



Research and Evaluation Resources:

Studies and Impact Assessments that Guide Continuous Improvement



Using evaluation results can help you improve programs through a continuous feedback loop into your program planning.

This fact sheet offers resources, such as guides and manuals, which can help you define the scope of your program studies and evaluations. It also offers resources to address common challenges researchers, program managers and practitioners have regarding evaluation, and outlines major reasons why conducting a program evaluation can benefit your program.

Guides and Methods for Studies and Evaluations

Why Conduct a Program Evaluation?

http://childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/child_trends-2007_10_01_rb_whyprogeval.pdf

This brief focuses on youth programming, but the rationale for, and approach to program evaluation, is applicable to all workforce development programs and human services programming.

The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/program_managers_guide_to_eval2010.pdf

This guide includes worksheets, examples, checklists, definitions and an appendix with additional evaluation resources.

Guide to Evaluating Workforce Programs

<http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/products/evaluating-workforce-programs-guide-what-policymakers-need-know-structure-effective-user>

This guide for policy-makers discusses the value and purpose of program evaluations, highlighting different evaluation tools and techniques, and illustrating how policymakers and program managers can structure and implement evaluations of workforce development programs.

Evaluation and Measurement for Training Grant Programs

<https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/evaluation-and-measurement-for-taacct-grant-programs-recommendations-and-resources-for-getting-started>

This guide provides a comprehensive discussion of program evaluation strategies, providing recommendations and resources for discretionary education and training program grantees.



Design Options for an Evaluation of Job Search Assistance

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/design_opt_eval.pdf

This report developed recommendations for an overall approach, potential research design options, and the analytic methods that could be used in rigorous impact evaluations of job search strategies.

[Evaluation Toolkit for Prospective Discretionary Grantees](#)

https://www.doleta.gov/workforce_innovation/pdf/grantees/FINAL_WIF_EvaluationToolkit_5-12-2014.pdf

This toolkit presents a detailed orientation to evaluation concepts and principles, providing background information on evaluation, and reviewing the different kinds of evaluations, including pre- and post-outcome study, randomized control trial, implementation study and cost study.

[A Guide to Statistical Methods for Program Impact Evaluation](#)

<https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/ms-14-87-en>

How do you know, if a program made a difference? This guide focuses on how to assess whether a program made an impact. It has an overview of core statistical and econometric methods for program impact evaluation (and, more generally, causal modeling). It forms a bridge between more basic treatments of the essentials of evaluation methods and the more advanced methods.

[Guiding Principles for Evaluators \(American Evaluation Association\)](#)

<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=5>

These guiding principles describe the extent to which there are ethical standards of the evaluation and research process.

[Performance Management and Evaluation: What's the Difference? \(Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief\)](#)

<http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2011-02PerformMgmt.pdf>

This Child Trends Research-to-Results Brief discusses the differences between performance management and evaluation processes. Evaluation differs from assessments, routine monitoring activities, data validation/quality reviews and mere measurement of performance outcomes (which is not an evaluation without additional analysis or data analytics).



[Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships](#)

<http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/gg98026.pdf>

The US General Accounting Office (GAO) issued this guide to provide policy-makers and research guidance on the difference between performance measurement and evaluation.

Program Evaluation and Performance Management Primer

https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/51113_ch_1.pdf

Chapter 1 of this GAO guide can be used as a primer on research and evaluation methods.

Connecting Performance Management to Program Evaluation

<http://www.wherethejobsare.com/2014/05/complementary-connection/#sthash.o8lNy3N5.dpbs>

This document is in a data blog format from Where the Jobs Are.

Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)

<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=144>

The PART was developed by OMB and has an explanation of types of research methodologies.

Program Measurement vs. Program Evaluation Chart (NOAA)

<http://www.performance.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/NOAA-Program-Evaluation-Guide.pdf>

This guide provides a framework for thinking about evaluation and first steps in designing an evaluation.

