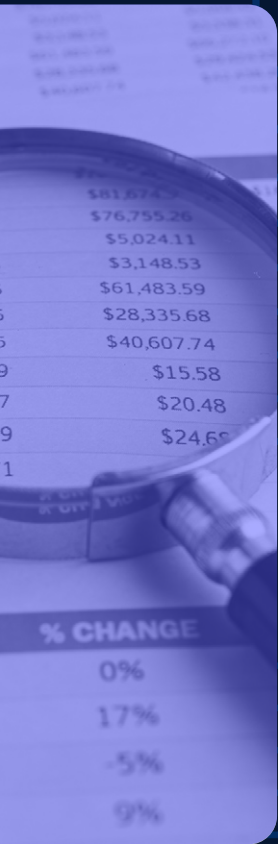


County Evidence-Based Budgeting Guide

5 Actions for Investing in What Works



Introduction

Our nation’s county governments invest more than \$743 billion each year to help improve economic mobility for their residents.¹ The decisions of county governments in particular impact the day-to-day quality of life of residents by managing services in the areas of health care, housing, and criminal justice among others. And yet decision-makers can’t always prove that county spending decisions will produce the intended results. Budget leaders are increasingly being tasked with maximizing the impact of spending while balancing a shrinking budget. By investing in programs that are proven to deliver as intended, counties can deliver on the promise of moving their communities forward.

Results for America’s **County Evidence-Based Budgeting Guide** is designed to help county government leaders — including county chief financial officers, budget directors, commissioners, managers, and other county leadership — define and prioritize evidence in their budgeting systems in order to make investing in what works their “new normal.” By providing evidence that government programs are delivering, county leaders can build trust with residents and demonstrate that the government is effectively working to make lives better.



Have questions about evidence-based budgeting or need help implementing the action steps in this guide? Results for America — a national nonprofit — offers pro bono technical assistance to county government leaders. Email localgov@results4america.org to learn more.

We do this work confidentially, objectively, and independently. RFA has never applied for any government funds – nor have we ever requested or received any funds from government grantees.

Please let us know if your county government has taken any of the steps outlined below but are not featured in this document. We look forward to hearing from you!

¹US Census Bureau. (2021, November 22). 2022 Census of Governments. Census.gov. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/econ/gus/2022-governments.html>

County Evidence-Based Budgeting Action Steps

This Guide includes five actions county government leaders can use to create a budgeting system that prioritizes proven solutions. The result is county government spending that is more likely to improve economic mobility and well-being for residents.

Strategy	Action Steps	Illustrative Example
Clearly Define Evidence	1 Establish a definition of evidence	The county sets an organization-wide definition of “evidence-based” and “evidence-building” based on the State of Maryland’s definitions .
	2 Implement budget instructions and templates that collect evidence information	The county adds a default field for evidence into their budget submission template and informs all departments that preference will be given to budget requests for new or enhanced funding that demonstrate strong evidence of effectiveness. A sample scorecard is included and training is offered to all department fiscal and program managers.
Prioritize Evidence in County Budgeting	3 Establish guidelines, goals or targets for the use of evidence	Following a decision at a leadership retreat, the budget team is asked to ensure that at least 25% of budgeted funds for countywide priorities must meet the county’s evidence definition. Budget instructions and training materials are updated to include this target.
	4 Provide evidence indicators in public budget documents	All materials provided to the County Commission have an “EB” label (for evidence-based) next to the budget line.
	5 Report on budget decisions made for evidence-based interventions	After the budget passes, the budget office produces a supplement to the budget book that details the evidence-based investments the county has made in the coming year.

Clearly Define Evidence

For county government leaders to have a clear understanding of programs that are “evidence-based,” they must have a shared definition of evidence of effectiveness. Clearly defining “evidence” is therefore a key step towards including evidence standards in budgeting. In a broad sense, evidence of effectiveness refers to all the studies, evaluations, analyses and other structured data showing how successfully a program or policy worked toward advancing or achieving its goals.



Why it matters: By determining what counts as evidence, county government leaders can more effectively invest in proven solutions and better justify spending. Elected leaders can consider the merits of proposals in relation to those standards.

Action Step

1



Establish a definition of evidence.

The first step is to define the terms, specifically “evidence” or “evidence-based.” This is important to establish a common language and set expectations around the use of evidence in decision-making processes.

A robust evidence definition should include criteria for the quality of evidence, as well as for what the evidence must show, including:

- Details about what types of studies will be considered that meet specified quality benchmarks, such as randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental studies, qualitative data, or even structured integration of those with lived experience.²
- Details that quantify or qualify improvements to outcomes, for example whether impacts have shown effectiveness with **similar populations or in similar settings**, and/or the size or duration of favorable impacts that is acceptable.

