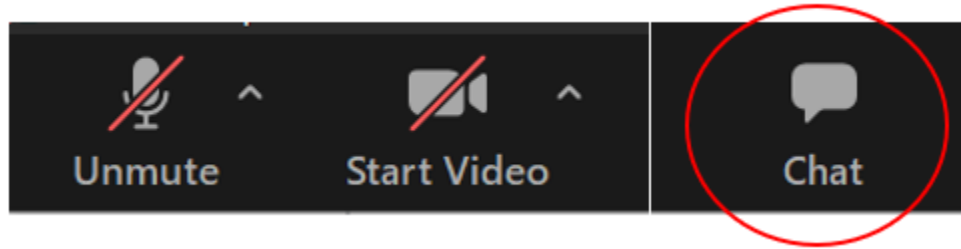


Deepening Our Understanding of What it Takes to Scale an Effective Program

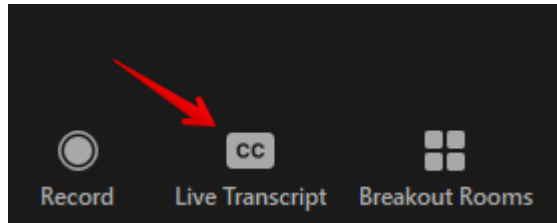
November 3, 2021

Office of Research and Evaluation (Evaluation@cns.gov)

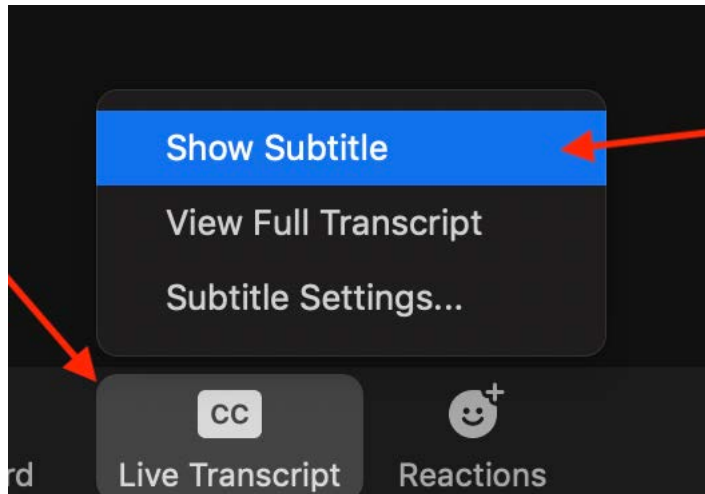
Welcome!



Please be advised that all lines have been muted to avoid background noises and to allow for greater engagement.



Please use chat feature to submit any questions throughout the presentations. Select *Everyone* when submitting your questions. We will read your questions for you.



Spanish captions are available. To activate closed caption please select click on captions and select show subtitles.



Welcome Remarks

Mary Hyde, PhD

Director, Office of Research and Evaluation
AmeriCorps



Introductory Remarks

Diana Epstein, PhD

Evidence Team Lead

Office of Management and Budget



Scaling Evidence-Based Models (SEBM) Project and SCALER Tool: An Introduction

Lily Zandniapour, PhD
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AmeriCorps

Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

AmeriCorps Evidence Journey



- The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (Public Law 111-13, enacted April 21, 2009)
 - Social Innovation Fund 2010-2016 (Tiered-Evidence-Based Grantmaking): 100% of grant funds supported evidence-based models and rigorous evaluation requirements were implemented
 - AmeriCorps State & National implemented evaluations requirements based on funding levels in the grant application process and rolled out Evidence-Based Planning Grants
 - AmeriCorps Seniors offered Augmentation Grants to grantees that selected evidence-based models for implementation
 - AmeriCorps provided evaluation training and technical assistance to support evidence building

AmeriCorps
Taking Service Grants to the Next (Evidence) Level

WHAT IS EVIDENCE?

At the heart of all AmeriCorps programs is evidence – the data and reporting that measures program performance. The stronger the evidence, the greater confidence that the program is effective.