Tools and Resources for Assessing Social Impact (TRASI)

<http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/on-the-web/tools-and-resources-for-assessing-social-impact-trasi>

This searchable database is from the Foundation Center, and focuses on impact achieved with interventions.

Evaluation Strategies for Human Services Programs

https://www.bja.gov/evaluation/guide/documents/evaluation_strategies.html

This policy-maker and service provider guide is from The Urban Institute, which has experience in evaluating and assessing social services programs.



Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement

<https://www.epa.gov/evaluate/program-evaluation-and-performance-measurement-epa>

This is an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) example of evaluation standards and has a glossary.

Research Methods and Evaluation Resources

<https://www.opressrc.org/sites/default/files/public/SSRC-RER%20General%20Research%20Methods.pdf>

This research guide is from the Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse provides resources for policy-makers, researchers and practitioners.

Examples and Benefits of Studies and Evaluations

What Works In Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence

<https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/jdt/jdt.pdf>

This report summarizes the evidence collected on job training strategies and programs, synthesizing evidence on what works for adults and youth to improve their employment and educational outcomes, highlighting gaps in evidence, and suggesting directions for future research.

WIA Gold Standard Evaluation Implementation Study Briefs

https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_resultDetails&pub_id=2587&mp=y

These evaluations were conducted under WIA, but provide examples of exemplary approaches to research and evaluation of workforce programs.

Evaluating Labor Market Performance Using a Matched Comparison Group Design

http://www2.gsu.edu/~ecobth/PaperReprints/LMPerformance_Veterans_Group_Design.pdf

This is an example of a labor market impact study from the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents. It examines the labor market results of veterans served using a matched comparison group study design.

Evidence-Building Research and Evaluation Case Studies

https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/03/20/10/45/Performance_Accountability_Presentation

These case studies were prepared for the three WIOA Convening sessions on Evidence-Building Capacity in State Workforce Research and Evaluation.

Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking Final Report: The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking

<https://www.cep.gov/cep-final-report.html>

The final report, required by the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-140), discussed the benefits of evidence-based policy-making driven by data and results of studies.



[Impact of Community College Training on Older Displaced Workers](#)

<https://www.chicagofed.org/publications/working-papers/2003/2003-25>

This analysis of longitudinal administrative data estimates the returns to retraining for older displaced workers by estimating the impact that community college schooling has on their subsequent earnings.

[Getting Started with Evidence-Based Practices: Supported Employment](#)

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA08-4365/GettingStarted-SE.pdf>

This is an Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Knowledge Informing Transformation (KIT) from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Inventories or Databases of Effective Practices Analysis and Research

[ETA's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\)](#)

<http://clear.dol.gov/>

CLEAR identifies and summarizes many types of research, including descriptive statistical studies and outcome analyses, implementation, and causal impact studies. For causal and labor market impact studies, CLEAR assesses the strength of the design and methodology in studies that look at the effectiveness of particular policies and programs.



[ETA's Research Publication Database](#)

<https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>

ETA database can be queried for workforce development-related research and evaluation, including those studies on demonstrating effective strategies and interventions.

[Workforce System Strategies](#)

<https://strategies.workforcegps.org/>

If you are looking for evidence-based research and emerging practices, Workforce System Strategies (WSS) provides a central inventory of



reports and studies for workforce professionals and their partners who strive to improve outcomes for job seekers and employers through informed decision-making. The collection highlights recent research and evaluation reports or technical assistance tools and guides that support program management and operations, education and training, or employment, retention and advancement activities.

[What Works Clearinghouse](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/) - <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

This clearinghouse or library of evidence-based practices is maintained by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) under the U.S. Department of Education. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews the existing research on different programs, products, practices, and policies in education, and houses results for searches in its inventory.

[Child Trends What Works Searchable Registry](https://www.childtrends.org/what-works/)

<https://www.childtrends.org/what-works/>



This is a searchable registry of over 700 programs that have had at least one randomized evaluation to assess child or youth outcomes related to education, life skills, and social/emotional, mental, physical, behavioral, or reproductive health.