² For more specific definitions on these types of studies or more information, see [Results for America's Evaluation Policy Guide](#), specifically pages 70-71.

When a county sets out to establish its definition of evidence, a good place to start is to review how other governments define and use evidence. Results for America publishes a [complete list](#) of local, state and federal government evidence definitions. A few examples are also included in this guide to help you craft your own definition. Although only a couple of local governments have defined evidence, nine states have defined evidence of effectiveness in their state budgeting systems.

Results for America has also developed a [model definition](#) that can serve as a useful starting point for creating a county-specific definition.

Results for America defines an evidence-based program as “a program with either impact evidence or implementation evidence that is relevant and credible and has an informed rationale.”

- **Impact evidence** refers to data or other information that proves in similar contexts and for similar populations, whether changes in the lives of participants can be directly attributed to the program, often using experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
 - For example, there are a range of evidence-based supports for [expecting parents and families with young children](#), such as home visiting programs that aim to increase access to health care for a mother and baby, and to provide information and resources on supporting healthy early child development. Multiple rigorous [evaluations](#) find strong evidence of a range of positive health and well-being outcomes for mothers and children who participate in these programs.
- **Implementation evidence** is information in similar contexts and for similar populations on how a program is being deployed and whether it is being delivered as intended. This doesn't necessarily speak to the effectiveness of the program, but rather answers questions such as how well the program has been implemented, barriers that have been experienced during implementation, who the program has served, the cost of implementing and who values the program.
 - For instance, [enVisionMATH](#), is a core curriculum for students in kindergarten through sixth grade that seeks to help students develop an understanding of math concepts through problem-based instruction, small-group interaction, and visual learning. This program does not yet have qualifying impact evidence, but [implementation evidence](#) has been compiled for use by practitioners.

“In Similar Contexts and for Similar Populations”

Results for America encourages policymakers to consider their community’s unique needs and diverse populations when using evidence to make decisions. Practically speaking, this means that instead of simply choosing from a predefined list of studies, government policymakers should consider whether there is relevant, credible evidence that relates to their specific challenges. This can be accomplished by requiring relevant evidence “in similar contexts and for similar populations” which encourages leaders to ask key questions, such as whether existing studies apply to their population, how current and relevant the evidence is, and if the research was conducted in similar settings.

Results for America’s [Evaluation Policy Guide](#) (pages 14-15) also provides potential review questions to help assess whether existing definitions align with current best practices.

Examples



[Dane County, Wisconsin’s Department of Human Services’ Youth Justice and Prevention Program](#) adopted the [National Institute of Corrections’](#) evidence definition to guide its programs. “Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the objective, balanced, and responsible use of current research and the best available data to guide policy and practice decisions, such that outcomes for consumers are improved. Used originally in the health care and social science fields, evidence-based practice focuses on approaches demonstrated to be effective through empirical research rather than through anecdote or professional experience alone. An evidence-based approach involves an ongoing, critical review of research literature to determine what information is credible, and what policies and practices would be most effective given the best available evidence. It also involves rigorous quality assurance and evaluation to ensure that evidence-based practices are replicated with fidelity, and that new practices are evaluated to determine their effectiveness.”



[Multnomah County, Oregon’s Department of Community Justice](#) adopted the following definition: “An evidence-based practice is a strategy, curriculum, or approach that has been shown to be effective at achieving its intended outcomes using extensive scientific research and evaluation. Evidence-based practices in corrections are those that have been shown to reduce recidivism or improve other outcomes for justice involved youth and adults.”



The State of Maryland defines “[evidence-based](#)” as meaning that there is evidence from an experimental or quasi-experimental study that a key program component has been effective in improving a relevant outcome with similar populations or in similar settings.



The Tennessee Office of Evidence and Impact uses an [evidence framework](#) to standardize language and classify programs based on the level of evidence supporting the program. Their state guide provides a five-tier structure that begins with each program having a “logic model, or a theory of action, that guides its operation. Outputs are process measures, while outcomes communicate impact on participants or systems over time. The evidence and strong evidence steps indicate that the program is supported by at least one rigorous evaluation.”





Supplemental Strategy: Building Evidence Through Program Evaluations

Defining and prioritizing “evidence-based” programs is not enough. Evidence-building – through impact evaluations and implementation evaluations – is a critical step in bridging the gap between the body of evidence that is currently available and the body of evidence that will enable government and community leaders to thoroughly understand what works, for whom, and under what circumstances.

Alongside defining “evidence-based programs,” Results for America recommends defining and prioritizing programs focused on “building evidence”. Results for America has developed a [model definition](#) that can serve as a useful starting point for creating a county-specific definition.

