

Best Practices in Demonstrating Evidence

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Session Outline



AmeriCorps' approach to evidence

NOFO evidence base criteria

Evidence tiers

Evidence quality

Tips for applicants

Resources

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Why is Evidence Important?



Achieve a shared goal of offering communities effective solutions that address their needs

Ensure that federal dollars are invested wisely

Inform continuous improvement of programs

- Change what isn't working
- Do more of what is working

Evidence in AmeriCorps Grant Applications



Proposed service activities (interventions) must be supported by evidence

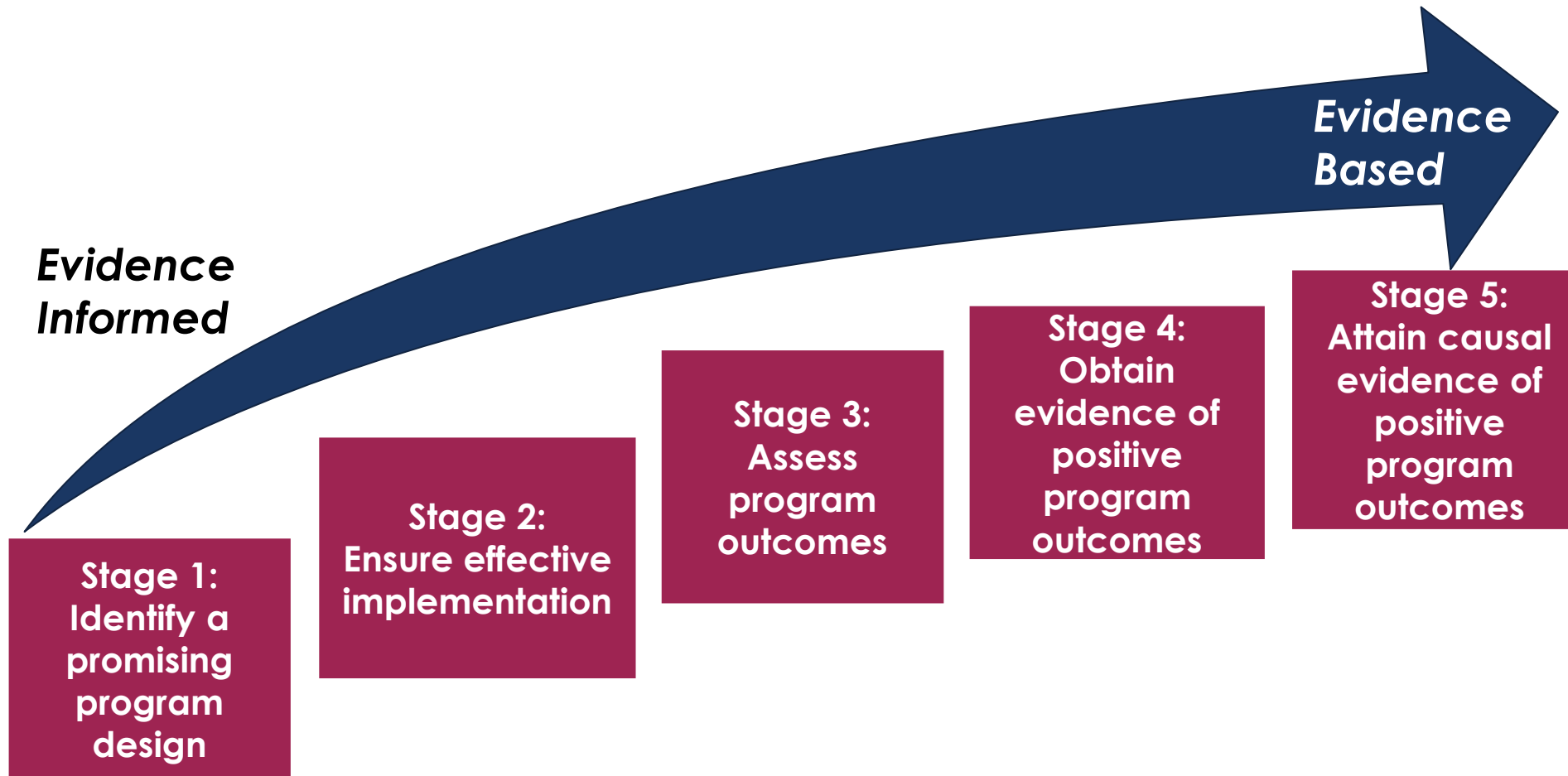
Evidence-informed:

