



CRITERIA	 ACF	 ACL Administration for Community Living	 USAID UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	 AmeriCorps	 ED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	 HUD U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT	 DOL DEPARTMENT OF LABOR	 MCC	 SAMHSA <sup>1</sup>
<b>TOTAL SCORE (100 points possible)</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>1. Leadership:</b> Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20? (9 points possible)	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	7	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	6
<b>2. Evaluation and Research:</b> Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20? (10 points possible)	8	<u>10</u>	9	8	9	<u>10</u>	7	7	2
<b>3. Resources:**</b> Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20? (10 points possible)	7	<u>10</u>	9	<u>10</u>	7	6	6	8	1
<b>4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement:</b> Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20? (10 points possible)	6	7	<u>10</u>	4	8	9	<u>10</u>	5	6
<b>5. Data:</b> Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20? (10 points possible)	5	8	8	6	6	6	5	7	5
<b>6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:</b> Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20? (10 points possible)	8	5	5	7	<u>10</u>	3	9	6	4
<b>7. Innovation:</b> Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20? (7 points possible)	6	4	<u>7</u>	5	6	6	5	<u>7</u>	3
<b>8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs:**</b> Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20? (15 points possible)	7	7	10	13	13	8	6	<u>15</u>	6
<b>9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs:**</b> Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20? (10 points possible)	6	3	7 <sup>2</sup>	3	7	4	7	<u>10</u> <sup>2</sup>	5
<b>10. Repurpose for Results:</b> In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from any practice, policy, or program which consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes? (8 points possible)	6	4	6	6	5	5	4	<u>8</u>	4

\*\*Meeting this criteria requires both federal agency and congressional action.

<sup>1</sup> RFA gave SAMHSA several opportunities to review and edit the information in this document, but it declined to do so. Therefore, the SAMHSA portion of the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence includes information previously supplied by SAMHSA as well as additional information from the SAMHSA website.

<sup>2</sup> USAID and MCC only administered competitive grant programs in FY20. Therefore, for both agencies, Results for America applied their relative score in criteria #8 to criteria #9.

# **RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works **FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

## **About the Results for America 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard**

Results for America's [2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence](#) (Federal Standard of Excellence) highlights how nine federal agencies, which oversee more than \$220 billion in federal investments annually, are building the infrastructure necessary to use evidence and data in their budget, policy, and management decisions.

The Federal Standard of Excellence is an annual assessment of these federal agencies' evidence-based and data-driven policymaking efforts. The Federal Standard of Excellence highlights the significant progress these nine federal agencies have made to operate effectively and efficiently in order to deliver better results for young people, their families, and communities.

In particular, the Federal Standard of Excellence assesses agencies' early efforts to implement the requirements of the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#) (Evidence Act), which took effect in early 2019. The Federal Standard of Excellence found that these agencies represent a model that all federal agencies can follow as they work to implement the Evidence Act. Exemplary practices at these agencies include the following:

- Eight of nine participating agencies have [designated](#) Evidence Act leaders (or equivalent) to coordinate agency wide evidence-based policymaking and reported progress on conducting an [Evidence Capacity Assessment](#).
- Nearly half of these agencies (44%) [spent 1% or more](#) of their evaluations-related activities.
- Moreover, 39 [competitive](#) and [noncompetitive](#) grant programs (which allocated \$45 billion in FY20) at these nine federal agencies are [prioritizing evidence](#) when allocating funds.

In 2020, Results for America and the committed federal civil servants at nine federal agencies developed the 2020 Federal Standard of Excellence. Results for America would like to thank its [Federal Standard of Excellence Advisory Committee](#) and participating federal agencies for their work to improve lives by investing taxpayer dollars in what works: the Administration for Children and Families (within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS); Administration for Community Living (within HHS); U.S. Agency for International Development; Corporation for National and Community Service; U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Department of Labor; Millennium Challenge Corporation; and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (within HHS).

## **RESULTS FOR AMERICA** 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence

When reviewing the information and scores in the 2020 Federal Standard of Excellence, it is important to note that:

- Results for America developed the standard's criteria and scoring structure in close consultation with more than 100 current and former federal government officials and key stakeholders from all across the country.
- The purpose of the standard is to educate members of the general public as well as public, private, and nonprofit sector leaders on how federal departments and agencies are currently using evidence, data, and evaluation to invest taxpayer dollars in what works.
- Results for America gave the federal departments and agencies included in the standard multiple opportunities to review and comment on the content and presentation of the information included in it. Results for America greatly appreciates their willingness to help develop this standard and their continued commitment to making the federal government as effective and efficient as possible. Since Results for America recognizes that it is very difficult to distill complex practices, policies, and programs into a single cross-agency scorecard, Results for America exercised its best judgment and relied on the deep expertise of leaders both within and outside of the federal government during the development of the standard.
- Results for America released eight previous versions of the Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence, formerly entitled as the Invest in What Works Index, in [June 2013](#), [September 2013](#), [May 2014](#), [March 2015](#), [April 2016](#), [October 2017](#), [November 2018](#), and [October 2019](#).



**68**  
FY20 Score

**Administration for Children and Families**  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



**Administration for Children and Families**  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Even prior to the *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act* (Evidence Act), the [Administration for Children and Families](#) (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services invested in a robust approach to infuse data and evidence in budget, policy, and management decisions. The agency's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluations leads the Office of Planning Research and Evaluation and oversees the agency's evaluation team of 68 staff and a budget of \$208 million. In fact, ACF was among the first of federal agencies to publicly release an [agency-wide evaluation framework](#) with its FY12 policy "to govern our planning, conduct, and use of evaluation."

One of the results of ACF's long-standing expertise in research and evaluation is the support it provides to grantees on evaluation, evidence-building, data-driven innovation, and implementation of evidence-based programs. For example, ACF's [TANF Data Innovation Project](#) supports cohorts of states to improve the effectiveness of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs by helping them better leverage human services data. This has helped states enhance data analytics for program improvement and gain a better understanding of issues so that they can strengthen integrated data systems, improve program integrity and payments.

ACF's competitive grant [Head Start grant program](#) considers grantee past performance as a condition of continued funding through the Head Start Designation Renewal System. In two smaller grant programs, Personal Responsibility Education Program and Sexual Risk Avoidance Education, grantees must implement evidence-based or research-based interventions. The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) enables states to use federal funds to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements through the provision of evidence-based services. ACF conducts an independent systematic review to designate programs as evidence-based as eligible for federal funds

ACF's investment in its research and evaluation activities, personnel, and capacities support an organizational culture focused on evidence-building, learning, and innovation. These activities are helping states and grantees improve program and service delivery for children, families, and parents across the country.

To advance the agency's investments in evidence-based policymaking, ACF may consider issuing updated data policies and practices that coincide with OPEN Data Government Act implementation, based on forthcoming White House Office of Management and Budget guidance.

*Read more about Administration for Children and Families in the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence [here](#).*

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 9 points)

### Administration for Children and Families

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluations at the [Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation](#) (OPRE) serves as the Administration for Children and Families Chief Evaluation Officer. The Deputy Assistant Secretary oversees ACF’s [Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation](#) (OPRE) which supports evaluation and other learning activities across the agency. ACF’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation oversees a research and evaluation budget of approximately \$180 million in FY20. OPRE has 68 federal staff positions; OPRE staff are experts in research and evaluation methods and data analysis as well as ACF programs, policies, and the populations they serve. In August 2019, the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation was named the Chief Evaluation Officer of HHS.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

The HHS Chief Information Officer serves as the HHS Chief Data Officer. In August 2019, the HHS Chief Information Officer was named the acting Chief Data Officer of HHS. In September of 2019, the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families designated the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation as the primary ACF member to serve on the HHS Data Council, the body responsible for advising the HHS Chief Data Officer on implementation of Evidence Act activities across HHS.

Additionally, in 2016, ACF established a new [Division of Data and Improvement](#) (DDI) providing federal leadership and resources to improve the quality, use, and sharing of ACF data. The Director of DDI reports to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning,

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

Research, and Evaluation and oversees work to improve the quality, usefulness, interoperability, and availability of data and to address issues related to privacy and data security and data sharing. DDI has 12 federal staff positions and an FY20 budget of approximately \$6.4M (not including salaries).

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency's major programs?**

As of September 2019, ACF's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation serves as the primary ACF representative to HHS' Leadership Council, Data Council, and Evidence and Evaluation Council -- the HHS bodies responsible for implementing Evidence Act activities across HHS. These cross-agency councils meet regularly to discuss agency-specific needs and experiences and to collaboratively develop guidance for department-wide action.

Within ACF, the [2016 reorganization](#) that created the Division of Data and Improvement (DDI) endowed ACF's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation with oversight of the agency's strategic planning; performance measurement and management; research and evaluation; statistical policy and program analysis; synthesis and dissemination of research and evaluation findings; data quality, usefulness, and sharing; and application of emerging technologies to improve the effectiveness of programs and service delivery. ACF reviews program office performance measures and associated data three times per year in sync with the budget process; OPRE has traditionally worked with ACF program offices to develop research plans on an annual basis and has worked to integrate the development of program-specific learning agendas into this process. In addition, OPRE holds regular and ad hoc meetings with ACF program offices to discuss research and evaluation findings, as well as other data topics.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**8**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

ACF's [evaluation policy](#) confirms ACF's commitment to conducting evaluations and using evidence from evaluations to inform policy and practice. ACF seeks to promote rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, and ethics in the conduct of evaluations. ACF established the [policy in 2012](#) and published it in the [Federal Register](#) on August 29, 2014. In late 2019, ACF released a short [video](#) about the policy's five principles and how we use them to guide our work.

As ACF's primary representative to the HHS Evidence and Evaluation Council, the ACF Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation co-chairs the HHS Evaluation Policy Subcommittee—the body responsible for developing an HHS-wide evaluation policy.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

In accordance with OMB guidance, ACF is contributing to an HHS-wide evaluation plan. OPRE also annually identifies questions relevant to the programs and policies of ACF and proposes a research and evaluation spending plan to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. This plan focuses on activities that the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation plans to conduct during the following fiscal year.

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

In accordance with OMB guidance, HHS is developing an HHS-wide evidence-building plan. To develop this document, HHS asked each sub-agency to submit examples of their agency's priority research questions, potential data sources, anticipated



**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

approaches, challenges and mitigation strategies, and stakeholder engagement strategies. ACF drew from our existing program-specific learning agendas and research plans and has contributed example priority research questions and anticipated learning activities for inclusion in the HHS evidence-building plan. ACF also intends to release to the public a broad learning plan.

In addition to fulfilling requirements of the Evidence Act, ACF has supported and continues to support systematic learning and stakeholder engagement activities across the agency. For example:

- Many ACF program offices have or are currently developing detailed program-specific learning agendas to systematically learn about and improve their programs—studying existing knowledge, identifying gaps, and setting program priorities. For example, ACF and HRSA have developed a [learning agenda for the MIECHV program](#), and ACF is supporting ongoing efforts to build a [learning agenda for ACF’s Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood \(HMRF\) programming](#).
- ACF will continue to release annual portfolios that describe key findings from past research and evaluation work and how ongoing projects are addressing gaps in the knowledge base to answer critical questions in the areas of [family self-sufficiency](#), [child and family development](#), and [family strengthening](#). In addition to describing key questions, methods, and data sources for each research and evaluation project, the portfolios provide narratives describing how evaluation and evidence-building activities unfold in specific ACF programs and topical areas over time, and how current research and evaluation initiatives build on past efforts and respond to remaining gaps in knowledge.
- ACF works closely with many stakeholders to inform priorities for its research and evaluation efforts and solicits their input through conferences and meetings such as the [Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency](#), the [National Research Conference on Early Childhood](#), and the [Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium Annual Meetings](#); meetings with ACF grantees and program administrators; engagement with training and technical assistance networks; surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other activities conducted as a part of research and evaluation studies; and through both project-specific and topical technical working groups, including the agency’s Family Self-Sufficiency Research Technical Working Group. ACF’s ongoing efforts to engage its stakeholders will be described in more detail in ACF’s forthcoming description of its learning activities.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

ACF's evaluation policy requires that "ACF will release evaluation results regardless of findings...Evaluation reports will present comprehensive findings, including favorable, unfavorable, and null findings. ACF will release evaluation results timely – usually within two months of a report's completion." ACF has publicly released the findings of all completed evaluations to date. In 2019, OPRE released over 110 research publications. OPRE publications are publicly available on the [OPRE website](#).

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 3115, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

In accordance with OMB guidance, ACF is contributing to an HHS-wide capacity assessment to be released by September 2020. ACF also continues to support the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts as follows:

**Coverage:** ACF conducts research in areas where Congress has given authorization and appropriations. Programs for which ACF is able to conduct research and evaluation using dedicated funding include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Health Profession Opportunity Grants, Head Start, Child Care, Child Welfare, Home Visiting, Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood, Personal Responsibility Education Program, Sexual Risk Avoidance Education, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Runaway and Homeless Youth, Family Violence Prevention Services, and Human Trafficking services. These programs represent approximately 85% of overall ACF spending.

**Quality:** ACF's [Evaluation Policy](#) states that ACF is committed to using the most rigorous methods that are appropriate to the evaluation questions and feasible within budget and other constraints, and that rigor is necessary not only for impact evaluations, but also for implementation/process evaluations, descriptive studies, outcome evaluations, and formative evaluations; and in both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

**Methods:** ACF uses a range of evaluation methods. ACF conducts impact evaluations as well as implementation and process evaluations, cost analyses and cost benefit analyses, descriptive and exploratory studies, research syntheses, and more. ACF is committed to learning about and using the most scientifically advanced approaches to determining effectiveness and efficiency of ACF programs; to this end, OPRE annually organizes [meetings](#) of scientists and research experts to discuss critical topics in social science research methodology and how innovative methodologies can be applied to policy-relevant questions.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**Effectiveness:** ACF's [Evaluation Policy](#) states that ACF will conduct relevant research and disseminate findings in ways that are accessible and useful to policymakers and practitioners. OPRE engages in ongoing collaboration with ACF program office staff and leadership to interpret research and evaluation findings and to identify their implications for programmatic and policy decisions such as ACF regulations and funding opportunity announcements. For example, when ACF's Office of Head Start significantly revised its Program Performance Standards—the regulations that define the standards and minimum requirements for Head Start services—the revisions drew from decades of OPRE research and the [recommendations](#) of the OPRE-led Secretary's Advisory Committee on Head Start Research and Evaluation. Similarly, ACF's Office of Child Care drew from research and evaluation findings related to eligibility redetermination, continuity of subsidy use, use of funds dedicated to improving the quality of programs, and other information to inform the regulations accompanying the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

**Independence:** ACF's [Evaluation Policy](#) states that independence and objectivity are core principles of evaluation and that it is important to insulate evaluation functions from undue influence and from both the appearance and the reality of bias. To promote objectivity, ACF protects independence in the design, conduct, and analysis of evaluations. To this end, ACF conducts evaluations through the competitive award of grants and contracts to external experts who are free from conflicts of interest; and, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation, a career civil servant, has authority to approve the design of evaluation projects and analysis plans; and has authority to approve, release, and disseminate evaluation reports.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

ACF's [Evaluation Policy](#) states that in assessing the effects of programs or services, ACF evaluations will use methods that isolate to the greatest extent possible the impacts of the programs or services from other influences and that for causal questions, experimental approaches are preferred. As of April 2020, at least 25 ongoing OPRE projects included one or more random assignment impact evaluations. To date in FY20, OPRE has released RCT impact findings related to [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#), [Subsidized Employment](#), [Teen Pregnancy Prevention](#), and [the Assets for Independence Program](#).

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

**3. Resources:** Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20? (Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**3.1** \_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$ \_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_% of the agency's \$ \_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.

The Administration for Children and Families invested approximately \$208 million in evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing approximately 0.3% of the agency's approximately \$60.4 billion FY20 budget.

**3.2** Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)

In FY20, the Administration for Children and Families has an evaluation budget of approximately \$208 million, an \$8 million increase from FY19.

**3.3** Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?

ACF provides evaluation technical assistance to grantees to:

- Support sites participating in federal evaluations (for example projects supporting [Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0](#) and [Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0](#) grantees and [Regional Partnership Grants](#) grantees);
- Support grantees who are conducting their own local evaluations (for example projects supporting [Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood](#) grantees, [Personal Responsibility Education Program](#) grantees, [MIECHV grantees](#) (in collaboration with HRSA), [Tribal MIECHV grantees](#), [Child Welfare Community Collaborations](#) grantees, and [YARH](#) grantees; and ACF staff directly supporting Section 1115 child support demonstration grantees); and
- Provide general capacity building support (for example the [TANF Data Innovation Project](#), the [Tribal Early Childhood Research Center](#), and the [Center for States](#)).

**3. Resources:** Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20? (Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

- Provide [guidance](#) to encourage state MIECHV awardees to develop their own learning agendas.

ACF also strengthens the data capacity of grantees through:

- Technical assistance with management information systems, such as the Participant Accomplishment and Grant Evaluation System (PAGES) system for Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) and Tribal HPOG grantees and the [Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management](#) (nFORM) system for Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grantees
- Supporting grantee ability to monitor data quality and performance through projects like [Personal Responsibility Education Program Studies of Performance Measures and Adulthood Preparation Subjects \(PREP PMAPS\)](#) and [Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Performance Analysis Study \(SRAE PAS\)](#)

ACF also supports evidence capacity across the agency by preparing promising programs and interventions to advance to the next level of evidence. ACF has supported this work through projects like [Supporting Evidence Building in Child Welfare](#); [Next Steps for Rigorous Research on Two-Generation Approaches](#); and [Building Evaluation Capacity in TANF: Implementing, Replicating, and Scaling Up Evidence-Informed Interventions to Promote Employment and Self-Sufficiency](#). The latter project will also document the landscape of current or previous evaluation TA activities in human services program contexts, what can be learned from other fields that have examined this question, and what lessons can be drawn to inform future federal evaluation capacity-building efforts.

ACF also publishes resources such as 1) [The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation](#) to provide guidance to programs planning and implementing evaluations, and 2) the [Continuous Quality Improvement Toolkit](#), which helps MIECHV awardees and others work with local agencies to build capacity in CQI. The toolkit features examples from home visiting but may also be helpful for audiences from other early childhood and human service programs. ACF recently began work to adapt existing ACF evaluation TA resources and develop new evaluation TA resources to more effectively build the evaluation capacity of the diverse stakeholders that ACF serves.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

ACF was an active participant in the development of the [FY 2018-2022 HHS Strategic Plan](#), which includes several ACF-specific objectives. ACF regularly reports on progress associated with those objectives as part of the [FY 2020 HHS Annual Performance Plan/Report](#), including the ten total performance measures from ACF programs that support this Plan. ACF performance measures primarily support Goal Three: “Strengthen the Economic and Social Well-Being of Americans Across the Lifespan.” ACF supports [Objective 3.1](#) (Encourage self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, and eliminate barriers to economic opportunity), [Objective 3.2](#) (Safeguard the public against preventable injuries and violence or their results), and [Objective 3.3](#) (Support strong families and healthy marriage, and prepare children and youth for healthy, productive lives) by reporting annual performance measures. ACF is also an active participant in the HHS Strategic Review process, which is an annual assessment of progress on the subset of ten performance measures that ACF reports on as part of the HHS Strategic Plan.

**4.2 Did the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

OPRE currently reviews all ACF funding opportunity announcements and advises program offices, in accordance with their respective legislative authorities, on how to best integrate evidence into program design. Similarly, program offices have applied ACF research to inform their program administration. For example, ACF developed the [Learn Innovate Improve \(LI2\)](#) model -- a systematic, evidence-informed approach to program improvement — which has since informed targeted TA efforts for the TANF program and the [evaluation requirement](#) for the child support demonstration grants.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

ACF programs also regularly analyze and use data to improve performance. For example, two ACF programs (Health Profession Opportunity Grants & Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs) have developed advanced web-based management information systems (PAGES and [nFORM](#), respectively) that are used to track grantee progress, produce real-time reports so that grantees can use their data to adapt their programs, and record grantee and participant data for research and evaluation purposes.

ACF also uses the nFORM data to conduct the HMRF Compliance Assessment and Performance (CAPstone) Grantee Review: a process by which federal staff and technical assistance providers assess grantee progress toward and achievement in meeting programmatic, data, evaluation, and implementation goals. The results of the CAPstone process guide federal directives and future technical assistance.

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

ACF program areas take tailored approaches to continuous improvement and rapid learning. For example, ACF:

- Provides continuous quality improvement (CQI) resources specifically for [child welfare agencies](#) and [home visiting grantees](#);
- Provides CQI training and technical assistance for [Tribal home visiting grantees](#), [Tribal TANF-Child Welfare Coordination grantees](#), TANF, and [Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood \(HMRF\) grantees](#);
- Is exploring how child care and Head Start programs can institutionalize CQI using a [Breakthrough Series Collaborative](#) approach;
- Launched two learning collaboratives: 1) the [Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives: A Continuous Quality Improvement Approach in the Child Welfare System](#) and 2) [the Tribal Home Visiting Institute \(TEI\)](#) to implement and evaluate an adapted version of Breakthrough Series Collaborative;
- Developed a [Learn Innovate Improve](#) model that has been used with TANF programs and is using rapid cycle evaluation methods to help [Responsible Fatherhood](#) and [Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education](#) (HMRE) grantees address critical implementation challenges and test promising practices to address them

 **RESULTS**  
**FOR AMERICA** **2020 Invest in What Works**  
**Federal Standard of Excellence**

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

ACF also administers [Child and Family Services Reviews \(CFSRs\)](#) to ensure that state child welfare systems are in conformity with federal child welfare requirements; to gauge the experiences of children, youth, and families receiving state child welfare services; and to assist states in enhancing their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The reviews are structured to help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. States determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in all the areas assessed must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan addressing the areas of nonconformity.



**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

FY20 Score  
**5**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

ACF's [Interoperability Action Plan](#) was established in 2017 to formalize ACF's vision for effective and efficient data sharing. Under this plan ACF and its program offices will develop and implement a Data Sharing First (DSF) strategy that starts with the assumption that data sharing is in the public interest. The plan states that ACF will encourage and promote data sharing broadly, constrained only when required by law or when there are strong countervailing considerations.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

In 2020, ACF released a [Compendium of ACF Administrative and Survey Data Resources](#). The Compendium documents administrative and survey data collected by ACF that could be used for evidence-building purposes. It includes summaries of twelve major ACF administrative data sources and seven surveys. Each summary includes an overview, basic content, available documentation, available data sets, restrictions on use, capacity to link to other data sources, and examples of prior research. It is a joint product of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in ACF, and the office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition, in 2019 OPRE compiled the descriptions and locations of hundreds of OPRE-archived datasets that are currently available for secondary analysis and made this information available on a [single webpage](#). OPRE regularly archives research and evaluation data for secondary analysis, consistent with the ACF evaluation policy, which promotes rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, and ethics in the conduct of evaluation and research. This new consolidated webpage serves as a one-stop resource that will help to make it easier for potential users to find and use the data that OPRE archives for secondary analysis.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

ACF has multiple efforts underway to promote and support the use of documented data for research and improvement, including making numerous administrative and survey datasets publicly available for secondary use and actively promoting the archiving of research and evaluation data for secondary use. These data are machine readable, downloadable, and de-identified as appropriate for each data set. For example, individual-level data for research is held in secure restricted use formats, while public-use data sets are made available online. To make it easier to find these resources, ACF released a [Compendium of ACF Administrative and Survey Data](#) and consolidated information on archived research and evaluation data on the OPRE website.

Many data sources that may be useful for data linkage for building evidence on human services programs reside outside of ACF. In 2020, OPRE released the [Compendium of Administrative Data Sources for Self-Sufficiency Research](#), describing promising administrative data sources that may be linked to evaluation data in order to assess long-term outcomes of economic and social interventions. It includes national, federal, and state sources covering a range of topical areas. It was produced under contract by MDRC as a part of OPRE's Assessing Options Evaluate Long-Term Outcomes (LTO) Using Administrative Data project.

Additionally, ACF is actively exploring how enhancing and scaling innovative data linkage practices can improve our understanding of the populations served by ACF and build evidence on human services programs more broadly. For instance, the [Child Maltreatment Incidence Data Linkages \(CMI Data Linkages\)](#) project is examining the feasibility of leveraging administrative data linkages to better understand child maltreatment incidence and related risk and protective factors.

ACF actively promotes archiving of research and evaluation data for secondary use. OPRE research contracts include a standard clause requiring contractors to make data and analyses supported through federal funds available to other researchers and to establish procedures and parameters for all aspects of data and information collection necessary to support archiving information and data collected under the contract. Many datasets from past ACF projects are stored in archives including the ACF-funded [National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect \(NDACAN\)](#), the [ICPSR Child and Family Data Archive](#), and the [ICPSR data](#)

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

[archive](#) more broadly. OPRE has funded grants for secondary analysis of ACF/OPRE data; examples in recent years include secondary analysis of [strengthening families datasets](#) and [early care and education datasets](#). In 2019 ACF awarded [Career Pathways Secondary Data Analysis Grants](#) to stimulate and fund secondary analysis of data collected through the [Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education \(PACE\) Study](#), [Health Professions Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\) Impact Study](#), and [HPOG National Implementation Evaluation \(NIE\)](#) on questions relevant to career pathways programs' goals and objectives. Information on all archived datasets that are currently available for secondary analysis is available on [OPRE's website](#).

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

ACF developed a [Confidentiality Toolkit](#) that supports state and local efforts by explaining rules governing confidentiality in ACF and certain related programs, by providing examples of how confidentiality requirements can be addressed, and by including [sample memoranda of understandings and data sharing agreements](#). ACF is currently in the process of updating the Toolkit for recent changes in statute, and to provide real-world examples of how data has been shared across domains—which frequently do not have harmonized privacy requirements—while complying with all relevant privacy and confidentiality requirements (e.g. FERPA, HIPPA). These case studies will also include downloadable, real-world tools that have been successfully used in the highlighted jurisdictions.

