jed Herrmann](#), Results for America's Vice President for State and Federal Policy Implementation at [jed@results4america.org](mailto:jed@results4america.org), can help answer any questions you may have about these recommendations or how they can be incorporated into your campaign's policy agenda.

## 17 WHAT WORKS RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1 NATIONAL ECONOMIC MOBILITY GOALS: CREATE A NATIONAL ECONOMIC MOBILITY TASK FORCE CHARGED WITH DEVELOPING AND ACHIEVING NATIONAL ECONOMIC MOBILITY GOALS BY 2040

*We can help restore the American Dream for generations to come if we harness the power of rigorous evidence about what works to increase economic opportunity for low- and middle-income Americans.*

#### **Recommendation**

- Create a new national "Economic Mobility Task Force" comprised of local, state, and national government leaders, human services providers, independent evaluators, and policy experts to develop national economic mobility goals and metrics for low- and middle-income Americans, families, and communities to be achieved by 2040.
- Create a Chief Opportunity Officer in the White House to spearhead the Economic Mobility Task Force by relying on evidence and data to identify and address economic mobility disparities.

#### **Rationale and Background Information**

- Although individual federal departments and agencies have made significant progress in improving outcomes in specific areas, including maternal and child health and teen pregnancy, our government has not developed bold, comprehensive national goals to increase economic opportunity for low- and middle-income Americans, families, and communities.
- At the international level, the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals (2000) and seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (2015) have helped focus and expand global anti-poverty efforts over the last two decades. Following the international example, and taking inspiration from the [new 100 Key Questions Initiative](#), this Economic Mobility Task Force would develop national economic mobility goals and work with the White House Office of Management and Budget and Domestic Policy Council to engage all relevant federal departments and agencies in achieving those goals.
- The Economic Mobility Task Force should be spearheaded by a new White House Chief Opportunity Officer who would lead this new federal collective impact effort.

## 2 THE POWER OF A PENNY: INVEST 1 CENT OF EVERY FEDERAL PROGRAM DOLLAR TO DETERMINE WHAT WORKS IN ECONOMIC MOBILITY

*We can improve the impact of federal taxpayer dollars if we invest 1% of existing federal program funds in evaluations.*

### Recommendation

- Improve the effectiveness of new and existing federal programs by setting aside 1% of their funds to strengthen the relevant federal agency's evaluation capacity and to conduct rigorous program evaluations.
- Require new and existing federal grantees to agree to participate in rigorous program evaluations as a condition of receiving funding.

### Rationale and Background Information

- Congress and federal agencies spend billions of dollars every day trying to tackle big problems, but they rarely evaluate how well their efforts address those problems. In a 2017 [Government Accountability Office study](#), 39% of federal managers reported that they did not know if an evaluation of any program, operation, or project they were involved in had been completed within the past five years. Another 18% of federal managers reported having had no evaluations during this same time period.
- A [March 2019 poll](#) conducted by National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago found that 84% of Americans support investing 1% of federal program funds in evaluations to determine if they are effective or not.
- The following bipartisan leaders and organizations from across the political spectrum have expressed support for investing 1% of federal program funds in program evaluations:
  - **Federal leaders:** [Peter Orszag](#) (former White House Office of Management and Budget Director under President Obama) and [John Bridgeland](#) (former White House Domestic Policy Council Director under President G.W. Bush);
  - **Academics:** [Bob Balfanz](#) (Research Professor, Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University School of Education); and
  - **Policy Experts:** The 15 bipartisan experts of the federally chartered [Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking](#).

### Federal Examples

- Results for America's [2018 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence](#) found that [six of the largest](#) federal human services departments and agencies

invested, on average, only 0.38% of their budgets on evaluation activities in FY18. Nonetheless, two of the largest federal foreign assistance agencies, the [Millennium Challenge Corporation](#) and [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), invested 5.1% and 1.4%, respectively, that same year.

- Federal appropriations laws in FY16–FY19 [provide](#) the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) with the authority to set aside up to 0.75% of workforce training funds for program evaluations. DOL also [requires](#) all of its federal competitive grant program grantees to participate in evaluations if asked.
- The bipartisan *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) [authorizes](#) the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to set aside up to 0.5% of federal K–12 education funds (excluding ESSA Title I funds) for program evaluations. It also authorizes \$710,000 each year for evaluations of the ESSA Title I program.

### 3 FUND WHAT WORKS: PRIORITIZE EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS IN EVERY FEDERAL AGENCY AND IN EVERY FEDERAL PROGRAM

*We can improve economic mobility dramatically if we make rigorous evidence of effectiveness a priority in every federal agency and in every federal program.*

#### **Recommendation**

- Direct all federal agencies to prioritize rigorous evidence of effectiveness — including gold-standard randomized controlled trials wherever feasible — when allocating funds from their new and existing federal grant programs.

#### **Rationale and Background Information**

- The twin goals of evidence-based policymaking are to improve outcomes effectively and efficiently. Directing federal grant funds toward evidence-based solutions is a way to accomplish both goals.
- In most cases, federal agencies currently have the administrative authority to prioritize evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from their competitive grant programs. The next President should require agencies to use this authority to the fullest extent possible to ensure that taxpayer dollars are increasingly invested in what works.
- On the other hand, federal agencies are required to allocate funds from their noncompetitive grant programs (including the largest block grant programs which provide funding to cities, counties, and states) as outlined in the relevant federal laws.

For this reason, the next President should work with Congress to amend these laws to encourage or require recipients of these noncompetitive grant funds to invest a portion of their grants in evidence-based, results-driven solutions. These changes are absolutely necessary if the federal government is to play a significant role in increasing economic mobility: in FY19, seven of the largest federal human services agencies collectively provided \$96.7 billion through their five largest non-competitive grants.

### **Federal Examples**

- **Competitive Grant Programs:** 13 of the 31 **largest federal competitive grant programs** at seven of the largest federal human services agencies use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds. While the rigor and application of these evidence standards vary by agency and program, some leading examples include:
  - **U.S. Department of Education** (ED):
    - » In FY18, ED prioritized evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its five largest competitive grant programs (\$2.15 billion total appropriation in FY18)
    - » For example, ED's TRIO Student Support Services program (\$300 million in FY18), TRIO Talent Search program (over \$150 million in FY18), and TRIO Upward Bound Math and Science program (nearly \$400 million in FY18) awarded competitive preference points to grant applicants proposing to invest awarded funds in strategies supported by at least moderate evidence of effectiveness.
  - **Corporation for National and Community Service** (CNCS):
    - » In FY18, CNCS's AmeriCorps State and National competitive grant program application allocated up to 12 points out of 100 to applicants proposing strategies supported by rigorous evidence of effectiveness.
- **Non-competitive Grant Programs:** Five of the 35 **largest federal noncompetitive discretionary grant programs** at seven of the largest federal domestic human services agencies use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds, including:
  - The U.S. Department of Labor's 2019 guidance on **Unemployment Insurance (UI) Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Grants**, includes a new requirement for evidence-based approaches, encouraging "the Department to fund and states to use evidence-based strategies where they exist and to conduct evaluations and build evidence in places where needed. The goal is to ensure that each state employs RESEA interventions and service delivery strategies that, based on rigorous evaluations, improve employment outcomes and reduce benefit duration..." (**Section 306 of the Social Security Act**).
  - **U.S. Department of Education** (ED):
    - » *The Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) requires states to set aside at least seven percent of their ESSA Title I, Part A funds (representing \$1.1 billion in FY19) for a range of activities to help school districts improve low-performing schools.

