Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

Best Practices in Demonstrating Evidence

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Topics

- CNCS approach to evidence
- Overview of basic evaluation concepts
- Overview of NOFO evidence tiers
- Q&A

CNCS Approach – Federal Context

Presidential Administrations	Federal Guidance
President Clinton (1993 – 2001)	Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA)
President Bush (2001 – 2009)	Program Assessment Rating Tool

President Obama
(2009 – 2017)
	• GPRA Modernization Act of 2010
	• Office of Management and Budget Memoranda
	  • M-10 -01 Increased Emphasis on Program Evaluation
	  • M-12-14 Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget
	  • M-13-17 Next Steps in the Evidence and Innovation Agenda
	  • M-14-07 Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Guidance, Evidence and Evaluation

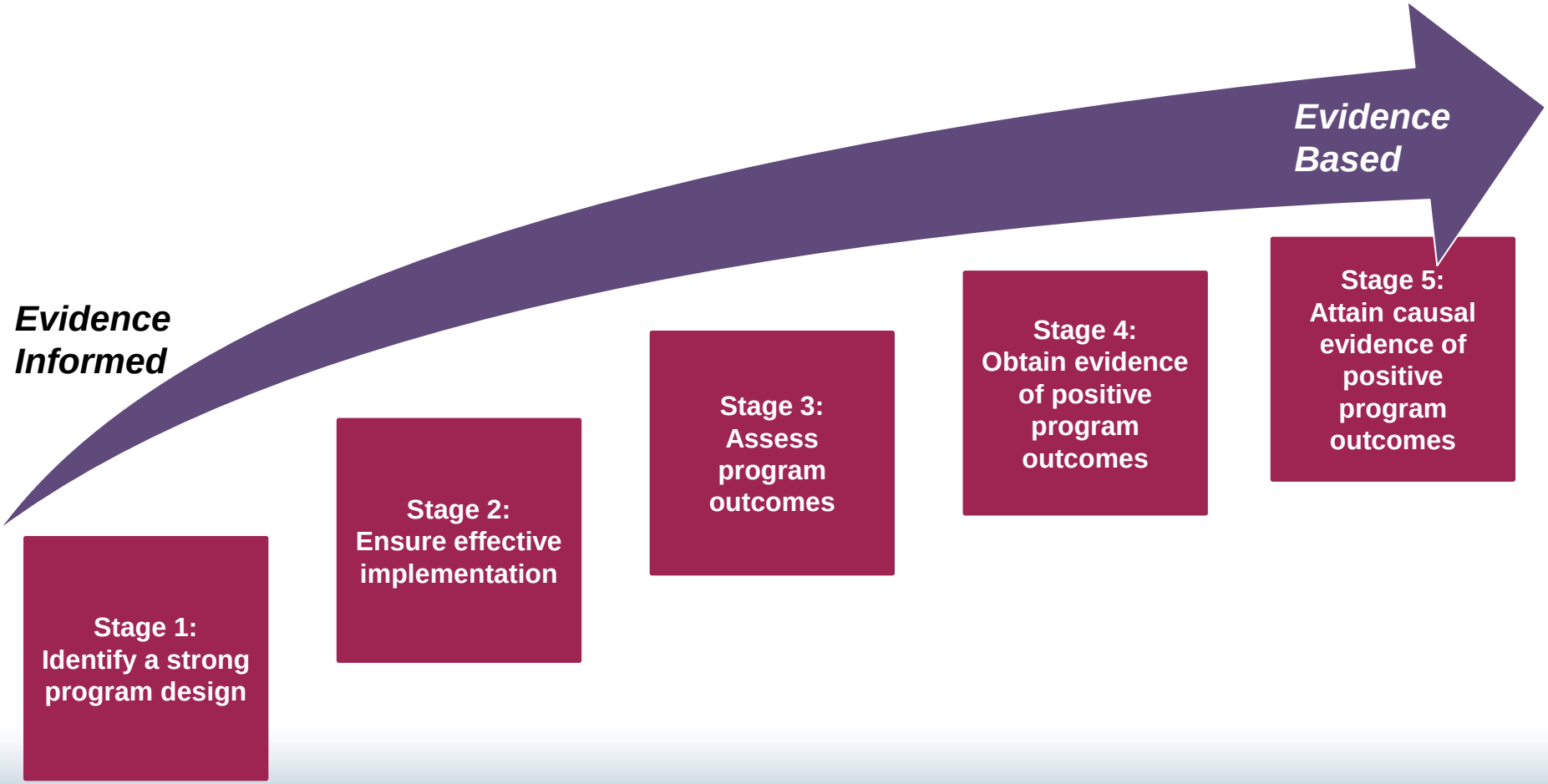
Federal Evidence Initiatives

- Tiered Evidence Initiatives
  - Build evidence at all levels
  - Direct more resources to initiatives with strong evidence
  - Study and scale the most promising program models
  - CNCS Social Innovation Fund, Department of Education Investing in Innovation Fund (i3)
- Pay for Success
  - Federal funds invested only after programs demonstrate results
- Evidence Clearinghouses
  - Repositories of evidence on existing program models
  - CNCS Evidence Exchange, Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse, Department of Labor CLEAR

Why is Evidence Important?

- To test whether programs are effective, and what makes them effective
- To ensure that federal dollars are invested wisely
- To inform continuous improvement of programs