ACF also takes appropriate measures to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of individuals contributing data for research throughout the archiving process, consistent with ACF's [core principle of ethics](#). Research data may be made available as public use files (when the data would not likely lead to harm or to the re-identification of an individual) or through restricted access. Restricted access files are de-identified and made available to approved researchers either through secure transmission and download, virtual data enclaves, physical data enclaves, or restricted online analysis.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

ACF undertakes many program-specific efforts to support state, local, and tribal efforts to use human services data while protecting privacy and confidentiality. For example, ACF's TANF [Data Innovation Project](#) supports innovation and improved effectiveness of state TANF programs by enhancing the use of data from TANF and related human services programs. This work includes encouraging and strengthening state integrated data systems, promoting proper payments and program integrity, and enabling data analytics for TANF program improvement. Similarly, in 2020 OPRE awarded [Human Services Interoperability Demonstration Grants](#), which are intended to expand data sharing efforts by state, local, and tribal governments to improve human services program delivery, and to identify novel data sharing approaches that can be replicated in other jurisdictions. Also in 2019, OPRE in partnership with ASPE began a project to support states in [linking Medicaid and Child Welfare data](#) at the parent-child level to support outcomes research. Under this project, HHS will work with two to four states to enhance capacity to examine outcomes for children and parents who are involved in state child welfare systems and who may have behavioral health issues. Of particular interest are outcomes for families that may have substance use disorders, like opioid use disorder. Specifically this project seeks to develop state data infrastructure and increase the available de-identified data for research in this area.

ACF also engages in several broad-based and cross-cutting efforts to support state, local, and tribal efforts to use human services data while protecting privacy and confidentiality. Through the [Interoperability Initiative](#), ACF supports data sharing through developing standards and tools that are reusable across the country, addressing common privacy and security requirements to mitigate risks, and providing request-based technical assistance to states, local jurisdictions, and ACF program offices. Several ACF divisions have also been instrumental in supporting cross-governmental efforts, such as the [National Information Exchange Model](#) (NIEM) that will enable human services agencies to collaborate with health, education, justice, and many other constituencies that play a role in the well-being of children and families.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

FY20 Score  
**8**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

ACF has established a [common evidence framework](#) adapted for the human services context from the framework for education research developed by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation. The ACF framework, which includes the six types of studies delineated in the ED/NSF framework, aims to (1) inform ACF's investments in research and evaluation and (2) clarify for potential grantees' and others' expectations for different types of studies.

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

While ACF does not have a common evidence framework across all funding decisions, certain programs do use a common evidence framework for funding decisions. For example:

- The [Family First Prevention Services Act](#) (FFPSA) enables states to use funds for certain evidence-based services. In April 2019, ACF published the [Prevention Services Clearinghouse Handbook of Standards and Procedures](#), which provides a detailed description of the standards used to identify and review programs and services in order to rate programs and services as promising, supported, and well-supported practices.
- The Personal Responsibility Education Program Competitive Grants were funded to replicate effective, evidence-based program models or substantially incorporate elements of projects that have been proven to delay sexual activity, increase condom or contraceptive use for sexually active youth, and/or reduce pregnancy among youth. Through a [systematic evidence review](#), HHS selected 44 models that grantees could use, depending on the needs and age of the target population of each funded project.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user-friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

ACF sponsors several [user-friendly tools](#) that disseminate and promote evidence-based interventions. Several evidence reviews of human services interventions disseminate and promote evidence-based interventions by rating the quality of evaluation studies and presenting results in a user-friendly searchable format. Reviews to date have covered: [teen pregnancy prevention](#); [home visiting](#); [marriage education and responsible fatherhood](#); and [employment and training](#) and include both ACF-sponsored and other studies. ACF has developed two new websites that disseminate information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions: 1) [The Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#) is a user-friendly website that reports on “projects that used a proven approach or a promising approach in moving welfare recipients into work, based on independent, rigorous evaluations of the projects”; 2) ACF’s [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#) project launched a [website](#) in June 2019 that is easily accessible and searchable and allows users to navigate the site and find information about mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services, in-home parent skill-based programs, and kinship navigator services designated as “promising,” “supported,” and “well-supported” practices by an independent systematic review.

Additionally, most ACF research and evaluation projects produce and widely disseminate short briefs, tip sheets, or infographics that capture high-level findings from the studies and make information about program services, participants, and implementation more accessible to policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders. For example, the [Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education \(PACE\)](#) project released a series of nine [short briefs](#) to accompany the [implementation and early impact reports](#) that were released for each of the nine PACE evaluation sites.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

ACF’s evaluation policy states that it is important for evaluators to disseminate research findings in ways that are accessible and useful to policymakers and practitioners and that OPRE and program offices will work in partnership to inform potential

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

applicants, program providers, administrators, policymakers, and funders through disseminating evidence from ACF-sponsored and other good quality evaluations. OPRE research contracts include a standard clause requiring contractors to develop a dissemination plan during early project planning to identify key takeaways, target audiences, and strategies for most effectively reaching the target audiences. OPRE's dissemination strategy is also supported by a commitment to plain language; OPRE works with its research partners to ensure that evaluation findings and other evidence are clearly communicated. OPRE also has a robust dissemination function that includes the OPRE [website](#), an OPRE [e-newsletter](#), and social media presence on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

OPRE biennially hosts two major conferences, the [Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency](#) (RECS) and the [National Research Conference on Early Childhood](#) (NRCEC) to share research findings with researchers and with program administrators and policymakers at all levels. OPRE also convenes the [Network of Infant and Toddler Researchers \(NITR\)](#) which brings together applied researchers with policymakers and technical assistance providers to encourage research-informed practice and practice-informed research; and the [Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium \(CCEEPRC\)](#) which brings together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss what we are learning from research that can help inform policy decisions for ACF, States, Territories, localities, and grantees and to consider the next steps in early care and education (ECE) research. In light of COVID-19, OPRE plans to convene the Network, Consortium, and RECS and NRCEC conferences virtually in 2020.

The Children's Bureau (CB) sponsors the recurring [National Child Welfare Evaluation Summit](#) to bring together partners from child welfare systems and the research community to strengthen the use of data and evaluation in child welfare; disseminate information about effective and promising prevention and child welfare services, programs, and policies; and promote the use of data and evaluation to support sound decision-making and improved practice in state and local child welfare systems.

ACF also sponsors several:

- research centers which advance research and translate findings to inform practice, including the [Tribal Early Childhood Research Center](#) and the [Center for Research on Hispanic Children & Families](#); and

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:** Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

- resource websites, including the [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#), [Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative](#), and a forthcoming website for [Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grantees](#) to support grantee access to program-relevant research and evidence



**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 7 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

In late 2019, ACF stood up a customer experience initiative to enhance ACF's delivery and administration of human services. This initiative focuses on ways to improve the experiences of both grantees and ACF employees. One sub-initiative is to equip ACF leaders and staff with fundamental innovation strategies and ways of fostering a culture of innovation within their programs. In early 2020, ACF invited external experts to host two skill-based trainings for ACF staff: 1) *Innovation as a Discipline: Empowering Employees to Change the Game*, and 2) *Human-Centered Design Training: Putting People at the Center of What we Do*. This initiative is ongoing.

ACF leadership and staff have also collaborated with other federal agencies, local leaders, and entrepreneurs around the practice of innovation. In January of 2020, the ACF Office of Early Childhood Development (ECD) partnered with other ACF program offices and the Department of Education to put on the first-ever [Showcase on Early Childhood Development and Learning](#) within the [Annual ED Games Expo](#). About 100 federal, national, state, and local leaders in early childhood, education, health, and human services joined ACF leadership and 11 thought leaders and entrepreneurs who presented a series of Big Idea talks about innovation and how to scale-up good ideas. This Showcase was one part of a [multi-day event sponsored by ED's Institute of Education Science](#) which focused on games and technology targeted at children, parents, educators, funders, and other stakeholders with more than 1000 people attending.

HHS has embarked on a process called ReImagine HHS, which has engaged leadership and staff from around the department to identify strategic shifts to transform how HHS operates. One part of this larger initiative, called Aim for Independence (AFI), is using a human centered design approach to rethink how ACF does work and how that work translates into long-lasting, positive outcomes for parents and children. Engagement activities have included a leadership retreat and opportunities for staff input.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

ACF leadership has [proposed](#) new Opportunity and Economic Mobility Demonstrations to allow states to redesign safety net service delivery by streamlining funding from multiple public assistance and workforce development programs and providing services tailored to their populations' specific needs. The demonstrations would be subject to rigorous evaluation.

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

ACF's mission to "foster health and well-being by providing federal leadership, partnership and resources for the compassionate and effective delivery of human services" is undergirded by six values: dedication, professionalism, integrity, stewardship, respect, and excellence. ACF's [emphasis on excellence](#), "exemplified by innovations and solutions that are anchored in available evidence, build knowledge and transcend boundaries," drives the agency's support for innovation across programs and practices.

For example, ACF's customer experience initiative is supporting the development of innovative practices for more efficient and responsive agency operations, including the identification of new ways to streamline grantee compliance requirements, minimize administrative burden, and increase grantee capacity for service delivery.

ACF also administers select grant programs—through innovation projects, demonstration projects, and waivers to existing program requirements--that are designed to both implement and evaluate innovative interventions, as a part of an ACF-sponsored evaluation or an individual evaluation to accompany implementation of that innovation. For example:

- The [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program was authorized as a demonstration program with a mandated federal evaluation. ACF is conducting a [multi-pronged evaluation](#) to assess program implementation, systems change resulting from HPOG programs, and outcomes and impacts for participants.
- ACF's [Office of Child Support Enforcement](#) administers grant-funded demonstration projects and waivers including the [Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt](#) (PJAC) demonstration project; [Digital Marketing grants](#); and [Intergovernmental Case Processing Innovation Demonstration grants](#).
- ACF's [Community Collaborations to Strengthen and Preserve Families](#) grant program provides cooperative agreements that support the development, implementation, and evaluation of primary prevention strategies to improve the safety, stability, and well-being of families.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

ACF projects that support innovation include:

- The [Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency-Next Generation](#) (BIAS-NG) project continues ACF’s exploration of the application of behavioral science to the programs and target populations of ACF. BIAS-NG supports rigorous random assignment evaluations of behavioral economics interventions. Additionally, the [Behavioral Interventions Scholars](#) (BIS) grant program supports dissertation research that applies a behavioral science lens to research questions relevant to social services programs and policies and other issues facing low-income families.
- ACF’s [Human Centered Design for Human Services project](#) is exploring the application of human centered design across ACF service delivery programs at the federal, state, and local levels.
- ACF’s [Child Maltreatment Incidence Data Linkages \(CMI Data Linkages\)](#) project is exploring how enhancing and scaling innovative data linkage practices can improve our understanding of child maltreatment incidence and related risk and protective factors.
- ACF’s [Promoting and Supporting Innovation in TANF Data](#) project supports innovation and improved effectiveness of state TANF programs by enhancing the use of data from TANF and related human services programs.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

In addition to the list of ACF demonstration projects, innovation projects, and waiver programs with rigorous evidence activities built into their delivery (as described in sub-criteria 7.2), ACF also conducts rigorous research on other innovative human services.

The evaluations below are on-going rigorous evaluations conducted by ACF:

- ACF is conducting the [Building Bridges and Bonds \(B3\) Evaluation](#), an impact study designed to test innovative, evidence-informed programming for fathers, with the goal of building practical evidence that can be used to improve services.
- ACF is also conducting the [Building Evidence on Employment Strategies for Low-Income Families \(BEES\)](#) and the [Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies \(NextGen\) projects](#); these projects are conducting rigorous evaluations of the effectiveness of innovative programs designed to boost employment and earnings among low-income individuals.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

- ACF is also conducting the [Expanding Evidence on Replicable Recovery and Reunification Interventions for Families \(R3\)](#) project to replicate an intervention, utilizing coaches for families engaged in the child welfare system due to parental substance use is orders, that demonstrates favorable parental recovery outcomes and shortens time to reunification. The R3 project will conduct a concurrent implementation and impact study.

ACF administers a series of [Head Start](#) and [Early Head Start](#) University Partnership Grants in which university researchers partner with local Head Start or Early Head Start programs to conduct an implementation study and evaluate the effectiveness of innovative strategies for improving service quality and/or child/family outcomes. Past grants programs have examined promising parenting interventions, dual-generation approaches, integrated interventions in center-based Early Head Start, and approaches for working with dual language learner.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 15 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**8.1 What were the agency’s five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest competitive grant programs are:

- 1) [Head Start](#) (\$10.6 billion; eligible applicants: public or private non-profit organizations, including community-based and faith-based organizations, or for-profit agencies);
- 2) [Unaccompanied Children Services](#) (\$1.3 billion; eligible applicants: private on-profit and for-profit agencies);
- 3) [Preschool Development Grants](#) (\$275 million; eligible applicants: states);
- 4) [Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants](#) (\$148.8 million; eligible applicants: states, local governments, tribal entities, and community-based organizations, both for profit and not-for-profit, including faith-based);
- 5) [Runaway and Homeless Youth Program](#) (\$113.8 million; eligible applicants: community-based public and private organizations)

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in 5 largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

ACF reviewed performance data from current Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grantees (using the nFORM system) to set priorities, interests, and expectations for 2020 HMRF grant applicants. For example, because nFORM data indicated that organizations were more likely to meet enrollment targets and engage participants when they focused on implementing one program model, ACF’s [2020 FOA](#) mentions specific interest in grantee projects, “that implement only one specific program model designed for one specific youth service population (p. 12)”

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

ACF “anticipates giving preference to those applicants that were awarded a Healthy Marriage or Responsible Fatherhood grant between 2015 and 2019, and that (a) are confirmed by ACF to have met all qualification requirements under Section IV.2, The Project Description, Approach, Organizational Capacity of this FOA; and (b) are confirmed by ACF to have received an acceptable rating on their semi-annual grant monitoring statements during years three and four of the project period. Particular consideration will be given to applicants that: (1) designed and successfully implemented, through to end of 2019, an impact evaluation of their program model, and that the impact evaluation was a fair impact test of their program model and that was not terminated prior to analysis; or (2) successfully participated in a federally-led impact evaluation” (p. 17).

ACF will evaluate HMRF grant applicants based upon their capacity to conduct a local impact evaluation and their proposed approach (for applicants required or electing to conduct local evaluations); their ability to provide a reasonable rationale and/or research base for the program model(s) and curriculum(a) proposed; and their inclusion of a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan, clearly describing the organizational commitment to data-driven approaches to identify areas for program performance, testing potential improvements, and cultivating a culture and environment of learning and improvement, among other things. Further, The Compliance And Performance reviews (CAPstone) entail a thorough review of each grantee’s performance. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) sends a formal set of questions about grantee performance that the grant program specialists and TA providers answer ahead of time, and then they convene meetings where the performance of each grantee is discussed by OFA, OPRE, and the TA provider at length using nFORM data and the answers to the formal questions mentioned above.

The Head Start Designation Renewal System (DRS) determines whether Head Start/Early Head Start grantees are delivering high-quality comprehensive services to the children and families that they serve. These determinations are based on seven conditions, one of which looks at how Head Start classrooms within programs perform on the [Classroom Assessment Scoring System](#) (CLASS), an observation-based measure of the quality of teacher-child interactions. When the DRS deems grantees to be underperforming, grantees are denied automatic renewal of their grant and must apply for funding renewal through a standard open competition process. In the most recent [Head Start FOA](#) language, grantees who are re-competing for Head Start funds **must** include a description of any violations, such as deficiencies, areas of non-compliance, and/or audit finding in their record of Past Performance (p. 26). Applicants may describe the actions they have taken to address these violations. [According to Head Start policy](#), in competitions to replace or potentially replace a current grantee, the responsible HHS official will give priority to applicants that have demonstrated capacity in providing effective, comprehensive, and well-coordinated early childhood education and development services and programs (see section 1304.20: Selection among applicants).

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

ACF manages the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center (RHYTTAC), the national training and technical assistance entity that provides resources and direct assistance to the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) grantees and other youth serving organizations eligible to receive RHY funds. RHYTTAC disseminates information about and supports grantee implementation of high-quality, evidence-informed, and evidence-based practices. The [RHYTTAC funding opportunity announcement](#) evaluates applicants based on their strategy for tracking RHY grantee uptake and implementation of evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies.

ACF also evaluates [Unaccompanied Children Services](#), [Preschool Development Grants](#), and [Runaway and Homeless Youth](#) grant applicants based upon: their proposed program performance evaluation plan; how their data will contribute to continuous quality improvement; and their demonstrated experience with comparable program evaluation, among other factors.

**8.3 Did the agency use its 5 largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

ACF's [template](#) (see p. 14 in Attachment C) for competitive grant announcements includes standard language that funding opportunity announcement drafters may select to require grantees to either 1) collect performance management data that contributes to continuous quality improvement and is tied to the project's logic model, or 2) conduct a rigorous evaluation for which applicants must propose an appropriate design specifying research questions, measurement and analysis.

As a condition of award, Head Start grantees are required to participate fully in ACF-sponsored evaluations, if selected to do so. As such, ACF has an ongoing research portfolio that is [building evidence in Head Start](#). Research sponsored through Head Start funding over the past decade has provided valuable information not only to guide program improvement in Head Start itself, but also to guide the field of early childhood programming and early childhood development. Dozens of Head Start programs have collaborated with researchers in making significant contributions in terms of program innovation and evaluation, as well as the use of systematic data collection, analysis and interpretation in program operations.

ACF's 2020 Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) Grants establish required evidence activities by scope of grantee services ([p.4](#)). For example, large scope services (requesting funding between \$1M-\$1.5M) "must propose a rigorous

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

impact evaluation (i.e., randomized-controlled trial (RCT) or high-quality, quasi-experimental design (QED) study)...and must allocate at least 15 percent, but no more than 20 percent, of their total annual funding for evaluation” (p. 19) Regardless of their scope of services, all 2020 HMRF grantees must plan for and carry out continuous quality improvement activities (p. 18) and conduct a local evaluation (p. 18) or participate in a federally led evaluation or research effort (p. 22). ACF has an ongoing [research portfolio](#) building evidence related to Strengthening Families, Healthy Marriage, and Responsible Fatherhood, and has conducted randomized controlled trials with grantees in each funding round of these grants.

The 2003 Reauthorization of the [Runaway and Homeless Youth Act](#) called for a study of long-term outcomes for youth who are served through the Transitional Living Program (TLP). In response, ACF is sponsoring a [study](#) that will capture data from youth at program entry and at intermediate- and longer-term follow-up points after program exit and will assess outcomes related to housing, education, and employment. ACF is also sponsoring a process evaluation of the [2016 Transitional Living Program Special Population Demonstration Project](#).

Additionally, [Unaccompanied Children Services](#) (p. 33), [Preschool Development Grants](#) (p. 30), and [Runaway and Homeless Youth](#) (p.24) grantees are required to develop a program performance evaluation plan.

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its 5 largest grant programs)?**

ACF’s [Personal Responsibility Education Program](#) includes three individual discretionary grant programs that fund programs exhibiting evidence of effectiveness, innovative adaptations of evidence-based programs, and promising practices that teach youth about abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

To receive funding through ACF’s [Sexual Risk Avoidance Education](#) (SRAE) program, applicants must cite evidence published in a peer-reviewed journal and/or a randomized controlled trial or quasi-experimental design to support their chosen interventions or models.



**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

As mentioned above, ACF is conducting a [multi-pronged evaluation](#) of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants Program (HPOG). Findings from the first cohort of HPOG grants influenced the funding opportunity announcement for the second round of HPOG (HPOG 2.0) funding. ACF used findings from the impact evaluation of the first cohort of HPOG grants to provide insights to the field about which HPOG program components are associated with stronger participant outcomes. For example, based on the finding that many participants engaged in short-term training for low-wage, entry-level jobs, the HPOG 2.0 FOA more carefully defined the career pathways framework, described specific strategies for helping participants progress along a career pathway, and identified and defined key HPOG education and training components. Applicants were required to more clearly describe how their program would support career pathways for participants. Based on an analysis, which indicated limited collaborations with healthcare employers, the HPOG 2.0 FOA required applicants to demonstrate the use of labor market information, consult with local employers, and describe their plans for employer engagement. The HPOG 2.0 FOA also placed more emphasis on the importance of providing basic skills education and assessment of barriers to make the programs accessible to clients who were most prepared to benefit, based on the finding that many programs were screening out applicants with low levels of basic literacy, reading, and numeracy skills.

ACF's [Personal Responsibility Education Innovative Strategies Program](#) (PREIS) grantees must conduct independent evaluations of their innovative strategies for the prevention of teen pregnancy, births, and STIs, supported by ACF training and technical assistance. These rigorous evaluations are designed to meet the [HHS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence-Based Standards](#) and are expected to generate lessons learned so that others can benefit from these strategies and innovative approaches.

In 2019, ACF awarded two child welfare discretionary grants to build knowledge of what works: (1) [Regional Partnership Grants to Increase the Well-Being of, and to Improve the Permanency Outcomes for, Children and Families Affected By Opioids and Other Substance Abuse](#); these grants aim to build evidence on the effectiveness of targeted approaches that improve outcomes for children and families affected by opioids and other substance use orders. To this end, grantees will evaluate their local program; select and report on performance indicators that align with proposed program strategies and activities; and participate in a national cross-site evaluation that will describe outcomes for children, adults, and families enrolled in RPG projects as well as

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

the outcomes of the partnerships. (2) [Community Collaboratives to Strengthen and Preserve Families](#): these grants will support the development, implementation, and evaluation of primary prevention strategies to improve the safety, stability, and well-being of all families through a continuum of community-based services and supports. Projects will include both process and outcome evaluations.

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

ACF's [template](#) (see p. 14 in Attachment C) for competitive grant announcements includes standard language instructing grantees to conduct evaluation efforts. Program offices may use this template to require grantees to collect performance data or conduct a rigorous evaluation. [Applicants are instructed](#) to include third-party evaluation contracts in their proposed budget justifications.

ACF's 2020 Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRP) Grants establish required evidence activities by scope of grantee services ([p.4](#)). For example, large scope services (requesting funding between \$1M-\$1.5M) "must propose a rigorous impact evaluation (i.e., randomized-controlled trial (RCT) or high-quality, quasi-experimental design (QED) study)...and must allocate at least 15 percent, but no more than 20 percent, of their total annual funding for evaluation" ([p. 19](#)) Regardless of their scope of services, all 2020 HMRP grantees must plan for and carry out continuous quality improvement activities ([p. 18](#)) and conduct a local evaluation ([p. 18](#)) or participate in a federally led evaluation or research effort ([p. 22](#)).

ACF's [2018 Preschool Development Grants funding announcement](#) notes that "it is intended that States or territories will use a percentage of the total amount of their [renewal] grant award during years 2 through 4 to conduct the proposed process, cost, and outcome evaluations, and to implement a data collection system that will allow them to collect, house, and use data on the populations served, the implementation of services, the cost of providing services, and coordination across service partners."

ACF's [rules](#) (section 1351.15) allow Runaway and Homeless Youth grant awards to be used for "data collection and analysis."

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

[Regional Partnership Grants \(RPG\)](#) (p. 1) require a minimum of 20 percent of grant funds to be spent on evaluation elements. ACF has supported the evaluation capacity of RPG grantees by providing technical assistance for data collection, performance measurement, and continuous quality improvement; implementation of the cross-site evaluation; support for knowledge dissemination; and provision of group TA via webinars and presentation.

[Community Collaboratives to Strengthen and Preserve Families \(CCSPF\)](#) grants (p. 7) require a minimum of 10 percent of grant funds to be used on data collection and evaluation activities. ACF has supported the evaluation capacity of CCSPF grantees by providing technical assistance for developing research questions, methodologies, process and outcome measures; implementing grantee-designed evaluations and continuous quality improvement activities; analyzing evaluation data; disseminating findings; and supporting data use in project and organizational decision-making processes.

ACF also provides evaluation technical assistance to:

- support grantees participating in federal evaluations (e.g., projects supporting grantees from [Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0](#) and [Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0](#)); and
- support grantees who are conducting their own local evaluations (e.g., projects supporting [Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood](#) grantees, [Personal Responsibility Education Program](#) grantees, and [YARH](#) grantees.)

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**9.1 What were the agency’s five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the 5 largest non-competitive grant programs are:

- 1) [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) (TANF) (\$16.4 billion; eligible entities: states);
- 2) [Child Care and Development Fund](#) (Block Grant and Entitlement to States combined) (\$8.72 billion; eligible entities: states);
- 3) [Foster Care](#) (\$5.3 billion; eligible entities: states);
- 4) [Child Support Enforcement Payments to States](#) (\$4.6 billion; eligible entities: states);
- 5) [Low Income Home Energy Assistance](#) (\$3.7 billion; eligible entities: states, tribes, territories).

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in the largest five non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) (Division E, Title VII of the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018](#)), funded under the [Foster Care](#) budget, newly enables States to use Federal funds available under parts B and E of Title IV of the [Social Security Act](#) to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements through the provision of evidence-based mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services, in-home parent skill-based programs, and kinship navigator services. FFPSA requires an independent systematic review of evidence to designate programs and services as “promising,” “supported,” and “well-supported” practices. Only interventions designated as evidence-based will be eligible for federal funds.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

Most of ACF's non-competitive grant programs are large block grants without the legislative authority to use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds. Several programs do have performance-based payment incentive programs, however. For example, [The Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments program](#), most recently reauthorized through FY 2021 as part of the Family First Prevention Services Act ([Social Security Act §473A](#)), provides incentive payments to jurisdictions for improved performance in both adoptions and legal guardianship of children in foster care. Additionally, [the Child Support program \(p. 6\)](#) has an outcome-based performance management system established by the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 (CSPIA; [Social Security Act § 458](#)). Under CSPIA, states are measured in five program areas: paternity establishment, support order establishment, current support collections, cases paying towards arrears, and cost effectiveness. This performance-based incentive and penalty program is used to reward states for good or improved performance and to impose penalties when state performance falls below a specified level and has not improved.

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

**TANF Grant Program:** The TANF statute gives HHS responsibility for building evidence about the TANF program: "Evaluation of the Impacts of TANF- The Secretary shall conduct research on the effect of State programs funded under this part and any other State program funded with qualified State expenditures on employment, self-sufficiency, child well-being, unmarried births, marriage, poverty, economic mobility, and other factors as determined by the Secretary." (§413(a)). Since FY17, Congress has designated 0.33% of the TANF Block Grant for research, evaluation, and technical assistance related to the TANF Block Grant.

ACF has a long-standing and ongoing [research portfolio](#) in service of building evidence for the TANF Grant Program. ACF conducts research and evaluation projects in collaboration with TANF grantees, typically in areas where TANF grantees are facing challenges, innovating, or carrying out demonstration projects. This ongoing work includes building evidence around [career pathways training programs](#), [subsidized employment approaches](#), [job search approaches](#), and [employment coaching interventions](#). These are all program approaches used by state and county TANF grantees to meet their employment goals. ACF widely disseminates information from its research and evaluation activities to TANF grantees and provides extensive [training and technical assistance](#).