School districts and individual schools are required to create action plans that focus on investments in "evidence-based" interventions that demonstrate strong, moderate, or promising levels of evidence.

- **Opioids:** The bipartisan 2018 [SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act](#), authorizes approximately \$195 million for evidence-based services and evaluations to help fight our nation's opioid crisis, including: \$15 million for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to replicate and rigorously evaluate the impact of a family recovery and reunification program and \$10 million per year to support evidence-based services to prevent and treat substance use disorders affecting children, adolescents, and young adults (more information on the evidence provisions is available [here](#)).
- **Juvenile Justice:** The bipartisan 2018 [Juvenile Justice Reform Act](#) defines what constitutes "evidence-based" and "promising" for programs funded through the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act* (JJDP). Under the competitive incentive grants for prison reduction program, states must invest federal funds in evidence-based or promising programs, and they receive a priority for developing data-driven prevention plans, employing evidence-based prevention strategies, and conducting program evaluations (more information on the evidence provisions is available [here](#)).

## 4 ACCELERATE INNOVATION: CREATE A NATIONAL ECONOMIC MOBILITY INNOVATION FUND

*We will only be able to significantly improve economic mobility if we continue to develop and rigorously test innovative interventions and strategies that cut across issue areas and federal agencies, and scale those with strong evidence of sizable, sustained effects on earnings and other important outcomes.*

### **Recommendation**

- Launch a new "National Economic Mobility Innovation Fund" at the U.S. Department of the Treasury — modeled on the successful [Social Innovation Fund](#) previously operated by CNCS — to determine through a "pilot, test, scale" model which interventions and strategies work most effectively and efficiently to advance economic mobility across issue areas and federal agencies.

### **Rationale and Background Information**

- Advancing economic mobility will require identifying, developing, implementing, and rigorously evaluating multiple interventions and strategies focused on different

populations in different jurisdictions with different economic and social challenges and opportunities.

- The "National Economic Mobility Innovation Fund" would include a three-tiered evidence framework that would provide different sized grants to help develop and implement innovative pilots, refine and rigorously evaluate interventions and strategies that have promising prior evidence of effectiveness, and scale up only those approaches that have been proven through rigorous evaluations to produce meaningful impacts on earnings and other outcomes. By ensuring grant amounts are commensurate with the level of evidence, a tiered-evidence framework has the following three advantages over more traditional federal grant
  - A. The tiered design enables more dollars to be directed toward interventions that have demonstrated evidence of effectiveness and are ready to be scaled thereby generating meaningful progress on economic mobility.
  - B. The tiered design reduces risk by directing lesser amounts toward interventions that are as yet unproven but worthy of testing.
  - C. The tiered design requires rigorous evaluations to grow the evidence base of what works, and to help federal grantees learn how to improve the effectiveness of the interventions they deliver.
- The U.S. Treasury Department (Treasury) is a natural fit for such a cross-federal government economic mobility effort since its [mission](#) is to "maintain a strong economy and create economic and job opportunities by promoting the conditions that enable economic growth and stability at home and abroad." Treasury also currently administers the [Social Impact Partnerships](#) program, a \$100 million fund designed to improve social services by paying for a project only if predetermined outcomes have been met and validated by an independent evaluator, which could greatly inform the "National Economic Mobility Innovation Fund."

### **Federal Examples**

- The [Social Innovation Fund](#) (SIF), a competitive grant program administered by the CNCS from 2009–2016, used federal funds to build the capacity of grantees to implement evidence-based approaches to improving youth development, health, and education, and to rigorously evaluate those approaches. In all, CNCS awarded [57 SIF grants](#) totaling \$1 billion invested in community solutions (\$352 million in federal funds and \$707 million in private matching funds) across 300 sites in 50 states. CNCS supported 44 experimental or quasi-experimental [evaluations](#) of SIF grantee work. An [independent assessment](#) of SIF, conducted by ICF International, found that SIF grantees reported growth in three key areas including 1) conducting rigorous evaluations of the programs; 2) using evaluation findings to improve programs; and 3) using evaluation findings to demonstrate and communicate effectiveness of programs funded by the organization.

- There are currently 4 federal tiered-evidence innovation programs (the [Education Innovation and Research](#) program at ED; the [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program](#) at HHS; the [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program](#) at HHS; and the [Development Innovation Ventures](#) at USAID. These are important and effective federal programs that address specific issue areas; however, they do not focus on economic mobility itself or work across issue areas. A new cross-sector innovation fund on economic mobility is therefore needed.

## 5 STRENGTHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S EVIDENCE AND DATA INFRASTRUCTURE BY IMPLEMENTING AND BUILDING ON THE EVIDENCE ACT

*The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 and a new Evidence Act 2021 could help ensure that federal agencies have the capacity, resources, and authority needed to dramatically improve economic mobility.*

### Recommendation

- Support the aggressive implementation of the bipartisan [Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) (Evidence Act) which advances federal agencies' data and evidence-building functions and requires agency-wide evaluation plans and robust open data catalogues with strong privacy controls.
- Work with Congress to enact a follow-up 2021 Evidence Act to ensure that federal agencies have the evidence and data capacity, resources, and authority needed to build rigorous evidence of what works and to use that evidence to increase economic mobility, including authorizing federal agencies to invest up to 1% of their program funds in evaluations (see Recommendation #2) and to prioritize rigorous evidence of effectiveness within all of their federal grant programs (see Recommendation #3).

### Rationale and Background Information

- The bipartisan *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018* includes many of the evidence and data recommendations that Results for America's [Federal Standard of Excellence](#) has promoted for years, including designating senior [Evaluation Officers](#), producing [evaluation plans](#), and developing [learning agendas](#).
- While building the evidence and data infrastructure within federal agencies is essential (and outlined in OMB's July 2019 [guidance](#) to federal agencies on Phase I Implementation of the Evidence Act), the next equally important phase is ensuring that a sufficient portion of existing federal resources are invested in building rigorous evidence of what works (see Recommendation #2 above) and that rigorous evidence

of effectiveness is prioritized when allocating public dollars (see Recommendation #3 above).

## 6 TURBO BOOST EFFECTIVENESS: DEPLOY "WHAT WORKS SWAT TEAMS" TO ADVANCE WHAT WORKS IN ECONOMIC MOBILITY

*We can accelerate the federal government's economic mobility efforts if we deploy specially trained teams to improve the results of federal programs.*

### Recommendation

- Create and deploy "What Works SWAT teams" to help federal social services agencies advance their economic mobility efforts.

### Rationale and Background Information

- It is often easier to create a new government program than it is to reform an underperforming program, but this is precisely the work that must be done to ensure that government improves outcomes, especially in the areas related to economic mobility where a web of overlapping programs complicate federal anti-poverty efforts.
- Members of these "What Works SWAT teams" would include representatives of the federal performance, data, evaluation, and statistical analysis leaders required by the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policy Act of 2018](#) (Evidence Act). These experts would be deployed on short-term assignments to help federal social services agencies get better results by prioritizing rigorous evaluations to identify what works in social spending programs, and increasing their use of evidence and data to guide the allocation of public funds (including exploring how agencies could utilize [data collaboratives](#)). As part of this work, SWAT team members would identify innovative, effective, and efficient initiatives that are achieving success, could be scaled across levels of government, and should be recognized through annual White House What Works Prizes (see Recommendation #9 below). These SWAT team members would also help federal agencies develop and implement all of the Recommendations in this 2020 Playbook.