AmeriCorps and its programs such as AmeriCorps State and National (ASN) provide strategic grants to organizations that engage in service to address local and national challenges. ASN grants build organizational capacity and expand effective programming, while also assessing program performance across the evidence continuum. This helps AmeriCorps maximize the impact of federal dollars.

WHY DOES EVIDENCE MATTER?

Through strategic grantmaking and collecting evidence, AmeriCorps:

- Measures program effectiveness and how populations are impacted by service.
- Grows the list of effective programs with proven outcomes by cataloging successes.
- Demonstrates efficient use of federal funding by investing in program models with real impact.
- Reaches more people by providing insight into how to replicate and scale effective programs.
- Increases the understanding of national service and its role in addressing national and local challenges.

HOW IS EVIDENCE APPLIED TO AMERICORPS?

In 2021, 68% of ASN competitive grant funding was invested in programs with moderate to strong evidence of effectiveness.*

ASN has increasingly invested in what works by supporting programs with moderate to strong levels of evidence:

Year	Percentage of ASN Competitive Funding Awarded to Projects with Moderate or Strong Level of Evidence
2017	29%
2018	37%
2019	41%
2020	51%
2021	68%

*Evidence produced by study designs that support causal impact attributable to the intervention program model.

For more information, contact the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation at evaluation@cns.gov.

Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

Project Background



- Scaling Evidence-Based Models Project (SEBM) was implemented in partnership with Mathematica (2016 through 2021)
- Purpose: To deepen the agency's understanding of the most effective program innovations and the knowledge base on scaling them
- Opportunity: Be more intentional/strategic about use of evidence to inform our work and how best to leverage national service in solving pressing social issues
- Vision/Goal: Scaling of AmeriCorps' most effective supported solutions nationwide & use of national service to facilitate that growth & impact


Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

Key Questions of Interest



- Which AmeriCorps-supported interventions demonstrate strongest evidence of effectiveness?
- How do AmeriCorps-funded organizations define scaling?
- How do organizations scale effective interventions?
- How can scaling of effective interventions be best supported?

Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative Components



EVIDENCE SNAPSHOT
Scaling Evidence-Based Models
Office of Research and Evaluation | [AmeriCorps.gov](https://ameriCorps.gov)

Scaling Evidence-Based Models (SEBM)

AmeriCorps' emphasis on evidence is meant to support innovation, improvement, and learning. Our agency's intent is to integrate the use of evidence and opportunities for further learning into all activities. Where an evidence base is lacking, our goal is for evidence to be developed through systematic analysis. Where evidence of positive impact exists, it will be used to encourage replication, expansion and adaptation of effective national service models to reach more people in underserved communities.

Scaling Approaches
Expansion: Extends the intervention to more people in the same target population in the same location
Replication: Extends the intervention to the same target population in a different location
Adaptation: Extends the intervention to a different target population in either the same or different location or modifies the intervention for the same population in either the same or different location

With a focus on the use and expansion of effective solutions, AmeriCorps' Office of Research and Evaluation initiated a multi-year research project called Scaling Evidence-Based Models (SEBM) to:

- Discover the AmeriCorps-funded program models with the strongest base of evidence,
- Illuminate the processes that grantees use to scale an evidence-based intervention, and
- Develop recommendations that support the scale up and replication of models and interventions that work. This Evaluation project not only researched, but translated that work into applied assistance guides, checklists and an interactive virtual SCALER Tool for AmeriCorps staff, grantees, sponsors, State Service Commissions and other community based organizations.

The SCALER Tool (<https://ameriCorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/evaluation-resources/scaler>) is an interactive learning resource that utilizes technology to provide state of the field guidance that helps not only our AmeriCorps awarded sponsors and grantees, but all community based organizations

AmeriCorps, a federal agency, brings people together to tackle the country's most pressing challenges, through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities. AmeriCorps helps make service to others a cornerstone of our national culture. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://ameriCorps.gov).