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

ACF's [TANF Data Innovation \(TDI\) project](#), launched in 2017, supports the innovation and improved effectiveness of state TANF programs by enhancing the use of data from TANF and related human services programs. In 2019, the [TANF Data Collaborative \(TDC\)](#), an initiative of the TDI project, conducted a needs assessment survey of all states and is now supporting a TANF agency Pilot program with 8 Pilot sites. To support state and local efforts and build strategic partnerships, Pilot agencies are receiving funding and intensive training and technical assistance.

**Child Care Development Block Grant Program:** While the [Child Care Development Block Grant Act](#) (p. 34) does not allocate funding for States to independently build evidence, the Act allows for up to one-half of one percent of CCDBG funding for a fiscal year to be reserved for HHS to conduct research and evaluation of the CCDBG grant program and to disseminate the key findings of those evaluations widely and on a timely basis. ACF manages this ongoing [research portfolio](#) to build evidence for the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program (CCDBG), conducting research and evaluation projects in collaboration with CCDBG grantees, typically in areas where CCDBG grantees are facing challenges, innovating, or carrying out demonstration projects. Major projects in recent years include the [National Survey of Early Care and Education](#); assessment of evidence on ratings in [Quality Rating and Improvement Systems](#) (QRIS); and several research partnerships between CCDF lead agencies and researchers. ACF widely disseminates information from its research and evaluation activities to CCDF grantees and provides extensive [training and technical assistance](#).

**Foster Care and Related Child Welfare Grant Programs:** ACF administers several foster care and related child welfare grant programs that do not possess the funding authority for States to conduct independent evidence-building activities. Some of these programs have set-asides for federal research; the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, for instance, sets aside 1.5% of the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood program (Chafee program) for evaluations of promising independent living programs.

As such, ACF has an ongoing [research portfolio](#) on the Title IV-E foster care grant program and related grant programs. ACF conducts research and evaluation in collaboration with child welfare grantees, typically focusing on areas in which grantees are facing challenges, innovating, or conducting demonstrations. Examples include strategies for prevention of maltreatment, meeting service needs, and improving outcomes for children who come to the attention of child welfare. Major projects include the

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

[National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being \(NSCAW\)](#) and a [Supporting Evidence Building in Child Welfare](#) project to increase the number of evidence-supported interventions grantees can use to serve the child welfare population.

ACF has [begun work on conducting formative evaluations of independent living programs](#) of potential national significance in preparation for possible future summative evaluations. This work builds off of the multi-site evaluation of foster youth programs, a rigorous, random assignment evaluation of four programs funded under the Chafee program completed in 2011.

Also, ACF's [Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention \(CBCAP\) formula grants](#), with a focus on supporting community-based approaches to prevent child abuse and neglect, are intended to inform the use of other child welfare funds more broadly.

**Child Support Enforcement Research and Evaluation Grant Program:** Section 1115 of the Social Security Act provides unique authority for research and evaluation grants to child support enforcement grantees to “improve the financial well-being of children or otherwise **improve the operation of the child support program.**” For instance, ACF awarded [Digital Marketing Grants](#) to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents that could benefit from child support services, and create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents.

ACF continues to manage a broad child support enforcement research portfolio and administers a variety of research/evaluation components to understand more about cost and program effectiveness. Research and evaluation within the portfolio have consisted of 1) supporting large multi-state demonstrations which include random assignment evaluations (described in criteria question 7.4), 2) funding a supplement to the Census Bureau’s Current Population survey, and 3) supporting research activities of other government programs and agencies by conducting matches of their research samples to the NDNH.

**9.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other non-competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

States applying for funding from ACF’s [Community Based Child Abuse Prevention](#) (CBCAP) grant program must “demonstrate an emphasis on promoting the increased use and high quality implementation of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices.” The Children’s Bureau [defines](#) evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices along a continuum

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

with four categories: Emerging and Evidence-Informed; Promising; Supported; and Well Supported. Programs determined to fall within specific program parameters will be considered to be “evidence informed” or “evidence-based” practices (EBP), as opposed to programs that have not been evaluated using any set criteria. ACF monitors progress on the percentage of program funds directed towards evidence-based and evidence-informed practices.

**9.5 What are the agency’s 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

In Section 413 of the Social Security act where Congress gives HHS primary responsibility for building evidence about the TANF program, Congress also commissions HHS to develop “a database (which shall be referred to as the “What Works Clearinghouse of Proven and Promising Projects to Move Welfare Recipients into Work”) of the projects that used a proven approach or a promising approach in moving welfare recipients into work, based on independent, rigorous evaluations of the projects” (§413(g)). In April of 2020, ACF officially launched the [Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#), a user-friendly website that shares the results of the systematic review and provides web-based tools and products to help state and local TANF administrators, policymakers, researchers and the general public make sense of the results and better understand how this evidence might apply to questions and contexts that matter to them.

Additionally, ACF has continued to produce findings from numerous randomized controlled trials providing evidence on strategies that TANF agencies can use such as [subsidized employment, coaching, career pathways](#) and [job search strategies](#). Ongoing ACF efforts to build evidence for what works for TANF recipients and other low-income individuals include the [Building Evidence on Employment Strategies for Low-Income Families \(BEES\) project](#) and the [Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies \(NextGen\) project](#); these projects are evaluating the effectiveness of innovative programs designed to boost employment and earnings among low-income individuals.

ACF’s Office of Child Care drew on research and evaluation findings related to eligibility redetermination, continuity of subsidy use, use of dollars to improve the quality of programs, and more to inform regulations related to Child Care and Development Block Grant reauthorization.



**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**9.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) programs are authorized as part of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). CAPTA promotes the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices that effectively strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. This includes efforts to improve the evaluation capacity of the states and communities to assess progress of their programs and collaborative networks in enhancing the safety and wellbeing of children and families. The [2020 Program Instruction](#) for the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant program states that CBCAP funds made available to states must be used for the financing, planning, community mobilization, collaboration, assessment, information and referral, startup, training and technical assistance, information management and reporting, and reporting and evaluation costs for establishing, operating, or expanding community-based and prevention-focused programs and activities designed to strengthen and support families and prevent child abuse and neglect, among other things.

[Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014](#) says states are required to spend not less than 7, 8, and 9 percent of their CCDF awards (“quality funds”) (for years 1-2, 3-4, and 5+ after 2014 CCDBG enactment, respectively – see 128 STAT. 1987) on activities to improve the quality of child care services provided in the state, including:

- 1B: Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce through...incorporating the effective use of data to guide program improvement (see 128 STAT 1988)
- 3: Developing, implementing, or enhancing a quality rating system for child care providers and services, which may support and assess the quality of child care providers in the State (A) and be designed to improve the quality of different types of child care providers (C) (see 128 STAT 1988)
- 7: Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care programs and services offered in the State, including evaluating how such programs positively impact children (see 128 STAT 1990)

ACF requires all CCDF lead agencies to annually report on how their CCDF quality funds were expended, including the activities funded and the measures used by states and territories to evaluate progress in improving the quality of child care programs and

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

services. ACF released a [Program Instruction](#) for state and territorial lead agencies to provide guidance on reporting the authorized activities for the use of quality funds.

ACF also provides evaluation technical assistance to:

- support grantees who are conducting their own local evaluations ([MIECHV grantees](#) (in collaboration with HRSA), [Tribal MIECHV grantees](#), and ACF staff directly supporting Section 1115 child support demonstration grantees); and
- build the evaluation capacity of grantees (e.g., the [TANF Data Innovation Project](#), the [Tribal Early Childhood Research Center](#), and the [Center for States](#)).

**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20 Score

**6**

(out of 8 points)

**Administration for Children and Families**

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 [only allows federal matching funds only for evidence-based prevention services](#) offered by states, thereby incentivizing states to shift their spending from non-evidence based approaches.

For ACF's [Child and Family Services Reviews \(CFSRs\)](#) of state child welfare systems, states determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in all the areas assessed must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan addressing the areas of nonconformity. ACF supports the states with technical assistance and monitors implementation of their plans. States must successfully complete their plans to avoid financial penalties for nonconformance.

The ACF Head Start program significantly expanded its accountability provisions with the establishment of five-year Head Start grant service periods and the [Head Start Designation Renewal System](#) (DRS). The DRS was designed to determine whether Head Start and Early Head Start programs are providing high quality comprehensive services to the children and families in their communities. Where they are not, grantees are denied automatic renewal of their grant and must apply for funding renewal through an open competition process. Those determinations are based on seven conditions, one of which looks at how Head Start classrooms within programs perform on the [Classroom Assessment Scoring System](#) (CLASS), an observation-

**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

based measure of the quality of teacher-child interactions. Data from ACF's [Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey](#) (FACES) and [Quality Features, Dosage, Thresholds and Child Outcomes](#) (Q-DOT) study were used to craft the regulations that created the DRS and informed key decisions in its implementation. This included where to set minimum thresholds for average CLASS scores, the number of classrooms within programs to be sampled to ensure stable program-level estimates on CLASS, and the number of cycles of CLASS observations to conduct. At the time the DRS notification letters were sent out to grantees in 2011, there were 1,421 non-tribal active grants, and of these, 453 (32%) were required to re-compete ([p. 19](#)).

Findings from the evaluation of the first round Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program influenced the funding opportunity announcement for the second round of HPOG funding. Namely, the scoring criteria used to select HPOG 2.0 grantees incorporated knowledge gained about challenges experienced in the HPOG 1.0 grant program. For example, based on those challenges, applicants were asked to clearly demonstrate—and verify with local employers—an unmet need in their service area for the education and training activities proposed. Applicants were also required to provide projections for the number of individuals expected to begin and complete basic skills education. Grantees must submit semi-annual and annual progress reports to ACF to show their progress in meeting these projections. If they have trouble doing so, grantees are provided with technical assistance to support improvement or are put on a corrective action plan so that ACF can more closely monitor their steps toward improvement.

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

In an effort to create operational efficiencies and increase grantee capacity for mission-related activities, ACF implemented a process in 2019 in which the grants management office completes annual risk modeling of grantee financial administrative datasets, which helps identify organizations that would benefit from targeted technical assistance. The grants management office provides TA to these grantees to improve their financial management and help direct resources toward effective service delivery.

**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

As mentioned in 10.1, states reviewed by a [Child and Family Services Review](#) (CFSR) and determined not to have achieved substantial conformity in all the areas assessed must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan addressing the areas of nonconformity. ACF supports the states with technical assistance and monitors implementation of their plans. ACF also provides broad programmatic technical assistance to support grantees in improving their service delivery, including the [Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative](#). The Collaborative is designed to help public child welfare agencies, Tribes, and courts enhance and mobilize the human and organizational assets necessary to meet Federal standards and requirements; improve child welfare practice and administration; and achieve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children, youth, and families. ACF also sponsors the [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#), a platform connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more.



**67**

FY20 Score

**Administration for Community Living**  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



**Administration for Community Living**  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

The [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL), an operating division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, first participated in the *2018 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence*, and has since accelerated its efforts to build an agency focused on performance and research.

ACL's centralized capacity for performance, research, and evaluation is housed in the [Office of Performance and Evaluation](#) (OPE). The Director of OPE serves as the agency's evaluation and performance officer with responsibility for coordinating *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act* (Evidence Act) implementation within the operating division. The OPE Director also serves on the [HHS data council](#), HHS Data Governance Board, and Federal Interagency Council on Evaluation Policy.

To resource the agency evaluation and research activities, in FY20, ACL invested more than 1% of its overall budget in research and evaluation activities -- a total of \$22.1 million, compared with \$18.8 million, or 0.85% in FY19 -- a first for the agency since FY18. Three other federal agencies (USAID, AmeriCorps, and MCC) have invested 1% or more of their budget in research and evaluation, a Results for America policy recommendation for all governments. As part of its growing efforts to increase the agency's evidenced-based policy capabilities, OPE supports [training](#) for the agency's program staff on evidence-based grantmaking, which will enhance the agency's ability to invest in better results and outcomes.

Of particular note, ACL is committed to implementing the Evidence Act even though, because of its status as a component of a CFO Act agency, it is not mandated to do so. This year alone, the agency has made major strides in meeting the requirements of the Evidence Act by issuing a [FY22 Evaluation Plan](#), developing an [Interim Learning Agenda](#), participating in the development of an HHS-wide Evidence Capacity Assessment, and drafting a primer on [data governance](#) (akin to the Data Governance Body that sets and enforces priorities for managing data as a strategic asset required by the Evidence Act). This growing investment in, and capacity for, research and evaluation will benefit the agency as it continues to execute its mission to serve aging populations across the country.

In future years ACL will focus on improving its use of evidence as part of the process for making competitive and noncompetitive grant awards.

**Administration for Community Living**

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 9 points)

### Administration for Community Living

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The Director of the [Office of Performance and Evaluation](#) (OPE) serves as the Administration for Community Living (ACL) evaluation officer. OPE, which oversees the agency’s performance and evaluation work, has six full time staff positions and three full-time onsite contractors. In FY20 it had a budget of approximately \$10.1 million. The Director of OPE has the education, skill, and experience to meet the Evaluation Officer requirements listed in the Evidence Act and routinely gauges the coverage, quality, methods, consistency, effectiveness, independence, and balance of the portfolio of evaluations, policy research, and ongoing evaluation activities of the agency and assesses agency capacity to support the development and use of evaluation. The Director is also the designated ACL Performance Officer.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

The Director of the Office of Performance and Evaluation (OPE) serves as the Administration of Community Livings’ Chief Data Officer. OPE, which oversees the agency’s performance and evaluation work, has six full time staff positions and three full-time onsite contractors. In FY20 it had a budget of approximately \$10.1 million. The Director of OPE leads ACL’s [Data Governance Body](#), including facilitating collaborative activities among the numerous actors with responsibilities and needs for data within the agency and has demonstrated training and experience in data management, governance, collection, analysis, protection, use, and dissemination and fulfills the aspects of this role which are relevant to ACL. These include coordinating with ACL’s CIO and Chief Privacy Officer on use, protection, dissemination, and generation of data to ensure that the data needs of the agency are met; ensuring that agency data conform with data management best practices; engaging agency employees, the public, and contractors in using public data assets; and encouraging collaborative approaches on improving data use. The Director of OPE



 **2020 Invest in What Works**  
**Federal Standard of Excellence**

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

serves as the agency liaison to other federal entities through, for example, serving as the ACL representative to the [HHS data council](#), and serving on the Federal Interagency Council on Evaluation Policy as well as the HHS Data Governance Board.

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency's major programs?**

The Director of ACL's Office of Performance and Evaluation serves the functions of evaluation officer, chief data officer, and performance officer. In order to coordinate activities relevant to these positions, the OPE Directors and staff coordinate the support, improvement, and evaluation of agency programs through implementation of an agency [performance strategy](#), [learning agenda](#), [annual agency wide evaluation plan](#), and additional long range and evaluation plans for the Administration on Aging (in development) and the [National Institute for Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#). The structure requires semi-annual meetings with ACL leadership and management staff and annual consultation with all program managers. In FY19 ACL instituted a council to improve ACL's data governance and quality, including the development of improved processes and standards for defining, collecting, reviewing, certifying, analyzing, and presenting data that ACL collects through its evaluations, grant reporting, and other administrative data collections. Taken together, this robust governance structure ensures cohesive collection and use of evidence across ACL regarding program performance, evaluation, and improvement and to ensure that data are gathered, processed, and curated so as to produce evidence that program staff and agency leadership use for program and operational improvement. As an operating division without a statistical unit, ACL does not have a statistical officer.

**2. Evaluation and Research:** Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Administration for Community Living**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

ACL's public [evaluation policy](#) confirms ACL's commitment to conducting evaluations and using evidence from evaluations to inform policy and practice. ACL seeks to promote rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, and ethics in the conduct of evaluations. The policy addresses each of these principles.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

[ACL's agency-wide evaluation plan](#) was submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in support of HHS' requirement to submit an annual evaluation plan to OMB in conjunction with its Agency Performance Plan. ACL's annual evaluation plan includes the evaluation activities the agency plans related to the [learning agenda](#) and any other "significant" evaluation, such as those required by statute. The plan describes the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs, projects, and processes as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decision-makers about current and future activities.

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

Based on the [learning agenda approach](#) that ACL adopted in 2018, ACL published a [learning agenda](#), in FY20. In developing the plan, ACL engaged stakeholders through meetings with program staff and grantees as required under OMB M-19-23. Additional meetings with stakeholder groups, such as through conference sessions, were put on hold for 2020 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

ACL releases all [evaluation reports](#) as well as interim [information](#) such as issue briefs, webinar recordings, and factsheets based on data from its evaluation and evidence building activities.

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

Staff from the Office of Performance and Evaluation (OPE) played an active role HHS's capacity assessment efforts serving on the Capacity Assessment Subcommittee of the HHS Evidence and Evaluation Council. ACL's self-assessment results were provided to HHS to support HHS' ability to submit the required information to OMB. ACL's self-assessment results, which provided information about planning and implementing evaluation activities, disseminating best practices and findings, and incorporating employee views and feedback; and carrying out capacity-building activities in order to use evaluation research and analysis approaches and data in the day-to-day operations will be reviewed by the ACL Data Council in order to develop a capacity building plan.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

ACL typically funds evaluation design contracts, such as those for the Older Americans Act Title VI [Tribal Grants Program evaluation](#) and the [Long Term Care Ombudsman Evaluation](#), that are used to determine the most rigorous evaluation approach that is feasible given the structure of a particular program. While the Ombudsman program is full coverage programs, where comparison groups are not possible, ACL most frequently uses propensity score matching to identify comparison group members. This was the case for the Older Americans Act [Nutrition Services Program](#) and [National Family Caregivers Support Program](#) evaluations and the [Wellness Prospective Evaluation Final Report](#) conducted by CMS in partnership with ACL and published in January 2019.

ACL's National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) funds the largest percentage of ACL's RCTs. Of their 718 research projects being conducted by grantees, 23% (163/718) are employing a randomized clinical trial (RCT) or "true experimental" design. To ensure research quality, NIDILRR adheres to strict [peer reviewer evaluation criteria](#)

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

that are used in the grant award process (see part (c) for details on rigor of research projects and part (d) for details on the design of research projects). In addition, ACL's [evaluation policy](#) states that "In assessing the effects of programs or services, ACL evaluations will use methods that isolate to the greatest extent possible the impacts of the programs or services from other influences such as trends over time, geographic variation, or pre-existing differences between participants and non-participants. For such causal questions, experimental approaches are preferred. When experimental approaches are not feasible, high-quality quasi-experiments offer an alternative." ACL is in the process of implementing a method for rating each proposed evaluation against OMB's Program Evaluation Standards and Practices as defined in OMB M-20-12.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**3.1** \_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$ \_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_% of the agency's \$ \_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.

ACL invested \$22.2 million on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing 1.11% of the agency's \$2.0 billion [FY20 enacted budget](#).

**3.2** Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)

ACL's Office of Performance and Evaluation (OPE) budget for evaluation was \$10.4 million in FY20 and there were no significant changes to the evaluation budget since the previous year. The bulk of OPE's evaluation funds are based on a set-aside required in [Title II, section 206, of the Older Americans Act](#), "From the total amount appropriated for each fiscal year to carry out title III, the Secretary may use such sums as may be necessary, but not to exceed 1/2 of 1 percent of such amount, for purposes of conducting evaluations under this section, either directly or through grants or contracts." In addition, in 2017 ACL's Office of Performance and Evaluation established a mechanism that allows ACL programs not covered by the OAA set-aside to transfer funds to OPE to be able to support evaluations of their programs. In 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 OPE added approximately \$1.0 million, \$1.7 million, \$3.2 million, and \$1.2 million from these programs to its evaluation budget respectively. In addition to these funds, ACL allocated \$11.8 million for technical assistance and other activities, such as prize competitions, to support strong evidence building. In total, ACL spent \$22.2 million on evaluation related activities in FY20.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

**3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

ACL primarily provides information resources to grantees to build their evaluation and evidence building capacity. Staff record trainings on evaluation topics, including an [overview of performance measurement](#). ACL also has several resources and TA centers that focus on evidence building including one contract dedicated to improving performance data provided by Older Americans Act Title III, VI, and VII grantees that offers [live and prerecorded webinars and a range of manuals and TA supports](#). ACL also published toolkits for [strategic planning](#), [data quality](#), [performance measures](#), and [logic model development](#). ACL provides technical assistance to grantees related to using evidence-based programs and building evidence. For example, the [National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging](#) (NRC) provides different programs and approaches that deliver nutrition-related home- and community-based services (HCBS) administered through grants to the 56 states and territories. ACL's [Alzheimer's Disease Supportive Services Program](#) (ADSSP) grant program supports state efforts to expand the availability of community-level supportive services including the translation of evidence-based models into community-level practice in their programs. The 68 [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service](#) (UCEDDs) throughout the United States and its territories serve as liaisons between academia and the community. They fund model demonstrations to build evidence for addressing issues, finding solutions, and advancing research related to the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

[Access to Respite Care and Help \(ARCH\)](#) provides training and technical assistance to the Lifespan Respite Network with a focus on performance measurement, sustainability, best practices, and research. ACL has funded 33 states and the District of Columbia to establish or enhance Statewide Lifespan Respite systems and ARCH provides training and technical assistance to them as well. The [National Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center](#) supports grantees as they implement evidence-based interventions and innovative practices designed to empower and assist caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. ACL funding is released in five year cycles, with the next five year grant expected to be awarded in 2020.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement:** Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Administration for Community Living**

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

As part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Annual Performance Plan and Report, ACL reports on the following two HHS Agency Priority Goals: (1) Increase the success rate of the Protection and Advocacy Program’s individual or systemic advocacy, thereby advancing individuals with developmental disabilities’ right to receive appropriate community based services, resulting in community integration and independence, and have other rights enforced, retained, restored and/or expanded; and (2) Improve dementia capability of long-term support systems to create dementia-friendly, livable communities (Lead Agency ACL). ACL’s strategy [focuses on five pillars](#): supporting families and caregivers, protecting rights and preventing abuse, connecting people to resources, expanding employment opportunities, and strengthening the aging and disability networks. These pillars provide structure and focus for ACL’s work. ACL’s outcomes measures are available, by program, in its annual [Congressional Budget Justification](#), and include measures of program efficiency.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

ACL employs a moderate approach for analyzing evidence to find ways to improve return on investment that addresses multiple parts of the agency. In FY20, as part of its ongoing effort to ensure that agency funds are used effectively, ACL funded a contract, focused on ACL's Administration in Aging, to identify approaches to measure how and to what extent parts of the Aging Network leverage Older Americans Act funds to increase their available resources as well as how the Aging Network uses resources to measure and improve the quality of services available/provided. NIDILRR conducts research as part of their new employment research agenda to continue development of return-on-investment models that can be used by Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to optimize the services they provide. In addition, in March 2020 ACL launched a [Challenge Competition](#) to spur development of the interoperable, statewide referral and analytics platforms needed to enable the type of partnerships between health care and community-based social services organizations have been shown to improve health outcomes and lower costs.

In June 2020 ACL launched [MENTAL Health Challenge](#) to create an online tool that connects socially isolated people to resources. In November 2020, ACL launched two competitions. The [Inventive Solutions to Address the Direct Support Professional Crisis](#) has the goal of improving the overall quality of home- and community-based services (HCBS) for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). The [Disability Employment Challenge](#) sought innovative models that can be shared to help businesses across the country reach a wider talent pool and to create more opportunities for employment for people with disabilities. The goal of all the prize competitions is to encourage effective and efficient methods for meeting ACL's mission and improving services to its target populations.

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

As part of ACL's [performance strategy](#) and [learning agenda approach](#) OPE staff present performance data to ACL leadership several times a year. In addition, ACL leadership review performance data as part of the budget justification process that informs



**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

program funding decisions. OPE staff conduct annual meetings with ACL staff to report performance measure data and results to discuss methods for incorporating performance and evaluation findings into funding and operational decision-making. As part of annual evaluation planning efforts, staff from ACL's Office of Performance and Evaluation consult with ACL center directors to identify evaluation priorities and review proposed evaluation approaches to ensure that the evaluation questions identified will provide information that will be useful for program improvement.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

FY20 Score

**8**

(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

As an operating division of a CFO Act Agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACL is not required to have its own strategic data plan and utilizes [HHS's data strategy](#). In 2016, ACL implemented a [Public Access Plan](#) as a mechanism for compliance with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy's public access policy. The plan focused on making published results of ACL/National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) funded research more readily accessible to the public; making scientific data collected through ACL/NIDILRR-funded research more readily accessible to the public; and increasing the use of research results and scientific data to further advance scientific endeavors and other tangible applications. In 2019, ACL created a council to improve ACL's data governance, including the development of improved processes and standards for defining, collecting, reviewing, certifying, analyzing, and presenting data that ACL collects through its evaluation, grant reporting, and administrative performance measures. In 2020, its first year, the ACL Data Council produced an [annotated bibliography](#) to provide essential background information about the topic, and also developed a [Primer](#) to detail best practices in data governance specifically as they apply to ACL. The Council also developed a Data Quality 101 infographic to guide decision-making processes related to data quality, which will be completed in late 2020.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

ACL provides comprehensive public access to its programmatic data through two web based portals: [Aging, Independence, and Disability \(AGID\)](#) and [National Rehabilitation Information Center \(NARIC\)](#). ACL is also creating an internal evidence inventory that staff will be able to use to search for relevant program performance and evaluation data by agency priority question.