### Federal Example

- The General Services Administration's (GSA) [18F Unit](#) has a team of 120 software designers and engineers that help federal agencies improve public-facing services like websites or applications as well as digitize and streamline internal systems to save time and increase accuracy. Successful [projects](#) have moved paper processes online, increased data access, saved millions on cloud hosting, and implemented new acquisition techniques.

## 7 INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF FEDERAL AGENCIES TO HARNESS THE POWER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION TO INCREASE ECONOMIC MOBILITY

*Helping American families improve their economic circumstances is one of the most important roles government can play. Leveraging lessons from science and technology can help.*

### Recommendation

- Increase support at federal social services agencies for research, development, and demonstration projects that increase shared prosperity, including creating partnerships between federal social services agencies that currently lack sufficient science and technology capacity with agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF).
- Use flexible hiring authorities at federal social services agencies to recruit people with expertise in science, technology, and innovation (such as human-centered design, data science, machine learning, and open innovation) to apply that expertise to our nation's most pressing challenges.
- Allocate funding to incentive prizes and other market-shaping approaches to accelerate the development of science and technology-enabled interventions that promote economic and social opportunity.

### Rationale and Background Information

- Federal science and technology efforts have borne tremendous fruit over the last half century in areas like disease eradication, technology development, and workplace safety. Although these advances have addressed some of the toughest challenges in our ever-changing world, they have come only from a small number of federal agencies dedicated to science and technology research. Broadening this approach by increasing the capacity of federal social services agencies to harness science, technology, and innovation, would have myriad benefits for advancing economic mobility. For example, the recommendations described above could help our country: reduce the time needed for a non-college educated worker to gain a valuable skill from years to months; encourage low-income parents and caregivers to read to their children for 30 minutes each day; develop engaging games for adult literacy or passing the U.S. citizenship test; lower the physical cost borne by construction workers by 50 percent; double the percentage of low-income students who are proficient in 8th grade math; and use data science and low-cost sensors to fight childhood lead poisoning.
- Applying science, technology, and innovation throughout the federal government requires hiring the right people. As such, the next President should allow for flexible

hiring authorities, including hiring “bilingual” researchers with multidisciplinary training that have expertise in both science and technology (e.g. computer science) and a societal problem (e.g. public health) and have the ability to harness technological advances to solve societal problems.

### **Federal Example**

- The U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) was able to launch a [program](#) to reduce the time required for new Navy recruits to gain a technical skill from years to months by harnessing advances in AI.



## **INNOVATE AND EVALUATE: AUTHORIZE TARGETED FEDERAL WAIVERS FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

*The federal government can and should partner with state and local governments to develop, implement, evaluate, and scale innovative approaches to solving long-standing problems.*

### **Recommendation**

- Ensure that new federal economic mobility laws and regulations authorize state and local governments to seek and obtain program waivers that allow them to develop and implement new economic mobility interventions and strategies as long as those efforts are rigorously evaluated.

### **Rationale and Background Information**

- Duplicative and antiquated federal grant rules often stand in the way of local and state innovation. A targeted waiver program would allow state and local governments to apply to federal agencies to waive rules that stand in the way of implementing more effective and innovative solutions to improve economic mobility. Federal agencies could permit waivers for grantees that meet certain conditions (such as performance benchmarks); require rigorous evaluations of the relevant programs to determine which work and which do not; and encourage expansion of only the approaches that prove effective.

### **Federal Example**

- The [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA), for example, authorizes the Secretary of Labor to grant [WIOA waivers](#) to state governments to test new ways to improve workforce outcomes. The current structure does not require rigorous evaluations of the programs receiving waivers, but it should do so. This would allow DOL to understand whether relevant programs were successful in improving workforce outcomes.

## 9 DETERMINE WHAT WORKS TO ADVANCE ECONOMIC MOBILITY IN EVERY COMMUNITY: CREATE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EVALUATION FUNDS

*The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to work with state and local governments to ensure that the federal taxpayer dollars they receive and distribute are being invested in what works.*

### **Recommendation**

- Create new "State and Local Government Economic Mobility Evaluation Funds" at the largest federal social services agencies to help city, county, and state governments build their evaluation capacity and evaluate their economic mobility efforts. These state and local evaluation activities would be supported by existing federal resources once the federal government invests 1% of existing federal program funds in evaluations (see Recommendation #2 above).

### **Rationale and Background Information**

- Nationwide, governments spend over \$2 trillion each year to improve the lives of the most vulnerable Americans. Local, state, and federal governments, however, have not invested nearly enough to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of these investments or to build the much needed evidence-base about what works in economic mobility.
- The new "State and Local Government Economic Mobility Evaluation Funds" would ensure focused and dedicated funding for rigorous evaluations of economic mobility efforts developed and supported by city, county, and state governments. These evaluations would be overseen by the chief evaluation officers at the largest federal social services agencies (including those positions newly required by the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) (Evidence Act)). These evaluations would also need to meet the requirements of the relevant federal agency's evaluation policy and plan, and meet the federal agency's evidence needs as outlined in its learning agenda (also required by the Evidence Act).

# 10 EXPAND FLEXIBILITY: PERMIT FEDERAL BLOCK GRANTS FUNDS TO BE USED TO EVALUATE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC MOBILITY EFFORTS

*Federal agencies should clarify that state and local governments can and should use a portion of their federal block grant funds to help build evidence of what works to increase economic opportunity.*

## **Recommendation**

- Specifically permit and encourage city, county, and state governments to invest up to 1% of their federal block grant program funds (including but not limited to [Community Development Block Grant](#) funds) to rigorously evaluate their economic mobility efforts and strengthen their evidence-building capacity.

## **Rationale and Background Information**

- Far too many city, county, and state governments lack the funding necessary to build and use rigorous evidence and data to improve their programs, services, and outcomes. Allowing state and local governments to spend federal block grant funds, in coordination with the relevant federal agencies, will improve the effectiveness of these programs.
- Although most federal block grant programs provide broad flexibility to city, county, and state governments in spending their "overhead" set aside funds, some state and local governments may be reluctant to invest any of the "program" funds they receive to evaluate their economic mobility efforts or strengthen their evidence-building capacity because there is no clear guidance from federal agencies authorizing (or encouraging) them to do so. Issuing clear guidance that it is acceptable (even encouraged) to invest up to 1% of these program funds in evaluation efforts will allow local and state governments to achieve greater impact with the other 99% of their federal funds.

## **Local Examples**

- The Community Development Block Grant program currently permits recipients (including city and state governments) to set aside up to [20% of their CDBG grant funds](#) for administrative costs such as [evaluation capacity building efforts and evaluations of their CDBG-funded interventions](#) (as defined in [507.205 and 507.206](#)).
- Bloomberg Philanthropies' [What Work Cities initiative](#) has helped 42 cities conduct 110 trials of their work since 2015 through support from the Behavioral Insights Team. [Arnold Ventures](#) also funds randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of programs across the spectrum of social policy – operated by cities, counties, states,

and others – whose prior evidence shows potential for sizable effects on education, earnings, crime prevention, and other important outcomes.