- Uses available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design/implementation
- Specific intervention described in application has not been rigorously evaluated

Evidence-based:

- Intervention described in application has been rigorously evaluated and demonstrated positive results

Building Evidence of Effectiveness



Same Intervention



Evidence-based applicants must provide evidence for the **same intervention** described in the application

“**Same intervention**” means all of these areas must match:

- Characteristics of beneficiary population
- Characteristics of population delivering intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of intervention, including all key components
- Setting in which intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of intervention

Clarifying Program Design



To assess the evidence supporting an application, core components of the intervention must be clearly described in **both** the application and the submitted evaluation report(s):

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention, including all key components and activities
- Context in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

NOFO Evidence Base Criteria



Evidence Tier (12 points)

Based on:

- the relative strength of each applicant's evidence base
- the likelihood that the proposed intervention will lead to outcomes identified in the logic model

Evidence Quality (8 points)

Based on:

- The quality of the applicant's evidence
- The extent to which the evidence supports the proposed program design
- Exact evidence quality criteria depend on evidence tier

Evidence Tiers



Pre-Preliminary

Preliminary

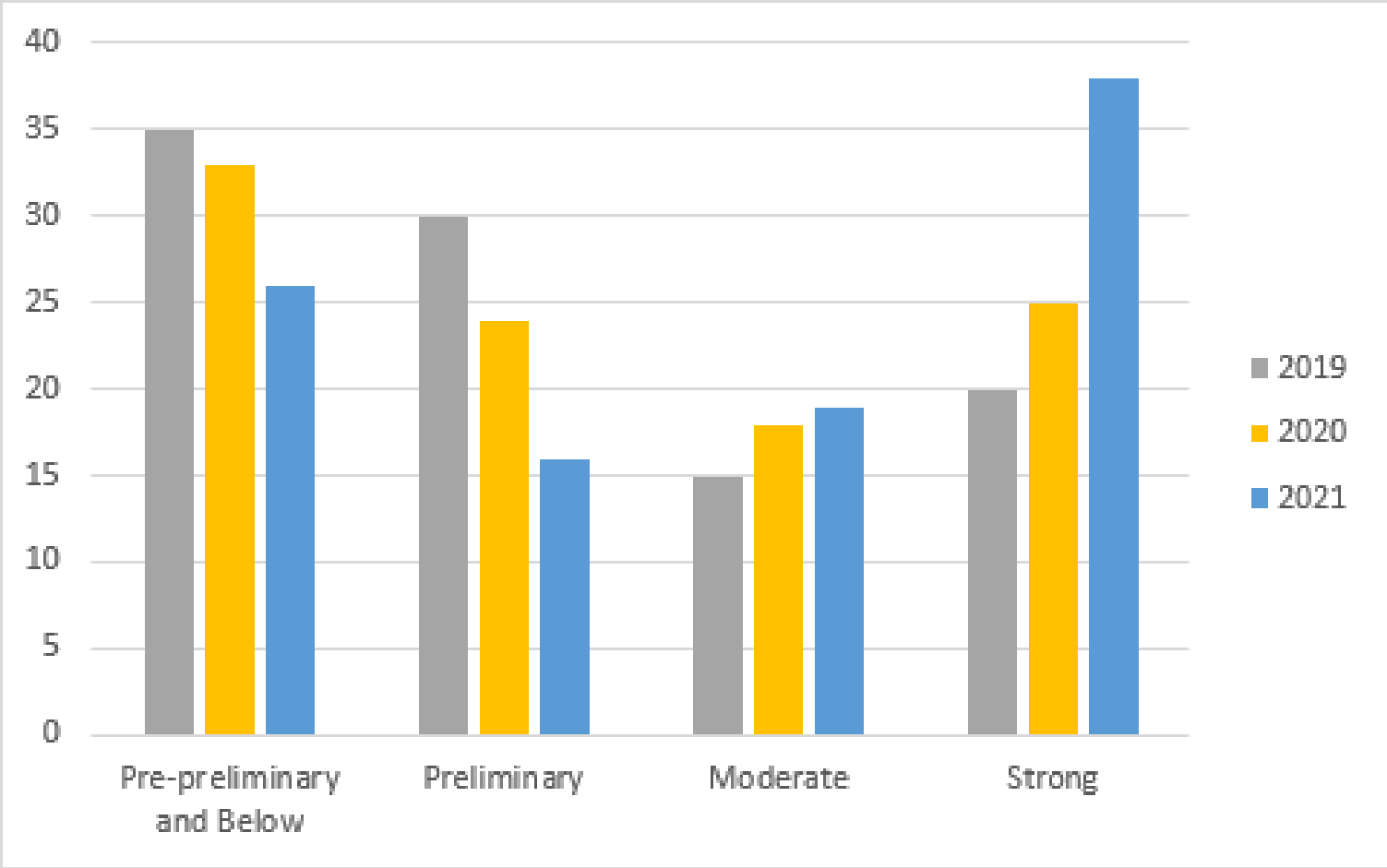
Moderate

Strong

Defined in *Mandatory Supplemental Information*



Evidence Tiers: Percent of Awarded Applicants, by Year



Evidence Tiers: Pre-preliminary



Applicant has **not submitted** any outcome/impact evaluations of the intervention described in the application

- Applicant must **describe in the application narrative** how program design is evidence-informed
- Applicants may also cite prior performance measure data

Pre-Preliminary Evidence Tier Example



Applicant's *Ready to Read* program provides small-group tutoring services to 5th-grade students for 30 minutes, twice a week. The program is adapted from Famous Tutoring Program's successful approach, which used the same curriculum to provide one-on-one tutoring sessions for 30 minutes every day. A randomized control trial conducted last year found that students in the Famous Tutoring Program increased their scores on standardized tests by 40% more than the control group.

Additional documents: none

Evidence Tiers: Preliminary



Applicant has **submitted outcome evaluation report(s)** (can be internal or independent evaluations)

- Comparison group may be present, but is not randomly assigned or statistically matched

Reports evaluated the **same intervention** described in the application

Reports show **positive results** on one or more key desired outcomes in the applicant's logic model