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

ACL's Office of Performance and Evaluation has access to all of ACL's performance and evaluation data and is able to link those data and advise programs about their availability and usability. In March 2019, the ACL completed the [ACL Data Restructuring \(DR\) Project](#) to assess the data hosted on [AGID](#), and to develop and test a potential restructuring of the data in order to make it useful and usable for stakeholders. In 2019, ACL [awarded a follow on contract](#) to further integrate its datasets along the lines of conceptual linkages, and to better align the measures within ACL's data collections across the agency. ACL funded several grants to promote data linkage including the [Grants to Enhance State Adult Protective Services](#) awarded in FY19 to increase intra- and inter-state sharing of information on APS cases and the 2020 [Empowering Communities to Reduce Falls and Falls Risk](#) to develop robust partnerships, develop a result-based, comprehensive strategy for reducing falls and falls risk among older adults and adults with disabilities living in your community and directs grantees to consider CDC opportunities to broaden and improve the linkage between primary care providers and evidence-based community falls prevention programs supported by ACL.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

As an operating division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACL follows all [departmental guidance](#) regarding data privacy and security. This includes project-specific reviews by ACL's Office of Information Resource Management (OIRM),

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

which monitors all of ACL's data collection activities to ensure the safety and security of ACL's data assets. In FY19, ACL awarded a contract to stand up a "Data Council" to enhance the quality, security, and statistical usability of the data ACL collects through its evaluation, grant reporting, and administrative data collections, and to develop effective data governance standards. A Data Governance and a Data Quality working group have been established to actively address these goals. In addition, each funding opportunity announcement states that "a data and safety monitoring board (DSMB) is required for all multi-site clinical trials involving interventions" (see for example the FOA for [Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects \(DRRP\): Assistive Technology to Promote Independence and Community Living \(Development\) HHS-2019-ACL-NIDILRR-DPGE-0355](#)).

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

ACL staff provide technical assistance through presentations and ACL's technical assistance resource centers to grantees, including state, tribal, and local governments. The resource centers providing technical assistance include: the [National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging \(NRC\)](#), the [Alzheimer's Disease Supportive Services Program \(ADSSP\)](#) and the [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service](#). This technical assistance includes annual workshops and presentations at the [Title VI National Training and Technical Assistance Conference](#); training available through the ACL funded [National Ombudsman Resource Center](#); and the [Disability and Rehabilitation Research Program \(DRRP\)](#), which funds capacity building for minority research entities.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

FY20 Score  
**5**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

ACL defines [evidence-based programs](#) on its website. ACL's [National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDILRR) uses a [stages of research framework](#) (SORF) to classify and describe its funded grants and research projects within the grants. Rigorous evaluations methods are applied based on appropriateness. The four stages of SORF include: exploration and discovery, intervention development, intervention efficacy, and scale-up evaluation. Using SORF, NIDILRR gains insight into what is known and unknown about a problem; whether it is time to develop interventions to address a particular problem; whether it is time to test the efficacy of interventions; and whether it is time to scale-up interventions for broader use.

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

The [Older Americans Act](#) requires the use of evidence-based programming in Title III-D-funded activities: [Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Services](#). In response, ACL developed a [definition](#) of the term evidence-based, and created a website containing links to a range of resources for evidence-based programs. This is a common evidence framework used for Older Americans Act funded activities. For programs that are not legislatively required to use evidence-based models, through its funding process ACL requires all programs to provide clear justification and evidence (where available) that proposed projects will achieve their stated outcomes.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

ACL does not have a common evidence repository that applies across the entire agency. It publishes [intervention summaries](#) of aging and disability evidence-based programs and practices. ACL funds the [Evidence-Based Program Review Council](#) to identify new community programs that meet the criteria established by the Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging (ACL/AoA) for evidence-based programs funded through the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-D. To support the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed programming, service providers can find out about evidence-based programs that serve people with dementia and their caregivers by consulting a white paper drafted with funds from ACL– [Translating Innovation to Impact: Evidence-based interventions to support people with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers at home and in their communities](#). The [Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center](#) (MSKTC) has worked with NIDILRR’s Model Systems grantees to develop and publish a variety of evidence-based factsheets about living with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, or burn injury. [ACL’s Living Well demonstration program](#) requires grantees to use evidence-based and innovative strategies to (1) improve access to and quality of community services, (2) reduce and mitigate abuse and neglect, and (3) support empowerment, self-determination, and self-advocacy.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

ACL works through its [resource centers](#) to help grantees use evidence to drive improvements in outcomes for older adults and individuals with disabilities. For example, with funding from ACL, the [National Resource Centers](#) at National Center on Aging (NCOA), in collaboration with the [Evidence-Based Leadership Council](#), led an innovative vetting process to increase the number of programs available to ACL’s aging network that meet the Title III-D evidence-based criteria. This process resulted in adding six new health promotion programs and three new programs for preventing falls. The [Alzheimer’s Disease Supportive Services Program](#) (ADSSP) funds competitive grants to expand the availability of evidence-based services that support persons with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia (ADRD) and their family caregivers. Extensive evaluation of the National Chronic

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) and Falls Prevention database helped generate important insights for potential new ACL applicants in preparing their applications using data-driven estimation procedures for participant and completion targets (see [Guidance for Administration for Community Living 2019 Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Grant Applicants: Considerations for Estimating Participation and Completion Targets](#)). ACL also funded several grants, such as the [Lifespan Respite Care Program: State Program Enhancement Grants](#) and [Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects \(DRRP\) Program: Chronic Disease Management for People with Traumatic Brain Injury \(TBI\)](#) which are designed, in part, to develop an evidence base for respite care and related services and contribute to the evidence base upon which people with TBI and their health care providers can employ effective chronic disease management practices respectively.

Starting in FY20, ACL is also conducting an evaluation of the fidelity with which ACL and its grantees under the Older Americans Act are implementing the required evidence-based programs. This will result in a report documenting the information collected and providing clear, actionable recommendations for ensuring the effective use of evidence-based programming. Recommendations will address what ACL, its grantees, and sub-grantees can do to improve the selection, implementation, and monitoring of evidence-based programming. The report will also include the development of a standardized tool for use by ACL and its OAA state grantees that assesses evidence-based program fidelity. This tool will greatly enhance ACL's ability to ensure that evidence-based practices are used in the field.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

FY20 Score

**4**

(out of 7 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**7.1 Did the agency engage leadership and staff in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

Agency leadership promotes innovation by requiring all program offices to explain, in their annual funding proposals, how the proposed use of funds will identify innovative practices. ACL also partially funds a Forum on Aging, Disability, and Independence which engages staff to foster discussions about innovation for coordinating and integrating aging and disability stakeholders. The most recent publication from this group, released in 2019 is [Artificial Intelligence Applications for Older Adults and People with Disabilities: Balancing Safety and Autonomy: Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief](#). ACL also funds resource centers, such as the [Engagement and Older Adults Resource Center](#) which provides technical assistance and serves as a repository for innovations designed to increase the aging network’s ability to tailor social engagement activities to meet the needs of older adults.

**7.2 Did the agency have *policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?***

In FY20 all ACL Centers were involved in funding innovative work. ACL released several funding opportunity announcements (FOA) focused on the identification and implementation of innovative approaches to improve programming. These included the [Innovations in Nutrition Programs and Services – Demonstration](#), the [Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) Program](#), and [Grants to Enhance State Adult Protective Services](#) demonstration addresses gaps and challenges in state APS systems through innovations and improvements in practice, services, data collection, and reporting. ACL also funded challenge competitions to spur development of the interoperable, statewide referral and analytics platforms needed to enable these partnerships ( [IT Solutions](#)) and to combat the social isolation and loneliness that older adults, people with disabilities and veterans often experience ([Mental Health Challenge](#)).



**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

ACL is a funder of [The John A. Hartford Foundation 2020 Business Innovation Award](#) which recognizes aging and disability community-based organizations (CBOs) for their innovative approaches to reducing health care costs and improving the well-being of older adults and people with disabilities through strategic partnership with health care entities.

There are several funding streams that support innovation. The Older Americans Act, which funds ACL's Administration on Aging, allows ACL to use up to 1% of its appropriations for nutrition innovation demonstrations designed to develop and implement evidence-based practices that enhance senior nutrition. One result is that, consistent with the Administrator's focus on identifying new ways to efficiently improve direct service programs, ACL is using \$3.5 million to fund nutrition innovations and test ways to modernize how meals are provided to a changing senior population. One promising demonstration (entitled Double Blind Randomized Control Trial on the Effect of Evidence-Based Suicide Intervention Training on the Home-Delivered and Congregate Nutrition Program through the Atlanta Regional Commission), currently being carried out by the Georgia State University Research Foundation, is an effort to train volunteers who deliver home-delivered meals to recognize and report indicators of suicidal intent and other mental health issues so that they can be addressed.

[State Councils on Developmental Disabilities](#) (SCDD) are charged with identifying and addressing the most pressing needs of people with developmental disabilities in their state and territory. Councils work with different groups in many ways, including educating communities to welcome people with developmental disabilities; funding projects to show new ways that people with disabilities can work, play, and learn; and seeking information from the public as well as state and national sources.

The 2020 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act has provisions for technical assistance and innovation to improve transportation for older individuals.

In 2020, ACL awarded grants for demonstrations in [Innovations in Nutrition Programs and Services](#) to support the documentation of innovative projects that enhance the quality, effectiveness, and other proven outcomes of nutrition services programs within the aging services network. The goal of this funding opportunity is to support projects that can demonstrate potential for broad implementation throughout the aging services network, and with demonstrated value, i.e., improvements in participant well-being, cost savings, etc.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

As previously mentioned, [National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDILRR) uses a [stages of research framework](#) (SORF) process to gain insight into what is known and unknown about a problem; whether it is time to develop interventions to address a particular problem; whether it is time to test the efficacy of interventions (evaluate its innovation efforts); and whether it is time to scale-up interventions for broader use (improve the impact of its programs).

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

The 2020 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act requires a new Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation Center for the Aging Network and new demonstration programs to evaluate new strategies for the recruitment, retention, or advancement of direct care workers, and the soliciting, development, and implementation of strategies; and a demonstration to address negative health impacts associated with social isolation. Further, ACL has a number of model programs and demonstration grants that propose and test the use of innovative approaches. For example, ACL funded cooperative agreements for the development and testing of model approaches towards coordinated and comprehensive systems for enhancing and assuring the independence, integration, safety, health, and well-being of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in the community (i.e. [Living Well Grants](#)). While the evaluation of this program is not yet complete, initial findings about what works were integrated into the requirements of the funding announcement for the FY18 award cycle.

As previously mentioned, NIDILRR's research and development activities are guided by the Stages of Research Framework and the Stages of Development Framework. NIDILRR grantees conducting research projects must identify the stage of research their projects are in while grantees conducting development projects must identify the stage of development their projects are in. The stage a research project is in depends upon what is known and what is not known about a particular disability problem or topic. Research projects where relatively little is known, or the topic area is emerging, would be classified in the Exploration and discovery stage. Over time, as more becomes known, research projects progressively move into the Intervention Development phase. The next phase, known as Intervention Efficacy, means the stage of research during which a project evaluates and tests whether an intervention is feasible, practical, and has the potential to yield positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The final stage, known as Scale-Up Evaluation, means the stage of research during which a project analyzes whether an intervention is effective in producing improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities when implemented in a real-world setting.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

Similarly, the stage of development a development project is in also depends upon what is known or not known about a need that informs the design and development of a product. The proof of concept stage means the stage of development where key technical challenges are resolved. Stage activities may include recruiting study participants, verifying product requirements; implementing and testing (typically in controlled contexts) key concepts, components, or systems, and resolving technical challenges. The proof of product stage means the stage of development where a fully-integrated and working prototype, meeting critical technical requirements is created. The proof of adoption stage means the stage of development where a product is substantially adopted by its target population and used for its intended purpose.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 15 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**8.1 What were the agency's five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest competitive grant programs are:

1. [National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDILRR) (\$112.0 million; eligible applicants: State, local, and tribal governments and nonprofits, public and State controlled institutions of higher education)
  - a. NIDILRR's largest competitive grants are its [Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects \(DRRP\)](#)
2. Centers for Independent Living (\$90.8 million; eligible applicants: Nonprofits; Public and State controlled institutions of higher education)
  - a. One of their largest competitive grants for was the [Centers for Independent Living Training and Technical Assistance Grant](#)
3. State Health Insurance Assistance Program (\$52.1 million; eligible applicants: Unrestricted)
  - a. One of the relevant NOFAs is for [2020 State Health Insurance Assistance Program \(SHIP\) Base Grant](#)
4. [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service](#) (\$41.6 million; eligible applicants: entities in each State designated as UCEDDs to carry out the four core functions of interdisciplinary pre-service preparation and continuing education, community services, research, and information dissemination)
5. Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act Programs (MIPPA) (\$38 million; Eligible applicants are: Nonprofits; City or township governments; Public and State controlled institutions of higher education; Native American tribal; Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities; Private institutions of higher education; Native American tribal organizations; Special district governments; County governments; State governments; and Independent school districts).
  - a. [A relevant NOFA is for the National Center for Benefits Outreach & Enrollment](#)

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in the five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

Based on a strict interpretation of the phrase “evidence of prior effectiveness to make grant awards,” NIDILRR currently does not use evidence of prior effectiveness to make grant awards. Instead, ACL makes these grant awards by largely relying on the expert evaluative judgments of our peer reviewers. Making grant awards by using peer review is a standard, and widely-accepted, evidenced-based practice. For example, see page 7 of the full [DPCP full announcement](#).

Independent Living (IL) NOFAs describe evaluation criteria including plans for technical assistance to enhance grant effectiveness and the provision of information developed about best practices ([full announcement](#) (p. 21)). To continue receiving CIL program funding, eligible centers must provide evidence that they have previously had an impact on the goals and objectives for this funding.

SHIP NOFAs describe evaluation criteria including plans to improve alignment of policies, processes, and procedures to program goals and increased accountability to program expectations at all levels ([full announcement](#) (p.25)).

University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service ([UCEDDs](#)) are a nationwide network of independent but interlinked centers, representing an expansive national resource for addressing issues, finding solutions, and advancing research related to the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. According to the [funding opportunity announcement](#) applications are also reviewed based on their description of current or previous evidence of relevant experience.

MIPPA funds are awarded to State grantees and to the [National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment](#). To continue funding without restrictions, State grantees are required to submit [state plans](#) that ACL staff review for the specific strategies that grantees will employ to enhance efforts through statewide and local coalition building. The [National Center applicants](#) must describe the rationale for using the particular intervention, including factors such as evidence of intervention effectiveness. In 2019, the Center [was awarded additional funding](#) based on prior performance— specifically, assisting over 7.6 million individuals to identify over \$29.6 billion in potential annual benefits.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

NIDILRR, and its grantees, are in the disability and rehabilitation evidence-building business. NIDILRR grantees generate new knowledge, on particular disability topics or develop new disability products which eventually becomes part of a larger evidence base. To generate this new knowledge, NIDILRR grantees must conduct a series of research and development activities that produce important outputs. These research and development activities are guided by the following two frameworks: The NIDILRR Stages of Research Framework, and the NIDILRR Stages of Development Framework. The NIDILRR Stages of Research Framework is published in [45 CFR 1330.4](#) while the Stages of Development Framework is published in [45 CFR 1330.5](#).

Independence Living/Centers for Independent living grants are required to show that they are "improving performance, outcomes, operations, and governance of CILs." ([Full Announcement](#) (p. 5))

SHIP grantees are required to build and disseminate evidence of what works through documenting and promoting "knowledge, successes, and lessons learned within the SHIP network. This includes sharing ideas, products, and materials with other SHIP grantees, ACL, and the SHIP Technical Assistance Center." ([Full Announcement](#) (p.5))

A central purpose of UCEDD grants is the building and dissemination of evidence of what works. [UCEDDs](#) are a nationwide network of independent but interlinked centers, representing an expansive national resource for addressing issues, finding solutions, and advancing research related to the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

MIPPA Grant funds support the identification and dissemination of [promising practices](#) for (i.e., practices built upon evidence of effectiveness) improving benefits outreach and enrollment.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

ACL requires that evidence of effectiveness is used in all award decisions. Grant officers attend training regarding ways to include information about evidence building into funding opportunity announcements. This includes information about text that can be included in funding announcements: 1) describing requirements for developing measurable outcomes; 2) explaining how the inclusion of evidence and evidence building plans can be used to score grant applications; and 3) instructing grant reviewers regarding rating applicants' presentation of evidence and evidence building plans. The [training](#) was recorded and is available to all staff.

ACL's [Alzheimer's Disease Programs Initiative \(ADPI\)](#) translates and implements evidence-based supportive services for persons with ADRD and their caregivers at the community level. Award criteria include the extent to which applicants " describe partnerships, collaborations and innovative activities that will be implemented in support of goal/objective achievement, including the dementia specific evidence-based/evidence informed intervention(s) to be implemented in the project" ([Full Announcement](#) (p. 24))

The review criteria for the Lifespan Respite Care Program: State Program Enhancement Grants includes the applicant's description of "how the proposed project will build upon the accomplishments made in previous Lifespan Respite Care Program grants" ([Full Announcement](#) (p. 23)).

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Prior to the development of [visual scene displays](#) by the NIDILRR-funded Augmentative and Alternative Communication Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (AAC-RERC), the only Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) option was traditional grid displays with isolated symbols presented in rows and columns. It was difficult for many adults with acquired conditions resulting in significant language and cognitive limitations to use these traditional grid displays. Visual Scene Displays (VSDs) offer an easier alternative to traditional grid displays. They go beyond standard pictures and symbols organized in rows

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

and columns by providing information on the situation or context. Put more simply, VSDs are photos or pictures that people can use to communicate messages to others. These photos depict familiar scenes, objects or people—and users can touch “hot spots” on the photo to speak messages that relate to the pictured scene or object. For example, a person with aphasia might touch a hotspot on a picture of a sibling and say this is my sister. This additional information on the situation and context makes it easier for persons with complex communication needs to express their wants and needs and therefore enhances their ability to interact and participate with others in the community. Research from the AAC RERC and external researchers demonstrates the effectiveness of VSDs with adults with severe chronic aphasia, primary progressive aphasia, dementia, etc. As a result of the continued efforts of the AAC-RERC and their partners, this VSD technology has been successfully transferred to all of the major AAC manufacturers and app developers.

ACL’s Alzheimer’s Disease Supportive Services Program (ADSSP) encourages the translation of dementia specific interventions for use in communities. Examples include: the Savvy Caregiver (evidence-based) psychoeducational intervention focused on training family caregivers about the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to handle the challenges of caring for a family member with Alzheimer’s disease and to be an effective caregiver; Cuidando con Respeto (evidence-informed), Spanish version of the original Savvy Caregiver Program; and Savvy Caregiver Express (evidence-informed), a condensed version of the original Savvy Caregiver Program. ACL’s requirement for inclusion of dementia specific evidence-based interventions is demonstrated in the 2018 funding opportunity announcement entitled [Alzheimer’s Disease Programs to States and Communities](#).

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

Funding opportunity announcements and grant reviews stress the need for strong performance measurement and evaluation. ACL’s technical assistance centers— the [National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging](#) (NRC), the [Alzheimer’s Disease Supportive Services Program](#) (ADSSP) and the [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service](#)— promote the use and generation of evidence with ACL grantees. Grantees manuals also include information about the importance of and requirements for evaluation (see the [Administration on Aging: Title VI Resource Manual](#)). Staff of ACL’s Office of Performance and Evaluation make presentations regarding the importance of evidence with regional staff



**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

who are in frequent contact with State grantees and at grantee conferences (see [ACL Track: The ACL Older Americans Act \(OAA\) Performance System – Crossing the Finish Line](#) and [ACL/CMS Track: Raising the Bar in Medicaid HCBS & Community Inclusion – Showcasing Transformation](#) presented at the 2019 home- and community-based services (HCBS) conference; [ACL Track: Assuring the Health & Welfare of Medicaid HCBS Beneficiaries: Federal Findings, Investments, & Promising Practices in Systems Change](#) and [ACL Track: Innovative Housing & Health & Human Services Collaborations: A Game-Changer in Supportive Housing & Community Living](#) presented at the 2018 HCBS conference).

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**3**  
(out of 10 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**9.1 What were the agency's five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest non-competitive grant programs are:

1. [Nutrition Services](#), (\$936.8 million; eligible applicants: States)
2. [Home and Community Based Supportive Services](#) (\$390.1 million; eligible applicants: States);
3. [Caregiver Support Services](#) (\$185.9 million; eligible applicants: States)
4. [State Councils on Developmental Disabilities](#) (\$78 million; eligible applicants: States and nonprofits based in a State);
5. [Developmental Disabilities Protection and Advocacy](#) (\$40.1 million; eligible applicants: State and nonprofits based in a States)

As these are based on formula grants, the funding amount distributed to the States and tribal organizations are not determined using evidence-based application processes. Rather, the States and tribal organizations are responsible for directing the funds to evidence-based programs and organizations.

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in the largest five non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

Authorizing legislation for ACL's largest non-competitive grant programs requires consideration of evidence-based programming as a requirement of funding. The [Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000](#) allows for the withholding of funding if (1) the Council or agency has failed to comply substantially with any of the provisions required by section 124 to be

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

included in the State plan, particularly provisions required by paragraphs (4)(A) and (5)(B)(vii) of section 124(c), or with any of the provisions required by section 125(b)(3); or (2) the Council or agency has failed to comply substantially with any regulations of the Secretary that are applicable.” As a condition of funding non-competitive grantees are required to “determine the extent to which each goal of the Council was achieved for that year” and report that information to ACL.

States that receive Older Americans Act [Home and Community-Based Supportive Services](#) Title III-D funds [are required to spend those funds](#) on evidence-based programs to improve health and well-being, and reduce disease and injury. In order to receive funding, states must utilize programs that meet ACL’s [definition](#) of evidence-based or are defined as evidence-based by another HHS operating division. Under the Older American Act, caregiver support programs are required to track and report on their use of evidence-based caregiver support services.

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

FY12 Congressional appropriations included an evidence-based requirement for the first time. OAA Title III-D funding may be used only for programs and activities demonstrated to be evidence-based. Consistent with the Administrator’s focus on identifying new ways to efficiently improve direct service programs, ACL is using its 1% Nutrition authority to fund \$3.5 million for nutrition innovations and to test ways to modernize how meals are provided to a changing senior population. One promising demonstration currently being carried out by the Georgia State University Research Foundation (entitled Double Blind Randomized Control Trial on the Effect of Evidence-Based Suicide Intervention Training on the Home-Delivered and Congregate Nutrition Program through the Atlanta Regional Commission) which has drawn widespread attention is an effort to train volunteers who deliver home-delivered meals to recognize and report indicators of suicidal intent and other mental health issues so that they can be addressed.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**9.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other non-competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

The [2020 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act](#) requires that Assistive technology programs are “aligned with evidence-based practice;” that person-centered, trauma informed programs “incorporate evidence-based practices based on knowledge about the role of trauma in trauma victims’ lives;” and that a newly authorized Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation Center for the Aging Network increases “the repository of information on evidence based programs and interventions available to the aging network, which information shall be applicable to existing programs and interventions, and help in the development of new evidence-based programs and interventions.”

**9.5 What are the agency’s 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Since 2017, ACL has [awarded](#) Innovations in Nutrition grants to 11 organizations to develop and expand evidence-based approaches to enhance the quality and effectiveness of nutrition programming. ACL is currently overseeing five grantees for innovative projects that will enhance the quality, effectiveness, and outcomes of nutrition services programs provided by the national aging services network. The grants total \$1,197,205 for this year with a two-year project period. Through this grant program, ACL aims to identify innovative and promising practices that can be scaled across the country and to increase the use of evidence-informed practices within nutrition programs.

In 2020, ACL expects to award grants for demonstrations in [Innovations in Nutrition Programs and Services](#) to support the documentation of innovative projects that enhance the quality, effectiveness, and other proven outcomes of nutrition services programs within the aging services network.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**9.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

All funding opportunity announcements published by ACL include language about generating and reporting evidence about their progress towards the specific goals set for the funds. Grantee manuals include information about the importance of and requirements for evaluation (see the [Administration on Aging: Title VI Resource Manual](#)). The National Ombudsman Resource Center, funded by ACL, provides [self-evaluation materials](#) for Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (LTCOP) funded under Title VII of the Older Americans Act.

**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20 Score

**4**

(out of 8 points)

**Administration for Community Living**

**10.1 Did the agency have a policy for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

Because much of ACL’s funding is based on formula grants that cannot be reallocated to other programs or grantees, there is not an ACL-wide policy for this purpose. For several programs, such as most under the Older American Act, “entities such as states, U.S. territories, and tribal organizations are allotted funding based on a population-based formula factor (e.g., aged 55 and over, aged 60 and over, or aged 70 and over). Some statutory requirements for program funding allocations include a “hold harmless” provision, which guarantees that state or other entities’ allotment will remain at a certain fiscal year level or amount, provided sufficient funding in a given year. ACL is working with GSA’s Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) to test methods for improving outcomes for its congregate meals programs. Under the Older Americans Act, congregate meal sites are required to accept donations from meal recipients. But, there has been a concern regarding how to balance the collection of funds that can be used towards meal service and making meal recipients that cannot afford to donate uncomfortable, thus suppressing attendance. This study, expected to be completed in FY 2020, will offer concrete evidence to improve program operations.

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

While much of ACL’s funding is based on formula grants, and therefore cannot be reallocated to other programs, evaluation staff work closely with program staff to identify ways to translate evaluation findings into technical assistance and other types of

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

program support. For example, based on early results from an [evaluation](#) of the [Tribal Grant program](#), ACL has developed new program support materials to improve the delivery of Tribal Caregiver programs.

ACL typically proactively provides technical assistance in order to help programs to be successful, rather than redirecting funding. For example, the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) is [funding](#) a national Technical Assistance center for this purpose.



**80**

FY20 Score

# U.S. Agency for International Development



**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



### U.S. Agency for International Development

The [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) (USAID) continues to be a leader in [data-driven innovation](#) and evidence-based investing. As part of these efforts, the Agency's [U.S. Global Development Lab](#), its innovation flagship program, invests in research and development to scale effective innovations through the [Grand Challenges for Development](#) grant competition. To date, this initiative has funded \$155 million in grants and technical assistance for 528 innovators in 107 countries, many of which have secured sustainable funding. A similar program, the Development Innovations Ventures (DIV), considers evidence of effectiveness to fund and scale grantees with innovative solutions. Over the past eight years, DIV has invested \$118 million in nearly 200 innovations across 45 countries.

To solidify these approaches, USAID has continued to build its capacity for innovation and evidence-based policymaking with the support of key research and evaluation leaders. In FY19, the agency [appointed](#) a Chief Innovation Officer to advocate and promote a multi-sector innovation strategy. In FY20, USAID [increased](#) the coordination of its evidence and data leaders by holding regular meetings between its Chief Data Officer, Chief Evaluation Officer, Statistical officer, and the leaders of the Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research. These leaders are focused on continuous learning to make sure that the Agency is continually improving results, while also implementing the *Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act*.