“Evidence-building program” means a program that has an informed rationale and is undergoing an impact evaluation or implementation evaluation that is relevant and credible.

Results for America recommends governments set aside at least 1% of their overall programmatic budgets to support ongoing evaluation and encourage decision-makers to require departments to report on their evaluation plans, including the percentage of discretionary funding being used for evaluations or the number of programs that will be evaluated.

Why it matters: For existing programs, building evidence helps determine program efficacy and gives decision-makers data to evaluate future investments.

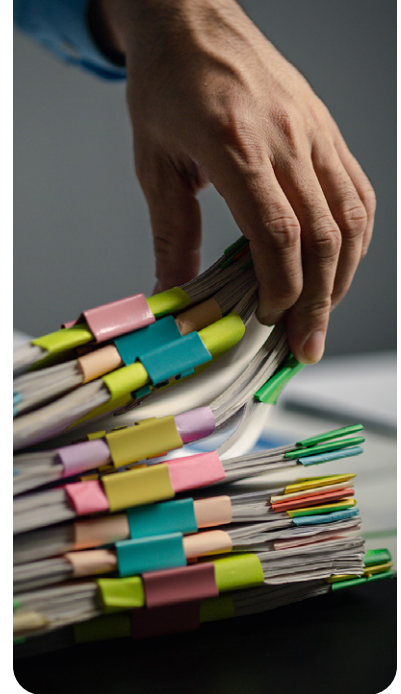


King County, Washington has a separate levy for their [Best Starts for Kids](#) program that has, as outlined in [Ordinance 18088](#), a 5% set aside for data and evaluation. (See Section 5.C.4 of the ordinance.)

To learn more about defining evidence-building, setting up a comprehensive evaluation policy and strategies for integrating evaluation results into budget, policy and management decisions, see [Results for America’s Evaluation Policy Guide](#).

Prioritize the Use of Evidence in County Budgeting

While there are a wide variety of approaches to county budgeting in use across the nation, all of them can be enhanced through the use of evidence.³ Once a definition of evidence has been established, it can be used to focus funding decisions on evidence-based programs. To formalize the use of information relevant for improving outcomes in the budgeting process, **counties must incorporate evidence into their budget development and reporting processes**, which requires training and educating county staff involved in the budget process as well as decision makers that will be reviewing information.



Why it matters: Prioritizing or requiring evidence in the budgeting process will help county policymakers choose the highest value budget requests, sets a standard by which to judge program effectiveness, and increases the likelihood that the program will achieve its goals and improve outcomes. This is particularly important in times of fiscal constraint.

Action Steps

2



Implement budget instructions and templates that collect evidence information.

Standardized budget templates and instructions set requirements and expectations for budget proposals. Therefore, a key step in embedding evidence of effectiveness into the budget process involves county government leaders introducing it into their budget request templates and instructions and clearly communicating this shift to departments. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Including the county’s definition of “evidence” and relevant guidance in department budget instructions.
- Adding a default field for relevant evidence into budget submission templates, including space for links to, or examples from, supportive studies, reports or evaluations.

³ For example, line-item budgeting, program-based budgeting, capital budgeting, performance budgeting, budgeting for outcomes, priority-based budgeting, and zero-base budgeting, among others.

- Providing a space to connect evidence of effectiveness to the county's strategic priorities and the outcome they hope to achieve.
- Adopting criteria that will be used countywide to evaluate budget proposals, including points assigned to programs that demonstrate evidence of effectiveness.

Using a Default Evidence Field in Budget Submission Templates

This is an example of the evidence field from a request for additional funding for youth violence intervention program. Standardizing the inclusion of an evidence field in budget submission templates helps create a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

COUNTY STRATEGIES: Please indicate which of the goals from the county's strategic plan this program will support by checking the relevant box below

- Public Safety
- Economic Growth
- Climate Resiliency
- Support Vulnerable Populations
- Government Effectiveness

OUTCOMES: Please indicate specific target outcomes that this spending will address; inserting output indicators is not sufficient. For each target outcome, please include a specific metric from the county's data that can be used to monitor progress towards achieving the desired outcomes.

Improving academic achievement among disadvantaged youth

- Metric: Improvement in attendance of served students
- Metric: Increase in high school graduation rates of served youth
- Metric: Improvement in achievement test scores of served youth

Reducing violence among disadvantaged youth

- Metric: Reduction of gun violence involvement among served youth
- Metric: Reduction of violent crime involvement among served youth

EVIDENCE: Please cite specific studies, evidence summaries, or clearinghouses that demonstrate that the proposed model has strong evidence of effectiveness as defined by our county. Popular press articles and performance metrics are not sufficient.