Preliminary Evidence Tier Example



Applicant's Ready to Read program provides small-group tutoring services to 5th-grade students for 30 minutes, twice a week. Based on pre- and post-assessments administered by the Ready to Read program last year, 350 students gained at least 1.5 grade levels in reading mastery. The effect sizes were moderate and represent a positive result.

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted one internal evaluation report of the Ready to Read program describing the results of the pre-post assessment.

Evidence Tiers: Moderate



Applicant has **submitted impact evaluation report(s)** (must be independent evaluations)

- Experimental (RCT) or quasi-experimental (QED) study designs
- Ability to generalize the findings beyond the study context may be **limited** (e.g., single-site)

Reports evaluated the **same intervention** described in the application

Reports show **positive results** on one or more key desired outcomes in the applicant's logic model

Moderate Evidence Tier Example



The applicant's *Ready to Read* program uses the same curriculum, program design, and dosage as the Famous Tutoring Program and is serving similar students. Based on a quasi-experimental evaluation conducted by Famous Tutoring Program at one of their program sites, students gained on average 1.3 grade levels on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment, compared to just 0.8 grade levels for the comparison group. The study was conducted by an independent (external) evaluator. The results were significant ($p < 0.05$).

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted one independent evaluation report from the Famous Tutoring Program describing the results of the QED study. The evaluation was published two years ago.

Evidence Tiers: Strong



Applicant has **submitted impact evaluation report(s)** (must be independent evaluations)

- Experimental (RCT) or quasi-experimental (QED) study designs
- Results are attributable to the intervention and **can be generalized beyond the study context** (e.g., multi-site evaluation or multiple evaluations from different sites/populations)

Reports evaluated the **same intervention** described in the application

Reports show **consistently positive results** on one or more key desired outcomes in the applicant's logic model

Strong Evidence Tier Example



Applicant's *Ready to Read* program provides tutoring services in 25 states across the country. The program hired an independent evaluator to conduct a randomized controlled trial in 16 states, including both rural and urban sites as well as student populations with different ethnic/racial backgrounds. The evaluation found that students in the *Ready to Read* program outperformed students in the control group on 3 specific literacy skills addressed by the program. The results were statistically significant with Moderate effect sizes. Subgroup analysis showed positive impacts in both rural and urban settings and across multiple ethnic/racial groups.