- These philanthropic efforts are helping build important evidence of what works in economic mobility, but the federal government also needs to provide city, county, and state governments the funding and flexibility they need to strengthen their evidence-building capacity and evaluate their economic mobility efforts at scale.

## 11 RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE: AWARD WHITE HOUSE WHAT WORKS IN ECONOMIC MOBILITY PRIZES

*We can spur continued innovation in economic mobility by awarding prizes in recognition of cutting edge, evidence-driven economic mobility leaders and efforts.*

### **Recommendation**

- Award annual "White House What Works in Economic Mobility Prizes" that recognize effective, efficient, and innovative uses of rigorous evidence and data, including scaling of evidence-based interventions, by city, county, state, and federal government officials and agencies to achieve better results for the American people.

### **Rationale and Background Information**

- By creating an ecosystem of cross-jurisdictional innovation and evidence-based policymaking, these prizes could identify and spread the most effective approaches to using rigorous evidence, data, and innovation to tackle common problems facing governments at all levels across the country. Presented by the President, these prizes would include public recognition such as a White House event and social media amplification.

### **Local, State, and Federal Examples**

- "White House What Works in Economic Mobility Prizes" could recognize the well-managed cities publicly recognized as the [2019 What Works Certified Cities](#), the leading states recognized in the [2018 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence](#), and the leading federal agencies featured in the [2018 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence](#).

# 12 HARNESS THE POWER OF DATA: CREATE 5 "SMART AND SAFE DATA" PILOT PROJECTS

*We must constantly develop and test new ways to manage and protect personal data.*

## Recommendation

- Create five "Smart and Safe Data Pilot Projects" within targeted federal agencies to test new privacy-preserving technologies (such as secure, multiparty computation) that protect personally identifiable information within public administration data sets while still allowing data to be used for program design, evaluation, and research purposes.
- Enable integration of administrative data held by different federal agencies and at different levels of government without relying on centralized databases as recommended by the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking's final report [The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking](#) (see [Appendix D](#)).
- Use metadata to publicize federal datasets, allowing researchers and citizens to easily connect with the correct federal agency to request the right dataset.

## Rationale and Background Information

- The power and peril of data has never been greater. Information is collected and used at lightning speed with tangible results. Some fast food chains [monitor their drive-through lanes](#) and change what appears on the menu to speed up the process (e.g., if the line is backed up, the features will change to reflect items that can be quickly prepared and help the line move faster).
- At the same time, confidential information held by private companies has been leaked or misused, such as when Cambridge Analytica and its third party researcher [harvested personal data](#) from Facebook users without their consent and used that data for political purposes.
- The next President should help Americans understand the potential of safe data use, and how to use the latest technologies to keep their data secure.

## Federal Examples

- The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS administers an [Interoperability Initiative](#) that supports data sharing through the development of standards and tools that are reusable across the country to address common privacy and security requirements to mitigate risks. ACF also has developed

resources such as the [National Human Services Interoperability Architecture](#), which proposes a framework to facilitate information sharing, improve service delivery, prevent fraud, and provide better outcomes for children and families; an [Interoperability Toolkit](#) to help state human services agencies connect with their health counterparts; and a [Confidentiality Toolkit](#) that supports state and local efforts by explaining rules governing confidentiality in ACF and certain related programs.

- The [Workforce Data Quality Initiative](#) within DOL funds the development and enhancement of state workforce longitudinal administrative databases. These databases include information on training and employment service programs, linked at the individual level, to allow for program evaluation and better information about the workforce system to customers and stakeholders.

## 13 PRIORITIZE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK: CREATE A NEW MOBILE APPLICATION TO ALLOW AMERICANS TO PUBLICLY RATE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH FEDERAL SERVICES

*We can make our government more responsive to the needs of its citizens if we use the latest mobile technology to create continuous customer feedback loops.*

### Recommendation

- Create a new "What Works" Yelp-like mobile application to allow Americans to publicly share their feedback as customers of benefits and services provided directly by the federal government either in-person or through websites, including but not limited to: Social Security Administration offices, Veterans Affairs hospitals, federal student financial aid websites, and IRS websites. The mobile customer feedback form should include a question asking each respondent whether they would recommend that federally run office or service to a friend (known in the corporate sector as the net promoter score).
- Require relevant federal agencies to report on how they use the data gathered through this new mobile application to improve their programs, services, and outcomes.

### Rationale and Background Information

- Crowd source review sites have transformed the restaurant, travel, and retail industries. A customer review system for federal services and benefits would encourage the modernization of federal programs by making them more responsive to the everyday experiences of their customers. Allowing for both real

time and post-experience reviews, this focus on customer experience would push the federal government to use modern tools such as user-centered design and data analytics to make federal programs meet the needs of their customers.

## 14 INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY: MAKE FEDERAL SPENDING AND PERFORMANCE RESULTS MORE TRANSPARENT

*We can help restore faith and trust in government if we make federal spending decisions and performance more transparent.*

### Recommendation

- Create a single, user-friendly, and searchable federal spending portal to catalogue information about and links to all federal government contracts (and subcontracts issued by state and local governments with federal financial support) and evaluation results related to each of those federal spending decisions.

### Rationale and Background Information

- Federal spending needs to be more transparent. There is currently no single, user-friendly, and searchable database that the general public, human service providers, academics, independent evaluators, or others can use to determine the details of how federal funds are being spent and what results they are achieving.
- While the federal website [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) includes all information on federal funding opportunities and [USASpending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) includes information on overall agency expenditures, there is no online portal with (1) information about and links to all federal government contracts (and subcontracts issued by state and local governments with financial support from the federal government) or (2) performance information and evaluation results related to all of these same federal government contracts and subcontracts.

### Current Example

- Supported by the Ballmer Group, [USA Facts](https://www.usafacts.org) catalogues how government funds are spent at a national level across issue areas.

# 15

## EMPOWER AMERICANS: CREATE INDIVIDUAL "MYUSA ACCOUNTS" TO GIVE EVERYONE MORE CONTROL OVER THEIR FEDERAL DATA

*We can help Americans harness the power of their own personal data by giving them the option of creating safe and secure federal customer accounts.*

### **Recommendation**

- Give all Americans the option of creating a safe and secure federal customer account that includes all of their personal data held by the federal government. This single customer account would allow Americans to manage all of their interactions with the federal government in one place by bringing together an individual's federal records (such as multiple years of tax filings) and benefits (Social Security, Medicare, Veterans benefits).

### **Rationale and Background Information**

- Bringing all personal information held by the federal government into a unified portal could make life easier for millions of Americans and reduce the duplicative paperwork requirements of many federal programs. For example, using the administrative data in the MyUSA account, individuals receiving Medicaid could automatically be enrolled in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as the food stamp program) thereby reducing the need for the federal government to spend valuable resources to conduct time consuming and duplicative enrollments.
- These "MyUSA" accounts could increase government efficiency and reduce red tape for Americans. They could also power new services such as an automatic tax return system that applies information from the MyUSA account along with employer reported wages to populate a 1040 tax form, including relevant tax benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, for taxpayer review and approval.
- Giving Americans access to their data in one place would grant them better control of their own data and provide improved visibility into how the government gathers and uses their data. Further, by using state of the art blockchain technology, not only would this single individual account make life easier for all Americans, it would also improve security over the existing patchwork of federal customer accounts, which have varying levels of access and privacy safeguards.