A 2018 evaluation assessed whether providing non-academic support to youth through the Building a Man (BAM) program can reduce youth violence and improve schooling outcomes for disadvantaged students. A series of randomized control trials found that, on a whole, the program is likely to have positive impacts for youth. These effects vary across samples and are sometimes sensitive to exactly how researchers aggregate information across studies. Youth who participated in BAM showed modest improvements in school engagement. Additionally, participating in BAM reduced involvement in violent crime by 19% to 35% compared with the control group.

SOURCES: Please provide specific links to the relevant supporting documentation and note any context on how the materials relate to the county's intended outcome goals.

[Preventing Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Youth Guidance's Becoming a Man Program](#): This is the structured evaluation that outlines the evidence behind our proposed strategy.

[Results for America Economic Mobility Catalog](#): This outlines how mentorship programs can be implemented effectively to deliver on the county's goals.

[Scaling Promising Practices in Youth Mentoring: Case Study from Results for America](#): A case study of one local government's successful implementation of this strategy with a focus on how to implement the model with fidelity.

It is also important for budget offices to train both fiscal and programmatic staff about the definition of evidence, how to source examples of evidence, and how it will be used in the budget process a few months before the budget instructions are released. This lays the groundwork for new concepts well in advance of the rush that comes with departmental budget submission deadlines. It also allows you to highlight places for departments to draw from for evidence such as Results for America's [Economic Mobility Catalog](#) (a more complete list can be found in [Appendix B](#)). In the event that some agencies already have definitions for existing funding streams, hosting trainings on new evidence definitions is also helpful to standardize the adopted definition across the organization. Training departments in

advance of the budget kickoff should surface any issues and give the budget team time to refine the budget instructions.

Embedding evidence into the budget instructions is becoming more common at the state level, which can provide useful models for county governments. Ten states have implemented this approach — [New Mexico](#), for example, is a leader in defining and prioritizing evidence in the budgeting process. A full list of states can be seen in [Appendix A](#).

Examples



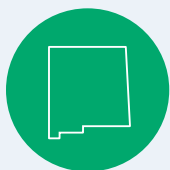
When deciding how to direct its American Rescue Plan Act funds, [Harris County, Texas required](#) that each proposed use demonstrate several characteristics, including whether the proposal was for the “Right Program,” which ensured that projects (a) use evidence-based approaches, (b) implement robust program evaluation, (c) are supported by the right resourcing, and (d) operate at the right scale.



In Santa Barbara County California, any new or expanded General Fund requests are given priority if the request is backed by evidence-based research demonstrating its effectiveness. This policy was adopted by the Board of Supervisors and is incorporated into the county’s budget book ([see page 490](#)).



The Data, Research and Accountability Department of the Wake County Public School System in North Carolina requires divisions proposing new or expanded programs to complete a “[Budget Case Addendum](#).” This form asks users to provide research evidence demonstrating that the proposed strategies will effectively address the identified need.



Each year, the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) issues budget instructions that provide [guidance](#) for state agencies for budget expansions and evidence-based programs as promulgated by the LFC’s [Legislating for Results framework](#).



Supplemental Strategy: Defining Problems and Inventorying Programs

When implementing evidence-based budgeting, there are some foundational practices that are important to have in place for county departments or agencies to successfully meet any organizational commitment to prioritizing evidence through a budgeting process:

Foundational Practice 1: Defining the Problem, Need and/or Desired Outcome

To assess a program's effectiveness, departments must first identify 1) the problem or need they want to address and 2) the desired outcome they want to achieve. This is a great opportunity to revisit countywide and/or department-specific strategic plans. Budget officers can incentivize this practice by adding a problem field and a desired outcomes field into program budget submission forms. Departments can then be asked to demonstrate how the evidence they have identified addresses the problem/need to achieve the desired outcome. Many of the resources in [Appendix B](#) list evidence-based programs by outcome (e.g., [RFA's Economic Mobility Catalog](#)).

Foundational Practice 2: Inventorying Programs

Requesting evidence be included in budget submission forms might require a department to present information at a program level. A "program" is an activity, strategy, intervention or practice that has defined core features, and evidence is often available at the program level rather than the division or function level that is typically used in county budgeting. For example, a Workforce Support division might have a veteran employment program as well as a re-entry employment program; the effectiveness of these programs likely would have been studied separately and therefore these programs may have varying levels of evidence supporting their effectiveness.

To effectively prioritize evidence, it is helpful to have a "program inventory," which is a complete list of the programs the government funds. Although this is not required countywide, departments often need to have at least a partial inventory of their programs to effectively incorporate evidence of a program's success into budget submission templates. Both the [National Association of Counties](#) and the [Pew Charitable Trusts' Results First initiative](#) have a set of steps useful for conducting a program inventory

Because many state and federal grants require using evidence as a basis for funding decisions, county departments may already have examples of evidence-based business cases that can serve as a grounding for an inventory. Identifying these programs and collecting the documentation can be a way to jump-start this approach.