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted one independent evaluation report from the *Ready to Read* program describing the results of the RCT study, which was published three years ago.

Submitting Evaluation Reports/Studies



Who should submit reports or studies?

- Any applicant wishing to be considered for Preliminary, Moderate or Strong evidence → Submit up to 2 reports/studies (or 3 if evaluation report required)
- Any applicant required to submit an evaluation report to meet evaluation requirements → Submit evaluation report

Required evaluation report can be submitted in addition to the 2 other studies (up to 3 total)

Reports or studies submitted for evidence base consideration **MUST** be of the **same intervention** proposed in the application

Submitting Additional Documents



If multiple evaluation briefs/reports/studies are submitted, the most recent (as measured by the date of completion or publication) will be reviewed first, and **any documents submitted beyond the allowable number will not be reviewed.**

Submit Evaluation Reports in **Microsoft Word**. Include

- A **title page** with the AmeriCorps grant number for the project that was evaluated
- The **name of the project**
- The **date of completion** of the report

****If any of this required information is missing, the applicant may not receive credit for meeting their evaluation requirements.****

Evidence Quality Criteria: Pre-Preliminary Evidence Tier



The applicant uses **relevant** evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies, to **inform** their proposed program design

The described evidence is relatively **recent**, preferably from the last six years

The evidence described by the applicant indicates a **meaningful positive effect** on program beneficiaries or AmeriCorps members in at least one key outcome of interest

****Based on content of application narrative****

****Review the NOFO for any footnotes pertaining to Evidence Quality criteria, as evidence thresholds differ slightly for each competition****

Evidence Quality Criteria: Preliminary/Moderate/Strong Evidence Tier



The submitted reports are of **satisfactory methodological quality and rigor** for the type of evaluation conducted (e.g., adequate sample size and statistical power, internal and/or external validity, appropriate use of control or comparison groups, etc.)

The submitted reports describe evaluations that were conducted relatively **recently**, preferably within the last six years

The submitted reports show a **meaningful and significant positive effect** on program beneficiaries or AmeriCorps members in at least one key outcome of interest

****Based on submitted reports/studies****

Evaluation Plans



Additional evaluation-related item that must be submitted with the grant application:

Item	Who Submits
Evaluation Plan	Recompeting Applicants

- Not reviewed until after funding decisions are made
- Evaluation plans must be approved by AmeriCorps within the first year of the grant

<https://americorps.gov/funding-opportunity/fy-2024-americorps-state-national-grants>

Funding Announcement, Mandatory Supplemental Information, and Application Instructions

[2024 AmeriCorps State and National Notice of Funding Opportunity \(PDF\)](#)
[2024 AmeriCorps State and National Mandatory Supplemental Information \(PDF\)](#)
[2024 AmeriCorps State and National Application Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

Performance Measure Instructions

[2024 AmeriCorps State and National Performance Measure Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

Evaluation Plan Template

[AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Plan Template \(DOC\)](#)

Tips for Applicants



Read the NOFO and Mandatory Supplemental Information carefully

In the application narrative, describe the full body of evidence that exists for your program:

- Summarize the study design and key findings from any submitted reports
- Describe other supporting evidence, for example, past performance measure data or other research

Describe how the intervention in the submitted report(s) is the same as the one proposed in the application

Do not submit more than the allowable number of studies (either 2 or 3 depending on applicant's evaluation requirements)

Select high quality evidence: **rigorous, relevant, recent, meaningful**

Resources



Notice of Funding Opportunity

Mandatory Supplemental Information

Evaluation Resources on AmeriCorps website

[Evaluation Core Curriculum](#)

[Best Practices in Writing an Evaluation Plan](#)

[Best Practices in Evaluation Reporting](#)

AmeriCorps [Evidence Exchange](#)

Email AmeriCorpsGrants@cns.gov with any questions about evidence base criteria for competitive grant applications

Resources



Institute of Education Sciences' National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance [What Works Clearinghouse](#)

Department of Health and Human Services [Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#)

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

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Questions