### **Federal Example**

- The [IRS Data Retrieval Tool](#) allows students to automatically transfer their income and tax information into their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when seeking student financial aid for higher education.

# 16 IMPROVE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY: INCREASE EVALUATION, OVERSIGHT, AND TRANSPARENCY OF TAX EXPENDITURES

*We can bring accountability to tax breaks by increasing their evaluation and oversight.*

## Recommendation

- Conduct **more and better evaluations** of tax expenditures by expanding the capacity of federal government agencies to undertake such evaluations. Start by funding evaluations by policy offices within the Executive Branch, namely by the Office of Tax Policy within Treasury.
- Promote increased oversight by nonpartisan agencies, such as the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Joint Committee on Taxation, by providing funding for additional evaluators and calling for explicit reporting on the effectiveness of the largest and most consequential tax expenditures.
- Implement a series of organizational reforms, such as periodic review by Congress of each tax expenditure and restructuring of the IRS to pay more individual attention to each tax expenditure, so that the tax expenditure budget is not on permanent "auto-pilot."

## Rationale and Background Information

- Tax expenditures, or tax breaks, are considered "spending through the tax code" because they grant special tax preferences to individuals or corporations for performing particular activities. Over time, these tax loopholes have grown the tax expenditure budget to over \$1.5 trillion annually — putting it on par with annual spending through the appropriations process. Yet, despite its massive size, tax expenditures are rarely subject to any formal evaluation and only receive limited Congressional oversight. There is no annual review of how Congress spends through the tax code; no program staff dedicated to tax expenditures' administration; no inspector general for tax expenditures; and no rigorous government evaluation of the effectiveness of most tax breaks.
- Absent new legislation, many tax expenditures not only are permanent parts of the tax code, but they permanently grow in cost. Unlike federal discretionary programs, no new laws are required to increase their value to beneficiaries or cost to the taxpayer. The tax exclusion for employer-sponsored health insurance plans, for example, grows automatically with the price of health insurance, which grows with health costs that have for many years increased much faster than overall inflation.

- Based on OMB's most recent estimates, tax expenditures totaled nearly \$1.5 trillion in FY17 (about 7.7% of GDP), roughly what government collected in total individual income taxes that year. About \$1.2 trillion is attributed to individual income tax expenditures, while another \$228 billion is attributed to corporate tax expenditures. A small number of tax expenditures related to health insurance, retirement savings, and housing comprise the bulk of the tax expenditures' cost.
- Government spending, including tax expenditures, receives disparate oversight depending on the nature of the program. Certain programs are subject to multiple layers of evaluations, first by the offices administering them, then through potential audits by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and in some cases review by agency Inspector Generals. Other programs, especially those administered through the tax code, are subject to much less oversight (and sometimes virtually none) and can continue indefinitely without a single serious review. This near-complete lack of oversight likely undermines the programs' effectiveness and leads to continued spending on ineffective expenditures.

## 17 BUILD FEDERAL EVALUATION CAPACITY: CREATE A "WHAT WORKS INSTITUTE" FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

*We can improve government performance and economic mobility outcomes by strengthening the federal government's evaluation and data capacity.*

### **Recommendation**

- Create a What Works Institute to train federal employees on how to build and use rigorous evidence to improve federal programs and operations.

### **Rationale and Background Information**

- Civil servants are our federal government's most valuable asset. However, federal employees often lack the training they need to be able to build and use rigorous evidence of what works in their budget, policy, and management decisions. The What Works Institute could train federal employees on the latest techniques in rigorous program evaluation, evidence, and data to help them increase the effectiveness of the programs they administer. The Institute could offer specialized classes in behavioral science, user-centered design, and other emerging areas that hold the promise of improving federal programs.
- In a 2017 [Government Accountability Office study](#), 40% of federal managers stated that a lack of knowledgeable staff at least moderately hindered the evaluation of federal programs. Improving the knowledge and capacity of

federal employees would increase use of evidence and data, leading to more effective program implementation and oversight.

### **Local Example**

- As part of Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities initiative, Johns Hopkins' Center for Government Excellence provides training to city government staff on using data to improve performance through programs such as [GovEx Academy](#). They also provide technical assistance to help cities start their own [data academies](#) to train local staff on better use of data to improve government performance.

## APPENDIX A

# ECONOMIC MOBILITY INTERVENTIONS THAT WORK

The following interventions and organizations are at the forefront of using data and evidence to improve economic mobility all across the United States. Presidential candidates should consider visiting these organizations and highlighting them throughout the campaign season to showcase pockets of excellence where real progress is being achieved.

We have rated the interventions described below based on the following evidence standards:

- **Strong Evidence:** Programs shown in well-conducted randomized controlled trials (RCTs), carried out in typical community settings, to produce sizable, sustained effects on important outcomes. This category requires replication – specifically, the demonstration of such effects in two or more RCTs conducted in different implementation sites, or, alternatively, in one large multi-site RCT.
- **Promising Evidence:** Interventions that have been evaluated in RCTs or rigorous quasi-experimental studies, and found to have positive effects that are sizable, but not yet conclusive (e.g., due to only short-term follow-up, a single-site study design, well-matched comparison groups but not randomization, or effects that fall short of statistical significance).
- **Preliminary Evidence:** The model has evidence based on a reasonable hypothesis and supported by credible research findings. Such evidence suggests the program may be an especially strong candidate for further research, but does not yet provide confidence that the program would produce important effects if implemented in new settings.

### Child Welfare

- **Child FIRST** is a home visitation program for low-income families with young children at high risk of emotional, behavioral, or developmental problems, or child maltreatment. **A well-conducted RCT** found, at the three-year follow-up, that the program led to a 33% reduction in families' involvement with child protective services (CPS) for possible child maltreatment. At the one-year follow-up, the program led to 40%–70% reductions in serious levels of (i) child conduct and language development problems, and (ii) mothers' psychological distress. Child FIRST operates in Connecticut, Florida, and North Carolina.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

- **[Children's Institute, Inc.'s Integrated Model Service](#)** provides coordinated, evidence-based prevention, intervention and treatment services to children and families. Its evidence-based programs include multidimensional treatment foster care, functional family therapy, and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, which clinical trials have shown to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and criminal and delinquent behavior, and to improve school attendance and effective parenting. Children's Institute's Integrated Model Service is currently operating in Los Angeles, California.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*
- **[The Triple P System](#)** is a system of parenting programs for parents with children ages zero to eight. **[A well-conducted RCT](#)** of Triple P found that the program led to 13%–33% reductions in county-wide rates of child maltreatment, hospital visits for maltreatment injuries, and foster-care placements two years after random assignment.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*
- **[Wendy's Wonderful Kids](#)**, (WWK), a program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, uses a unique model of adoption professionals as recruiters to match the hardest to place children with appropriate adoptive families. In a well-conducted RCT, WWK children were 40% more likely to have been adopted over an average follow-up period of roughly two years, and the effect was larger for children who were less likely to be adopted (i.e., older children and children diagnosed with emotional disturbances). Wonderful Kids operates programs in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. It operates fully statewide in New York, Washington, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Louisiana.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*
- **[Youth Villages' YVLifeset](#)** pairs highly trained specialists with young adults ages 17–22 who are aging out of foster care to help them acquire the skills they need to live independently and set them on a path to successful adulthood. A well-conducted RCT found positive effects on self-reported outcomes such as earnings, housing instability, and likelihood of being in a violent relationship at the one-year follow-up. However, there were no significant effects on any of the key outcomes measured at the two-year follow-up, including education, earnings, or arrests. Youth Villages operates in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, and has partner sites in New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Washington, D.C. You can contact Jessica Foster, Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships, at [Jessica.Foster@youthvillages.org](mailto:Jessica.Foster@youthvillages.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*

