

Results for America Evidence-Based Grant-Making Initiative

Grant Application Language

This document provides direction and language for use in all workforce grant applications under the Results for America (RFA) Evidence-Based Grant-Making Initiative. RFA is a national organization that is providing guidance to state leaders in the development of evidence-based grant making. This guidance will apply to grants administered by the Texas Workforce Commission, including the governor's discretionary Wagner-Peyser 7(b) grant program, and local workforce development boards.

Generally, this language should be included in the grant program summary/overview, application requirements, and scoring instrument with specific references included for contracting and reporting language. Critical content additions include the evidence tiers, definitions, instructions for tier selection, and outcomes requirements that direct applicants as to what data to collect, track, and report and specific methodology for doing so. Agencies must use this language consistently across all workforce grant programs. The agency and program will determine placement of the language with the following considerations: TWC to follow the Executive Summary; TTC to follow the Overview; and TWSRC to follow the Background in most applications.

Evidence Tier Section

[Placement in the application and other program resources to be determined by the agency and program.]

Required Elements for Texas Evidence-Based Grant Applications

The following stand-alone pieces are designed to be dropped into any Texas workforce grant applications and ensure that the same language is used for all workforce grants:

1. Glossary of Terms
2. Evidence-Based Grant Making in Texas Statement
 - Why evidence-based grant making?
 - Building Evidence for the Future
3. Evidence Tier Definitions and Requirements
4. Evidence Tier Instructions to the Applicant
5. Evidence Tier Selection
6. Documentation of Evidence, Based on Evidence Tier Selection
 - For High and Moderate Evidence Program Tiers
 - For Performance Program Tier,
 - For Experience Program Tier, and
 - For New Program Tier
 - Where to Access Models
7. Evidence Tier Bonus Scoring—Information for Applicants
 - Scoring structure and relation to tiers
 - Total number of bonus points
 - Bonus points by each tier

Evidence Glossary

Causal evidence: Evidence that documents a relationship between an activity, treatment, or intervention (including technology) and its intended outcomes, including measuring the direction and size of a change, and the extent to which a change may be attributed to the activity or intervention

CLEAR: Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Deliverable: A deliverable is any product or service that must be completed to finish a project

Essentially similar: A degree of similarity and high fidelity, or exactness, of the details or elements of the implementation plan between a program that is being proposed and the elements of the program which will be reproduced based upon its evidence of success with a population

Evaluation: A formal, rigorous process of assessing quality, importance, value through the application of specific methods and statistics

Evidence: The available body of facts or information indicating whether a proposition or relationship is true or valid

High Fidelity: The high degree of exactness with which the program design and implementation are reproduced

Intervention: An action taken to improve a situation

Logic model: A road map or depiction that presents the shared relationships among the resources, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact for your program, which depicts the relationship between the program's activities and its intended effect

Outputs: What a program or activity has produced, e.g., number of program completers (outputs do not address the value or impact of services)

Outcomes: The level of performance or achievement that occurred because of the activity or services a program has provided, e.g., the percentage of program completers who gain employment and remain employed at specific time intervals

Performance Metrics: Measure the performance of a program through the documentation of specific data sets and measurement methodologies, allowing a basis to be formed regarding overall program success in achieving intended goals, outputs, and outcomes

Study: A detailed investigation and analysis of a subject or situation

Evidence-Based Grant Making in Texas

Why evidence-based grant making?

The most effective job training programs open up new opportunities and can ultimately help change a person's life. These programs result in meaningful employment in a career pathway that is well-suited to the individual and support economic mobility. At the same time, prioritizing high quality programs opens up resources to serve new participants. These programs serve populations with significant barriers to employment yet effectively reduce the number of job seekers who cycle in and out of low-quality or poor-fit jobs thereby requiring repetitious support from the workforce system.

Grant funding can be used to facilitate innovative approaches to improve job training programs and to scale proven methods that lead to better employment outcomes for workers and higher productivity for employers in Texas. With this in mind, Texas is implementing a two-pronged approach that will link grant funds directly to common priority outcomes while continuing to support innovative practices. This approach will create incentives for grant applicants to identify and use program models that have demonstrated a record of effective outcomes. To continue to encourage innovative, but less- tested program models, the state is designing a tiered strategy. Evidence tiers have been defined to support a graduated method for programs and applicants to adapt to evidence-based grants. Some grant programs in Texas have already introduced and defined performance-based outcomes metrics, and prior grant outcomes data will be required in the application process, where relevant.