  - Change what isn't working
  - Do more of what is working

Building evidence of effectiveness



2016 NOFO

- Applicants should determine the highest evidence tier for which they are eligible and describe their evidence clearly, completely, and accurately

Don't Panic! 2015 CNCS Direct Grantee Levels of Evidence

Level of Evidence	Percent
Strong	7%
Moderate	12%
Preliminary	52%
Pre-Preliminary	19%
No Evidence	10%
Total	100%

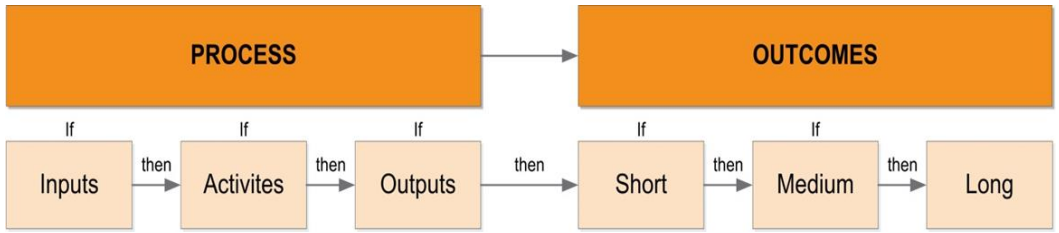
2015 CNCS Staff Reviewed vs. Funded

Level of Evidence	Staff Review	Funded	Percent (Funded/Staff Review)
Strong	8	8	100%
Moderate	14	14	100%
Preliminary	97	59	61%
Pre-Preliminary	63	22	35%
No Evidence	38	11	29%
Total	220	114	52%

Performance Measurement and Evaluation

Performance Measurement	Program Evaluation
• Ongoing monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments and progress • Explains what level of performance is achieved by the program	• In-depth research activity conducted periodically or on an ad-hoc basis • Answers questions or tests hypotheses about program processes and/or outcomes • Used to assess whether or not a program works as expected and why (e.g., did the program cause the observed changes?)

Evaluation types: process vs. outcome



Research questions for *process-focused evaluations* ask:

Who?
What?
When?
Where?
Why?
How?

About:
Inputs/resources
Program activities
Outputs
Stakeholder views

Research questions for *outcome-focused evaluations* ask about:

Changes?
Effects?
Impacts?

In:

(Short-term)	*(Medium-term)*	*(Long-term)*
Knowledge	Behaviors	Conditions
Skills	Actions	Status
Attitudes		
Opinions		

Note: Impact evaluation is a type of outcome evaluation that uses a comparison/control group!