This ethos of continual improvement is captured in the Agency's learning agenda, "[Self-Reliance Learning Agenda: Evidence to Support the Journey to Self-Reliance](#)." This learning agenda, which was developed using [extensive stakeholder engagement](#), lays out the key research questions for the Agency and the larger international development field. In FY20, USAID began stakeholder engagement around a [common evidence framework](#) to inform Agency programmatic and strategic decision-making funding and research decisions - this is an important new step to help USAID apply a more consistent approach to its evidence-building research activities and using evidence to inform funding decisions. Taken together, all of these tools and structures help USAID continue to leverage evidence to build knowledge and drive results-oriented investments.

In the coming year, USAID should proceed with OPEN Data Government Act implementation, based on forthcoming White House Office of Management and Budget guidance. Additionally, the agency should [consider consolidating its disparate, issued-based clearinghouses](#) into a single, one-stop-shop for evidence.

### U.S. Agency for International Development

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 9 points)

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The Director of the Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research (LER) serves as the USAID evaluation officer. In compliance with the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#), the Administrator of USAID designated the [Agency’s Evaluation Officer](#) (AEO) through an internal Executive Message that was shared with the Agency on June 4, 2019.

USAID’s AEO works in conjunction with the Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research (LER) in the [Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning \(PPL\)](#) to help the Agency build a body of evidence from which to learn and adapt programs. The LER Director is a senior staff member with the authority, staff, and budget to ensure agency evaluation requirements are met, including that all projects are evaluated at some level, and that decision-making is informed by evaluation and evidence. The LER Director oversaw approximately 25 staff and an estimated \$6.6 million budget in FY2019.

USAID has proposed creating a [Bureau for Policy, Resources, and Performance](#) (PRP), which will align policy, resources and evidence-based programming, and elevate the evaluation function by creating an Office for Learning and Evaluation that will manage the Agency’s Evaluation Policy. The office will also create and update the Agency Learning and Evaluation Plans, and commission or conduct cross-cutting evaluations. If approved by Congress, the estimated timeline for establishing the bureau is approximately a year and a half. In the meantime, working groups for each new office are developing work plans and focus areas for the new bureau to ensure PRP will be able to meet its mandate.

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency's Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

The Agency's Chief Data Officer (CDO) serves as the USAID Chief Data Officer. The Chief Data Officer reports to the Chief Information Officer in the [Bureau for Management](#). In compliance with the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#), the Administrator of USAID re-affirmed the designation of the Chief Data Officer through an internal Executive Message that was shared with the Agency on June 4, 2019. The CDO manages the USAID Data Services team which focuses exclusively on improving the usage of data and information to ensure the Agency's development outcomes are supported and enhanced by evidence. The CDO's team includes several direct hire data science and IT professionals along with a budget for contract professionals who provide a comprehensive portfolio of data services in support of the Agency's mission. The CDO oversaw approximately 80 staff and an estimated \$11.7 million budget in 2020. The CDO is a senior career civil servant, and the [USAID Data Services](#) team is regularly called upon to generate products and services to support the Agency's highest priorities. USAID also invests in roles including the Chief Innovation Officer, Chief Geographer, Chief Economist, Chief Scientist, and other key roles that drive the use of evidence across the agency.

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical official, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency's major programs?**

The Agency uses several governance structures and processes currently and will be updating these in accordance with OMB guidance related to the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. Some notable current examples include:

- A. **Data Board:** In September 2019, USAID established a Data Administration and Technical Advisory (DATA) Board, as mandated by the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) (Evidence Act) and subsequent guidance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in Memoranda [M-19-18](#) and [M-19-23](#). The DATA Board acts as USAID's data governance body. It serves as a central venue for seeking input from Agency stakeholders regarding data-related priorities and best practices to support Agency objectives. The DATA Board informs data-related policy, procedures and standards for the Agency. The [DATA Board](#) supports the work of the Agency Evaluation Officer by directing data services to facilitate evaluations. In addition to the Agency Evaluation Officer, Chief Data Officer and Statistical Officer, its membership includes the Performance Improvement

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Technology officer, the Senior Accountable Official for Privacy and the USAID Geographer as well as representation from across the Agency. The USAID Chief Data Officer, Agency Evaluation Officer, and Statistical Official confer monthly to coordinate policy and activities.

- B. **Management Operations Council:** USAID also uses a [Management Operations Council](#) (MOC) as the platform for Agency leadership to assess progress toward achieving the strategic objectives in USAID’s [Strategic Plan](#) and cross-agency priority goals and additional management issues. Established in 2014, the MOC provides Agency-wide leadership for initiatives and investments to reform USAID business systems and operations worldwide. The MOC also provides a platform for senior leaders to learn about and discuss improving organizational performance, efficiency, and effectiveness. The Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Management and the Agency’s Chief Operating Officer co-chair the MOC. Membership includes, among others, all the Agency’s Chief Executive Officers (e.g., Senior Procurement Executive, Chief Human Capital Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, Performance Improvement Officer and Project Management Improvement Officer). Depending on the agenda, it also includes the Chief Data Officer, Agency Evaluation Officer, and the Agency Senior Statistical Official.
- C. **Weekly/Monthly Meetings between the Chief Data Officer, Chief Evaluation Officer, and Statistical Official:** USAID established a standing meeting between the three officials named in the Evidence Act to coordinate on mandatory actions and milestones, evaluate resource requirements, and reconcile any potential discrepancies. The meeting includes leadership from the Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research which manages Agency requirements on performance monitoring, evaluation and organizational learning. As this meeting pre-dated the first Chief Data Officer council and Chief Evaluation Officer council meetings, it was critical for information sharing and addressing priorities.
- D. **Privacy Council Meetings:** USAID holds monthly Privacy Council meetings to address necessary actions and raise any privacy and confidentiality concerns. Representation includes the Senior Agency Official for Privacy, the Agency Statistical Official, and the Chief Privacy Officer, among others.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

The agency-wide [USAID Evaluation Policy](#), published in January 2011 and updated in October 2016, incorporates changes that better integrate with [USAID's Program Cycle Policy](#) and ensure compliance with the [Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act \(FATAA\)](#). The 2016 changes to the evaluation policy updated evaluation requirements to simplify implementation and increase the breadth of evaluation coverage, dissemination, and utilization.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

USAID has an agency-wide evaluation registry that collects information on all evaluations planned to commence within the next three years (as well as tracking ongoing and completed evaluations). Currently, this information is used internally and is not published. To meet the Evidence Act requirement, USAID will include an agency-wide evaluation plan in the Agency's draft [Annual Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report](#) submitted to OMB in September 2020.

In addition, USAID's Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research works with bureaus to develop internal annual Bureau Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plans that review evaluation quality and evidence building and use within each bureau and identify challenges and priorities for the year ahead.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

USAID has an agency-wide learning agenda called the [Self-Reliance Learning Agenda](#) (SRLA). The SRLA prioritizes evidence needs related to the Agency's [mission](#) to [foster country self-reliance](#) which covers all development program/sector areas, humanitarian assistance and resilience, and agency operations. This vision and mission is articulated in [USAID's Policy Framework](#) and reorients the Agency's programs, operations, and workforce around the vision of self-reliance or ending the need for foreign assistance.

USAID used a strongly consultative process for developing SRLA, as described in the [SRLA Fact Sheet](#). First, the Agency compiled learning questions from a number of feedback processes to initially capture 260 questions which through consultations were reduced to the final to thirteen that represent the Agency's priority learning needs related to Self-Reliance.

USAID is currently implementing the learning agenda and partnering with internal and external stakeholders to generate and gather evidence and facilitate the utilization of learning. These stakeholders include USAID's implementing partners, other U.S. agencies, private coalitions and think tanks, researchers and academics, bilateral/multilateral organizations, and local actors and governments in the countries in which it works. Examples of learning products generated to date include a [Paper Series on Capacity and Capacity Strengthening](#); [SRLA Review of Selected Evidence](#).

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

All final USAID evaluation reports are published on the [Development Experience Clearinghouse \(DEC\)](#), except for a small number of evaluations that receive a waiver to public disclosure (typically less than 5% of the total completed in a fiscal year). The process to seek a waiver to public disclosure is outlined in the document [Limitations to Disclosure and Exemptions to Public Dissemination of USAID Evaluation Reports](#) and includes exceptions for circumstances such as those when "public disclosure is likely to jeopardize the personal safety of U.S. personnel or recipients of U.S. resources."

To increase awareness of available evaluation reports, USAID has created infographics showing the number and type of evaluations completed in [FY2015](#), [FY2016](#), and [FY2017](#). These include short narratives that describe findings from selected evaluations and how that information informed decision-making. USAID is creating a public dashboard to share evaluation data from FY2016 through the

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

most recent year of reporting. The information for FY2019 is being finalized.

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

USAID recognizes that sound development programming relies on strong evidence that enables policymakers and program planners to make decisions, improve practice, and achieve development outcomes.

USAID has commissioned a Capacity Assessment in response to the Evidence Act requirements. The assessment is using a four-phased approach: assessment design, implementation and analysis, reports, and communication/ dissemination. USAID is currently in Phase 1, which involves developing a Maturity Model to assess the Agency's capacity to generate, manage, and use evidence.

USAID staff also review evaluation quality on an ongoing basis and review the internal Bureau Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plans referenced in 2.2 above. There are several studies that have looked at parts of this question over the previous several years. These include GAO reports, such as [Agencies Can Improve the Quality and Dissemination of Program Evaluations; From Evidence to Learning: Recommendations to Improve Foreign Assistance Evaluations](#); reviews by independent organizations like the Center for Global Development's [Evaluating Evaluations: Assessing the Quality of Aid Agency Evaluations in Global Health - Working Paper 461](#); and studies commissioned by USAID such as the [Meta-Evaluation of Quality and Coverage of USAID Evaluations 2009 - 2012](#). These studies generally show that USAID's evaluation quality is improving over time with room for continued improvement.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

USAID uses rigorous evaluation methods, including random control trials (i.e. assignment studies) and quasi-experimental methods for research and evaluation purposes. For example, in FY2019, USAID completed 12 impact evaluations, four of which used random control trials.

The [Development Innovation Ventures](#) (DIV) program makes significant investments using randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental evaluations to provide evidence of impact for pilot approaches to be considered for scaled funding. USAID is also experimenting with [cash benchmarking](#)—using household grants to benchmark traditional programming. USAID has conducted five

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

randomized control trials (RCT) of household grants or “cash lump sum” programs, and three RCTs of more traditional programs with household grant elements.



**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

**3.1 \_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$ \_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_% of the agency's \$ \_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.**

USAID invested at least \$201.8 million in FY19 and prior year money on a combination of evaluations completed in FY2019, evaluations that are ongoing during FY2019, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing 01.07% of the agency's \$18.8 billion FY19 budget.

**3.2 Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)**

In FY19, USAID operating units invested approximately \$67.4 million in FY19 and prior year money on 190 evaluations that were completed in that fiscal year. Another 180 evaluations were ongoing in FY2019 (many spanning more than one year in duration) with total ongoing evaluation budgets estimated at \$127.8 million. LER's budget for evaluation technical assistance and evaluation capacity-building in FY19 was \$6.6 million (up from \$4.6 million in FY18), coming to a total of \$201.8 million. This represents 1.07% of the Agency's \$18.8 billion FY19 budget.<sup>1</sup> This total does not include evaluation capacity building done by other Agency offices or other research, studies, analysis or other data collection that is often used for evaluation, such as USAID's investment in the [Demographic Health Survey](#) or some of the assessments done by third-parties across USAID's innovation portfolio. It also does not include funding by agency sub-components for evaluation technical assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Source for FY2019 Agency budget: [FY 2021 Congressional Budget Justification](#) (p. 2). Bilateral Economic Assistance total (\$24,500,700,000) minus State's Global Health Programs (\$5,720,000,000) is \$18,780,700,000.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

**3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

While specific data on this is limited, USAID estimates that investment in contracts or grants that provide support to build local organizational or governmental capacity in data collection, analysis, and use could be as high as \$250 million.

For example, USAID's [Data for Impact](#) (D4I) activity helps low- and middle-income countries—primarily in sub-Saharan Africa—to increase their capacity to use available data and generate new data to build evidence for improving health programs, health policies, and for decision-making. D4I's goal is to help low-resource countries gather and use information to strengthen their health policies and programs and improve the health of their citizens.

In another example, the [MEASURE Evaluation project](#), funded by USAID, has a mandate to strengthen health information systems (HIS) in low-resource settings. The Project enables countries to improve lives by strengthening their capacity to generate and use high-quality health information to make evidence-informed, strategic decisions at local, subregional, and national levels.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement:** Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

### U.S. Agency for International Development

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

USAID partners with the U.S. Department of State to jointly develop and implement clear strategic goals, strategic objectives, and performance goals, which are articulated in the [FY 2018 - 2022 U.S. Department of State - USAID Joint Strategic Plan \(JSP\)](#). The Agency measures progress towards its own strategic goals, strategic objectives, and performance goals using data from across the Agency, including from annual Performance Plan and Reports (PPRs) completed by operating units, and uses that information to report on performance externally through the [Annual Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report \(APP/APR\)](#) and the [Agency Financial Report](#).

To aggregate and track performance in key sectors, USAID works with the U.S. Department of State to develop and manage over 100 [standard foreign assistance indicators](#) that have common definitions and defined collection methods. Once finalized, USAID publishes illustrative indicator data on a publicly available website known as [Dollars to Results](#). Finally, USAID reports on Agency Priority Goal (APG) and Cross Agency Priority (CAP) goal progress on [www.performance.gov](#).

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

Most of USAID's innovation or co-created programs and those done in partnerships reflect a data-driven "[pay for results](#)" model, where milestones are agreed by all parties, and payments are made when milestones are achieved. This means that, for some

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

programs, if a milestone is unmet, funds may be re-applied to an innovation or intervention that is achieving results. This rapid and iterative performance model means that USAID more quickly understands what is not working and can move resources away from it and toward what is working.

Approaches such as prizes, [Grand Challenges](#), and ventures can also be constructed to be “pay for results only” where interventions such as “[Development Impact Bonds](#)” are used to create approaches where USAID only pays for outcomes and not inputs or attempts only. The Agency believes this model will pave the way for much of USAID’s work to be aligned with a “pay for results” approach. USAID is also piloting the use of the impact per dollar of cash transfers as a minimum standard of cost-effectiveness for applicable program designs. Most innovations funded at USAID have a clear “cost per impact” ratio.

Additionally, USAID Missions develop [Country Development Cooperation Strategies](#) (CDCSs) with clear goals and objectives and a [Performance Management Plan](#) (PMP) that identifies expected results, performance indicators to measure those results, plans for data collection and analysis, and regular review of performance measures to use data and evidence to adapt programs for improved outcomes. USAID also promotes data-informed operations performance management to ensure that the Agency achieves its development objectives and aligns resources with priorities. USAID uses its Management Operations Council to conduct an annual Strategic Review of progress toward achieving the strategic objectives in the Agency’s strategic plan.

To improve linkages and break down silos, USAID continues to develop and pilot the [Development Information Solution \(DIS\)](#)—an enterprise-wide management information system that will enable USAID to collect, manage, and visualize performance data across units, along with budget and procurement information, to more efficiently manage and execute programming. Several USAID field missions are testing the system prior to world-wide deployment: El Salvador, Peru, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Africa, Vietnam, and Nepal.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

USAID's Program Cycle policy (ADS 201.3.2.18) requires that Missions conduct at least one [portfolio review](#) per year that focuses on progress toward strategy-level results. Missions must also conduct a [CDCS mid-course stocktaking](#) at least once during the course of implementing their Country Development Cooperation Strategy, which typically spans five years.

USAID developed an approach to explicitly ensure adaptation through learning called [Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting](#) (CLA). It is incorporated into USAID's Program Cycle guidance (ADS 201.3.5.19) where it states: "Strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management link together all components of the Program Cycle." Through CLA, USAID ensures its programming is coordinated with others, grounded in a strong evidence base, and iteratively adapted to remain relative throughout implementation.

In addition to this focus through its programming, USAID has two senior bodies which oversee Enterprise Risk Management, and meet regularly to improve the accountability and effectiveness of USAID programs and operations through holistic risk management. USAID tracks progress toward strategic goals and annual performance goals during data-driven reviews at Management Operations Council meetings. Also, through input from the Management Operations Council, an annual Agency-wide customer service survey, and other analysis, USAID regularly identifies opportunities for operational improvements at all levels of the Agency as part of its operational learning agenda as well as the agency-wide learning agenda, the Self-Reliance Learning Agenda. SRLA's questions 8, 9, 12, and 13 focus on operational aspects of the agency's work which influence everything from internal policy, design and procurement processes, program measurement, and staff training.

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**8**  
(out of 10 points)

### U.S. Agency for International Development

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

USAID's data related investments and efforts are guided by its [Information Technology Strategic Plan](#). This includes support for the Agency's [Development Data Policy](#), USAID's open data policy, that provides a framework for systematically collecting Agency-funded data, structuring the data to ensure usability, and making the data public while ensuring rigorous protections for privacy and security. In addition, this policy sets requirements for how USAID data is tagged, submitted, and updated. The [Development Data Library \(DDL\)](#) is the Agency's repository of USAID-funded, machine readable data, created or collected by the Agency and its implementing partners. The DDL, as a repository of structured and quantitative data, complements the DEC which publishes qualitative reports and information. USAID also participates and leads in global compilations of data across the industry including the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) and in response to [COVID-19](#). USAID also has a variety of stakeholder engagement tools available on USAID's Development Data Library, including: Open Data Community Questions and video tutorials on using DDL.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

Launched in November 2018 as part of the Development Information Solution (DIS), USAID's public-facing [Development Data Library \(DDL\)](#) provides a comprehensive inventory of data assets available to the Agency. DDL has posted the Enterprise Data Inventory as a json file since 2015. Following the passage of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, and in preparation for specific guidance expected in the upcoming release of Phase 2 guidance for the Act, USAID will make any necessary changes to its Comprehensive Data Inventory and continue reporting with quarterly updates as required. The DDL's [data catalog](#) is also harvested via JavaScript on an ongoing basis for further distribution on the federal [Data.gov](#) website.

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

The USAID Data Services team— located in USAID’s Management Bureau’s Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO)— manages a comprehensive portfolio of data services in support of the Agency’s mission. This includes enhancing the internal and external availability and ease-of use of USAID data and information via technology platforms such as the [AidScape platform](#) broadening global awareness of USAID’s data and information services, and bolstering the Agency’s capacity to use data and information via training and the provision of demand-driven analytical services.

The Data Services Team also manages and develops the Agency’s digital repositories, including the [Development Data Library \(DDL\)](#), the Agency’s central data repository. USAID and external users can search for and access datasets from completed evaluations and program monitoring by country and sector.

USAID staff also have access to an internal database of over 100 standard foreign assistance program performance indicators and associated baseline, target, and actual data reported globally each year. This database and reporting process, known as the Performance Plan and Report (PPR) promotes evidence building and informs internal learning and decisions related to policy, strategy, budgets, and programs.

The United States is a signatory to the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) (IATI)—a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative that created a data standard for publishing foreign assistance spending data in machine-readable format. The standard links an activity’s financial data to its evaluations, and in 2019 the Agency tested publishing results indicators for one country. USAID continues to improve and add to its published IATI data, and is looking into ways to utilize these data as best practice—including using it to populate partner country systems, fulfill transparency reporting as part of the U.S. commitment to the [Grand Bargain](#), and make decisions internally, including based on what other development actors are doing by using the [Development Cooperation Landscape](#) tool.

The Landscape tool enables USAID staff to better understand cooperation partners’ priorities and identify potential areas of alignment. This data source is contributing to more robust cooperation strategy development, decision making, and helping USAID to more

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

effectively and efficiently use cooperation resources. USAID created the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) that shares information around development innovations with hundreds of other industry partners and governments.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

USAID's [Privacy Program](#) directs policies and practices for protecting personally identifiable information and data, while several policy references ([ADS303maz](#) and [ADS302mbj](#)) provide guidance for protecting information to ensure the health and safety of implementing partners. USAID's [Development Data Policy](#) (ADS Chapter 579) details a data publication process that provides governance for data access and data release in ways that ensure protections for personal and confidential information. As a reference to the Development Data Policy, [ADS579maa](#) explains USAID's foreign assistance data publications and the protection of any sensitive information prior to release. USAID applies statistical disclosure control on all public data before publication or inclusion in the DDL.

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

While specific data on this is limited, USAID does invest in contracts or grants that provide support to build local organizational or governmental capacity in data collection, analysis, and use. In addition, to date, more than 361 USAID data assets are available to the public via USAID's [DDL](#). These assets include microdata related to USAID's initiatives that provide partner countries and development partners with insight into emerging trends and opportunities for expanding peace and democracy, reducing food insecurity, and strengthening the capacity to deliver quality educational opportunities for children and youth around the globe. Grantees are encouraged to use the data on the DDL, which provides an extensive [User Guide](#) to aid in accessing, using, securing and protecting data. The Data Services team conducts communication and outreach to expand the awareness of websites with development data, how to access it, and how to contact the team for support. In addition, the Data Services team has developed a series of [videos](#) to show users how to access the data available. The [dataservices@usaid.gov](mailto:dataservices@usaid.gov) mail account responds to requests for assistance and guidance on a range of data services from both within the Agency and from implementing partners and the public.



**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:** Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**5**  
(out of 10 points)

### U.S. Agency for International Development

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

USAID is developing an agency-level evidence framework to clarify evidence standards for different decisions, including those related to funding.

USAID's evidence standards are embedded within its policies and include requirements for the use of evidence in strategic planning, project design, activity design, program monitoring, and evaluation. USAID has a [Scientific Research Policy](#) that sets out quality standards for research across the Agency. USAID's [Program Cycle Policy](#) requires the use of evidence and data to assess the development context, challenges, potential solutions, and opportunities in all of USAID's country strategies. Specific programs, such as the Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) use evaluation criteria related to evidence of cost effectiveness and ability to scale to determine funding decisions to test and scale innovations. As USAID's flagship open innovation program, DIV helps to test and scale creative solutions to any global development challenge. By investing in breakthrough proven innovations, driven by rigorous evidence and ongoing monitoring, USAID's DIV program has proven to impact millions of lives at a fraction of the usual cost.

GAO found in their December 2019 report [Evidence-Based Policymaking: EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING Selected Agencies Coordinate Activities, but Could Enhance Collaboration](#) that [USAID reflects](#) leading practices for collaborating when building and assessing evidence.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

USAID is developing an agency-level evidence framework to clarify evidence standards for different decisions, including those related to funding. In addition, there are specific types of programs at the sub-agency level that do use evidence framework or standards to make funding decisions.

Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) uses a tiered funding system to test and scale evidence-based innovations, making funding decisions based on its evaluation criteria: evaluation and impact; cost-effectiveness; evidence and evaluation; implementation; sustainability and pathway to scale; and project team (see page 6 in DIV's most recent [Annual Program Statement](#) for the evaluation criteria). DIV's expectations vary by stage, but every awardee must report against a set of pre-negotiated key performance indicators and nearly all grants are structured in a pay-for-performance model.

For large scale Stage 2 DIV grants of \$500,000 or more, DIV requires evidence of impact that must be causal and rigorous – the grantee must either have rigorous underlying evidence already established, use this funding to run an evaluation with an evaluation partner, or run an evaluation with its own funding during the grant period. There must be significant demonstrated demand for the innovation.

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user-friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

USAID does have an Agency-wide repository for development information (including evaluation reports and other studies) which is available to the public at the [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#). In addition, USAID uses the [International Initiative for Impact Evaluations](#) (3ie) [database of impact evaluations](#) relevant to development topics (including over 4,500 entries to date), [knowledge gap maps](#), and [systematic reviews](#) that pull the most rigorous evidence and data from across international development donors. 3ie also houses a collection of [institutional policies and reports](#) that examine findings from its database of impact evaluations on overarching policy questions to help policymakers and development practitioners improve development impact through better evidence.

USAID's [Agency Programs and Functions](#) policy designates technical bureaus responsible for being the repository for latest

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

information in the sectors they oversee; prioritizing evidence needs and taking actions to build evidence; and disseminating that evidence throughout the agency for those sectors. Several USAID bureaus and sectors have created user friendly tools to disseminate information on evidence-based solutions. These include, but are not limited to:

- [CLIMATELINKS](#): A global knowledge portal for climate change and development practitioners
- [EDUCATIONLINKS](#): Shares innovations and lessons learned on implementation of the USAID Education Policy
- [Natural Resources Management and Development Portal](#)
- [URBANLINKS](#): USAID's sharing platform for resources on sustainable urban development

Finally, USAID led a data-harmony initiative across the industry with other countries called the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) which surfaces, validates, and shares a repository of over 16,000 development relevant solutions across all actors, players and locations.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and reapplication of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

USAID's approach to [Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting \(CLA\)](#) helps ensure that evidence from evaluation of USAID programming is shared with and used by staff, partners, and stakeholders in the field. USAID requires a [dissemination plan](#) and [post-evaluation action plan](#) for each evaluation, and USAID field staff are encouraged to co-create evaluation action plans with key stakeholders based on evaluation evidence. USAID collects examples through the [CLA Case Competition](#), held annually, which recognizes implementers, stakeholders, and USAID staff for their work generating and sharing technical evidence and learning from monitoring and evaluation. It is another way that the Agency encourages evidence-based practices among its stakeholders.

USAID also periodically holds large learning events with partners and others in the development community around evidence including, but not limited to, [Evaluation Summits](#), engagement around the [Self-Reliance Learning Agenda](#), and [Moving the Needle](#). These gatherings are designed to build interest in USAID's evidence, build capacity around applying that evidence and learning, and elicit evidence and learning contributions.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

USAID created and led the “[Million Lives Club](#)” coalition, with more than 30 partners, which has identified more than 100 social entrepreneurs who have at least a million customers in order to share the learning that this successful cohort has had and better inform how USAID funding can assist more social entrepreneurs to grow successfully and rapidly. This unique learning platform brings donors, funders, governments, and the entrepreneurial community to the table together to learn and iterate on our approaches.

**7. Innovation:** Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 7 points)

### **U.S. Agency for International Development**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

In FY19, USAID appointed a new Chief Innovation Officer to advocate for innovation throughout development and national security strategies across USAID, the U.S. Government, and the international community. The Chief Innovation Officer promotes opportunities for entrepreneurs, implementing partners, universities, donors, and others to test and scale innovative solutions and approaches to development problems around the world. In FY2019, [the U.S. Global Development Lab](#) also engaged USAID leadership and Mission staff from around the world at the Mission Directors Conference, the Contracting Officer and Controller Conference, the Foreign Service National Conference, and the Private Sector Engagement Forum.