Embedding outcome-based applications and outcomes reporting in state workforce grant programs will help the state learn about the implementation, effectiveness, and cost of various approaches. The interventions that have been introduced by the workforce system to date have been producing a growing body of evidence that can be used to identify effective practices that help participants develop the skills required to find and maintain employment. Grant applicants will be encouraged to consider and identify applicable evidence. Similarly, the outcomes of pilot programs can be shared to incentivize replication if the measures are clearly defined and relevant to the priority outcomes.

Building Evidence for the Future

As the process of awarding bonus points for program design and anticipated outcomes that are based on evidence commences, we recognize that this is a dynamic process. Applicants will find that while the application asks for evidence to support the proposed program design and anticipated outcomes, there is a place for all programs on the evidence continuum. From newly created programs to those that are replicating a program that has been rigorously evaluated by an external entity, all are encouraged to find the evidence tier that demonstrates and best supports their proposed program. In future grant solicitations, as applicants become familiar with the types and use of evidence to support applications, we anticipate that proposed programs will move into higher tiers of evidence.

Evidence Tier Definitions and Requirements

High Evidence Program Tier

High evidence programs are ones that are supported by rigorous evaluations of the program or of an essentially similar program design and outcomes. The program or essentially similar program must have:

- conducted two or more well designed and well implemented Randomized Controlled Trial or Interrupted Time Series studies that include both a comparison group and a statistically valid technique to assess causation that eliminates or minimizes confounding factors. The studies must have had minimal attrition. The studies must show that the program has **both a positive and meaningful outcome**, and that there is a **high degree** of confidence that the outcome is primarily caused by the program.

For full description of the criteria to achieve High Evidence rating, please see [Causal Evidence Guidelines, Version 2.1](#). at CLEAR.dol.gov, noting that applicants must have two or more studies that meet the High Evidence rating in CLEAR or Other Entity to be considered for the High Evidence Program Tier.

The proposed program must be a replication of a program cited by CLEAR or Other Entity (see next page) as a high evidence program with positive and meaningful outcomes. An explanation as to why the program is appropriate for the proposed geography and population, and whether similar outcomes are expected must be included in the application.

Moderate Evidence Program Tier

Moderate evidence programs are ones that are supported by rigorous evaluations of the program or of an essentially similar program design and outcomes. The program or essentially similar program must have:

- conducted at least one study that includes both a comparison group and a statistically valid technique to assess causation that eliminates or minimizes confounding factors. This study must show that the program has **both a positive and meaningful outcome**, and that there is a **modest degree** of confidence that the outcome is primarily caused by the program.

For full description of criteria to achieve Moderate Evidence rating, please see [Causal Evidence Guidelines, Version 2.1](#). at CLEAR.dol.gov.

The proposed program design and anticipated outcomes must be consistent with a program cited by CLEAR or Other Entity (see next page) as a moderate evidence program and will be implemented with limited modifications. An explanation as to why the program is appropriate for the proposed geography and population and whether similar outcomes are expected must be included in the application.

Performance Program Tier

Programs that offer outputs and outcomes data and information as evidence, conduct assessments of participants to demonstrate effectiveness of their programs, and at least one post program follow up to track the outcomes of participants. Primary support for these programs' effectiveness is provided through historical data showing that the program creates an intended change in participants, and that participants show a positive outcome following participation in the program. To be reviewed on the basis of previously implemented programs, an applicant must have historical output and outcome data for at least two years, either directly collected or from the similar program being used as evidence.

In addition to past output and outcome data, an evaluation performed by an external entity on a program with a very similar design and anticipated outcomes may also be used to support this evidence tier.

Experience Program Tier

These programs do not perform evaluations of participant success in the program, do not collect performance data or follow up with participants, or evaluate the effect of the program on participants (though they may do a satisfaction survey of participants). Primary support for these programs' effectiveness is provided through anecdotal participant success stories or other testimonials. Experience programs must have been providing services for at least one year prior to grant application.