## **Early Childhood**

- **[Nurse-Family Partnership](#)** is a nurse home visitation program for first-time mothers – mostly low-income and unmarried – during their pregnancy and children's infancy. Five well-conducted RCTs, each carried out in a different population and setting (three in the United States, one in the Netherlands, and one

in the United Kingdom) found a pattern of sizable, sustained effects on important child and maternal outcomes in four of the five studies. Effects replicated across two or more studies include: (i) reductions in child abuse/neglect and injuries (20%–50%); (ii) reduction in mothers' subsequent births (10%–20%) during their late teens and early twenties; and (iii) improvement in cognitive/educational outcomes for children of mothers with low mental health/self-confidence/intelligence (e.g., 6–percentile point increase in grade one to six reading/math achievement). NFP currently operates in 41 states and is frequently supported by the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. You can contact Teri Weathers, Director of Federal Affairs, at [teri.weathers@nursefamilypartnership.org](mailto:teri.weathers@nursefamilypartnership.org) for more information.

**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*

## **K-12 Education**

- **Annual Book Fairs in High Poverty Elementary Schools** provide summer reading to students in high-poverty elementary schools over three years, starting at the end of first or second grade. **A well-conducted RCT** found that the book fairs increased students' reading achievement by 35%–40% of a grade level three years after random assignment.

**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

- **Building Assets, Reducing Risks** (BARR) provides high schools with a comprehensive approach to meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. An RCT showed that BARR's model produced statistically significant improvement in course credits earned, grade point average, and standardized test scores at the end of one school year. The BARR model is the only intervention to climb the three tiers of evidence required under ED's Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program, including a Scale Up grant to expand its network to at least 250 schools and more than 250,000 students by the fall of 2021. BARR currently operates in California, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Washington D.C. You can contact Angela Jerabek, CEO, at [angela.jerabek@barrcenter.org](mailto:angela.jerabek@barrcenter.org) for more information.

**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*

- **Children's Literacy Initiative** (CLI) is a teacher coaching and professional development program that aims to raise student reading achievement in elementary school by: (i) providing teachers with literacy resources (e.g., book collections); (ii) conducting professional development institutes and seminars to train teachers in literacy-related instruction, followed by classroom-embedded coaching; (iii) providing one "model teacher" per grade with more intensive coaching; and (iv) educating school leaders on leveraging CLI training. After three years of CLI implementation, a well-conducted RCT found that second grade students in CLI schools scored roughly 15% of a grade level higher in both reading achievement and reading comprehension than students in control schools. CLI currently operates in Colorado, Illinois, Florida, Montana, New

- Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Texas. You can contact Joel Zarrow, CEO, at [JZarrow@cli.org](mailto:JZarrow@cli.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*
- **KIPP** is a nonprofit network of 224 college-preparatory, public charter schools that serve 96,000 predominantly low-income students and students of color from pre-K through high school. Two well-conducted RCTs found that KIPP elementary schools and KIPP middle schools produced sizable, statistically-significant effects on reading and math achievement – increases of between 5 and 10 percentile points, respectively, at two- to three-year follow-up (compared to the control group). In 2010, KIPP was awarded an ED EIR scale-up grant because it demonstrated evidence of effectiveness in prior independent evaluation studies. KIPP currently **operates** in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New York, North Carolina, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington, D.C. For more information, contact Courtney Criswell, Senior Director of Policy & Public Affairs, at [ccriswell@kipp.org](mailto:ccriswell@kipp.org).  
**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*
- The **National Writing Project** (NWP) is a network of sites that provide professional development, develop resources, generate research, and act on knowledge to improve the teaching of writing and learning in schools and communities. The College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP) (formerly called the College-Ready Writers Program) improves students' academic argument writing through an integrated program of professional development, open access instructional resources, and formative assessment. SRI International conducted an evaluation of the College-Ready Writers Program, funded with an i3 validation award, and found positive impacts of two years on seventh to tenth grade student source-based argument writing. NWP currently operates **200 sites nationwide**. You can contact [Elyse Eidman-Aadadah](mailto:Elyse.Eidman-Aadadah@nwp.org), NWP Executive Director, for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*
- **PowerMyLearning** strengthens the relationship between students, teachers, and families by partnering with schools and districts to transform teaching and family engagement through innovative coaching and workshops, and through its digital platform, **PowerMyLearning Connect**. According to a quasi-experimental evaluation **conducted by MDRC**, PowerMyLearning schools outperformed comparison schools in math proficiency by an average of 7.1 percentage points each year (4.7% average annual improvement in the percent of students at or above proficiency at PowerMyLearning schools, -2.4% change at comparison schools). PowerMyLearning has offices in Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. For more information, contact Elizabeth Stock, CEO, at [estock@powermylearning.org](mailto:estock@powermylearning.org).  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*

- **Reading Recovery** is a short-term intervention for first graders having difficulty learning to read and write. Specially trained teachers working individually with children in daily 30-minute lessons for 12 to 20 weeks. A well-conducted RCT, funded by a scale-up grant from ED's EIR program, found large significant effects on reading achievement. This effect was measured immediately after the intervention concluded, so it is not yet known whether the effects endure or fade over time. Reading Recovery currently operates in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. For more information, contact Jady Johnson, Executive Director, at [jjohnson@readingrecovery.org](mailto:jjohnson@readingrecovery.org).

**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

- **Small Schools Choice** (SSCs) were small public high schools in New York City, created citywide in mostly high-poverty communities to replace large, low-performing high schools. The small schools competed for students through the city's system of school choice. The schools were newly created through a competitive process, in which the city invited applications from prospective school leadership teams. **A well-conducted RCT** found that four years after random assignment, SSCs achieved a six to ten percentage point increase in the rate of four-year high school graduation, and a 4–6 percentage point increase in the rate of graduation with a New York State Regents diploma (requiring proficiency on each of five state Regents exams in various subjects). The small schools' operating cost was approximately the same as that of the larger, more traditional high schools attended by control group students.

**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

- **Success for All** is a school-wide reform program, primarily for high-poverty elementary schools, designed to ensure that all students reach third grade reading at grade level, and then continue to grow. **A well-conducted RCT** found that the program increased second grade reading achievement by 25%–30% of grade level three years after random assignment. A second well-conducted RCT did not find significant positive effects on most measures of reading achievement, including comprehension. The reasons for the discrepant findings are unclear, and further replication is needed.
- Success for All operates **nationwide**. For more information, contact Robert Slavin, Co-Founder, at [rslavin@successforall.org](mailto:rslavin@successforall.org).