For innovations specific to a particular sector, Agency leadership has supported technical staff in surfacing groundbreaking ideas, such as how the Bureau for Global Health's [Center for Innovation and Impact](#) (CII) used open innovation approaches to issue the Saving Lives at Birth Grand Challenge and identify promising, life-saving maternal and newborn health innovations.

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

In FY2020, USAID released its first [Digital Strategy](#), moving to a “Digital by Default” position and USAID’s innovative approaches have helped get more than 40 million people in the developing world digital access. USAID’s [New Partnerships Initiative \(NPI\)](#) will allow USAID to work with a more diverse range of partners, strengthen existing partner relationships, and provide more entry points for organizations to work with the Agency. The principles behind NPI are outlined in the Agency’s first-ever [Acquisition and Assistance \(A&A\) Strategy](#).

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

USAID and its partners have launched 41 innovative programming approaches including prizes, ventures, challenges, and [Grand Challenges for Development](#) since 2011. Across the Grand Challenges portfolio, partners have jointly committed over \$535 million (\$155 million from USAID) in grants and technical assistance for over 528 innovators in 107 countries. To date, more than \$614 million in follow-on funding has been catalyzed from external sources, a key measure of success.

USAID's investment in state-of-the-art geo and information intelligence centers mean that any program has the ability to leverage geospatial analysis and critical data sets to drive innovative solutions based on evidence and data. With over 20 programs experimenting with Artificial Intelligence and machine learning, and USAID's strong work on Digital finance and connectivity, the Agency is using technology to drive our programs farther, faster. USAID has also completed more than 1,500 Global Development Alliances, leveraging private sector in-kind or financial investments.

In addition, the [Center for Innovation and Impact](#) (CII)—the Bureau for Global Health's dedicated innovation office—takes a business-minded approach to fast-tracking the development, introduction, and scale-up of health innovations that address the world's most important health challenges, and assessing and adopting cutting-edge approaches (such as using [unmanned aerial vehicles](#) and [artificial intelligence](#)).

[Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation](#) partners with agribusinesses to help them commercialize and scale new agricultural innovations to help improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, increasing their productivity and incomes. To date the program has worked with 59 partners in 20 different countries, investing more than \$43 million in new technologies and services, and leveraging nearly \$100 million in private sector investment. The program has helped commercialize over 118 innovations, which resulted in an estimated \$99 million in sales. [It has its own Innovation site](#) that partners can easily see and connect with promising innovations and research.

Finally, USAID was honored when the co-founder and Scientific Director of USAID's Development Innovations Venture (DIV) program, Dr. Michael Kremer [received](#) the [2019 Nobel prize for economics](#), along with Dr. Esther Duflo and Dr. Abhijit Banerjee. Some of his work that led to this honor was connected to USAID's DIV program. DIV values rigorous testing methods such as impact evaluations or robust market tests to measure the impact of USAID innovations. Evidence of clear and measurable outcomes helps demonstrate what is working and what is not. Solutions that demonstrate rigorous evidence of impact can then be scaled to other contexts. Through the DIV program, Dr. Kremer helps USAID use evidence-driven approaches to take small risks, identify what works, and scale those approaches to provide greater impact, which helps partners on the Journey to Self-Reliance. Since 2010, the DIV program

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

has supported over 200 awards to test and scale development focused innovations that have directly affected more than 30 million lives across 46 countries.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

Within [the U.S. Global Development Lab](#), the [MERLIN](#) program works to innovate on traditional approaches to monitoring, evaluation, research and learning. While innovative in themselves, these approaches can also be better suited to evaluating an innovation effort. Two examples include [Developmental Evaluation](#), which aims to provide ongoing feedback to managers on implementation through an embedded evaluator, and [Rapid Feedback](#), which allows implementers to test various methods to reach certain targeted results (more quickly than through traditional midterm or final evaluations).

Many of the agency's programs such as [Grand Challenges](#) and [Development Innovation Ventures](#) (DIV) have been reviewed by formal audit and other performance and impact interventions. DIV is USAID's tiered, evidence-driven open innovation program. It awards grants for innovative solutions to any development problem, on the basis of rigorous evidence of impact, cost-effectiveness, and a pathway to scale via the public and/or private sectors. The DIV model is designed to source breakthrough solutions, to minimize risk, and maximize impact by funding according to outcomes and milestones, to rigorously evaluate impact and cost-effectiveness, and to scale proven solutions.

DIV supports innovative solutions across all countries and development sectors in which USAID operates, including education, agriculture, water, energy, and economic development. Over ten years, since 2010, DIV has invested more than \$129 million in over 200 innovations in 46 countries, improving the lives of over 55 million beneficiaries. As of 2017, DIV funded entities have been able to catalyze the USAID DIV investment through private capital at a leveraged rate of \$1.59 for every \$1.

It has generated experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation studies of more than a third of those innovations as well as a forthcoming working paper that rigorously assesses the social rate of return of DIV's early portfolio. Since DIV reopened in fall 2018, approximately 94 percent of its 2,147 applicants were new to USAID. DIV enhances the Agency's engagement with non-traditional partners by partnering with innovators ranging from local entrepreneurs to researchers to high-growth start-ups to American small businesses trying to take their innovation global. In total, 53 percent of organizations supported by DIV have been new to USAID. DIV is an important means for for-profit companies—comprising 43 percent of DIV's portfolio—to engage with the Agency. Various

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**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

USAID Missions and Bureaus, including Egypt, Zambia, Bangladesh, Global Health, and the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative, and many more have partnered with and funded innovations identified by DIV.



**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 15 points)

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

**8.1 What were the agency's five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

USAID's top five program accounts based on actual appropriation amounts in FY19 are:

1. [International Disaster Assistance](#) (\$4.39 billion; eligible grantees: any U.S. or non-U.S. organization, individual, nonprofit, or for-profit entity that meets the requirements described in [ADS 303](#));
2. [Economic Support Fund](#) (\$3.69 billion [ADS 303](#));
3. [Migration and Refugee Assistance](#) (\$3.43 billion; eligible grantees: any U.S. or non-U.S. organization, individual, nonprofit, or for-profit entity that meets the requirements described in [ADS 303](#));
4. [Global Health](#) (USAID) (\$3.15 billion; eligible grantees: any U.S. or non-U.S. organization, individual, nonprofit, or for-profit entity that meets the requirements described in [ADS 303](#));
5. [Development Assistance](#) (\$3 billion; eligible grantees: any U.S. or non-U.S. organization, individual, nonprofit, or for-profit entity that meets the requirements described in [ADS 303](#)).

See the [U.S. Foreign Assistance Reference Guide](#) for more information on each of these accounts. More information can also be found in the [FY2021 Congressional Budget Justification](#) (page 2 and 3, column 4). USAID generally does not limit eligibility when awarding grants and cooperative agreements; eligibility may be restricted for an individual notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the procedures in [ADS 303](#).

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in its five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

USAID is committed to using evidence of effectiveness in all of its competitive contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants, which comprise the majority of the Agency's work. USAID's [Program Cycle Policy](#) ensures evidence from monitoring, evaluation and other

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

sources informs funding decisions at all levels, including during strategic planning, project and activity design, procurement and implementation.

USAID's [Senior Obligation Alignment Review \(SOAR\)](#) helps to ensure the Agency is using evidence to design and approve funding for innovative approaches to provide long-term sustainable outcomes and provides oversight on the use of grant or contract mechanisms and proposed results.

USAID includes past performance to comprise 30% of the non-cost evaluation criteria for contracts. As part of determining grant awards, USAID's policy requires an applicant to provide a list of all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs during the past three years. The grant Selection Committee chair must validate the applicant's past performance reference information based on existing evaluations to the maximum extent possible, and make a reasonable, good faith effort to contact all references to verify or corroborate how well an applicant performed.

For assistance, as required by [2 CFR 200](#), USAID also does a risk assessment to review an organization's ability to meet the goals and objectives outlined by the agency. Internal procedures for conducting the risk assessment are found in [ADS 303.3.9](#), with guidance on how to look for evidence of effectiveness from potential grantees. Per the ADS, this can be done through reviewing past performance and evaluation/performance reports such as the [Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System \(CPARS\)](#).

Even though there is no federal requirement (as there is with CPARS), USAID also assesses grantee past performance for use when making funding decisions (detailed in [ADS 303](#), p. 66). Per USAID's ADS 303 policy, before making an award of any grant or cooperative agreement the Agreement Officer must state in the memorandum of negotiation that the applicant has a satisfactory record of performance. When making the award, the Agreement Officer may consider withholding authority to proceed to the next phase of a grant until provided evidence of acceptable performance within a given period.

USAID was recognized by GAO in its recent report published on September 5, 2018, [Managing for Results: Government-wide Actions Needed to Improve Agencies' Use of Performance Information in Decision Making](#) (GAO-18-609SP) as one of four agencies (out of 23 surveyed) with proven practices for using performance information. USAID was also the only CFO Act agency with a statistically significant increase in the Agency Use of Performance Information Index since 2007.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

Grantees report on the progress of activities through documentation such as [Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning \(MEL\) Plans](#), periodic performance reporting, and external and internal evaluation reports (if applicable). These reports help USAID remain transparent and accountable and also help the Agency build evidence of what does and does not work in its interventions. Any internal evaluation undertaken by a grantee must also be provided to USAID for learning purposes. All datasets compiled under USAID-funded projects, activities, and evaluations are to be submitted by grantees to the USAID [Development Data Library](#). All final evaluation reports must also be submitted to the Agency's [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) (DEC), unless they receive a [waiver to the USAID's public dissemination requirements](#). These are rare and require the concurrence of the Director of the Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research.

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

USAID is actively engaged in utilizing evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds. For example, [Development Innovation Ventures](#) (DIV) invests in innovations that demonstrate evidence of impact, cost-effectiveness, and a viable pathway to scale. DIV provides four types of grants: 1) proof of concept, 2) positioning for scale, 3) scaling proven solutions, and 4) evidence grants.

The more funding requested (up to \$5 million dollars), the more DIV requires in an innovation's evidence base, the deeper the due diligence process, and the greater the expectation that the applicant will be able to demonstrate development impact and potential to scale. After a decision is made to allocate funding, 98% of all DIV awards are structured as fixed amount pay-for-performance grants, ensuring that awards maximize the impact of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Over the past eight years, DIV has invested \$118 million in nearly 200 innovations across 45 countries.

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

No USAID examples.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

USAID's [Program Cycle Policy](#) states that “[f]unding may be dedicated within a project or activity design for implementing partners to engage in an internal evaluation for institutional learning or accountability purposes.”

USAID's [Development Innovation Ventures](#) (DIV) specifically references evaluations and rigorous evidence in the [official solicitation](#): “Larger scale Stage 2 innovations (over \$500,000) must include or test the evidence of impact of an innovation. This evidence of impact must be causal and rigorous—the grantee must either have rigorous underlying evidence already established, use this funding to run an evaluation with an evaluation partner, or run an evaluation with its own funding during the grant period.” More on DIV's funding framework can be found in its [evaluation criteria](#) (see DIV's most recent Annual Program Statement for the evaluation criteria (p. 6)).

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs:** Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

*USAID does not administer non-competitive grant programs (relative score for criteria #8 applied)*

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

FY20 Score  
**4**  
(out of 8 points)

### **U.S. Agency for International Development**

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

USAID shifts funds away from ineffective grantees. For example, the [Securing Water for Food Grand Challenge](#) is designed with a [Technical Assistance Facility](#) to consult and work with grantees to identify specific growth barriers, and then connect them with vetted service providers that bring expertise and capabilities to help these grantees overcome their strategic barriers. The Technical Assistance Facility provides tailored financial and acceleration support to help these grantees improve their market-driven business development, commercial growth, and scaling.

If a grantee is unable to meet specific performance targets, such as number of customers or product sales, further funding is not granted, and the grantee is re-categorized into the program's group of unsuccessful alumni. The Securing Water for Food Grand Challenge used milestone-based grants to terminate 15 awards that were not meeting their annual milestones and shifted that money to both grants and technical assistance for the remaining 25 awards in the program.

Also, USAID's [INVEST](#) program is designed for constant feedback loops around the partner performance. Not only are under-performing partners dropped, but new partners can be added dynamically, based on demand. This greatly increases USAID's new partner base and increases the performance standard across the board.

USAID's Business Ecosystem Project (BEP), implemented by Palladium Group, is designed to increase private sector investment in strengthening domestic supply chains and workforce development in North Macedonia. BEP's initial strategy was to mobilize corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds from investors and large international corporations toward the project's goal, but it quickly became evident that such investments would be neither strategic nor sustainable. To achieve a lasting impact on North Macedonia's business ecosystem, BEP partnered with companies that were better positioned to recognize the link between local economic

development and their own business interest. BEP learned from its local partners and adapted its private sector engagement (PSE) strategy to target small, medium, and large enterprises that were more dependent on domestic supply chains and workers. BEP no longer focuses only on foreign direct investment (FDI) companies with CSR budgets, but approaches all companies that have a real economic incentive to invest in local supply chains and workforce development. This [approach was more effective](#) and allowed BEP to co-invest in a diverse range of supply chain and workforce development initiatives, first as a proof of concept and later at scale.

### **10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

USAID/Food for Peace’s Sustainable Action for Resilience and Food Security (Sabal) is a five-year program in Nepal, implemented by Save the Children and a consortium of partners. Sabal’s goal is to improve food security and resilience in targeted districts in Nepal by improving livelihoods, health and nutrition, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Sabal utilized collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA) approaches such as pause and reflect, M&E for learning, and adaptive management to be able to adapt to the changing context. In 2015, there were devastating earthquakes, which necessitated geographic program expansion and then, two years later, there were budget cuts, which meant ending implementation in those expansion areas. At that time, CLA approaches were utilized to identify sustainability strategies, assess the level of self-reliance among community groups, tailor interventions based on the data, and gain consensus and buy-in among internal staff, consortium partners, and the local government. As a result, Sabal registered high-performing community groups with the government and linked these groups with local resources and leaders. At the same time, Sabal identified poor performing groups and built their capacity and self-reliance through targeted trainings and community capacity building

USAID’s Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services in Eastern Uganda (RHITES-E) Activity (2016-2021), implemented by IntraHealth International and its partners, supports the Government of Uganda’s health “surge” strategy to find new HIV positive patients and enroll them in care and treatment. The data and results from RHITES-E’s first quarter performance review showed the Activity was way behind its target. The Activity leadership and USAID decided to shift from a “business as usual” attitude to applying collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA) approaches to draw on and analyze existing data, from a USAID dashboard, to reflect on findings with key stakeholders and fill identified needs and gaps to improve surge efforts. By the end of the fiscal year 2017, the Activity had improved its surge performance resulting in [better results and outcomes and shifted in its culture](#) to be a learning organization. Together with stakeholders, staff identified ineffective approaches such as mass HIV testing and developed and implemented new strategies to include screening of clients before testing for efficient and effective identification and linkage of new HIV positive clients into care and treatment.

USAID’s Empleado Futuros (Employing Futures) program, an at-risk youth program was launched in Honduras in 2016. During its

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**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

first year, a pause and reflect event found a significant number of drop-outs and the need to strengthen the program's response to better meet the needs of youth and the labor market. USAID and its implementing partner, Banyon Global, applied USAID's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Framework and tools to establish a framework for strategic pause and reflect events throughout the year, strengthen the program's performance monitoring system and develop an online platform for tracking program participants' progress. These changes helped the implementer to revisit the program's underlying assumptions and theory of change, learn continuously and inform evidence-based decisions. Preliminary [findings suggest](#) that the program has fewer dropouts, capacity of local systems and partners has been strengthened, and private sector engagement has improved.



**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



**69**

FY20 Score

**AmeriCorps**

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### AmeriCorps

Over the past several years, [AmeriCorps](#) (the former Corporation for National and Community Service) has been the federal government’s leader on evidence-based investing. In FY20, the agency’s flagship grant program, AmeriCorps State and National, [invested](#) the majority of its grants in interventions with a moderate or strong evidence base. The allocation of 51% of funds to evidence-based grantees in FY20, a 10% increase from FY19, constitutes a major achievement and is delivering real [impact](#) in communities across the country. For this achievement, Results for America recognizes AmeriCorps as a leader in federal evidence-based grantmaking.

This milestone is a result of the agency’s rigorous approach to grantmaking which provides preference to grantees that propose evidence-based programs (the details of this grantmaking process are described in a Results for America case study, [Improving Elementary School Literacy in Minnesota by Prioritizing Evidence of Effectiveness in AmeriCorps](#), published in 2019). This approach has also had significant influence at the [state-level with 48 states](#) adopting the same preference point model in their state grantmaking process.

The Office of Research and Evaluation provides critical support in increasing the agency’s evidence-based investments. The Office created resources to help the national service field identify and implement evidenced-based [interventions](#) and also provided individualized [technical assistance](#) to grantees to help them evaluate their efforts. Along the way, the Office of Research and Evaluation also continued to build the overall capacity of the agency by developing key resources such as the [Strategic Evidence Plan](#) and [Evidence Exchange](#).

Through these efforts, AmeriCorps has spread and scaled evidence-based interventions in order to deliver better results for communities across the country.

To advance the agency’s investments in evidence-based policymaking, CNCS should address its need for an updated and comprehensive data inventory and should proceed with OPEN Data Government Act implementation based on forthcoming White House Office of Management and Budget guidance.

### AmeriCorps

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 9 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The Director of the [Office of Research & Evaluation](#) serves as the AmeriCorps evaluation officer. The Director of Research and Evaluation (R&E) oversees R&E’s FY20 \$4 million budget and a staff of eight. On average, the agency has invested ~\$1 million in the Office of Research and Evaluation staff over the past eight years.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

AmeriCorps hired a new Chief Information Officer (CIO) in FY19. The CIO was appointed by the agency’s CEO as the Acting Chief Data Officer (CDO) and remains the Acting CDO in FY20. The agency has a long-term plan for hiring a CDO and standing up a department overseen by a permanent Chief Data Officer. The plan will likely be formalized in FY21.

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency’s major programs?**

AmeriCorps established a Research & Evaluation Council in FY20, which was approved and is receiving internal clearance. The AmeriCorps Executive Team will appoint members from the agency’s departments to serve on this Council. A charter will be developed. Members of the Council will likely include the Director of R&E, the CIO/Acting CDO, the Chief of Staff, as well as representatives from the Chief of Program Operations and the Chief Operating Officer.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score

**8**

(out of 10 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

AmeriCorps has an [evaluation policy](#) that presents five key principles that govern the agency's planning, conduct, and use of program evaluations: rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, and ethics.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

In FY19, AmeriCorps finalized and [posted](#) a five year, agency-wide strategic evaluation plan. The AmeriCorps CEO's goal is to use the plan to guide FY20 budget planning.

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

AmeriCorps uses the terms learning agenda, evaluation plan, and evidence-building plan synonymously. AmeriCorps has a [strategic evidence plan](#) that includes an evergreen learning agenda. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually. While the agency is open to the feedback of external stakeholders, it has not engaged external stakeholders in the development of the evidence plan.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

All completed evaluation reports are posted to the [Evidence Exchange](#), an electronic repository for evaluation studies and other reports. This virtual repository was launched in September 2015.

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency’s evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

A comprehensive portfolio of research projects has been built to assess the extent to which AmeriCorps is achieving its mission. As findings emerge, future studies are designed to continuously build the agency’s evidence base. R&E relies on scholarship in relevant fields of academic study; a variety of research and program evaluation approaches including field, experimental, and survey research; multiple data sources including internal and external administrative data; and different statistical analytic methods. AmeriCorps relies on [partnerships with universities](#) and third party research firms to ensure independence and access to state of the art methodologies. AmeriCorps supports its grantees with [evaluation technical assistance](#) and [courses](#) to ensure their evaluations are of the highest quality and requires grantees receiving \$500,000 or more in annual funding to engage an external evaluator. These efforts have resulted in a robust body of evidence that national service allows: (1) national service participants to experience positive benefits, (2) nonprofit organizations to be strengthened, and (3) national service programs to effectively address local issues.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

AmeriCorps uses the research design most appropriate for addressing the research question. When experimental or quasi-experimental designs are warranted, the agency uses them and encourages its grantees to use them, as noted in the [agency evaluation policy](#): “AmeriCorps is committed to using the most rigorous methods that are appropriate to the evaluation questions and feasible within statutory, budget and other constraints.” As of May 2020, AmeriCorps has received 42 grantee evaluation reports that use experimental design and 124 that use quasi-experimental design.

**3. Resources:** Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20? (Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**3.1** \_\_\_\_\_ invested \$\_\_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_\_% of the agency's \$\_\_\_\_\_ million FY20 budget.

AmeriCorps invested \$8,200,000.00 on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing 1.0% of the agency's \$806,529,00 million FY20 operating budget.

**3.2** Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)

Congress allocated \$4,000,000 to AmeriCorps for its evaluation budget. This is the same amount allocated in FY20.

**3.3** Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?

R&E funds a contractor to provide AmeriCorps grantees with evaluation capacity building support (\$500,000 of the \$4,000,000 evaluation budget). R&E staff are also available to State Commissions for their evaluation questions and make resources (e.g., research briefs summarizing effective interventions, online evaluation planning and reporting curricula) available to them and the general public. AmeriCorps awards investment fund grants to State Commissions (\$8.5 million in FY20), of which approximately one-third will be used for data and evidence capacity building activities based on prior year activities.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

FY20 Score

**4**

(out of 10 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

AmeriCorps continued to implement its [Transformation and Sustainability Plan](#) (TSP) in FY20. This plan aims to ensure AmeriCorps is maximizing its resources to achieve results. One of the key components of the TSP is creating a new regional office structure that relies on a new grant management model. The agency is conducting a process evaluation/rapid cycle assessment for each implementation phase of this aspect of the TSP. A staff survey was conducted and findings were used to improve onboarding, orientation, and training processes as well as training content. A focus group was conducted with leadership from the first phase of implementation and findings were used to inform and improve management practices.

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

AmeriCorps started the fiscal year with internal acquisition planning and budget formulation meetings that asked each office to identify in their budget proposals how evidence-based activities and evidence-building activities would be prioritized. All program offices are using data/evidence to improve performance. For example:

- AmeriCorps launched a grant management tool (the “Portfolio Navigator”) that allows Portfolio Managers to access data about grantee organizations in real time to facilitate improved oversight and support.
- AmeriCorps NCCC invested in a Service Project Database that provides staff access to data on all NCCC projects completed since 2012. The database thematically organizes projects, classifies project frameworks, and categorizes the

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

outcomes of these service initiatives. NCCC is investing in an evaluation of NCCC's impact. This research project was initiated in FY18 and is focused on evaluating member retention, studying how NCCC develops leadership skills in its members and teams, and the program's ability to strengthen communities. Finally, NCCC will continue to invest in research grants to better understand the outcomes of its disaster response efforts.

- NCCC made significant strides in improving the utility of the data it gathers regularly for continuous improvement.
  - Five years of service project data were digitized. A sample of projects was coded for outcomes achieved and these codes were applied to over 5,000 service projects completed to date to improve future project development and better assess community outcomes. The final analysis will be completed this fiscal year.
  - The Disaster Services Unit converted data collected from State Service Commissions into state-specific scorecards to illustrate readiness to respond to disasters and guide improvement efforts.
  - The Disaster Services Unit is using a new data collection instrument for improving the agency's situational awareness of how State Service Commissions and national service programs are responding to COVID-19 with the goal of using this information to improve internal and external (e.g., with FEMA) coordination and communication in responding to the pandemic. This unit provides weekly metrics on the number of national service members focused on various COVID-19 related activities (e.g., food distribution, wellness checks, on-line learning support) as well the estimated numbers served as part of a standing Senior Leadership Briefing document.
- AmeriCorps and the State of Colorado, in partnership with local public health authorities, are building a statewide corps of contact tracers to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus as the state gradually reopens. Approximately 800 NCCC, VISTA Summer Associates, and Senior Corps RSVP volunteers will be trained as contact tracers. The agency will assess the successes and challenges of this partnership and project with the goal of sharing lessons learned with other states as a promising role for national service in addressing the pandemic.



**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer meets quarterly to assess progress toward the goals of its performance plan. The plan includes strategic objectives, strategies for achieving the objectives, milestones, measures, and targets. Quarterly meetings are used to discuss actuals versus targets and identify promising practices used to achieve targets as well as areas for better optimizing the delivery of budget, procurement, grants, and financial management.

AmeriCorps Office of the Chief Risk Officer piloted a grantee risk assessment tool and is coordinating with the agency's new Office of Monitoring to establish an improved, more data-driven business process that better supports the new grant management model (e.g., delineating the roles of ensuring grantee compliance and providing grantees with programmatic coaching between distinct offices and positions within those offices). This tool was used to select a pool of grantees for monitoring in FY20. These monitoring activities are underway and are expected to increase compliance and improve performance during the grant life cycle.

Performance management and continuous improvement takes place primarily at the grantee management level and at the agency level. For the former, portfolio managers use various tools to ensure performance is on track and opportunities for continuous improvement are in place as needed. The Portfolio Navigator, FFRs, and progress reports are used in conjunction with regular check-ins and on occasion, site visits. At the agency level, evidence-building activities led by ORE are the primary mechanism for informing project development/innovation and improvement in grant making. The agency is in the process of strengthening its own systems and practices for establishing and managing office-level performance.

Over the past decade AmeriCorps and its grantees have invested significant resources in evaluating different agency programs and supported program models designed to improve a range of outcomes for national service members and volunteers, children, families, organizations, and communities. These investments have established the evidence base for both the effectiveness of the interventions implemented by its grantees, and more generally for the impact of national service. As this body of evidence has

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

emerged, ORE has broadened its perspective to include innovative methodologies to assess the impact of its national service programs. One methodology to extend the measurement of impact involves rigorously assessing and estimating a return on agency investments. Initial FY20 findings are promising and positive. Final findings will be available at the end of the fiscal year. The agency is in the process of procuring a contract to support annual, targeted return on investment analyses for the next five years.