Evaluation designs

Evaluation Study Designs	Comparison	Ability to make statements about causal attribution
Experimental Design Studies	Randomly Assigned Groups	↑
Quasi-Experimental Design Studies	Statistically Matched Groups	
Non-Experimental Design Studies	Not Statistically Matched Groups or Group Compared to Itself	

Evidence Tiers: No evidence and pre-preliminary

- No evidence
  - Applicant has not systematically collected any qualitative or quantitative data on their program
- Pre-preliminary
  - Applicant has collected systematic and accurate data to test or track one or more components of its logic model (ex: community need, outputs, participant outcomes) OR
  - Applicant has conducted a process evaluation assessing implementation of one or more interventions depicted in the logic model
  - The data collection process and results are described fully
  - The applicant explains the link between data collection and the relevant component(s) of its logic model

No Evidence - Example

Narrative: Applicant A's mentoring program incorporates the Elements of Effective Practice for mentoring, a set of evidence-based standards for mentoring programs. The program is modeled closely on Famous Mentoring Program's successful approach. A 2013 randomized control trial found Famous Mentoring Program to be effective.

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted a copy of Famous Mentoring Program's successful approach.

Pre-Preliminary Example

In Applicant B's last full year of operations, we provided tutoring services to 500 students (ED1, target was 475). 452 students completed the required dosage of 30 minutes, twice a week for 6 months (ED2, target was 450). Of these 450 students, 350 met our improvement benchmark for Performance Measure ED5 (target was 300)– a gain of at least one grade level on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment. This standardized test measures reading comprehension and has demonstrated validity and reliability for the population of second and third graders served by our program. It is administered as a pre-test when students enter the program and again at the end of the program. This gain is significant given that most students begin the program 2-3 grade levels behind and would not have been expected to make a year's improvement in six months without significant support from tutors. Improving academic engagement remains a primary focus of our program in 2016, and we have included these performance measures in our logic model.

Evidence Tiers: Preliminary (1)

- Preliminary – Option 1 – Outcome study of own program
  - Applicant has conducted at least one outcome study of its own intervention, either pre and post-test without a comparison group or post-test only with a comparison group
  - The outcome study includes data beyond that which is collected as part of routine performance measurement
  - The applicant provides a detailed description of the outcome study data
  - The description explains whether the outcome study was conducted by the applicant organization or by an entity external to the applicant
  - The outcome study yielded promising results for the proposed intervention

Preliminary Evidence – Example 1 – Outcome study of own program

Applicant C is a small program focused on helping homeless individuals gain knowledge of responsible tenant practices and other housing support resources, and ultimately find and maintain affordable housing. In our last complete program year, 250 homeless individuals received housing services (O5, target = 200) and 200 of these individuals were transitioned into safe, affordable housing (O10, target = 175). Since 2011 we have sent a follow-up survey nine months after an individual was transition into housing to determine whether they remained housed. We analyzed this survey data for our 2014 outcome evaluation and found that 95% of individuals responding to the survey remained in affordable housing, a rate much higher than the national average of 80% for the population we serve.

Evidence Tiers: Preliminary (2)

- Preliminary – Option 2 – Replication with fidelity
  - Applicant is proposing to replicate an evidence-based program with fidelity
    - Applicant submits at least one randomized control study (RCT) or quasi-experimental evaluation (QED) of the intervention the applicant will replicate
    - The evaluation found positive results for the intervention the applicant will replicate
    - The evaluation was conducted by an independent entity external to the organization whose program was studied
    - Applicant describes how the intervention studied and applicant's approach are the same
    - Applicant describes how they will replicate the intervention with fidelity to the program model
    - May be true but not required: Applicant has submitted a process evaluation demonstrating how it is currently replicating the intervention with fidelity to the program model
- Preliminary – Option 3: Applicant has conducted at least one outcome study of its own intervention AND is proposing to replicate another evidence-based intervention with fidelity. All requirements outlined in Options 1 and 2 are met.