New Program Tier

These programs are entirely new and are not similar to an existing program. New programs have no evidence of effectiveness and have not been evaluated. An applicant must explain why the proposed program will achieve the outcomes specified in the main body of the application and demonstrate that there is capacity to collect sufficient data to track outcomes from the program.

Where to Access Models for High or Moderate Tiers Definitions and Studies

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)

CLEAR's mission is to make research on labor topics more accessible to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public more broadly so that it can inform their decisions about labor policies and programs. CLEAR identifies and summarizes many types of research, including descriptive, implementation, and impact studies. In addition, CLEAR assesses the quality of research that looks at the effectiveness of particular policies and programs.

https://clear.dol.gov/study_database

Other Entity

Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse

<https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/studies>

CrimeSolutions

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/advsearch.aspx>

Evidence Tier Instructions to the Applicant

Texas values and will consider awards to programs at all levels of the evidence continuum and expects programs to improve data collection and evaluation methods in order to improve a program's evidence over time. **IMPORTANT:** The collection of evidence is being implemented across state workforce grant programs. The evidence tier approach recognizes the different capabilities between potential program developers and grant applicants at this time. Applicants that do not have current performance data or evaluation reports as evidence that supports the proposed program design or intervention are encouraged to apply.

Complete the following three steps to ensure that this application meets the requirements to be considered under the appropriate evidence tier for the program:

1. Determine the appropriate tier using the guiding questions below.
2. Select the evidence tier on page x.
3. Provide documentation as required to support evaluation of the application for the evidence tier selected.

Evidence tiers are defined to support the assessment of common factors of program success. Documentation helps evaluators determine bonus (incentive) points in scoring and understand the strength of each applicant's evidence base and the likelihood that the proposed intervention will lead to the outputs and outcomes identified in the narrative descriptions in the main body of the application.

Determining, Selecting, and Providing Documentation for an Evidence Tier

Please review the following questions, select the tier that best represents the program that you are proposing in this grant application. Next, complete the appropriate data chart and requirement of the evidence tier selected. **SELECT ONLY ONE TIER by using the decision tree below.**

1. Is the program developed internally, or is it based on the program design of another program or organization?
Yes, it is developed internally. Go to Question 2.
No, it is based on the program design of another program. Go to Question 5.
2. Is the program new or has it been offered in an essentially consistent and comparable way in past years?
Yes, the program is new.
➤ Because the program is new and developed internally, select the New Program Tier.
No, the program has been offered in past years. Go to Question 3.
3. In prior years, has data been collected on the outputs and outcomes of the program? Please refer to the Performance Chart on page X for the relevant data sets.
Yes, data has been collected on the performance metrics. Go to Question 4.
No, data has not been collected on the performance metrics.

- Because the program has been delivered previously but data was not collected on the performance metrics, select the Experience Program Tier.

4. Has an evaluation of your program been reviewed by [DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\)/Other Entity](#)?

Yes, a program evaluation has been submitted to CLEAR/Other Entity.

- If the program evaluation received a "high" rating and demonstrated both a positive and meaningful outcome and there is another review from CLEAR or Other Entity that supports the same, select the High Evidence Program Tier, and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High or Moderate Evidence Program Tier to reference the CLEAR/Other Entity Review Study.
- If the program evaluation received a "moderate" rating and demonstrated both a positive and meaningful outcome, select the Moderate Evidence Program Tier and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High or Moderate Evidence Program Tier to reference the CLEAR/Other Entity Review Study.
- If the program evaluation has not yet been reviewed, or received the "low" rating, select the Performance Program Tier, submit performance metrics, and complete the Performance Chart.

No, a program evaluation has not been reviewed by CLEAR/Other Entity listed on page X.

- Select the Performance Program Tier and submit performance metrics and requirements in the Performance Chart.

FOR PROGRAMS THAT ARE IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM DESIGN OF ANOTHER PROGRAM AND EXPECT SIMILAR PERFORMANCE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES ONLY:

5. Is the design of your program essentially similar to the program design and theory of change of the original program that this application proposes to implement?