The agency's emphasis on evidence is meant to support, not inhibit, innovation, improvement, and learning. The intent is to integrate the use of evidence and opportunities for further learning into all activities. Where an evidence base is lacking, evidence will be developed through systematic analysis. Where evidence exists, it will be used to encourage replication and expansion of effective solutions. As a learning organization, AmeriCorps uses many types of evidence and understands that a culture of continual improvement relies on multiple sources of information. AmeriCorps plans to procure a contract in FY20 to design and implement program evaluations that will have different purposes and uses such as program development, improvement, accountability, or replicability. Furthermore, in order to leverage limited evaluation resources and build the evaluation capacity of the national service field, the Contractor shall plan for the collaborative development of multi-site evaluations that pool (or "bundle") AmeriCorps grantees delivering the same or similar programs targeting the same or similar outcomes and that have a shared program evaluation purpose

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

FY20 Score

**6**

(out of 10 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

AmeriCorps has three policies related to managing the agency's data assets: Information Technology Management (policy 381), Information Technology Governance (policy 382) and Information Technology Data Management (policy 383).

The CIO/Acting CDO and the Director of Research and Evaluation/Evaluation Officer will be working together in FY20 to reconstitute and reconvene the agency's Data Council and determine what kind of charter/agency policy may be needed for establishing the role of the Council with regard to managing the agency's data assets. In essence, the role of the Council, under the direction of the Acting CDO, will be to prioritize data asset management issues such as creating an annual Fact Sheet (so all externally facing numbers have a single authoritative source), creating a more user-friendly interface for the agency's data warehouse/data inventory, and keeping the agency' open data platform current.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

The agency's Information Technology Data Management Policy addresses the need to have a current and comprehensive data inventory. The agency has an [open data platform](#).

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

AmeriCorps has a data request form and an MOU template so that anyone interested in accessing agency data may use the protocol to request data. In addition, public data sets are accessible through the agency's [open data platform](#). The agency's [member exit survey data was made publicly available](#) for the first time in FY19. In addition, nationally representative civic engagement and volunteering statistics are available, through a data sharing agreement with the Census Bureau, on an [interactive platform](#). The goal of these platforms is to make these data more accessible to all interested end-users.

The Portfolio Navigator pulls data from the AmeriCorps data warehouse for use by the agency's Portfolio Managers and Senior Portfolio Managers. The goal is to use this information for grants management and continuous improvement throughout the grant lifecycle.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

The agency has a new Privacy Policy (policy 153) that was signed in FY20 and posted internally. The Information Technology Data Governance Policy addresses data security. The agency conducts Privacy Impact Assessments which are a privacy review of each of AmeriCorps' largest electronic systems which are then published [online](#) (click on the first 3 listings or PRISM).

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

AmeriCorps provides assistance to grantees, including governments, to help them access agency data. For example, AmeriCorps provides assistance on using the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey [data](#) to State Service Commissions (many of which are part of state government) and other grantees as requested and through briefings integrated into standing calls with these entities.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:** Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

FY20 Score

**7**

(out of 10 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

AmeriCorps uses the same standard scientific research methods and designs for all of its studies and evaluations following the model used by clearinghouses like Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, the Department of Labor's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness project.

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

AmeriCorps has a common evidence framework for funding decisions in the Senior Corps and AmeriCorps State and National programs. This framework, which is articulated in the AmeriCorps State and National program [notice of funding](#), includes the following evidence levels: pre-preliminary, preliminary, moderate, and strong.

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

The AmeriCorps [Evidence Exchange](#) is a virtual repository of reports and resources intended to help AmeriCorps grantees and other interested stakeholders find information about evidence- and research-based national service programs. Examples of the types of resources available in the Evidence Exchange include research briefs that describe the core components of effective

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

interventions such as those in the areas of [education](#), [economic opportunity](#), and [health](#).

R&E also creates campaigns and derivative products to distill complex report findings and increase their utility for practitioners (for example, this [brief](#) on a study about the health benefits of Senior Corps). R&E has categorized reports according to their research design, so that users can easily search for experimental, quasi-experimental, or non-experimental studies, and those that qualify for strong, moderate, or preliminary evidence levels.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

AmeriCorps has an agency-wide approach to promoting the use of evidence-based practices by the field and employs a variety of strategies including evidence briefs, broad-based support to national service organizations, and targeted technical assistance to grantees. First, R&E creates campaigns and derivative products to distill complex report findings and increase their utility for practitioners (for example, this [brief](#) on a study about the health benefits of Senior Corps). Second, AmeriCorps has created user-friendly research briefs that describe the core components of effective interventions in the areas of education, economic opportunity, and health. These briefs are designed to help grantees (and potential grantees) adopt evidence-based approaches. Third, R&E funds a contractor to provide AmeriCorps grantees with evaluation capacity building support; R&E staff are also available to State Commissions for their evaluation questions and make resources (e.g., research briefs summarizing effective interventions, online evaluation planning and reporting curricula) available to them and the general public. Fourth, AmeriCorps funds and participates in grantee conferences that include specific sessions on how to incorporate evidence and data into national service programs. Fifth, as part of the AmeriCorps State and National FY20 application process, AmeriCorps provided technical assistance to grantees on using evidence-based practices through [webinars and calls](#). R&E and AmeriCorps conducted a process evaluation of grantees with varied replication experiences to produce a series of products designed to help grantees implement evidence-based interventions (including a forthcoming article in *The Foundation Review*). SeniorCorps continues to encourage and support the use of [evidence-based programs](#), as identified by the HHS's Administration for Community Living, by its grantee organizations.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

FY20 Score

**5**

(out of 7 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impacts of its programs?**

Staff at all levels of the organization participate in work groups focused on implementing AmeriCorps's [Transformation and Sustainability Plan](#), aimed at supporting the agency's efforts to improve operations, results, and meeting its mission. The CEO has also conducted Service Jams to elicit feedback from staff to support the plan. Service Jam topics have focused on what a best-in class learning organization looks like and how AmeriCorps could break down silos.

**7.2: Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

AmeriCorps's Evidence Exchange includes a suite of scaling products on the [evidence exchange](#) to help grantees replicate evidence-based interventions.

AmeriCorps continued to learn from its [evidence-based planning grant program](#) which "awards evidence-based intervention planning grants to organizations that develop new national service models seeking to integrate members into innovative evidence-based interventions." AmeriCorps continued to learn from its [research grantees](#), who receive grant funds to engage community residents and leaders in the development of [new and innovative national service projects](#). In addition to national service project development, these grants foster civic engagement through community research teams and build community capacity for using research to identify and understand local issues as well as identify possible solutions. Examples of these research-to-action projects include:

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

- A researcher at the University of Nevada worked with NCCC Pacific leaders to craft a series of local projects, like building sidewalks and community cleanups, emerging from her CBPR project with youth scientists working together to understand slow violence in their own communities as well as that of people experiencing homelessness in the area. The partnership between NCCC, the University of Nevada is quite strong and the local government is supportive of the work in the region. Early in 2020, housing had been donated by a local community organization and the NCCC team was assigned and scheduled to begin on April 21<sup>st</sup> but the work was placed on hold due to the COVID19 pandemic. Recently, PI and ADP have resumed discussions about rescheduling the team's arrival.
- Researchers at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, State University Tech (Virginia Tech University), and Virginia Commonwealth University have brought together community partners and stakeholders in Martinsville, VA to address the local opioid crisis. They are using an evidence-based stakeholder engagement approach (SEED) that has led to successful outcomes in Martinsville. In Year 2, they collaborated with the Minnesota AmeriCorps state commission, ServeMinnesota, to replicate this project and approach with a focus on deploying AmeriCorps volunteers to meet unmet service needs around the opioid crisis in Minneapolis. Because of the success in rural Virginia and Martinsville, this approach will be further replicated in another town in rural Virginia and another town outside Minneapolis.
- A researcher at Mississippi State University collaborated with NCCC Southern Campus to draft a concept paper for a NCCC team when COVID-19 struck – both agreed to table ideas for FAFSA support and ACT preparation until the crisis had subsided.
- A researcher Drew University successfully collaborated with a former senior New Jersey state government official on a concept paper for VISTAs to work with their community partner, Family Promise, to build the organization's capacity to work with local landlord's and people experiencing homelessness – a role identified through their grant funded research. They were awarded two VISTAs.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**



**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

As part of the evaluation of the Social Innovation Program, which was designed to identify and rigorously test innovative approaches to social service problems, AmeriCorps continues to receive evaluation reports from grantees. As of May 2020, AmeriCorps has received 129 final SIF evaluation reports, of which 31 (24%) were experimental designs and 74 (57%) were quasi-experimental designs. Further, the [evidence-based planning grant program](#) and the [research grant](#) program both seek to generate innovative national service models. The planning grants require an evaluation plan. The research grants use evidence to inform action planning and solutions. The Office of Research and Evaluation is planning an evaluation of this grant program to identify outcomes, including the outcomes of national service projects developed through participatory research. The goal is to contract with a third party to evaluate the effects of the research grant program before the end of FY20.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score

**13**

(out of 15 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**8.1 What were the agency's five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the 5 largest competitive grant programs are:

- 1) [AmeriCorps](#) State and National program (excluding State formula grant funds) (\$253,704,774 million; eligible grantees: nonprofit organizations, state governments, tribal governments, local governments, institutions of higher education);
- 2) [Senior Corps](#) RSVP program (\$51,355,000 million; eligible grantees: nonprofit organizations, local governments).

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grants were integrated into the Office of Research and Evaluation in FY19.

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

AmeriCorps's [AmeriCorps State and National grants program](#) (excluding State formula grant funds), allocated up to 44 out of 100 points to organizations that submit applications supported by performance and evaluation data in FY20. Specifically, up to 24 points can be assigned to applications with theories of change supported by relevant research literature, program performance data, or program evaluation data; and up to 20 points can be assigned for an applicant's incoming level of evidence and the quality of the evidence. Further, in 2020 AmeriCorps [prioritized](#) the funding of specific [education](#), [economic opportunity](#), and [health](#) interventions with moderate or strong levels of evidence.

Since AmeriCorps' implementation of a scoring process that assigns specific points for level of evidence, the percentage of grant dollars allocated to strong, moderate, preliminary, and no evidence categories has shifted over time (see chart below), such that

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

more FY20 grant dollars were awarded to applicants with strong and moderate levels of evidence for proposed interventions, and fewer grant dollars were awarded to applicants with little to no evidence of effectiveness. Note that 51% of FY20 grant dollars versus 41% of FY19 grant dollars were invested in interventions with a strong or moderate evidence base.

Percentage of competitive AmeriCorps grant funds that support evidence-based projects	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
<b>Strong</b>	20%	18%	26%	27%	34%
<b>Moderate</b>	14%	11%	11%	14%	17%
<b>Preliminary</b>	44%	45%	34%	31%	28%
<b>No evidence</b>	22%	26%	29%	28%	21%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

In FY18, Senior Corps RSVP embedded evidence into their grant renewal processes by offering supplemental funding, “[augmentation grants](#),” to grantees interested in deploying volunteers to serve in [evidence-based programs](#). More than \$3.3 million of Senior Corps program dollars were allocated, over three years, toward new evidence-based programming augmentations. Grantees will be operating with their augmentations through fiscal year 2021.

In a survey completed in FY20, Senior Corps grantees reported that 4,043 volunteer stations and 20,320 volunteers (10% of all volunteers) were engaged in evidence-based programming.

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to build evidence? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

AmeriCorps State and National grantees are required to evaluate their programs as part of the grant’s terms and conditions.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

Grantees receiving more than \$500,000 required to conduct an independent, external evaluation (see p. 23 of the [FY20 notice of funding](#) for a description of these requirements).

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

AmeriCorps administers only two competitive grant programs, described above.

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

AmeriCorps has summarized the accomplishments of its competitive grant programs in a series of research briefs that describe the core components of effective interventions in the areas of [education](#), [economic opportunity](#), and [health](#). The education brief was used to justify the FY19 funding priority for evidence-based interventions in the AmeriCorps State and National competition. All interventions described in these briefs illustrate how AmeriCorps competitive grant recipients have achieved better outcomes and built knowledge about what works. Our most current list was updated in FY20 and will be published as part of a larger report in the fall of 2020.

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

AmeriCorps State and National grantees, including city, county, tribal, and state governments, are required to use their AmeriCorps funds to evaluate their programs. In FY20, AmeriCorps awarded \$8.5 million for the [Commission Investment Fund](#) that supports State Commissions, which are typically housed within state government— approximately one third of these grants will focus on building the capacity of State Commissions and their grantees to collect and use performance and evaluation data.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

AmeriCorps's Evidence Exchange includes a suite of scaling products on the [evidence exchange](#) to help grantees replicate evidence-based interventions.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score

**3**

(out of 10 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**9.1 What were the agency’s five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest non-competitive grant programs are:

- 1) [AmeriCorps](#) State formula grants program (\$142,892,106 eligible grantees: states);
- 2) [AmeriCorps](#) National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) (\$32.5 million; eligible grantees: nonprofit organizations);
- 3) [AmeriCorps](#) VISTA (\$93 million; eligible grantees: nonprofit organizations, state, tribal, and local governments, institutions of higher education);
- 4) [Senior Corps Foster Grandparents](#) (\$118 million; eligible grantees: nonprofit organization, local governments)
- 5) [Senior Corps Senior Companion Program](#) (\$50 million; eligible grantees: nonprofit organizations, local governments).

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in the largest five non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

In FY18, Senior Corps Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion Program embedded evidence into their grant renewal processes by offering supplemental funding, “[augmentation grants](#),” to grantees interested in deploying volunteers to serve in [evidence-based programs](#). More than \$3.3 million of Senior Corps program dollars were allocated, over three years, toward new evidence-based programming augmentations. Grantees will be operating with their augmentations through fiscal year 2021.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

In a survey completed in FY20, Senior Corps grantees reported that 4,043 volunteer stations and 20,320 volunteers (10% of all volunteers) were engaged in evidence-based programming.

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

In FY19, Senior Corps completed an evaluation with an independent firm to produce case studies and comparative analyses of select grantees that received an evidence-based programming augmentation to understand successes, challenges, and other issues. This report is being used to inform Senior Corps' approach to replicating this augmentation initiative, as well as the training/technical assistance needs of grantees.

Senior Corps and the Administration for Community Living have continued a dialogue about how to build and broaden the evidence base for various programs designed for older adults, particularly for [aging and disability evidence-based programs and practices](#). AmeriCorps previously utilized ACL's list of evidence-based programs for its augmentation grants and is encouraging Senior Corps grantees to move toward more evidence-based programming.

For FY20, Senior Corps continued funding five demonstration grants, totaling \$2,579,475, which authorize organizations to implement Senior Corps program model with certain modifications to standard AmeriCorps policies. Demonstration grants allow Senior Corps to analyze potential policy changes.

AmeriCorps NCCC invested in a Service Project Database that provides staff access to data on all NCCC projects completed since 2012. The database thematically organizes projects, classifies project frameworks, and categorizes the outcomes of these service initiatives. NCCC is investing in an evaluation of NCCC's impact. This research project was initiated in FY18 and is focused on evaluating member retention, studying how NCCC develops leadership skills in its members and teams, and the program's ability to strengthen communities. Finally, NCCC will continue to invest in research grants to better understand the outcomes of its disaster response efforts.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.7 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other non-competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

AmeriCorps only administers five non-competitive grant programs, as described above.

**9.4 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Senior Corps and the Office of Research and Evaluation completed a longitudinal evaluation of the Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion Programs in FY19 that demonstrated the [positive health outcomes](#) associated with volunteering. A [50 year retrospective review](#) of the research conducted on Senior Corps programs was completed at the end of FY19 and was posted on the Evidence Exchange in FY20.

**9.5 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

AmeriCorps does not prohibit the use of formula dollars for evaluation but each State Commission may have its own guidelines. Further, formula grantees over \$500,000 have to perform evaluations using their grant funds.



**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20 Score

**6**

(out of 8 points)

**AmeriCorps**

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

AmeriCorps's AmeriCorps State and National denied funding to six FY20 applicants that requested \$1,722,851 for new or re-compete funding because they did not demonstrate evidence for the proposed program. These funds were invested in applications with a demonstrated evidence base. This investment decision is consistent with the agency's prioritization of evidence-based interventions (see agency [TSP Goal #3](#)).

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

AmeriCorps launched a grant management tool (the "Portfolio Navigator") that allows Portfolio Managers to access data about grantee organizations in real time to facilitate improved oversight and support.

AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation continued to invest \$500,000 in evaluation technical assistance support for grantees which is available to all competitive AmeriCorps State and National grantees seeking to improve their ability to demonstrate empirically their effectiveness. FY19 investments targeted to grantees struggling to achieve outcomes continued in

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20. More specifically, in FY20, the following ongoing support was provided to lower-performing grantees using reallocated FY19 program dollars:

- Two grantees required intensive evaluation technical assistance (TA) and are being closely monitored by AmeriCorps State and National. To ensure that two grantees are on track with implementing their evaluation plans, the grantees identified several milestones for their evaluation and with support have made progress in FY20.
- Tribal grantees have faced a variety of challenges in developing and implementing their evaluation plans. Through evaluation TA support, AmeriCorps hopes that the tribal grantees will receive the additional assistance needed to improve their plans. During FY20 11 tribal grantees received TA to improve the quality of data collection and evaluation plans.



**80**

FY20 Score

## U.S. Department of Education

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



### U.S. Department of Education

The [U.S. Department of Education](#) (ED) has been a long-time leader in evidence-based policy. Convening key personnel from across the Department has been a driver of ED's efforts to use information about what works to drive decision-making. This engagement of important staff has continued with the implementation of the *Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act* (Evidence Act) where the Evidence Leadership Group, ED Data Governance Board, the [Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development's Office of the Chief Data Officer](#), and Grants Policy Office, Office of Evidence-Based practices and State and Grantee Relations, the [Institute for Education Sciences](#), (IES) and other units leading the Department's Evidence Act implementation.

Beyond Evidence Act implementation, the Evidence Leadership Group supports program staff efforts to use evidence in grantmaking in programs across the agency, including support for the Department's legislation: the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA). ESSA has been a key driver of increased evidence use in states across the country (including in Nevada as detailed in a 2019 Results for America [case study](#)).

ED also provides robust technical assistance through the [Regional Education Laboratories and Comprehensive Centers](#), which help states and districts build and use evidence. In 2020, the 10 RELs collaborated to produce a series of evidence-based [COVID-19 resources and guidance](#) on teaching and learning in a remote environment and on how to address other issues that have arisen for schools as a result of the pandemic. Beyond the RELs and Comprehensive Centers, the Department's [What Works Clearinghouse](#), through its evidence reviews, Intervention Reports, and Practice Guides, plays a key role in helping teachers, leaders, and researchers identify and apply evidence-based interventions.

Another example of ED's support to states and districts includes the state longitudinal data systems grant administered by IES, which in FY20 invested \$105 million in state longitudinal data systems to help 26 states and two territories better gather, analyze, and evaluate data about student performance. Moving forward, ED's forthcoming Open Data Platform promises to offer educators and researchers even better access to the data they need to address some of the field's most pressing problems. ED should proceed with its Evidence Act and OPEN Data Government Act implementation, based on forthcoming White House Office of Management and Budget guidance.

Read more about the U.S. Department of Education in the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence [here](#).

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 9 points)

### U.S. Department of Education

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The Commissioner for the [National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance](#) (NCEE) serves as the Department of Education (ED) [evaluation officer](#). ED’s [Institute of Education Sciences](#) (IES), with a budget of \$623 million in FY20, is primarily responsible for education research, evaluation, and statistics. The NCEE Commissioner is responsible for planning and overseeing ED’s major evaluations and also supports the IES Director. IES employed approximately 160 full-time staff in FY20, including approximately 25 staff in NCEE.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

USED has a designated [Chief Data Officer](#) (CDO). The Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development’s (OPEPD) [Office of the Chief Data Officer](#) (OCDO) has a staff of 18 and is actively hiring additional staff. The Evidence Act provides a framework for OCDO’s responsibilities, which include lifecycle data management and developing and enforcing data governance policies. The OCDO has oversight over ED’s information collections approval and associated OMB clearance process. It is responsible for developing and enforcing ED’s open data plan, including management of a centralized comprehensive data inventory accounting for all data assets across ED. The OCDO is also responsible for developing and maintaining a technological and analytical infrastructure that is responsive to ED’s strategic data needs, exploiting traditional and emerging analytical methods to improve decision making, optimize outcomes, and create efficiencies. These activities are carried out by the Governance and Strategy Division, which focuses on data governance, lifecycle data management, and open data; and the Analytics and Support Division, which provides data analytics and infrastructure responsive to ED’s strategic data. The current OCDO budget reflects the importance of these activities to ED leadership, with S&E funding allocated for data governance, data analytics, open data, and

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

information clearances.

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency’s major programs?**

The EO, CDO, and SO meet monthly for the purposes of ensuring ongoing coordination of Evidence Act work. Each leader, or their designee, also participate in the PIO’s Strategic Planning and Review process. In FY20, the CDO is the owner of Goal 3 in ED’s strategic plan: “Strengthen the quality, accessibility, and use of education data through better management, increased privacy protections and transparency.” Leaders of the three embedded objectives come from OCDO, OCIO, and NCES.

The Evidence Leadership Group (ELG) supports program staff that run evidence-based grant competitions and monitor evidence-based grant projects. It advises ED leadership and staff on how evidence can be used to improve ED programs and provides support to staff in the use of evidence. It is co-chaired by the Evaluation Officer and the OPEPD Director of Grants Policy. Both co-chairs sit on ED’s Policy Committee (described below). The SO, EO, CDO, and Performance Improvement Officer (PIO) are ex officio members of the ELG.

The ED Data Governance Board (DGB) sponsors agency-wide actions to develop an open data culture, and works to improve ED’s capacity to leverage data as a strategic asset for evidence building and operational decisions, including developing the capacity of data professionals in program offices. It is chaired by the CDO, with the SO, EO, and PIO as ex officio members.

The ED CDO sits in OPEPD and the Evaluation Officer (EO) and the Statistical Official (SO) sit in the Institute for Education Sciences (IES). Both OPEPD and IES participate in monthly Policy Committee meetings which often address evidence-related topics. OPEPD manages the Secretary’s policy priorities including evidence, while IES is focused on (a) bringing extant evidence to policy conversations and (b) suggesting how evidence can be built as part of policy initiatives. OPEPD plays leading roles in the formation of ED’s policy positions as expressed through annual budget requests, grant competition priorities, including evidence. Both OPEPD and IES provide technical assistance to Congress to ensure evidence appropriately informs policy design.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Education**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d)).**

The Department’s new Evaluation Policy is posted online at [ed.gov/data](https://ed.gov/data) and can be directly accessed [here](#). Key features of the policy include the Department’s commitment to: (1) independence and objectivity; (2) relevance and utility; (3) rigor and quality; (4) transparency; and (5) ethics. Special features include additional guidance to ED staff on considerations for evidence-building conducted by ED program participants, which emphasize the need for grantees to build evidence in a manner consistent with the parameters of their grants (e.g., purpose, scope, and funding levels), up to and including rigorous evaluations that meet WWC standards without reservations.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

ED’s FY22 Draft Annual Evaluation Plan will be shared with OMB in the fall and finalized in the spring. Consistent with OMB Circular A-11 Section 290, the FY 22 Annual Evaluation Plan will be posted publicly in February 2021 concurrent with the Budget Release. ED anticipates that plan will include all current and planned program evaluations across ED and such details that are required by the Evidence Act and associated OMB guidance.

ED’s current evaluation plan covers the subset of agency activities funded by ESSA FY18 and FY19 appropriations, for work to be procured in FY19 and FY20, and begun—effectively—in FY20 and FY21. Since the passage of ESSA, IES has worked with partners across ED, including the Evidence Leadership Group, to prepare and submit to Congress a biennial, forward-looking evaluation plan covering all mandated and discretionary evaluations of education programs funded under ESSA (known as ED’s “[8601 plan](#)”).

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

ED is developing its Learning Agenda consistent with milestones established by the Evidence Act and OMB guidance. Per OMB guidance on performance management systems, ED will share priority questions in its draft learning agenda with OMB in June 2020 as part of the Strategic Review Process. The complete draft Learning Agenda will be shared with OMB in Fall 2020. After receiving feedback from OMB and external stakeholders, ED will submit a final Learning Agenda to OMB in Fall 2021. OMB Circular A-11 Section 290 does not require the Learning Agenda be publicly released prior to February 2022, concurrent with the FY23 Budget Release.

To develop its draft Learning Agenda, ED has expanded the question generation and prioritization process used in the development of its "8601 Plan" (see above) to all principal operating components across ED. To help ensure alignment of the draft learning agenda to ED's Strategic Plan, the Evidence Leadership Group has been expanded to include a member from ED's Performance Improvement Office. The Evaluation Officer regularly consults with ED's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) function to explore the intersection between the Learning Agenda and high-priority issues identified in ERM processes. Broad stakeholder feedback will be received on topics addressed in the Draft Learning Agenda after initial comments have been received from OMB on its format and sufficiency.

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

ED's [current Annual Performance Report and Performance Plan](#) includes a list of ED's current evaluations organized by topic. IES also maintains [profiles](#) of all its evaluations on its website, which include key findings, publications, and products. IES publicly releases all peer-reviewed publications from its [evaluations](#) on the IES website and also in the [Education Resources Information Center](#) (ERIC). IES regularly conducts briefings on its evaluations for ED, the Office of Management and Budget, Congressional staff, and the public.



**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

ED completed its Interim Capacity Assessment, meeting all milestones established by the Evidence Act and OMB guidance. It addresses six dimensions of the Department's capacity to build and use evidence, with an emphasis on evaluation. Specific components include: (1) a list of existing activities being evaluated by the Department; and assessments of the extent to which those activities (2) meet the needs of the Department's operating components; (3) meet the Department's most important learning, management, and accountability needs; (4) use appropriate methods; (5) are supported by agency capacity for effective planning, execution, and dissemination; and (6) are supported by agency capacity for effective use of evaluation evidence and data for analysis.

A distinguishing feature of ED's Interim Capacity Assessment is an agency-wide survey of all employees that focus in two domains: (1) their capacity to build and use evidence and (2) their capacity to use data. The specific questions employees received depend upon their position level (i.e., supervisory or non-supervisor) and their job role (i.e., grant maker/monitor; non-grant maker/monitor; data professional). The results of this survey are already being used to develop training related to evidence building, evidence use, and analytics and fulfills, in part, requirements of the Federal Data Strategy.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

The [IES website](#) includes a searchable database of planned and completed evaluations, including those that use experimental, quasi-experimental, or regression discontinuity designs. As of July 2020, that list includes 43 completed or planned experimental studies, two quasi-experimental studies, and five regression discontinuity studies. All impact evaluations rely upon experimental trials. Other methods, including matching and regression discontinuity designs, are classified as rigorous outcomes evaluations. Not included in this count are studies that are descriptive or correlational in nature, including implementation studies and less rigorous outcomes evaluations.

