

CNCS Requirements for Evidence and Evaluation

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2/27/2018



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Learning Objectives

- **By the end of this presentation, you will understand CNCS requirements related to:**
 - Evaluation plans
 - Evaluation reports and learning memos
 - Evidence base

Why Does CNCS Care about Evidence and Evaluation?

- **To encourage programs to test whether programs are effective, and what makes them effective (“prove”)**
- **To inform continuous improvement of programs (“improve”)**
 - Change what isn’t working
 - Do more of what is working
- **To ensure that Federal dollars are invested wisely (i.e., in programs that will make a difference)**



Evaluation Plans





Evaluation Plan Requirements for ReCompeting Applicants

- **Recompeting applicants (i.e., those applying for their second or subsequent three-year cycle of funding) are required to submit an evaluation plan**
- **Evaluation plan describes your proposed evaluation activities for your upcoming cycle of funding**
 - What you are going to do in the future, not what you did in the past
- **The evaluation plan should be provided in the Evaluation Summary or Plan section of the application**
- **The evaluation plan is not scored as part of the application review, but it is required**



Evaluation Plan Requirements for ReCompeting Applicants

- **Large grantees (i.e., those that receive >\$500K in funding) are required to conduct an external impact evaluation**
- **Smaller grantees are required to conduct some type of evaluation, but these:**
 - Could be internal or external
 - Could be process or outcome

Data Collection Plan Requirements for First Time Applicants

- **First time applicants are not required to provide an evaluation plan, but they are required to provide a “data collection plan”**
 - This is a new requirement in 2018
- **The data collection plan should describe how you will collect and use data in your first grant cycle**
- **Like the evaluation plan, the data collection plan should be provided in the Evaluation Summary or Plan section of the application**
 - Like the evaluation plan, it is not scored

Evaluation Reports and Learning Memos



Evaluation Report/Learning Memo Requirements

- **Any applicants applying for their 3rd or subsequent three-year cycle of funding must provide with their application (1) an evaluation report and (2) a learning memo**
 - Learning memo is a new requirement in 2018
- **These documents must be submitted as attachments to the application**
- **An evaluation report describes your evaluation activities and findings from the funding cycle that you are finishing**
 - What you did in the past, not what you are doing in the future

Evaluation Report/Learning Memo Requirements

- **Evaluation report and learning memo have different purposes:**
 - Evaluation report describes your evaluation goals, methods, and findings
 - Learning memo focuses on how you will use findings from your evaluation to make improvements to your program
- **Neither the evaluation report nor the learning memo are scored, although CNCS checks to make sure they meet requirements**



Evidence Base



Evidence Base Requirements

- **“Evidence base” refers to how much evidence you provide that your program will work—that is, that your program will be effective at producing the intended outcomes in your logic model**
 - Evidence could be from your own evaluation, from an external evaluation someone else did of your program, or from other studies done of similar programs
- **Evidence base is scored, and is worth 12 points**
- **Evidence base information should be provided in the Evidence Base section of the application**

Review of Evidence Base

- **CNCS' review of evidence base has two different steps:**
 - 1) The reviewers assign each application an “evidence tier,” which is an assessment of how strong the evidence is that the applicant provided
 - 2) The reviewers then assign points based on four different criteria
- **This process has changed significantly in 2018**
 - In 2017, applicants were judged only by their evidence tiers; the four criteria are new this year

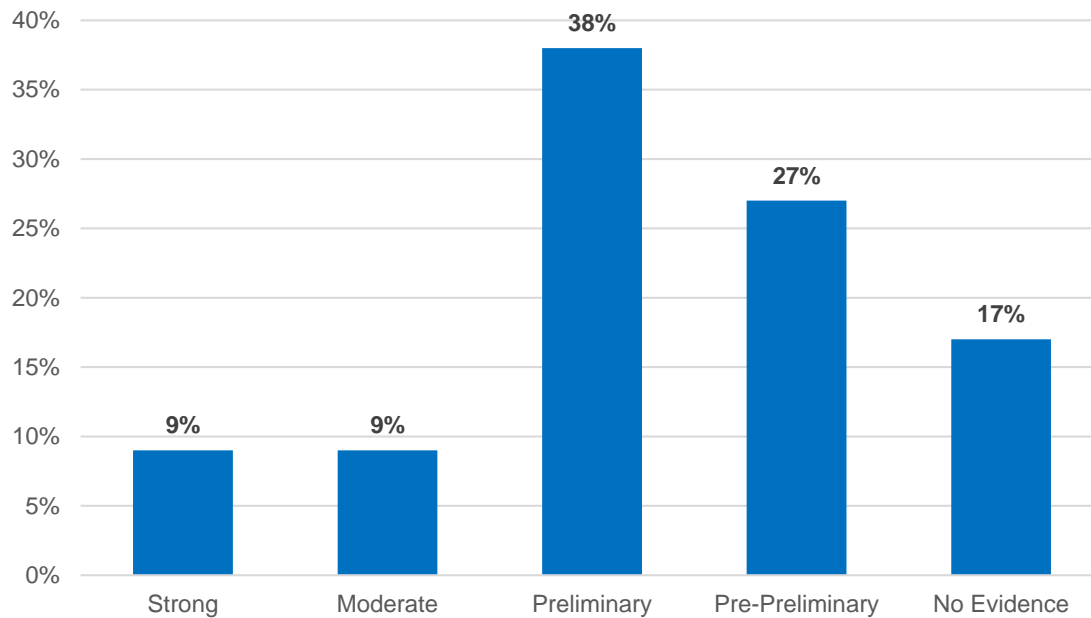
Evidence Tiers: A Summary

No Evidence	Pre-Preliminary	Preliminary	Moderate	Strong
No evidence provided	Results of process evaluation OR systematic data on some element of logic model	Evidence of program outcomes OR replication of a program with evidence of impact	Evidence of program impact	Evidence of program impact in multiple locations or with multiple populations

Your evidence tier is based on evidence that has already been collected, not on what you are planning to do in the future.