AmeriCorps.gov 1

- Document/database review including a study of previous systematic reviews of evaluation reports
- Yearly meta-synthesis and meta-analysis of existing and emerging evidence-based models
- Yearly review and analysis of scaling plans and grant applications
- Three in-depth process studies of selected grantees implementing and scaling an Evidence-Based Program and a cross site analysis
- Development and engagement of a Field Workgroup
- Development of policy & practice guides/technical assistance materials on scaling



Mathematica Research Team



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Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

Agenda



- Overview of the Scaling Checklists: Assessing your Level of Evidence and Readiness (SCALER) tool
- Discuss the SCALER framework and components
- Demonstration of the SCALER

Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative



Overview of the SCALER

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What is successful scaling?



- Successfully scaling effective interventions means:
 - Maintaining or surpassing the beneficial impacts of an intervention
 - Helping to improve lives for larger numbers of individuals and communities
- Organizations can maximize this potential by:
 - Ensuring the interventions have evidence of improving participant outcomes
 - Having intervention-level and organization-level procedures and processes to successfully scale



Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

SCALER overview



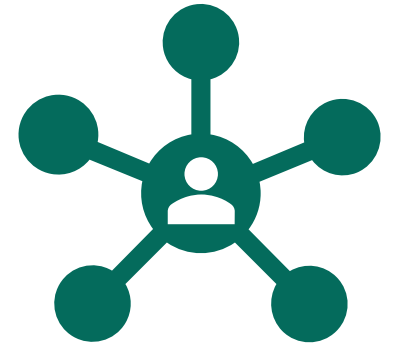
- The Scaling Checklists: Assessing your Level of Evidence and Readiness (SCALER) tool is a framework and set of checklists organizations can use to increase their likelihood of successfully scaling an intervention
- The primary goal is to support organizations in getting ready to scale their interventions by helping them to:
 - Identify or build the evidence needed for scaling an effective intervention
 - Identify the intervention-level and organization-level procedures and processes that will enable successful scaling
- Funders can also use the SCALER to communicate expectations to grantees about scaling readiness and inform technical assistance or training

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Who completes the SCALER



- The SCALER is a tool that can be completed online:
<https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/evaluation-resources/scaler>
- To complete the SCALER, organizations need:
 - Familiarity with any research studies on the intervention
 - Knowledge of the organization's support for building evidence
 - Understanding of the intervention's activities, target population, and implementation supports, and of the organization's culture and infrastructure
- Recommend designating one person or role to be the SCALER owner who completes the tool and seeks input from other organization personnel



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Action planning with the SCALER



- The online tool will help identify areas in which organizations are more and less ready to scale
- Organizations can take steps to build capacity in areas of growth
- Organizations can identify realistic and short-term goals to gauge progress
- Organizations can revisit the SCALER regularly to assess scaling readiness