3



Establish guidelines, goals or targets for the use of evidence.

County government leaders can ensure budgets support evidence-based programs by establishing guidelines, goals, or targets for funding for programs supported by evidence. Guidelines or targets can be set countywide or for departments where evidence-based approaches are common. They can take different forms, such as a dollar amount (i.e., spending \$2 million on evidence-based programs next year), number of programs (i.e., funding 10 proposals that are evidence-based), or percentage of the budget (i.e., 50% of the budget funds evidence-based programs).

An initial step that counties can take towards establishing a guideline or target might be to require evidence for only a subset of programs. For example:

- **New investments or programs:** A county requiring an evidence base for all new investments and/or any programmatic enhancements that are 25% or more above baseline numbers.
- **Programs that are of high importance to the county:** A county requiring that half of all proposals from departments affected by the county’s community health plan be evidence-based.
- **Functions that are rich in evidence:** A county requiring that all investments in areas with a significant body of evidence (i.e., early childhood, workforce, education, justice and public safety) meet the county’s definition of evidence. [Results for America’s Economic Mobility Catalog](#) is a helpful resource, offering a collection of evidence-based strategies.
- **Reductions and cuts:** A county with reduced revenues or fiscal constraints requiring all reduction proposals to prioritize programs for which strong evidence does not exist. Although evidence will not be the only deciding factor in cuts, additional information about a program’s evidence of effectiveness can help decision-makers make difficult reduction decisions.⁴

⁴The Government Finance Officers Association discusses the power of limiting choice in budget decisions in their 2023 publication: Budget Officer as Decision Architect. <https://www.gfoa.org/materials/budget-officer-as-decision-architect>.



At the state level, an [Oregon law](#) defining evidence directs certain agencies, such as the Oregon Department of Corrections and the Oregon Youth Authority, to invest at least 75% of state funds in evidence-based programs, analyze costs and benefits, and compile a biennial program inventory with results from funded programs.





4



Provide evidence indicators in public budget documents.

Once evidence is integrated into the budgeting system, it’s important to bring attention to the data and incorporate it into legislative decision-making. Budget hearings provide a key opportunity to discuss evidence-based programs. Including effectiveness data in budget books and presentations helps focus attention on program rationale and centers discussions on what is shown to work with similar populations or in similar settings to achieve a county’s strategic priorities.

Counties should include evidence indicators in budget books, departmental presentations made in public hearings, and within public-facing data dashboards. A simple indicator to show a program has met that threshold can help ensure its inclusion in the final budget.

PROGRAM	EVIDENCE-BASED?
PROGRAM NAME #1	 YES
PROGRAM NAME #2	 NO
PROGRAM NAME #3	 NO
PROGRAM NAME #4	 YES

A recent study found that state legislators were 22% more likely to support a program with an "evidence-based" label than the same item without that tag.⁵

⁵ Xu, Chengxin, Yuan (Daniel) Cheng, Shuping Wang, Weston Merrick, and Patrick Carter. 2024. "Evaluating Use of Evidence in U.S. State Governments: A Conjoint Analysis."Public Administration Review 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13903>

For jurisdictions that use decision packages to highlight recommended budgetary changes, county leaders can require that those documents include any relevant evidence for outcomes the program is intended to deliver. This aligns with national best practice, memorializing the specific evidence used to make decisions in the budget document or website.