**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

- **Teach For America** (TFA) is a network of leaders working to confront educational inequity through teaching. With nearly 60,000 alumni and corps members in 51 regions around the country, the TFA network includes 14,000 teachers; 3,700 school principals, assistant principals, and deans; more than 300 school system leaders; 500 policy and advocacy leaders; nearly 200 elected leaders; and almost 200 social entrepreneurs. A well-conducted RCT found that TFA improved elementary students' math achievement by 10% of a grade level at one-year follow-up. Another well-conducted RCT found that TFA modestly improved middle and high school math achievement, equivalent to an additional three months in school, at the end of one school year. Based on this evidence, TFA received an ED EIR scale-up grant in 2010; however, a second well-conducted RCT of the scale-up found no significant effects on student math or reading achievement over the course of one school year. The reasons for the discrepant findings are unclear, and further replication studies are needed. TFA currently operates in [51 regions](#). For more information, contact Matthew Walker, Vice President of Policy and Public Partnerships Strategy, at [Matt.Walker@teachforamerica.org](mailto:Matt.Walker@teachforamerica.org).  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

## Higher Education

- **Bottom Line** is a program that provides one-on-one guidance to help low-income, first-generation students get into and graduate from college. A well-conducted RCT focusing on the classes of 2015 and 2016 showed that students offered Bottom Line advising were 6 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in college, and 9 percentage points more likely to be enrolled at a 4-year college, at the three-year follow-up. Bottom Line students also attended institutions with higher mean graduation rates and lower cohort default rates. Bottom Line currently operates in Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; and New York, New York. You can contact Steve Colon, Executive Director, at [scolon@bottomline.org](mailto:scolon@bottomline.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*
- The **City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs** (CUNY ASAP) is a comprehensive community college program that provides academic, personal, and financial support to low-income college students who need remedial education, with the goal of increasing college graduation rates. **A well-conducted RCT** found that ASAP increased college graduation rates by 10 percentage points at six-year follow-up. **MDRC and CUNY are leading a project** to implement and evaluate ASAP in three community colleges in Ohio (see brief RFA-produced video about the ASAP model [here](#)). Preliminary two-year results from **a well-conducted RCT** show that the Ohio programs boosted semester-to-semester persistence and credit accumulation and more than doubled the graduation rate. Longer-term follow-up is ongoing and will confirm whether these impacts are sustained over time. CUNY ASAP currently operates in New York City and has expanded to sites in Ohio and California. You can contact Donna Linderman, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, CUNY, at [Donna.Linderman@cuny.edu](mailto:Donna.Linderman@cuny.edu) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*

- H&R Block College Financial Aid Application Assistance** program provided streamlined personal assistance in completing the FAFSA to customers at their tax preparation offices who were low or moderate income and had a family member at or near college age without a bachelor's degree. A large, **multi-site RCT** found a sizable increase in college attendance and persistence over the 3½–4 years following the program – e.g., 29% greater likelihood of attending college for two consecutive years. The program cost approximately \$97 per program participant, in 2017 dollars. It also increased federal financial aid payments by an average of \$402 per participant, as described.

**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*
- Learning Accounts** is a program in New Brunswick, Canada that provides up to approximately \$8,000 in conditional financial aid for postsecondary education to low-income tenth grade students (i.e., students with a family income below the provincial median). The aid does not have to be re-paid provided the student is accepted into a recognized postsecondary program. A well-conducted, multisite RCT found that the students offered Learning accounts were 6.5 percentage points more likely to obtain a high school diploma or GED and 7.1 percentage points more likely to obtain a postsecondary degree at the five and a half year follow-up.

**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*

## Workforce Development

**Sector-Based Strategies** combine skills training and job supports focused on specific, high-demand industries:

- Per Scholas** provides employment and training to low-income workers focused on the information technology sector. **Two well-conducted RCTs** found that Per Scholas increased average earnings by nearly 30%, or \$4,000–\$5,000, two to three years after random assignment. Per Scholas currently operates in **Georgia, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Ohio**, and **Texas**. You can contact Priya Ramanathan, Senior Director of National Expansion, Per Scholas, at [pramanathan@perscholas.org](mailto:pramanathan@perscholas.org), for more information.

**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*
- Project Quest** offers tuition subsidies and support to low-income San Antonio residents for pursuing high-demand community college degrees. **A well-conducted RCT** found that Project Quest increased average earnings by \$5,000 per year, nine years after random assignment. You can contact Project Quest at (210) 630-4690 or [email here](#) for more information.

**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

**Job Search Assistance and Re-employment Services** are some of the main activities offered in **American Job Centers** (AJCs) in at least 40 states. AJCs are funded by DOL and help job seekers connect with resume writing, interviewing skills, job training and job opportunities.

- **Nevada's Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment** (REA) is a mandatory program for Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants, which provides an in-person review of their UI eligibility, and personalized reemployment services (e.g., job search assistance). Participants were required to receive regular REA services plus additional services, including a reemployment plan, job search assistance, and job training. [A well-conducted RCT](#) found that REA increased earnings by \$2,988 per claimant, increased the employment rate by four percentage points, and generated net savings to the UI system of \$765 per claimant 18 to 26 months after random assignment.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

**Transitional Jobs and Subsidized Wages** help to employ individuals who may not be able to find employment on their own. Many [transitional jobs](#) result in short-term reduced-recidivism and increased earnings for participants because of jobs and wages that are provided during the programs. However, longer-term employment outcomes are rare.

- The **Center for Employment Opportunities** (CEO) offers a life skills course, followed by placement into a transitional job and post-placement services at a cost of \$4,800 per participant. CEO increased employment by 24.5 percentage points in the first year; however, this effect faded out within a year after study entry according to [MDRC's 2012 RCT](#). The program did produce suggestive effects on recidivism outcomes during the three years after study entry, such as a 7 percentage-point reduction in reincarceration rates. CEO currently operates in California, Colorado, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. You can contact Pam Lachman CEO's Director of Strategic State Initiatives, at [plachman@ceoworks.org](mailto:plachman@ceoworks.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*
- **Goodwill's Transitions San Francisco** offers an assessment, two weeks of job-readiness training, and placement into subsidized jobs, costing about \$8,460 per participant. [A well-conducted RCT](#) found that Goodwill's Transitions program increased earnings by \$2,160 in the last year of a 45-month follow-up. You can contact Goodwill's San Francisco's office at 415-575-2100 or [email here](#) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*

**Youth Programs** combine academic and technical skills training, and more intensive models generally have more significant impacts.