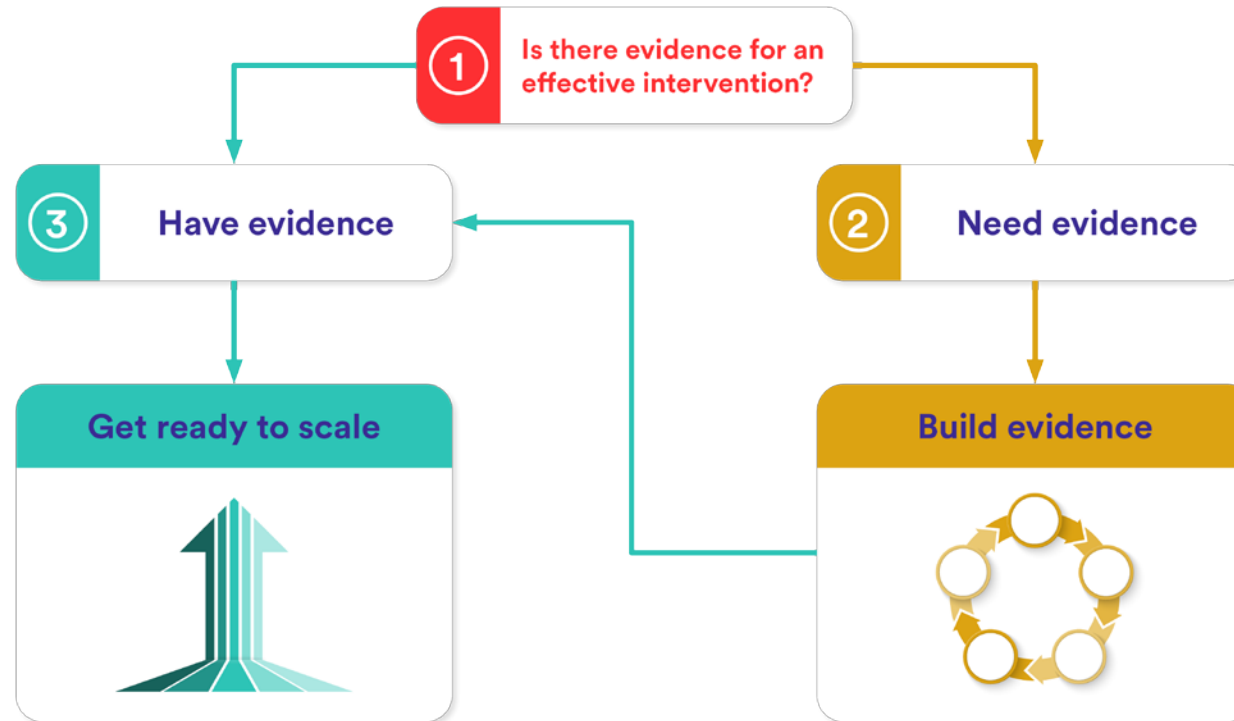
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The SCALER framework and components

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The SCALER Framework



Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

Step 1: Identifying evidence of effectiveness



- Understand what rigorous research is
- Determine whether an intervention has research showing that it is effective
- Learn about the context or environment in which the intervention was evaluated

Standards to identify effective interventions

An **independent evaluator** external to the organization conducts the research.

The **study design uses a comparison group** (a counterfactual) to provide evidence about participant outcomes in the absence of the intervention.

The research design enables the evaluators to attribute outcomes to the intervention instead of other factors (**no confounds**).

The research design:

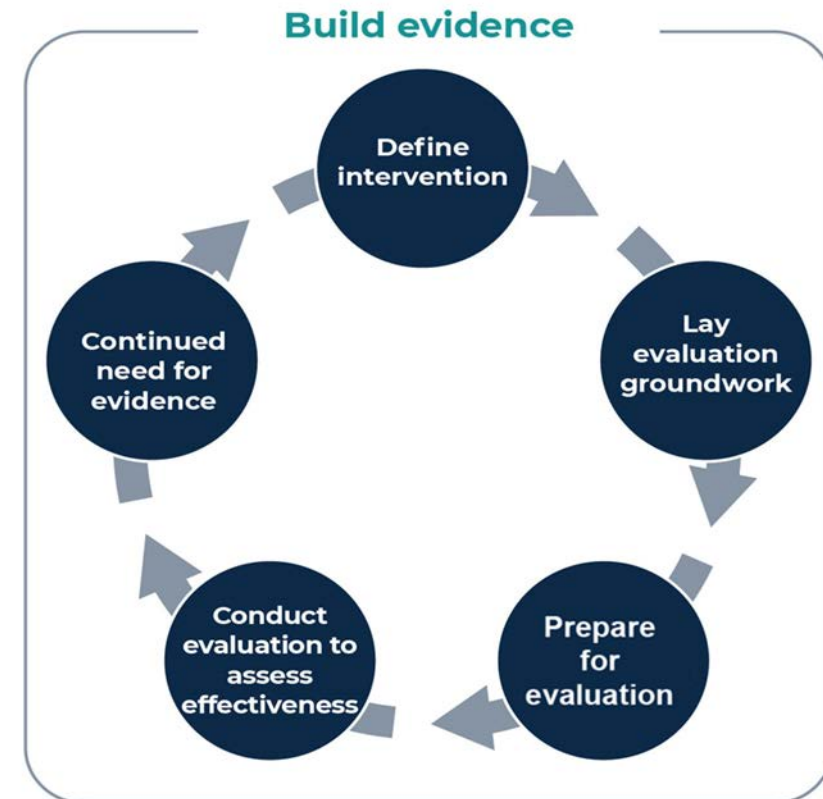
- Has few people leaving the study groups (**low attrition**)
- Does not switch people to different study groups (**no reassignment**)
- Has final treatment and comparison groups used in the outcomes analysis that were similar at the beginning of the study (**baseline equivalence**)