Examples



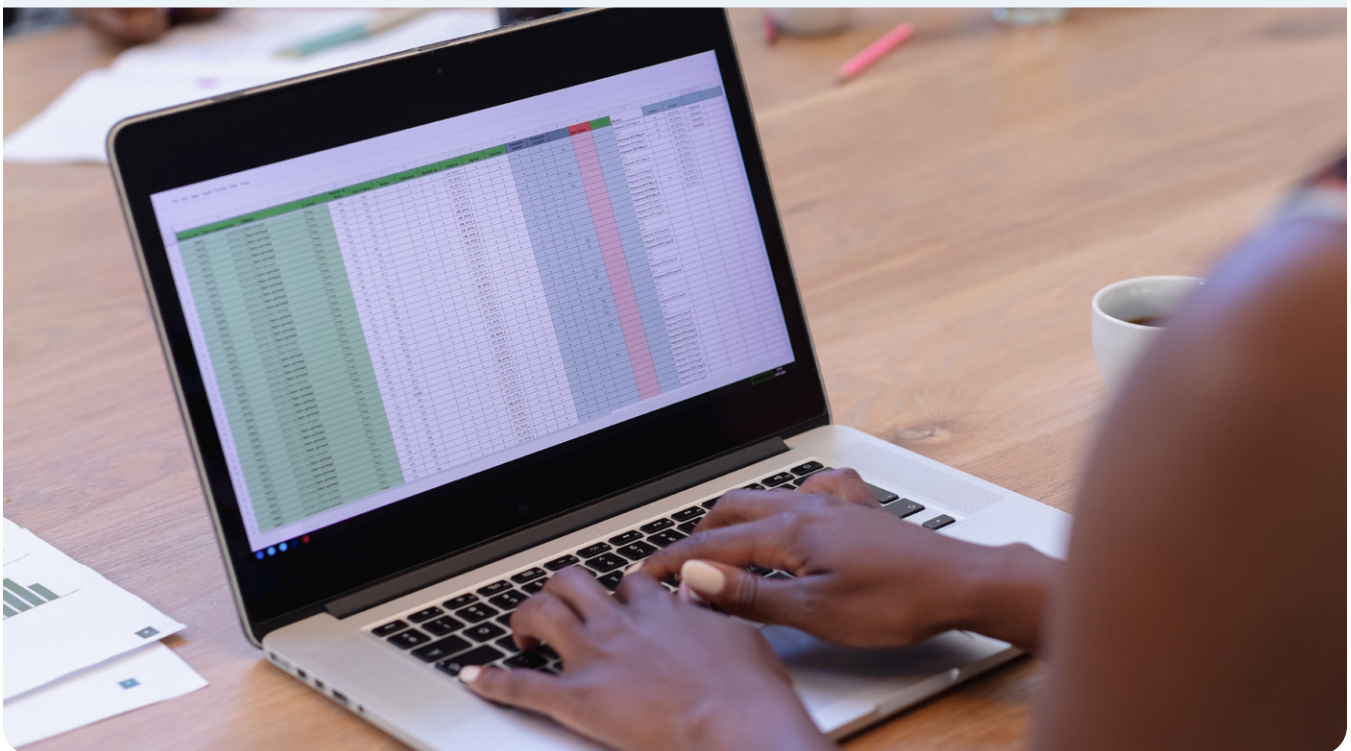
Baltimore County, Maryland included information about each program's evidence base in its [ARPA Recovery Plan Performance Report](#).



At the state level, Minnesota includes evidence indicators in the [Governor's Budget Recommendations](#). For example, the [employment and economic development budget recommendation](#) highlights two evidence-based practices that support a specific workforce program for which funding is recommended.



Similarly, in Colorado, the Governor's [2023-24 budget request](#) links to evidence summaries and plans to build evidence through evaluation, such as the [evidence](#) that supports the recommended universal pre-k program.



5



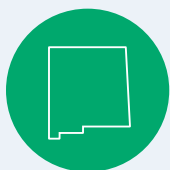
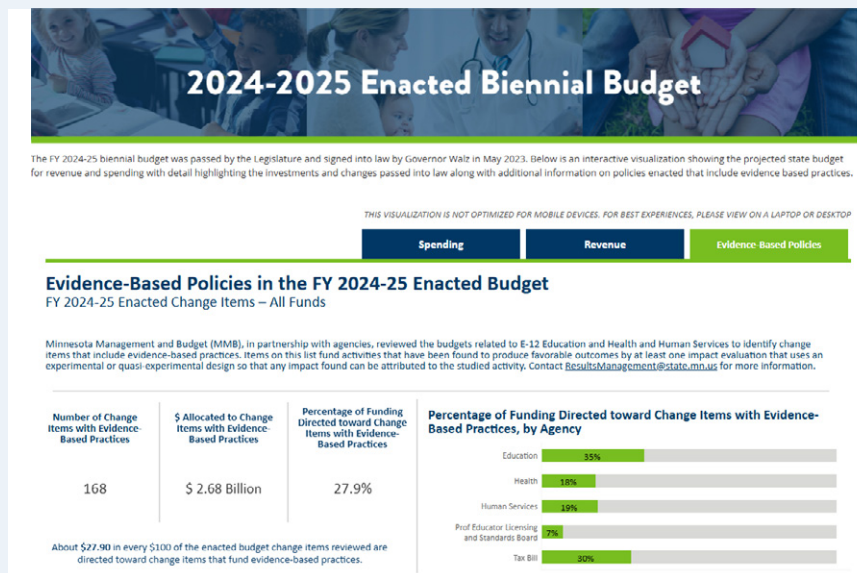
Report on budget decisions made for evidence-based interventions.

