

# Examples of Prioritizing Evidence of Effectiveness in Government Grant Programs

This table provides specific examples of how governments have prioritized evidence of effectiveness in their grantmaking decisions. Using evidence of effectiveness means shifting taxpayer dollars to programs that have been proven to be effective through strong evaluations or based on their past performance.

Of note, the term "grant programs" as used below includes all types of government spending on human services programs, including grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other programmatic expenditures.

Strategy	Activity	Difficulty Level	Example
<b>1. Define and Identify Evidence</b>			
1a	Adopt a common definition of the term "evidence" to be used across budget, policy, and programmatic decisions at the state level (and at the local level, if possible); this could include aligning state programs with evidence definitions and requirements in federal programs	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Tiered definition</a> of evidence in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act</li> <li>• <a href="#">Washington</a> and <a href="#">Colorado</a> (RFA 2018 State Standard of Excellence)</li> <li>• Nevada Department of Education (see Appendix 4 of <a href="#">linked case study</a> for examples and more state program details)</li> </ul>
1b	Identify programs and practices being implemented across the state and categorize them according to a common definition of evidence	Hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Colorado</a>, <a href="#">Connecticut</a>, <a href="#">Mississippi</a>, <a href="#">New Mexico</a>, and <a href="#">Oregon</a> (RFA 2018 State Standard of Excellence)</li> <li>• Washington's <a href="#">Inventory of Evidence- and Research-Based Practices and Menu of Best Practices and Strategies</a></li> <li>• Michigan's MyStrategyBank (a component of <a href="#">MiDataHub</a>)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Minnesota Office of Management and Budget Inventory</a></li> </ul>

Strategy	Activity	Difficulty Level	Example
1c	Highlight and/or link to evidence-based strategies in funding announcements and/or grant applications	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pennsylvania (<a href="#">Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [WIOA plan]</a> highlights Center for Employment Opportunities), Hawai'i (<a href="#">WIOA plan</a> highlights Pay for Performance)</li> <li>• Corporation for National and Community Service AmeriCorps <a href="#">evidence-based education programs</a> (RFA 2019 Federal Standard)</li> <li>• Nevada Department of Education <a href="#">Multi-Grant Competitive Application</a></li> <li>• Illinois' <a href="#">IL-EMPOWER Learning Partners</a></li> <li>• Connecticut's <a href="#">Evidence-Based Practice Guides</a> (linked to in various grant applications)</li> <li>• Georgia's Local Education Agency <a href="#">Guidance for Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions</a></li> </ul>
1d	Encourage the use of evidence-based interventions by creating or identifying existing clearinghouses of evidence-based interventions	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">California, Minnesota, Washington</a> (RFA 2018 State Standard of Excellence)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse</a></li> </ul>

## 2. Prioritize Evidence of Effectiveness in Grant Design

2a	Ask grant applicants how they plan to utilize evidence/data in their program, whether their program is evidence-based and at what level of rigor (i.e. strong, moderate, or preliminary evidence)	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Department of Education (USED) <a href="#">Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program</a></li> <li>• USED <a href="#">Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grants</a></li> <li>• Nevada Department of Education <a href="#">Office of Student and School Supports</a></li> </ul>
2b	Give applicants for federal and state competitive grant funds <i>preference points</i> if they propose investing those funds in evidence-based programs and practices	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CNCS AmeriCorps <a href="#">2019 NOFA</a> (RFA 2019 Federal Standard)</li> </ul>

Strategy	Activity	Difficulty Level	Example
2c	Require the use of evidence-based programs and services	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Oregon, Florida, and Washington</a> (2018 State Standard of Excellence)</li> <li>• HHS ACF Family First Act and Family First Prevention Services Act (Title IV-E funds) (<a href="#">2018 Federal Standard</a>)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Vermont Department of Education</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Nevada Department of Education</a></li> </ul>
2d	Create tiered evidence grant programs that provide competitive funding to programs at different levels of evidence to identify promising practices and expand proven interventions	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USED <a href="#">Education Innovation and Research program</a></li> <li>• CNCS <a href="#">Social Innovation Fund</a></li> </ul>

### 3. Outcomes-Based Grant Management

3a	Assign points for grantees' past performance in achieving outcome goals when reviewing new grant applications and/or considering grant renewals	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care up to 56 points for past performance in reducing homelessness (RFA <a href="#">2019 Federal Standard of Excellence, 8.2</a>)</li> </ul>
3b	Structure competitive grant programs so recipients get initial funding (e.g., three years) but must show results to receive continuation funding (e.g., two additional years)	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Department of Justice <a href="#">Juvenile Justice Reform Act</a> funds awarded to states are ended after year two if grantees have not met their requirements</li> </ul>
3c	Use evaluation/outcomes data to identify low-performing grantees (e.g., the bottom 10%) and then require them to re-compete for future funding	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Head Start Designation Renewal System (RFA <a href="#">2019 Federal Standard of Excellence</a>)</li> </ul>
3d	Use performance-based contracts that link outcomes to payments by requiring achievement of certain performance benchmarks to receive grant payments	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Pennsylvania</a> (2018 State Standard of Excellence), <a href="#">Ohio WIOA Aspire program</a></li> </ul>
3e	Set aside funding for providers offering models with high or moderate causal evidence or contracts that pay directly for outcomes	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services 10% mental health block grant set aside (RFA <a href="#">2019 Federal Standard</a>)</li> </ul>

Strategy	Activity	Difficulty Level	Example
<b>4. Evidence-Building Activities</b>			
4a	Authorize grant recipients to use their awarded funds for evaluations as a direct cost, not just indirect ones	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>US Department of Labor (DOL) <a href="#">Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment</a> grant allows up to 10% for evaluation</li> </ul>
4b	Require grantees to participate in state agency-led and funded evaluation as a condition of receiving grant funding if asked by the funding agency	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>US DOL (RFA <a href="#">2018 Federal Standard</a>)</li> </ul>
4c	Require and/or incentivize (via competitive preference points, for example) grantees to conduct evaluations of their funded program(s)	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CNCS AmeriCorps <a href="#">evaluation requirement</a> for grants over \$500k (RFA 2019 Federal Standard)</li> <li>HHS ACF <a href="#">Responsible Fatherhood Opportunities for Reentry and Mobility</a> (RFA 2019 Federal Standard)</li> </ul>
4d	Set aside a percentage (i.e. 1%) of funding in each program or agency to fund evaluation and research	Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HHS ACF Child Care and Development Fund <a href="#">.5% set aside</a> (RFA 2019 Federal Standard, see 9.3)</li> </ul>
4e	Create a statewide and/or agency-specific evaluation fund to allow for the evaluation of funded programs	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colorado's <a href="#">Implementation and Evaluation Grant</a></li> </ul>

For more details on how governments can use evidence of effectiveness to achieve better results, please see [Results for America's Blueprint for Delivering Results in State Government](#) (Strategy K), [2019 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence](#) (Criteria #12), [2019 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence](#), [7 Ways to Improve Workforce Outcomes Using Evidence: 2019 Policy Roadmap for State & Local Officials](#), and [Once Evidence Skeptics, Now Evidence Champions: The Nevada Department of Education Seized the Opportunity presented by the Every Student Succeeds Act to Prioritize Evidence to Improve Nevada Public Schools](#).