Other Sources of Data and Evidence-Based Studies

[Evidence-Based Practices and Process Mapping – Data that Works for Innovation](#)

Logic models are great tools to move an idea toward implementation. They help develop a roadmap for a program or initiative you wish to start from the ground up or for the change you are trying to achieve in an existing initiative. In this tutorial you will learn how logic models can help articulate your goals and identify and organize resources, while keeping focused on results. This resource includes a link to an example of a **quasi-experimental impact study**.

https://lmi.workforcegps.org/resources/2015/06/18/11/23/Evidence-Based_Practices_and_Process_Mapping_Innovation

[How to Find Evidence-Based Programs and Practices](https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/finding-evidence-based-programs)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/finding-evidence-based-programs>

This website from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides resources and tools for learning about existing evidence-based practices already inventoried by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It includes links to several registries where evidence-based practice research is inventoried, such as for at-risk youth, juvenile offenders, teen pregnancy prevention, etc.

Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/evidence/>

This list of resources and examples of implementing and cross-walking evidence-based practices to benchmarks is provided by the Child Welfare Information Gateway of the Children’s Bureau under the Administration for Children and Families.

Inventory of Evidence-Based Practices to Assist Incarcerated and Reentering Individuals and their Families

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/overview-and-inventory-hhs-efforts-assist-incarcerated-and-reentering-individuals-and-their-families>

This report provides an overview and a listing of evidence-based practices as part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s efforts to assist ex-offenders.

Additional Research and Evaluation Resources

What is Evidence-Based Practice?

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/evidencebasedpractice20120829.pdf>

This factsheet on evidence-based programs and practices (EBPP) is from the runaway and homeless youth (RHY) program under the Family and Youth Service Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families, and includes examples of steps for implementing EBPPs.

Using and Replicating Evidence-Based Practices with Fidelity

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-training/tpp-and-paf-resources/using-evidence-based-programs/index.html>

This resource website offers access to examples of evidence-based practice implementation, and is maintained by the Office of Adolescent Health under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

WIOA Wednesday-Evaluation and Research: Building Capacity under the WIOA



<https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2016/11/17/12/14/WIOA-Wednesday-Research-Evaluation-and-More>

In this recorded session, ETA and workforce evaluation and research experts from the state of Ohio discussed the WIOA-mandated state annual research project and the changing landscape of evidence-based decision making in the public workforce system.

[Listening Session on States' Role in Evaluation and Research under WIOA](#)

https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2015/01/29/15/11/Listening_Session_ST_RoleWIOA

This ETA-recorded session asked participants to voice concerns and offer ideas regarding state requirements for evaluation and research under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), found primarily under Section 116 (e).

[Evidence-Building Capacity: Research and Evaluation in State Workforce Agencies](#)

http://www.futureworksystems.com/docs/wioa/WorkforceGPSResources/Day%202-115pm_Evidence_Building_Capacity.pdf

This session was presented three times with different scenarios and panelist to convey the scope of evaluation conducted between state workforce agencies and universities or research partners.

[Evidence-Building Capacity in State Workforce Agencies](#)

<https://www.naswa.org/assets/utilities/serve.cfm?gid=938B2045-5E83-45AC-BEAA-80AAD19725D0>

The National Association of State Workforce Agencies' (NASWA) Center for Employment Security Education and Research released this report summarizing the research and analysis capacity of its member state workforce agencies at the beginning of WIOA implementation.



[Evidence-Based Practices and Process Mapping - Data that Works for Innovation](#)

https://lmi.workforcegps.org/resources/2015/06/18/11/23/Evidence-Based_Practices_and_Process_Mapping_Innovation

This resource page provides you additional resources on using research and data analysis for building an inventory of evidence-based practices to support program design and policymaking.

A Note: What is Research and Evaluation?

