



Evidence Frameworks

What is an evidence framework?

Evidence frameworks are a tool to categorize programs, policies, interventions, etc. on how much evidence exists to support their effectiveness. Frameworks can have definitions for different categories of evidence to place programs or policies along a continuum.

When to use evidence frameworks?

Evidence frameworks are often employed during budget development or contract and grant award processes to ensure that funds are directed to programs, policies, interventions, etc. that achieve important outcomes. RFA's [Moneyball for Workforce Development Report](#) provides additional recommendations for how evidence frameworks can be used:

- Define and identify evidence of effectiveness for programs, policies, interventions, etc.
- Fund and expand evidence-based interventions, and allocate additional funds to rigorously evaluate newer approaches to develop and strengthen more evidence of what works.
- Enhance contracting and grantmaking by linking funds to desired workforce outcomes.
- Allow longer contract performance periods to demonstrate program evidence.
- Increase the comprehensiveness of data collection portals, including streamlined integration with other relevant systems and development of longitudinal data systems.

What does an evidence framework look like?

Evidence frameworks often feature a tiered system reflective of the rigor, quantity, and outcomes of an evaluation. For example:

- **High Evidence** – Refers to interventions shown in well-conducted experimental studies, such as randomized control trials, 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 experimental studies conducted in different implementation sites, or, alternatively, in one large multi-site experimental study.
- **Moderate Evidence** – Refers to interventions that have been evaluated in at least one experimental study, such as randomized controlled trials, or a rigorous quasi-experimental study capable of drawing causal conclusions about the intervention's effectiveness, and found to produce positive effects on important outcomes that are sizable, but not yet conclusive.
- **Low Evidence** – Refers to interventions that have demonstrated positive effects on important outcomes or have the potential to do so based on a reasonable hypothesis and credible

research findings, such as correlational studies with statistical controls for selection bias or descriptive research such as case studies.

For more information on experimental and quasi-experimental studies, please see the DOL's [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research](#) (CLEAR) [Causal Evidence Guidelines](#).

Examples from RFA's State and Local Fellowship Participants:

Spotlight on Colorado/Pennsylvania:

- The Colorado Workforce Development Council uses their [evidence continuum](#) as part of grant scoring, including awarding \$2.25 million to evidence-based strategies through their [Reskilling, Upskilling, and Next-skilling Workers \(RUN\)](#) grant.
- Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry used their [evidence continuum](#) as part of the award process for their \$4 million [Pennsylvania Industry Partnership Grants](#) in August 2021. Applicants were evaluated, in part, by 1) data collection and performance outcomes and 2) evidence building and effectiveness.

| Level of Evidence | Criteria Adopted by Colorado & Pennsylvania Fellowship Teams |
|--------------------------|--|
| High | At least two approved evaluations must find the strategy or intervention produces consistently positive findings in at least one priority workforce outcome. |
| Moderate | At least one evaluation report has demonstrated that an intervention or strategy has been tested using an approved study design showing evidence of effectiveness on at least one key workforce outcome. |
| Low | <i>Pre-preliminary evidence:</i> There is program performance data showing improvements for one or more key workforce outputs or outcomes. |

Spotlight on Texas:

- The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) began using their [Evidence Framework](#), which includes five tiers, to prioritize evidence of effectiveness when awarding \$1.5 million in training grants for the [2020 Building and Construction Trades program](#). TWC provided up to 10 bonus points out of 110 to applicants based on the causal evidence supporting each application, and up to 15% of each grant was attached to specified outcomes, including participation completion, receipt of industry-based certification, and employment. TWC has continued to leverage this framework across other grant programs including the [Texas Talent Connection program](#), [Perkins Equitable Access and Opportunity Program](#), and additional rounds of [Building and Construction Trades grants](#). Further resources from TWC, including training webinars, about evidence-based grantmaking can be found [here](#).

| Evidence Tiers | Criteria Adopted by Texas Fellowship Team |
|---------------------------|---|
| High Evidence Program | At least two rigorous studies must show that the program produces positive and meaningful outcomes, with a high degree of confidence that the outcome is primarily caused by the program. |
| Moderate Evidence Program | Program must be supported by an approved rigorous evaluation which finds that the program has a positive and meaningful outcome, with a modest degree of confidence that the outcome is primarily caused by the program. |
| Performance Program | Program must provide historical output and outcome data for at least two years, along with assessments and post-program follow-up to demonstrate effectiveness. |
| Experience Program | Programs do not perform evaluations of participant success or collect data on the effectiveness of the program. Support for program effectiveness comes from anecdotal success stories or other testimonials. |
| New Program | Entirely new programs with no evidence of effectiveness or evaluation data. Applicants must explain why the program will achieve positive measurable outcomes and that there is sufficient capacity to collect data and track outcomes. |

Other Evidence Framework Examples:

- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) - [Program Regulations](#) (p. 9-10)
- Corporation for National and Community Service - [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#) (p. 13-16)
- U.S. Department of Education - [Education Innovation Research \(EIR\)](#)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 - [Evidence Definitions](#) (p. 7-12)