Don't Panic About Your Evidence Tier!

- In 2017, 44% of AmeriCorps grantees were rated as No Evidence or Pre-Preliminary
- Only 18% were rated as Moderate or Strong



Evidence Tier of 2017 AmeriCorps Grantees

Determining Evidence Tiers

- **You will be given a tier of moderate or high if:**
 - You have done a successful impact study of your program—that is, a study using experimental or quasi-experimental design
 - The intervention you are implementing is the same as the one that was studied, and you will be implementing with fidelity
 - The impact study was conducted by an independent external evaluator
- **If you do not submit a successful independent impact study of your program, then you cannot receive a tier rating of moderate or high.**

Determining Evidence Tiers: Moderate vs. High

- **Assuming that you have an impact evaluation of your program, you will be given a tier of high if:**
 - Your impact evaluation has tested your intervention nationally, regionally, or at the state level (e.g., multi-site) OR
 - You have several impact evaluations that have tested the effectiveness of your intervention in different locations or with different populations within a local geographic area.
- **If your impact evaluation evidence does not show that your program has worked in multiple locations or with multiple populations, you will be given a tier of moderate.**

Determining Evidence Tiers: Below Moderate

- **There are two different ways to achieve a tier of preliminary:**

- 1) You can cite the results of an outcome evaluation of your program (“Preliminary with Outcome”)
 - The outcome evaluation must use a “pre-post” design, or a “post-only” design with a comparison group
 - The outcome evaluation must include data in addition to what you would normally collect for performance measurement

OR...

Determining Evidence Tiers: Below Moderate

- There are two different ways to achieve a tier of preliminary:

- 2) You can cite the results of an independent impact evaluation supporting the intervention you are using (but not of your actual program*) (“Preliminary with Replication”)
 - An “impact” evaluation is an outcome evaluation that includes a comparison group
 - You must show how you plan to replicate this intervention with fidelity to the model that was tested in the impact evaluation

- If you do not do either of these, you will be assigned a tier of pre-preliminary or no evidence.

*Remember that if you have an independent impact evaluation of your actual program, you will be rated as moderate or high

Preliminary Tier with Replication

- **If you are replicating a program, in order to be rated as preliminary you must show that you are replicating:**
 - Characteristics of the beneficiary population
 - Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
 - Dosage (frequency and duration) and design of intervention
 - Training for providers
 - Context in which intervention is provided
- **You must also describe how you will ensure that you are implementing the intervention with fidelity**

Determining Evidence Tiers: Pre-Preliminary

- You will be given a tier of pre-preliminary if you do one or both of the following:
 - 1) Show that you have collected systematic and accurate data to test or track one or more of the following components of your logic model: community need, activities and services delivered (outputs), participation in the intervention by the target population (outputs), participant outcomes, including performance measurement data.
 - 2) Show that you have conducted a process evaluation assessing implementation of one or more interventions depicted in your logic model.
- If you do not show either of these, you will be assigned a tier of no evidence.

Evidence Base Standards

- **Unlike in previous years, points are not awarded based on which evidence tier you are in**
- **Instead, points are awarded based on the following four Evidence Base criteria:**
 - 1) Is the applicant's evidence of satisfactory quality?
 - 2) Are the applicant's data systems sufficient to yield high-quality process and outcome data?
 - 3) Does the applicant demonstrate adequate capacity to use process and outcome data to inform continuous learning and program improvement?
 - 4) Is the applicant's long-term research agenda aligned to its learning needs and evidence tier?

Explanation of Evidence Base Standards

- 1) Is the applicant's evidence of satisfactory quality?
 - For applicants with no evidence, show how your program is “evidence-informed” (i.e., based on programs that do have evidence)
 - For others, describe purpose and relevance of evaluations, design, sample size, data, and results
- 2) Are the applicant's data systems sufficient to yield high-quality process and outcome data?
 - What data will be collected, how it will be collected, how it will be stored and managed, how data quality and consistency will be ensured, who will be responsible for oversight

Explanation of Evidence Base Standards

- 3) Does the applicant demonstrate adequate capacity to use process and outcome data to inform continuous learning and program improvement?
 - Examples of how data has been (or will be) used to make changes to program processes, activities, or theories of change
- 4) Is the applicant's long-term research agenda aligned to its learning needs and evidence tier?
 - Description of long-term research questions and plan to get there, based on position on the evidence continuum
 - Must extend past proposed grant cycle

Points for Evidence Base

How you can earn the 12 points for Evidence Base depends on your evidence tier...

Evidence Quality and Evaluation Capacity Standards	No Evidence & Pre-Preliminary	Preliminary	Moderate & Strong
The applicant's evidence is of satisfactory quality. Applicants with no evidence describe an evidence-informed theory of change.	2	2	2
The applicant's data collection systems are sufficient to yield high quality process and outcome data.	5	4	1
The applicant demonstrates adequate capacity to use process and outcome data including performance measurement (and evaluation data if applicable) to inform continuous learning and program improvement.	5	5	5
The applicant's long-term research agenda is aligned to the organization's learning needs and position on the evidence continuum (evidence tier).	0	1	4
TOTAL	12	12	12

Important Note about Evidence Base Information

- **When assessing the four Evidence Base criteria, reviewers are not allowed to look at the Evidence Summary and Plan section**
 - Therefore, the answers to these questions have to appear in the application narrative before that section (ideally in the Evidence Base section)
 - This may lead to some redundancy in your application, since some of this information likely will appear in your evaluation plan as well

Summary of Requirements