Once the budget has been adopted, county government leaders can communicate how evidence was used to make decisions through reports or other public documentation. A key element for earning and maintaining public trust is to make decisions using evidence and provide regular updates about program implementation, effectiveness and outcomes. Reporting the use of tax dollars towards programs known to work with similar populations or in similar settings, shows a county is investing limited taxpayer dollars in proven programs.⁶

Examples



Beginning in 2023, the Minnesota Management and Budget office began publishing an Evidence Based Policies tab on the [Current Enacted Biennial Budget dashboard](#) to summarize new evidence-based funding: \$2.68 billion for 168 new practices/programs, representing 27.9% of new proposals approved that year.



The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee publishes a [post session review](#) providing information on evidence-based items signed into law or vetoed. Budget guidelines provide additional information on consideration of evidence and outcome.

⁶The Government Finance Officers Association has a number of resources on how to convey budgeting data and budgeting books in effective ways for the public. One such guide includes their Fiscal Fluency guide which can be found at <https://www.gfoa.org/fiscalfluency>.

Putting it All Together: Evidence in County Budgets

The action steps above provide a solid foundation for including evidence in funding decisions, supporting data-driven decision-making and ensuring accountability for results.

County governments can benefit from implementing evidence-based budgeting, including improved outcomes for all constituents and better alignment with goals. Defining evidence and prioritizing its use in the budget process are the key strategies in implementing evidence-based budgeting.

Other benefits of using an evidence-based approach include promoting innovation and increasing resiliency. Once a team begins using evidence to design programs, an emphasis on the outcome becomes the norm, rather than “the way we’ve always done it.” Ongoing research and evaluation ensures programs continue to produce the desired results or point to the need for adaptation in the processes and techniques to meet changing community needs.

Results for America provides pro bono technical assistance to counties ready to start incorporating evidence in their budgeting processes. Email localgov@results4America.org to learn more.

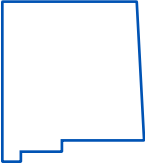




Additional Results for America Resources

Results for America has a number of resources to help county government leaders invest in the programs and policies most likely to improve lives in their communities. You can find them on [our website](#) and below:

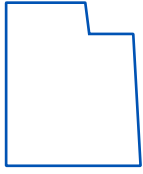
- [Evidence Definitions](#)
- [Catalog of Federal, State and Local Evidence Definitions](#)
- [Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence](#)
- [Education Evidence-Based Spending Guide](#)
- [Workforce Evidence-Based Spending Guide](#)
- [Evidence-Based Grantmaking Checklist](#)
- [Economic Mobility Catalog](#)
- [Evaluation Policy Guide](#)

Appendix A: Standard Budget Templates and Instructions from Leading States

State	Definitions
<p>Colorado</p> 	<p>Since 2016, the Colorado Governor’s Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSPB) has mandated evidence information in budget requests for the Governor’s annual proposal. OSPB provides annual guidance to state departments, stressing the use of data and evidence in the budget process, promoting transparency and informed decision-making. In 2024, the Colorado legislature modified the definitions and the process for incorporating evidence-based decision-making into budget decisions. The legislation allows the joint budget committee to consider a program’s evidence designation when determining the appropriate level of funding. It also requires agencies to participate in the evidence-based decision-making process, including investing in building evidence. State agencies can justify a program or practice evidence designation by providing a summary of the best available evidence, plans to evaluate the program or practice to build evidence regarding its effectiveness, and information about how the best available research evidence is connected to the budget request.</p>
<p>Maryland</p> 	<p>The fiscal year 2026 operating budget submission requirements, issued by the Maryland Department of Budget and Management, highly encourage agencies to submit evidence information as part of budget enhancement requests. To determine if a program is evidence-based, agencies can use an agency-sponsored evaluation, evidence-based research clearinghouse, or other select resources. MDBM specifies which clearinghouses meet or exceed Maryland’s definition of “evidence-based.”</p>
<p>Minnesota</p> 	<p>The Minnesota’s Governor Office and the Minnesota Department of Management and Budget (MMB) have directed agencies to include information about the evidence base for their budget proposals, a summary of evidence, citations, and amount to be spent on the activity. MMB provides a standard template and instructions for budget change requests for proposed increases, new one-time expenditures or substantial re-allocations or budget reductions. Previously a voluntary form, the Minnesota Management and Budget 2024-25 biennial budget instructions embeds a field for agencies to complete items they consider to be “evidence-based.”</p>