Preliminary Evidence – Example 2 – Replication with fidelity

Applicant D will replicate the successful Money Matters financial literacy program. Money Matters utilizes trained volunteers to deliver a standardized financial literacy curriculum, paired with bi-weekly one-on-one coaching focused on setting one or two financial goals and taking small steps each month to meet the goal. A 2012 quasi-experimental study of Money Matters found that a year after completing the program, participants were significantly more likely than individuals in the comparison group to have a household budget, a checking account, and to have deposited money into a savings account within the past six months. Applicant D will replicate Money Matters with fidelity, providing the same training to AmeriCorps volunteers and using the same curriculum and coaching structure with program participants. We will collect output data from all sites to ensure that members complete all required training and that participants receive the intended dosage. A consultant from Money Matters will assist in training AmeriCorps members and will train site supervisors to conduct fidelity checks to ensure that the curriculum and coaching sessions are being implemented with fidelity.

Evidence Tiers: Moderate

- Moderate evidence
  - Applicant has conducted at least one quasi-experimental study (QED) or randomized control trial (RCT) of its own program
    - The studies are well-designed and well-implemented
    - The studies evaluate the same intervention described in the application
    - The studies demonstrate evidence of effectiveness (positive findings) on one or more key desired outcomes of interest depicted in the applicant's logic model
    - The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the applicant organization
    - The ability to generalize the findings from the RCT or QED beyond the study context may be limited (e.g., single-site)

Moderate Evidence

In 2014, Applicant E's Ready to Read program conducted a randomized control trial at one of its fourteen sites. The study was conducted by an independent (external) evaluator. Students in the program outperformed students in the control group on reading comprehension. The effect size was moderate.

Evidence Tiers: Strong

- Strong evidence
  - Applicant has conducted at least one quasi-experimental study (QED) or randomized control trial (RCT) of its own program
    - The studies are well-designed and well-implemented
    - The studies evaluate the same intervention described in the application
    - The studies were conducted by an independent entity external to the applicant organization
    - The overall pattern of study findings is consistently positive
    - Findings from the studies may be generalized beyond the study context
  - At least one of the following is true:
    - The intervention has been tested nationally, regionally, or at the state level (e.g., multi-site) using a well-designed and well-implemented QED or RCT
    - The applicant has conducted multiple QEDs or RCTs in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area

Strong Evidence

In 2014, Applicant E's Ready to Read program conducted a randomized control trial at all twenty-five sites statewide. The study was conducted by an independent (external) evaluator. By the end of the year, students in all sites in the Ready to Read program outperformed students in the comparison group on all literacy skills addressed by the program. The effect sizes were not only significant but substantial in magnitude. The Ready to Read program was effective regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, or dual language learner status and across multiple sites and site types.

Tips for Applicants

- Read all FAQs
- Present high quality evidence from the two strongest, most relevant studies
- Remember you may be considered for a lower evidence tier than the one you have self-assessed
- Describe the complete body of evidence that exists for your program
- Even if you submit studies, describe them in the narrative. The narrative and documents will be reviewed by different reviewers
- Do not submit more than the allowable number of studies

Submitting documents

- Who should submit documents?
  - Applicant claiming *preliminary* evidence with *replication* option → Submit study of program that will be replicated; submit process study if available
  - Applicant claiming *moderate* evidence → Submit up to 2 studies
  - Applicant claiming *strong* evidence → Submit up to 2 studies
  - Any applicant required to submit an evaluation report → Submit report
- Evaluation report can be submitted *in addition* to the "up to 2 studies"
- Unless otherwise noted, studies should be high-quality QEDs or RCTs
- Do not submit extraneous or irrelevant documents

Resources

2016 NOFO and FAQs:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2016

Evaluation Resources on the Knowledge Network:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation

Evidence Checklist:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/Evidence%20Checklist%20FINAL.pdf