- **Career Academies** are small learning communities in low-income high schools, combining academic and technical/ career curricula, and offering workplace opportunities through partnership with local employers. [A well-conducted, multi-site RCT](#) found that Career Academies increased average earnings by \$2,555 per year, sustained over the eight years following a participant's scheduled high school graduation. You can contact the [National Career Academy Coalition](#) at 872-356-6222 or [email here](#) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*

- **Year Up** is a full-time, year-long workforce-training program for economically disadvantaged young adults that focuses on economic sectors with jobs in high demand—namely, information technology and financial services, at a cost of \$28,290 per participant. **A well-conducted RCT** found that Year Up increased annual earnings by \$7,011 in the third year after random assignment; longer-term follow-up is ongoing to determine whether these large earning gains endure over time. You can contact Shawn Jacqueline Bohlen, Chief Transformative Impact Officer at Year Up, at [sbohen@yearup.org](mailto:sbohen@yearup.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*
- **Urban Alliance** provides high-school seniors with paid internships in office settings, power/soft and hard skills job training, and coaching and mentoring at a cost of \$10,000–12,500 per participant. **A well-conducted RCT** found that Urban Alliance did not produce significant effects on key measures of educational attainment, employment, or earnings for the full sample of students. The study did find positive effects for certain subgroups, including for males (who had increased probability of high school graduation and college attendance) and for students with a middle Grade Point Average (who were more likely to attend four-year colleges). However, limitations in this study's design render the evidence preliminary in nature and in need of confirmation in more rigorous evaluations. You can contact Eshauna Smith, CEO of Urban Alliance, at [esmith@theurbanalliance.org](mailto:esmith@theurbanalliance.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*

## Health and Human Services

- The **Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Program**, sponsored by the Children's Aid Society, is a comprehensive youth development program for economically disadvantaged teens, a key component of which is reproductive health care. **A well-conducted, multi-site RCT** found, for girls, 40%–50% reductions in pregnancies and births three years after random assignment (at average age 17). For boys, no effect was found on causing a pregnancy. Evidence of effects on high school completion and college enrollment are promising, but not yet rigorously demonstrated due to study limitations. Carrera currently operates in Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*
- **Teen Options to Prevent Pregnancy** (TOPP) is an 18-month program for low-income adolescent mothers, delivered by nurse educators and a social worker, which aims to reduce rapid repeat pregnancy and promote healthy birth spacing. A well-conducted RCT found, for the full sample, that the program reduced the rate of repeat pregnancy during the 20 months after random assignment by about half (21% of the treatment group became pregnant versus 39% of the control group). Based on state birth records obtained for the subsample of mothers ages 18 or 19 at the start of the study, the program reduced the rate of new births during the 30 months after random assignment by about one-third (24% of the treatment group gave birth versus 36% for the control group).  
**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

- **Soccer For Success** is a sports-based youth development program that serves children in grades K to 8 in underserved, urban communities. The program uses soccer to combat obesity, promote healthy eating and exercise habits, and foster positive youth development. A quasi-experimental evaluation **found** that program participants showed greater improvement towards healthy body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference categories than participants in other similar programs. However, limitations in the study's design render the evidence preliminary in nature, and in need of confirmation in more rigorous evaluations. More than **150 organizations run 1,700+ Soccer for Success sites** across the country. You can contact Patricia Arty, Director of Strategic Partnerships, at [party@ussoccerfoundation.org](mailto:party@ussoccerfoundation.org) for more information.  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*
- **Roca** uses relationships, targeted life skills, education, and employment programming to support young men in developing the skills necessary to reduce violence and create positive behavioral changes. A joint 2013 quasi-experimental study by the Harvard Social Innovation Lab and the Massachusetts Department of Administration and Finance **found** that the rate of recidivism among the high-risk youth who participated in the Roca program between 2008 and 2012 was 33% less than that of similarly high-risk youth who had not participated in the Roca program. However, limitations in the study's design render the evidence preliminary in nature, and in need of confirmation in more rigorous evaluations. Roca operates in cities across Massachusetts and in Baltimore. For more information, contact Yotam Zeira, Director of Strategy and External Affairs, at [Yotam\\_Zeira@rocainc.com](mailto:Yotam_Zeira@rocainc.com).  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*
- **PACE Center for Girls** provides girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training, and advocacy. **An ongoing RCT** has found that PACE nearly doubles the likelihood of girls being on-track to graduate from high school after follow-up 12 to 18 months after random assignment, compared to girls who did not enroll in PACE (27% versus 14%). Longer-term follow-up is needed to determine whether these short-term effects ultimately lead to higher graduation rates. PACE serves young women in 21 centers throughout Florida. For more information, contact Mary Marx, President & CEO, at [Mary.Marx@pacecenter.org](mailto:Mary.Marx@pacecenter.org).  
**Evidence Rating:** *Preliminary Evidence*

## **Juvenile and Criminal Justice**

- **Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) Sexual Assault Resistance Program** is a sexual assault resistance program for first-year female university students. The Assess unit focuses on improving women's assessment of the risk of sexual assault by male acquaintances and developing strategies to minimize that risk. The Acknowledge unit focuses on overcoming emotional barriers to seeing the danger in situations that have turned coercive. The Act unit offers instruction about effective options for resistance and includes two hours of self-defense training. The Sexuality and Relationships unit provides information on sexual health, safer-sex practices, strategies for communicating about sex, and an opportunity for participants to explore their sexual attitudes, values, and desires. **A well-conducted RCT** found that EAAA led to a 50%

reduction in the incidence of rape during the 12 months after random assignment. The program is currently implemented at Stanford University, University of Iowa, and Florida Atlantic University, in close coordination with the [SARE Centre](#).

**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*

- [Parent Management Training – The Oregon Model](#) (PMTO) is a parent training program for recently-separated, single mothers with sons aged six to ten. [A well-conducted RCT](#) found that sons of women in the PMTO group had substantially fewer arrests over nine years (0.76 arrests per boy in the treatment group versus 1.34 per boy in the control group).

**Evidence Rating:** *Promising Evidence*

## Housing and Homelessness

- [Critical Time Intervention](#) (CTI) is a case management program to prevent recurrent homelessness in people with severe mental illness leaving shelters, hospitals, or other institutions. [Two well-conducted RCTs](#) found that CTI led to a 60% reduction in the likelihood of homelessness 18 months after random assignment.

**Evidence Rating:** *Strong Evidence*

## ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED, DATA-DRIVEN INITIATIVES

The following community-based organizations are actively engaging community residents in the development and achievement of local economic mobility goals and metrics. These may be especially good candidates for future study given their incorporation of evidence-based practices and/or use of data to improve program performance.

- [Birth through Eight Strategy for Tulsa](#) (BEST) is building a "continuum of care" to increase the supply of, and access to, evidence-based programs and other services that provide support for families and children from preconception through age eight in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Trained family advocates help parents and caregivers navigate a full range of services, and a cross-sector system is delivering real-time information to best serve families.
- [Get Ready Guilford Initiative](#) is attempting to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and improve individual and population-level outcomes for the approximately 55,000 children, prenatal to age eight, living in Guilford County, North Carolina, by expanding and integrating Nurse-Family Partnership, HealthySteps, and Family Connects interventions.
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- **Providence Talks** is an early childhood intervention that is currently helping develop children's vocabulary and oral language skills in Providence, Rhode Island. Participating families receive free access to a "word pedometer" and bi-weekly coaching from trained home visitors. Bloomberg Philanthropies and Results for America are currently working with local government leaders across the country who are interested in supporting this intervention in their cities. Providence Talks is also partnering with Brown University to design and implement a third-party evaluation of its short- and long-term impacts.
- **Strive Together's** 70 community partnerships across the country bring together a wide range of groups that are committed to student success, including families, teachers, businesses, civic organizations, nonprofits, and investors. These communities collect and share data annually on the progress they are making on at least six cradle-to-