Yes, our program will be essentially similar and have high fidelity to the original. Go to Question 6.

No, our program will incorporate significant changes from the model program.

- Because your program is not a high-fidelity implementation of an existing program, select the New Program Tier.

6. Was an evaluation of the original program reviewed by CLEAR/Other Entity listed on page X and there is another study from CLEAR or Other Entity that supports the same, and demonstrated both a positive and meaningful outcome?

Yes, an evaluation was reviewed by CLEAR/Other Entity and there is a second study that supports the same.

- If the program evaluation received a "high" rating, select the High Evidence Program Tier, and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High Evidence Program Tier to reference the CLEAR/ Other Entity Review Study.
- If the program evaluation received a "moderate" rating, select the Moderate Evidence

Program Tier and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the Moderate Evidence Program Tier to reference the CLEAR/ Other Entity Review Study.

- If the evaluation has not yet been reviewed or received the “low” rating, select the Performance Program Tier and complete the Performance Chart.

No, an evaluation was not submitted. Go to question 7.

7. Do you have performance data or a detailed evaluation from the original program?

Yes, we have performance data from the original program.

- Select the Performance Program Tier and complete the Performance Chart as completely as possible with data from the original program.

No, we do not have performance metrics data from the original program.

- Because your program does not have data from the original program, select the Experience Program Tier.

Evidence Tier Selection

High Evidence Program Tier

If your program qualifies as a High Evidence Program, please check this box and complete the required documentation of evidence chart.

Moderate Evidence Program Tier

If your program qualifies as a Moderate Evidence Program, please check this box and complete the required documentation of evidence chart.

Performance Program Tier

If your program qualifies as a Performance Program, please check this box and complete the required documentation of evidence representing at least two years of program implementation in the Performance Chart.

Experience Program Tier

If your program qualifies as an Experience Program, please check this box. No outcome data or documentation of evidence is required; however, anecdotal evidence such as opinion surveys and testimonials on services provided for at least one year prior to the application must be provided.

New Program Tier

If your program qualifies as a new program, please check this box. No outcome data, documentation of evidence, or anecdotal evidence is required; however, anecdotal evidence of success in similar interventions may be provided to support the proposed activities.

Documentation of Evidence, Based on Evidence Tier Selection

For High or Moderate Evidence Program Tiers [MAKE FILLABLE FORM when saved as .PDF]

Complete this chart to reference the CLEAR or Other Entity (listed below) reviewed study of the comparable, replicable program. Only studies that have been evaluated by Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) or by an Other Entity listed below may be used to support a proposed program. **Attach the complete study to your application.**

High Evidence or Moderate Evidence: STUDY number 1

Evaluation Source (from list below)	<i>Please list name of entity</i>
Study #1 name:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
Study Full Citation:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
Findings:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
CLEAR/Other Entity Causal Evidence Rating:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
Key elements of the study program that will be implemented:	
Elements of the study program that will be changed or not implemented, and why these changes do not affect the validity of the comparison:	
Data to be collected to compare outcomes between the study and proposed programs:	
Appropriateness of proposed geography and population to be served.	

Evaluation Reviewed Study Sources

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)

https://clear.dol.gov/study_database

Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse

<https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/studies>

CrimeSolutions

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/advsearch.aspx>

High Evidence: STUDY number 2

Evaluation Source (from list below)	<i>Please list name of entity</i>
Study #2 name:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
Study Full Citation:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
Findings:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
CLEAR/Other Entity Causal Evidence Rating:	<i>Please copy/paste from the CLEAR/Other Entity.</i>
Key elements of the study program that will be implemented:	
Elements of the study program that will be changed or not implemented, and why these changes do not affect the validity of the comparison:	
Data to be collected to compare outcomes between the study and proposed programs:	
Appropriateness of proposed geography and population to be served.	