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Step 2: Building evidence of effectiveness



- A well-articulated theory of change is needed for a well-defined intervention
- Stakeholder consensus should have a common understanding and s about research and evaluation
- Financial resources and personnel should be available
- Organizations conduct rigorous evaluation and determine if intervention improved participant outcomes
- Continue process if further research is needed



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Step 3: Getting ready to scale



- Five conditions can facilitate scaling readiness
- Maintaining fidelity after scaling helps an intervention generate the same outcomes that occurred before scaling

Establishing a readiness to scale

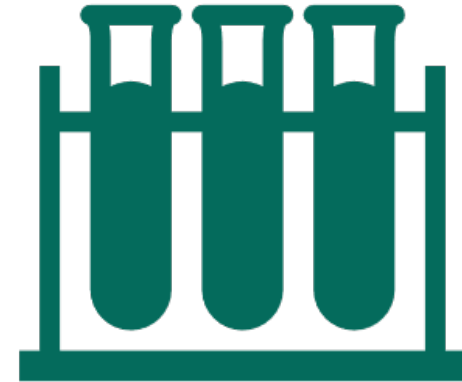


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Step 3: Having a well-specified intervention



- A well-specified intervention clearly identifies the core components critical for achieving beneficial outcomes after scaling
 - Clearly identified core activities
 - Clearly defined personnel roles
 - Clearly defined setting
 - Clearly defined completion



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Step 3: Having a well-defined target population



- When scaling, offering an intervention to the same population for whom the intervention was designed and shown to be effective leads to the highest likelihood of success
- The population must be well-defined in terms of the characteristics people must have to participate in the intervention



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Step 3: Establishing implementation supports



- Six supports can help an organization implement with fidelity:
 - A monitoring system
 - Performance goals
 - Continuous quality improvement processes
 - Preservice and in-service training
 - Communication systems
 - Data systems



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Step 3: Having an enabling context



- An organization's culture should support innovation, learning, and improvement during scaling
- Two components will enable scaling:
 - Support by organization leaders and key stakeholders
 - A culture of innovation and learning



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Step 3: Establishing an implementation infrastructure



- An organization's infrastructure should ensure sufficient resources to support fidelity during scaling
- Infrastructure should include sufficient:
 - Financial and human resources
 - Materials and physical space



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Demonstration of the SCALER

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Hypothetical program for demonstration



- Flag Football for Fitness (F4) seeks to combat childhood obesity, promote healthy eating and exercise habits, and foster positive youth development
- Students improve football skills while learning about healthy dietary and exercise habits
- F4 works with students in grades K–8 at schools receiving Title I funds in urban districts throughout the country
- Sessions are 90 minutes per day, 3 days a week, for 12 weeks during the school year and are conducted in a face-to-face in a group format
- Site coordinators, who have at least 5 years of experience and at least a bachelor's degree, oversee administrative and programmatic functions at each school
- A coach, with demonstrated experience working with youth, runs the sessions at each school

Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative



Questions and Discussion

Mathematica Research Team and
AmeriCorps' Office of Research and Evaluation

Scaling Evidence-Based Models Initiative

For more information



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Thank You!

- Recording will be available at AmeriCorps Impact Webinars
- Visit the AmeriCorps Scaler Tool on the AmeriCorps Evaluation Resources Page

For more information on AmeriCorps Research and Evaluation: evaluation@cns.gov