Studies expected under WIOA go above and beyond regular performance metrics and measurement. Evaluations may include some analysis of performance outcomes, but studies typically entail applying a statistical method to assess the labor market results, participant impact or evidence-based strength of a service delivery design approach, practice or intervention. There are many types of studies states may choose to conduct, such as longitudinal studies that are designed under the WDQI and SLDS grants, to impact assessments, to randomized control trials, or experimental studies, etc.

However, while performance oversight/management, data validation, data quality control/assurance, regular monitoring, periodic audits, etc. all play a role in the fidelity of programs and their data integrity as a foundation for further viable study, those activities in and of themselves would not constitute research activities, as anticipated that states would conduct under WIOA. There are many design options, but all types would normally employ some statistical rigor and analysis beyond performance reporting as a standard in their methodology.

Research Project Resources - Tutorials/Webinars

Making the Case for What Works

https://www.workforcegps.org/resources/2015/05/07/10/51/Making_the_Case_for_What_-_Works_-_Using_Evidence-Based_Practices_to_Support_Innovation

What Evaluation Details Do I Need for a Plan and How Long Will It Take?

<https://cms.workforcegps.org/events/2019/05/30/13/54/What-Evaluation-Details-Do-I-Need-for-a-Plan-and-How-Long-Will-It-Take>

What Evaluation Designs Are Right For My State?

<https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2019/05/07/13/07/What-Evaluation-Designs-Are-Right-For-My-State>



Which Evaluation Designs Are Right for

Different Types of Evaluations

Pre-evaluation Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs assessment Literature reviews
Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation studies Process studies
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Random assignment Quasi-experimental design (QED)



RESEA
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This process is iterative!



- What you learn from your first evaluation might lead to changes in the program
- Initial results may motivate you learn more about program impacts for particular sub-groups
- If your results are not what you expected, you may want to go back to your logic model and test something new!

Fully Articulating Your Vision: Using Logic Models to Support Innovation

https://evalhub.workforcegps.org/sitecore/content/global/resources/2015/05/07/11/07/Fully_Articulating_Your_Vision_Using_Logic_Models_to_Support_Innovation

State Evaluation Readiness Assessment Tool

<https://evalhub.workforcegps.org/sitecore/content/global/events/2018/09/18/14/53/An-Evaluation-Readiness-Assessment-Tool-Prioritizing-Efforts-to-Measure-Effectiveness>

Evaluating RESEA: How Does it Help My State and Where Do We Start?

<https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2019/04/17/16/43/Evaluating-RESEA-How-Does-it-Help-My-State-and-Where-Do-We-Start>



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RESEA Research Question Examples

Question Type	Example
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does selection for RESEA improve claimants' employment outcomes from what they would have been otherwise? Would more intensive case management by AJC staff improve claimants' outcomes?
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How soon did claimants become reemployed? How do FTR rates vary across WDB areas?
Process or Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What reemployment services and activities do claimants participate in? What activities take place during meetings between claimants and case managers?



RESEA
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Evaluation Design Types

- Impact Studies (Quasi-Experimental Designs & Randomized Control Trials)**
 - Determine extent to which claimant outcomes are different compared to what outcomes would have been without the program
- Outcomes Studies**
 - Assess program's progress in achieving its established goals
- Process & Implementation Studies**
 - Document program operations and client flow through the program, as implemented

Procuring and Selecting an Independent Evaluator

<https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2019/05/30/14/24/Procuring-and-Selecting-an-Independent-Evaluator>

Research and Evaluation Community of Practice: <https://evalhub.workforcegps.org/>

Federal Guidance: [Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#), also known as the Open Government Data Act, requiring population of the [Federal Catalogue of Data](#) at Data.gov

Disclaimer: *This brief list of resources is neither inclusive nor exclusive of all available guides and examples, nor is ETA or DOL promoting, or making a statement about, any particular reference sources. The opinions of the authors of these works do not necessarily reflect those of the Department. Any one or more of these resources may give some of you a starting point, if you would like more information to understand what a research study or evaluation methodology entails and/or how evidence-based practices can be implemented in programs.*