<p>New Mexico</p> 	<p>The 2019 Evidence and Research Based Funding Requests Act amended a 1999 law by defining four tiers of evidence and further requiring certain state agencies to “identify each sub-program as evidence-based, research-based, promising, or lacking evidence of effectiveness” and report on the amount allocated for each of these evidence tiers. Agencies are also required to report how they prioritized evidence- and research-based sub-programs within the budget request. Each year, the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) issues budget instructions that provide guidance for agencies for budget expansions and evidence-based programs as promulgated by the LFC’s Legislating for Results framework. See here for LFC’s instructions to agencies making significant expansion requests.</p>
<p>North Carolina</p> 	<p>The North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships in the Office of State Budget and Management develops budget instructions that request that proposals for new and expanded programs and services include evidence supporting the programs’ goals and outcomes. The instructions also emphasize proposals that align with the Governor’s strategic priorities, including advancing equity and diversity. See here for a budget justification form agencies use to describe and support each budget request.</p>
<p>Ohio</p> 	<p>Ohio’s Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Operating Budget Guidance initiated Results-Focused Budgeting which requires agencies requesting funds for new or expanding programs to provide additional information in their budget request to the Office of Budget and Management. To demonstrate a program’s effectiveness, each program provided a simple logic model, proposed output and outcome measures, and data for those measures for fiscal years (FYs) 2019-2025. If funds were requested for an evidence-based program, agencies were asked to provide a summary of the findings of the evidence, along with the study citation and, if applicable, the rating given by an evidence clearinghouse.</p>
<p>Tennessee</p> 	<p>The Tennessee Office of Evidence and Impact and the Budget Division within the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration have budget instructions that direct agencies to invest in programs and initiatives supported by evidence and research to improve results and return on investment. See here for a sample program cost increase request.</p>
<p>Rhode Island</p> 	<p>State law requires agencies to report on program evidence and performance when submitting budget requests to the Governor. Agencies are required to report on program evidence and performance when submitting budget requests, utilizing a tiered evidence scale (proven effective, promising, and theory-based).</p>

Utah



A [2021 Utah law](#) (updated in 2023) requires agencies to set at least one performance measure for passed and approved budget requests of more than \$500,000. The Utah Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst within the Utah State Legislature [specifies](#) that agencies should include performance notes — a statement of performance measures and information for legislation that creates or expands programs. These performance measures were reported to the [Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget](#) (GOPB) and to the [Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst](#) (LFA) within 60 days following the passage of the law. These include performance measures, the goals and impact of the new program or agency, benchmarks for measuring progress, and the performance measures that will be used to evaluate progress. Annually, agencies are required to report performance measures identified in the appropriations bills prior to October 1 to support preparation for the next budget cycle. Evidence of effectiveness is required through GOPB’s [budget request forms](#), with requests having to outline the “evidence-basis” for the associated program.

Appendix B: Additional Evidence Clearinghouses

There are a number of resources to help counties find proven approaches from other jurisdictions. Evidence clearinghouses contain rigorously evaluated information on the effectiveness of existing programs, helping local governments make evidence-based decisions. Some widely recognized clearinghouses for data related to local government programs include:

- [Results for America's Economic Mobility Catalog](#) — The Economic Mobility Catalog contains summaries of over 50 high-level strategies and nearly 200 specific practices and programs that have demonstrated positive results in rigorous evaluations. For every strategy, practice, and program, the Catalog synthesizes the relevant research, identifies best practices in implementation, and aggregates additional resources for users interested in learning more.
- [Results First Clearinghouse Database](#) — A database of nine clearinghouses that evaluate programs in various policy areas, including criminal justice, health, education, and workforce development, managed by Penn State's Social Science Research Institute and its [Evidence-to-Impact Collaborative](#).
- [What Works Clearinghouse](#) — Education programs and practices, provided by the U.S. Department of Education.
- [The Campbell Collaboration](#) — Reviews of evidence in social and behavioral sciences, covering areas such as crime, education, and social welfare. Run by the Campbell Collaboration.
- [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#) — Programs that promote positive youth development, managed by the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado Boulder.
- [Social Programs That Work](#) — Social programs in health, justice, and other disciplines with evidence of effectiveness. A project of the Arnold Ventures Evidence-Based Policy team.
- [National Institute of Justice - Crime Solutions](#) — Criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services programs. Managed by the National Institute of Justice.
- [The Community Guide](#) — Evidence-based interventions in public health, collected by the Community Preventive Services Task Force, a program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- [Child Trends' What Works Database](#) — Programs and policies affecting children and youth developed by Child Trends.

- [Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy](#) – Studies on policing strategies and tactics from George Mason University.
- [Center for Evidence-Based Practices](#) – Social programs focusing on health and human services collected by Case Western University.
- [Evidence-Based Prevention and Implementation Support \(EPIS\)](#) – A collection of prevention focused studies for health and families created by PennState.

These and other clearinghouses provide studies that local governments can use to evaluate and implement effective programs.



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