Evaluation Reviewed Study Sources

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)

https://clear.dol.gov/study_database

Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse

<https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/studies>

CrimeSolutions

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/advsearch.aspx>

For the Performance Program Tier

The Performance Program Tier that you have selected must be supported by data and information showing that the program creates an intended change in participants, and that participants show a positive outcome following the program. Fill out the chart below as completely as possible with the data of previously implemented programs. Historical output and outcome data must represent at least two years

of program implementation, either directly collected or from the similar program being used as evidence. Also, provide information that will support demonstration of your organization’s ability to manage grant programs to significant and strong outcomes such as an evaluation from this or a similar program to support the design and anticipated outputs and outcomes. Include that information as an attachment to the application. You may include information from previous grants, programs, and services. Please group your information first by funding source or type of grant. Include information from previous grants, and list at least two years or more of data. An example follows:

EXAMPLE: PERFORMANCE CHART

HISTORY		TRAINING DATA			EMPLOYMENT DATA					WAGE DATA	
History of Initiative or Intervention (i.e. Grant, Program, Service)	Year	Number of Participants	Number of Completers	% of completers	Number of Industry based certifications	Number employed at 6 months (Q2)	% employed at 6 months	Number employed at 12 months (Q 3 & Q4)	% employed at 12 months	Average wage increase (Q2, Q3, Q4)	Average wage increase %
<i>Example</i>											
Texas Talent Connection Grant	2018	100	90	90%	90	89	89%	95	95%	\$5.00 hr	20%
Youth Build Program	2017	105	76	72%	76	60	83%	65	85%	\$3.5 per hr	15%

Use the example provided to complete the following chart as accurately as possible:

- Initiatives and interventions should have a direct relationship to the deliverables and targets in the proposal.
- Each data entry must be expressed as a number – either actual and/or percentage.
- If any of the deliverables are not relevant/applicable to the listed activity, note N/A.
- Please list all initiatives and interventions chronologically, by year.

PERFORMANCE CHART [MAKE FILLABLE CHART once saved as .PDF]

HISTORY		TRAINING DATA			EMPLOYMENT DATA					WAGE DATA	
History of Initiative or Intervention (i.e. Grant, Program, Service)	Year	Number of Participants	Number of Completers	% of completers	Number of Industry based certifications	Number employed at 6 months (Q2)	% employed at 6 months	Number employed at 12 months (Q 3 & Q4)	% employed at 12 months	Average wage increase (Q2, Q3, Q4)	Average wage increase %

Previous Evaluation for the Performance Program Tier

Do you have an evaluation performed by an external entity from this or a similar program to support the design and anticipated outcomes?

No

Yes

- *Include the external evaluation as an attachment to the application.*

For the Experience Program Tier

To qualify for bonus points under the Experience Program Tier, please provide anecdotal participant success stories or other testimonials and results of any satisfaction survey of participants that demonstrate the effectiveness of the services provided for at least one year prior to grant application.

[INSERT TEXT BOX AND INSTRUCTIONS]

For the New Program Tier

New programs have no evidence of effectiveness and have not been evaluated; however, these programs are eligible for funding and are encouraged to apply. Explain why the proposed program will achieve the specific outcomes proposed in the main body of the application and demonstrate that there is capacity to collect sufficient data to track outcomes from the program.

[INSERT TEXT BOX AND INSTRUCTIONS]

Evidence Tier Bonus Scoring—Information for Applicants

Bonus points are earned based on the level of the evidence continuum shown in the application. Points are earned as follows:

- High Evidence Program Tier: The study provided has been reviewed and the proposed program is comparable to the study. CLEAR/Other Entity rating confirms the study achieved a high rating and demonstrated positive meaningful outcomes.
Points given: 10
- Moderate Evidence Program Tier: The study provided has been reviewed and the proposed program is comparable to the study. CLEAR/Other Entity rating confirms the study achieved a moderate rating and demonstrated positive meaningful outcomes.
Points given: 6
- Performance Program Tier: Data has been collected sufficiently for either employment, credential or wage outputs and outcomes based on the Performance Chart. Provide as much data as possible for at least two recent prior years.
Points given: 3
- Experience Program Tier: The program has no performance data to consider as evidence. Anecdotal evidence, such as an opinion survey and testimonials on services provided for at least one year prior to the application, must be provided.
Points given: 1
- New Program Tier: The program has no performance data or history of services provided; therefore, the application cannot be considered for bonus scoring. Anecdotal evidence of success in similar interventions may be included.
Points given: 0