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Education (ED)**

**3.1 \_\_\_\_\_ invested \$\_\_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_\_% of the agency's \$\_\_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.**

ED invested \$237.6 million in rigorous evaluations, technical assistance related to evaluation and evidence-building, and capacity-building in FY20. This includes work awarded by the Regional Educational Laboratories (\$83.9 million), NCEE's Evaluation Division (\$56.4 million), NCER Efficacy Trials (\$42.7 million), SBIR Phase II Projects (\$7.1 million), NCSEER Efficacy Trials (\$32.7 million), and NCSEER Replication Trials (\$14.8 million).

This represents 0.48% of the agency's \$49 billion FY20 congressional appropriation, not including: (1) Student Financial Assistance and related accounts; (2) Howard and Gallaudet Universities; (3) capital and liquidating accounts for higher education institutions; (4) agency salaries and expenses; and (5) general and special funds receipts.

**3.2 Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)**

ED does not have a specific budget solely for evaluation. Federal program evaluations are supported either by required or allowable program funds or by ESEA Section 8601, which permits the Secretary to reserve up to 0.5% of selected ESEA program funds for rigorous evaluation. Other evaluation activities are supported by the IES budget (i.e., the Regional Educational Laboratories account; the Research, Development, and Dissemination account; the Research in Special Education account; and the Special Education Studies and Evaluations account).

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 (\$364.8M) and FY19 (\$357.6M) estimates are not directly comparable due to a change in ED’s FY20 calculation method. However, the amount invested by NCEE in rigorous evaluations increased in FY20 (\$56.4 million vs \$53.5 million). Evaluation, research and development, and capacity building in the REL program represents a relatively stable appropriation (FY19 \$55.4 million vs. FY20 \$56.0 million), though, due to how contracts are funded over their lifecycle, a significantly larger expense in FY20 than in FY21. Slight increases were also observed in the Research, Development, and Dissemination account (+\$3.2 million) and in the Research in Special Education account (+\$500,000).

Investment	FY20 (in millions)	FY19 (in millions)
Rigorous evaluations (estimated)	\$56.4	\$53.5
REL Program	\$56.0	\$55.4
Research, Development, and Dissemination	\$195.9	\$192.7
Research in Special Education	\$56.5	\$56.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$364.8</b>	<b>\$357.6</b>

**3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

In [March 2020](#), IES announced its most recent round of SLDS awards. IES anticipates awarding a total of \$105 million over four years to 26 states, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Alabama, CNMI, Guam, and Wyoming were first-time SLDS grantees. Five other states, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Maine, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia had not received SLDS grants since the 2009 cycle. Priorities for the 2020 grants included (1) infrastructure, (2) education choice, and (3) equity.

The [Regional Education Laboratories](#) (RELs) provide extensive technical assistance on evaluation and support research partnerships that conduct implementation and impact studies on education policies and programs in ten geographic regions of the U.S., covering all states, territories, and the District of Columbia. Congress appropriated \$55.4 million for the RELs in FY20.

[Comprehensive Centers](#) provide support to States in planning and implementing interventions through coaching, peer-to-peer

 **RESULTS**  
**FOR AMERICA** **2020 Invest in What Works**  
**Federal Standard of Excellence**

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

learning opportunities, and ongoing direct support. [The State Implementation and Scaling Up of Evidence-Based Practices Center](#) provides tools, training modules, and resources on implementation planning and monitoring.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement.** Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**8**  
(out of 10 points)

### U.S. Department of Education

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

ED's [FY18-22 Strategic Plan](#) includes two parallel goals, one for P-12 and one for higher education (Strategic Objectives [1.4](#) and [2.2](#), respectively), that focus on supporting agencies and educational institutions in the identification and use of evidence-based strategies and practices. The OPEPD ELG co-chair is responsible for both strategic objectives.

All Department Annual Performance Reports (most recent fiscal year) and Annual Performance Plan (upcoming fiscal year) are located on ED's [website](#). This includes the [FY19 Annual Performance Report and the FY21 Annual Performance Plan](#), which includes FY19 performance results as well as planned targets for FY20, FY21, and FY22. In FY20, ED published new Agency Priority Goals in [performance.gov](#) emphasizing (1) education freedom, (2) multiple pathways to student success, (3) federal student aid customer service, (4) student privacy and cybersecurity, and (5) regulatory reform.

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

The Grants Policy Office in the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development (OPEPD) works with offices across ED to ensure alignment with the Secretary's priorities, including evidence-based practices. The Grants Policy Office looks at where ED and the field can continuously improve by building stronger evidence, making decisions based on a clear understanding of the available evidence, and disseminating evidence to decision makers. Specific activities include: strengthening the connection between the Secretary's policies and grant implementation from design through evaluation; supporting a culture of evidence-based practices; providing guidance to grant-making offices on how to integrate evidence into program design; and identifying

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement. Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

opportunities where ED and field can improve by building, understanding, and using evidence. During the past year, the Grants Policy Office has collaborated with offices across the Department on a variety of activities, including reviews of efforts used to determine grantee performance.

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

The Department conducted after-action reviews after the FY 2019 competition cycle to reflect on successes of the year as well as opportunities for improvement. The reviews resulted in process updates for FY 2020. In addition, the Department updated an optional internal tool to inform policy deliberations and progress on the Secretary's policy priorities, including the use of evidence and data.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

FY20 Score

**6**

(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Education (ED)**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

ED's [FY18-22 Performance Plan](#) outlines strategic goals and objectives, including Goal #3: "Strengthen the quality, accessibility and use of education data through better management, increased privacy protections and transparency." This currently serves as a strategic plan for ED's governance, protection, and use of data while it develops the Open Data Plan required by the Evidence Act. The plan includes a metric on the number of data assets that are "open by default" as well as a metric on open licensing requirements for deliverables created with Department grant funds.

In addition, the [Information Resources Management Strategic Plan for FY 2019 to FY 2023](#), released in December 2019, includes for the first time a strategic goal to "improve data management, enhance the use of data analytics, and promote transparency at the Department." One of the strategic objectives is to "implement solutions that advance open data and transparency." Initiatives under this objective are "develop, publish, and execute an open data plan" and "develop, maintain, and enhance technology solutions that foster open data access, public dialogue, and a culture of transparency." Metrics will include the number of agency open data assets released through ED's Open Data Platform (ODP), a new tool to make public data discoverable from a single location and easily searchable by topic.

ED continues to wait for Phase 2 guidance from OMB to understand required parameters for the open data plan. In the meantime, USED continues to release open data, develop our Open Data Platform as informed by M-13-13 and the open data project, and develop our draft open data plan. USED will finalize the Open Data Plan and conform to new requirements when Phase 2 guidance

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

is released. If guidance is received soon, ED will publish its open data plan in FY21 within the agency's Information Resource Management Strategic Plan.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

The [ED Data Inventory](#) (EDI) was developed in response to the requirements of M-13-13 as ED's external asset inventory. It describes data reported to ED as part of grant activities, along with administrative and statistical data assembled and maintained by ED. It includes descriptive information about each data collection along with information on the specific data elements in individual data collections. While the EDI continues to meet requirements for M-13-13, ED has also been developing an Open Data Platform (ODP), a new tool to make public data discoverable from a single location and easily searchable by topic. ED will continue to identify, ingest, catalogue, and make available public data assets for public discovery and use. ED continues to wait for Phase 2 guidance from OMB to understand required parameters for comprehensive data inventory. Once published, the ODP will serve as the agency's comprehensive data inventory and regularly send information to data.gov as required by Evidence Act provisions on the Federal Data Catalog.

Information about Department data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) have historically been made publicly available [online](#). Prioritized data is further documented or featured on ED's data page. NCES is also leading a government-wide effort to automatically populate metadata from Information Collection Request packages to data inventories. This may facilitate the process of populating EDI and comprehensive data inventory.

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement?**

ED's forthcoming Open Data Platform features standard metadata contained in Data Profiles for each data asset. Before new assets are added, data stewards conduct quality review checks on the metadata to ensure accuracy and consistency. As the platform matures and expands, ED staff and the public will find it a powerful tool for accessing and analyzing ED data, either through the platform directly or through other tools powered by its API.



**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

ED has also made concerted efforts to improve the availability and use of its data with the release of the revised College Scorecard that links data from NCES, the Office of Federal Student Aid, and the Internal Revenue Service. In FY20, ED released data describing debt at the level of fields of study. ED plans to integrate additional fields of study data into its College Scorecard consumer site and the Office of Federal Student Aid's NextGen student tools. College Scorecard provides privacy-protected consumer access to data that otherwise would not be available to students and parents. Users can see aggregated data for colleges and universities on student income and debt (not otherwise publicly available) in an easy-to-use interface. College Scorecard also includes an API, fueling dissemination of college consumer data through other platforms such as Google.

In September 2019, ED established an agency-level Data Governance Body (DGB), chaired by the Chief Data Officer (CDO), with participation from relevant senior-level staff in agency business units. The DGB assists the CDO in assessing and adjudicating competing proposals aimed at achieving and measuring desirable Departmental data outcomes and priorities. Since its inception, the DGB has evaluated data maturity models, selected an assessment that blends CMMI and the Open Data Initiative models, conducted preliminary "discovery" conversations with all ED offices to identify data challenges and opportunities, and completed its first data maturity assessment in each office and for ED as a whole. Data maturity is a metric that will be measured and reported as part of ED's Annual Performance Plan. Several of these activities have been supported by ED's investment in a Data Governance Board and Data Governance Infrastructure (DGBDGI) contract.

The Information Resources Management Strategic Plan for FY19-FY23, released in December 2019, includes for the first time a strategic goal to "improve data management, enhance the use of data analytics, and promote transparency at the Department." [Strategic Objective 5.6.2](#) calls for ED to "advance data analytic capabilities for the Department," and includes an initiative to "leverage new and emerging technologies to facilitate access to and use of Department data."

IES continues to make available all data collected as part of its administrative data collections, sample surveys, and evaluation work. Its support of the [Common Education Data Standards \(CEDS\) Initiative](#) has helped to develop a common vocabulary, data model, and tool set for P-20 education data. The CEDS Open Source Community is active, providing a way for users to contribute to the standards development process.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

IES is collaborating with an outside research team to conduct a proof of concept for multi-party computing. The Department's general approach is to replicate an existing data collection that involves securely sharing PII across a number of partners using the MPC framework.

The [Disclosure Review Board](#) (DRB), the EDFacts Governing Board, the [Student Privacy Policy Office \(SPPO\)](#), and SPPO's [Privacy Technical Assistance Center](#) and Privacy Safeguards Team all help to ensure the quality and privacy of education data. In FY19, the ED Data Strategy Team also published a user resource guide for staff on disclosure avoidance considerations throughout the data lifecycle.

In FY20, the ED DRB approved 27 releases (as of June 2020) by issuing "Safe to Release" memos. The DRB is in the process of developing a revised Charter that outlines its authority, scope, membership, process for dispute resolution, and how it will work with other DRBs in ED. The DRB is also developing standard operating procedures outlining the types of releases that need to be reviewed along with the submission and review process for data releases. The DRB is currently planning to develop information sessions to build the capacity of ED staff focusing on such topics as disclosure avoidance techniques used at ED, techniques appropriate for administrative and survey data, and how to communicate with stakeholders about privacy and disclosure avoidance.

In ED's [FY18-22 Performance Plan](#), Strategic Objective 3.2 is to "Improve privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data both at ED and in the education community." The plan also [outlines](#) actions taken in FY18. ED's [Student Privacy website](#) assists stakeholders in protecting student privacy by providing official guidance on FERPA, technical best practices, and the answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

ED's forthcoming Open Data Platform will make Department data easily accessible to the public. Data will be machine-readable and searchable by keyword in order to promote easy access to relevant data assets. In addition, the ODP features an API so that aggregators and developers can leverage Department data to provide information and tools for families, policy makers, researchers, developers, advocates and other stakeholders. ODP will ultimately include listings of non-public, restricted data with links to information on the privacy-protective process for requesting restricted-use access to these data.

ED's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) responds to technical assistance inquiries on student privacy issues and provides online FERPA training to state and school district officials. FSA conducted a postsecondary institution breach response assessment to determine the extent of a potential breach and provide the institutions with remediation actions around their protection of FSA data and best practices associated with cybersecurity.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides free online training on using its data tools to analyze data while protecting privacy. [Distance Learning Dataset Training](#) includes modules on NCES's [data-protective analysis tools](#), including QuickStats, PowerStats, and TrendStats. A full list of NCES data tools is available on their [website](#).

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) administers a restricted-use data licensing program to make detailed data available to researchers when needed for in-depth analysis and modeling. NCES loans restricted-use data only to qualified organizations in the United States. Individual researchers must apply through an organization (e.g., a university, a research institution, or company). To qualify, an organization must provide a justification for access to the restricted-use data, submit the required legal documents, agree to keep the data safe from unauthorized disclosures at all times, and to participate fully in unannounced, unscheduled inspections of the researcher's office to ensure compliance with the terms of the License and the Security Plan form.

ED's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) responds to technical assistance inquiries on student privacy issues and provides online FERPA training to state and school district officials. FSA conducted a postsecondary institution breach response assessment

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

to determine the extent of a potential breach and provide the institutions with remediation actions around their protection of FSA data and best practices associated with cybersecurity.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Education**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

ED has an agency-wide framework for impact evaluations that is based on ratings of studies' internal validity. ED evidence-building activities are designed to meet the highest standards of internal validity (typically randomized control trials) when causality must be established for policy development or program evaluation purposes. When random assignment is not feasible, rigorous quasi-experiments are conducted. The framework was developed and is maintained by IES's [What Works Clearinghouse™](#) (WWC). WWC [standards](#) are maintained on the [WWC website](#). A stylized representation of the standards can be found [here](#), along with [information](#) about how ED reports findings from research and evaluations that meet these standards.

Since 2002, ED—as part of its compliance with the Information Quality Act and OMB guidance— has required that all “research and evaluation information products documenting cause and effect relationships or evidence of effectiveness should meet that quality standards that will be developed as part of the What Works Clearinghouse” ([see Information Quality Guidelines](#)).

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

ED employs the same evidence standards in all discretionary grant competitions that use evidence to direct funds to applicants that are proposing to implement projects that have evidence of effectiveness and/or to build new evidence through evaluation. Those standards, as outlined in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations ([EDGAR](#)), build on ED's [What Works Clearinghouse™](#) (WWC) research design standards.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

ED's [What Works Clearinghouse™](#) (WWC) identifies studies that provide valid and statistically significant evidence of effectiveness of a given practice, product, program, or policy (referred to as “interventions”), and disseminates summary information and reports on the WWC website.

As of April 2020, the WWC has reviewed more than 10,650 studies that are available in a [searchable database](#). It has published more than 590 Intervention Reports, which synthesize evidence from multiple studies about the efficacy of specific products, programs, and policies. It has published 24 Practice Guides, which synthesize across products, programs, and policies to surface generalizable practices that can transform classroom practice and improve student outcomes.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

ED has several technical assistance programs designed to promote the use of evidence-based practices, most notably IES's [Regional Educational Laboratory Program](#) and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's [Comprehensive Center Program](#). Both programs use research on evidence-based practices generated by the What Works Clearinghouse and other ED-funded Research and Development Centers to inform their work. RELs also conduct applied research and offer research-focused training, coaching, and technical support on behalf of their state and local stakeholders. Their work is reflected in Strategic Plan Objectives 1.4 and 2.2.

Often, those practices are highlighted in WWC [Practice Guides](#), which are based on meta-analytic syntheses of existing research and augmented by the experience of practitioners. These guides are designed to address challenges in classrooms and schools. The WWC is currently developing five new Practice Guides for release in FY21.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

To ensure continuous improvement of the kind of TA work undertaken by the RELs and Comprehensive Centers, ED has invested in both independent evaluation and grant-funded research. The REL Program is currently undergoing evaluation, and design work for the next Comprehensive Center evaluation is underway. Addition, IES has awarded two grants to study and promote knowledge utilization in education, including the [Center for Research Use in Education](#) and the [National Center for Research in Policy and Practice](#). In June of 2020, IES released a report on [How States and Districts Support Evidence Use in School Improvement](#), which may be of value to technical assistance providers and SEA and LEA staff in improving the adoption and implementation of evidence-based practice.

Finally, the Evidence Leadership Group has coordinated the development of revised evidence definitions and related selection criteria for competitive programs that align with ESSA to streamline and clarify provisions for grantees. These revised definitions align with ED's suggested criteria for states' implementation of ESSA's four evidence levels, included in ED's non-regulatory guidance, [Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#). ED also developed a [fact sheet](#) to support internal and external stakeholders in understanding the revised evidence definitions. This document has been shared with internal and external stakeholders through multiple methods, including the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education [ESSA technical assistance page for grantees](#).

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 7 points)

**U.S. Department of Education**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts?**

In FY19, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) made strategic investments in innovative educational programs and practices and administered discretionary grant programs. In FY19, the Innovation and Improvement account received \$1.035 billion. ED reorganized in 2019, consolidating the Office of Innovation and Improvement into the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. To lead and support innovation within the reorganized OESE, ED created the Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) team. EBP teams work within OESE and with colleagues across the agency to develop and expand efforts to inform policy and improve program practices.

In the reorganization that created the Office of the Chief Data Officer, ED leadership established a unit focused explicitly on Innovation and Engagement. These staff focus on innovation in data infrastructure and use, leading the development of the Open Data Platform using agile methodology. Innovations are discussed and disseminated for use at monthly meetings of the Data Strategy Team (DST), consisting of data professionals from across ED. Recent DST meetings have included presentations on the Federal Student Aid data warehouse, introductions to Tableau and PowerBI, and a demonstration of the Open Data Platform detailing the role of office data stewards.

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

To lead and support innovation within the reorganized OESE, ED created a new component: the Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) team. EBP is tasked with promoting evidence consistent with relevant provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act's (ESSA). EBP includes two units—one to support the many discretionary



**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

grant programs in OESE and one to support the formula grant programs and any discretionary grant programs associated with the formula grant programs. EBP works to advance an evidence-based grantmaking agenda and seeks to operationalize the ESSA evidence framework for strengthening the effectiveness of ESEA investments within OESE programs by: 1) Leading OESE policy development and serving as consultants to grant programs on program design and implementation using evidence, data, trends, field experiences, and stakeholder input; 2) Assessing and improving evidence-based grant-making processes and decision-making to drive results and outcomes aligned with strategic goals; and, 3) Identifying and disseminating promising and evidence-based practices by convening practitioners and producing practitioner-friendly resources.

The [Education Innovation and Research \(EIR\) program](#) is ED's primary innovation program for K–12 public education. EIR grants are focused on validating and scaling evidence-based practices and encouraging innovative approaches to persistent challenges. The EIR program incorporates a [tiered-evidence framework](#) that supports larger awards for projects with the strongest evidence base as well as promising earlier-stage projects that are willing to undergo rigorous evaluation. Lessons learned from the EIR program have been shared across the agency and have informed policy approaches in other programs.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

ED is currently implementing the [Experimental Sites Initiative](#) to assess the effects of statutory and regulatory flexibility for participating institutions disbursing Title IV student aid. ED collects performance data from all participating institutions, and IES is currently conducting rigorous evaluations of selected Experimental Sites, including two related to short-term Pell grants.

The [Education Innovation and Research \(EIR\) program](#), ED's primary innovation program for K–12 public education, incorporates a [tiered-evidence framework](#) that supports larger awards for projects with the strongest evidence base as well as promising earlier-stage projects that are willing to undergo rigorous evaluation.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**13**  
(out of 15 points)

**U.S. Department of Education**

**8.1 What were the agency's five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

ED's top five program accounts based on actual appropriation amounts in FY20 are:

- 1) [TRIO](#) (\$1.96 billion; eligible applicants: eligible grantees: institutions of higher education, public and private organizations);
- 2) [Charter Schools Program](#) (\$440 million; eligible grantees: local charter schools)
- 3) [GEAR UP](#) (\$365 million; eligible grantees: state agencies; partnerships that include IHEs and LEAs)
- 4) [Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program](#) (TSL) (\$200 million; eligible grantees: local education agencies, partnerships between state and local education agencies);
- 5) [Comprehensive Literacy Development Grants](#) (\$192 million; eligible grantees: state education agencies).

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in its five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

ED uses evidence of effectiveness when making awards in its largest competitive grant programs.

- The vast majority of [TRIO](#) funding in FY20 was used to support continuation awards to grantees that were successful in prior competitions that awarded competitive preference priority points for projects that proposed strategies supported by moderate evidence of effectiveness. Within the TRIO program, ED will make new awards under [Student Support Services](#). That competition provides points for applicants that propose a project with a key component in its logic model that is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest it is likely to improve relevant outcomes.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

- Under the [Charter Schools Program](#), ED generally requires or encourages applicants to support their projects through logic models – however, applicants are not expected to develop their applications based on rigorous evidence. Within the CSP program, the [Grants to Charter School Management Organizations for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools](#) (CMO Grants) supports charter schools with a previous track record of success.
- For the 2019 competition for [GEAR UP](#) State awards, ED used a [competitive preference priority](#) for projects implementing activities that are supported by promising evidence of effectiveness. FY20 funds are supporting continuation awards.
- The [TSL](#) statute requires applicants to provide a description of the rationale for their project and describe how the proposed activities are evidence-based, and grantees are held to these standards in the implementation of the program.
- The [Comprehensive Literacy Development](#) (CLD) statute [requires](#) that grantees provide subgrants to local educational agencies that conduct evidence-based literacy interventions. ESSA requires ED to give priority to applicants demonstrating strong, moderate, or promising levels of evidence.

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

The Evidence Leadership Group (ELG) advises program offices on ways to incorporate evidence in grant programs through encouraging or requiring applicants to propose projects that are based on research and by encouraging applicants to design evaluations for their proposed projects that would build new evidence.

ED's grant programs require some form of an evaluation report on a yearly basis to build evidence, demonstrate performance improvement, and account for the utilization of funds. For examples, please see the annual performance reports of [TRIO](#), the [Charter Schools Program](#), and [GEAR UP](#). The Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program is [required by ESSA](#) to conduct a national evaluation. The [Comprehensive Literacy Development Grant](#) requires evaluation reports. In addition, IES is currently conducting rigorous evaluations to identify successful practices in TRIO-Educational Opportunities Centers and GEAR UP. In FY19, IES released a [rigorous evaluation](#) of practices embedded within TRIO-Upward Bound that examined the impact of enhanced college advising practices on students' pathway to college.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

The [Education and Innovation](#) (EIR) program supports the creation, development, implementation, replication, and taking to scale of entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations designed to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students. The program uses three evidence tiers to allocate funds based on evidence of effectiveness, with larger awards given to applicants who can demonstrate stronger levels of prior evidence and produce stronger evidence of effectiveness through a rigorous, independent evaluation. The [FY19 competition](#) included checklists and PowerPoints to help applicants clearly understand the evidence requirements.

ED incorporates the evidence standards established in EDGAR as priorities and selection criteria in many competitive grant programs.

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

The Education and Innovation (EIR) program supports the creation, development, implementation, replication, and scaling up of evidence-based, field-initiated innovations designed to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students. IES released [The Investing in Innovation Fund: Summary of 67 Evaluations](#), which can be used to inform efforts to move to more effective practices. ED is exploring the results to determine what lessons learned can be applied to other programs.

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

In 2016, ED released [non-regulatory guidance](#) to provide state educational agencies, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, educators, and partner organizations with information to assist them in selecting and using “evidence-based” activities, strategies, and interventions, as defined by ESSA, including carrying out evaluations to “examine and reflect” on how interventions are working.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

However, the guidance does not specify that federal competitive funds can be used to conduct such evaluations. Frequently, though, programs do include a requirement to evaluate the grant during and after the project period.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Education**

**9.1 What were the agency's five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

ED's largest non-competitive programs based on actual appropriation amounts in FY20 are:

- 1) [Title I Grants](#) to LEAs (; eligible grantees: state education agencies);
- 2) [IDEA Grants](#) to States (\$12.8 billion; eligible grantees: state education agencies);
- 3) [Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants](#) (\$2.1 billion; eligible grantees: state education agencies);
- 4) [Impact Aid Payments to Federally Connected Children](#) (\$1.3 billion; eligible grantees: local education agencies);
- 5) [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (\$1.2 billion; eligible grantees: state education agencies).

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in the largest five non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

ED worked with Congress in FY16 to ensure that evidence played a major role in ED's large non-competitive grant programs in the reauthorized ESEA. As a result, section 1003 of ESSA requires states to set aside at least 7% of their Title I, Part A funds for a range of activities to help school districts improve low-performing schools. School districts and individual schools are required to create action plans that include "evidence-based" interventions that demonstrate strong, moderate, or promising levels of evidence.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

ESEA requires a [National Assessment of Title I– Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged](#). In addition, Title I Grants require state education agencies to report on school performance, including those schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

Federal law (ESEA) requires states receiving funds from 21st Century Community Learning Centers to “evaluate the effectiveness of programs and activities” that are carried out with federal funds (section 4203(a)(14)), and it requires local recipients of those funds to conduct periodic evaluations in conjunction with the state evaluation (section 4205(b)).

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the implementing office for IDEA grants to states, has revised its accountability system to shift the balance from a system focused primarily on compliance to one that puts more emphasis on results through the use of [Results Driven Accountability](#).

**9.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in any non-competitive grant program?**

Section 4108 of ESEA authorizes school districts to invest “safe and healthy students” funds in Pay for Success initiatives. Section 1424 of ESEA authorizes school districts to invest their Title I, Part D funds (Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk) in Pay for Success initiatives; under the section 1415 of the same program, a State agency may use funds for Pay for Success initiatives.

**9.5 What are the agency’s 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

States and school districts are beginning to implement the requirements in Title I of the ESEA regarding using evidence-based interventions in school improvement plans. Some States are [providing training or practice guides to help](#) schools and districts

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

identify evidence-based practices.

**9.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

In 2016, ED released [non-regulatory guidance](#) to provide state educational agencies, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, educators, and partner organizations with information to assist them in selecting and using “evidence-based” activities, strategies, and interventions, as defined by ESSA, including carrying out evaluations to “examine and reflect” on how interventions are working. However, the guidance does not specify that federal non-competitive funds can be used to conduct such evaluations.



**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20 Score

**5**

(out of 8 points)

**U.S. Department of Education**

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

[The Education Department General Administrative Regulations \(EDGAR\)](#) explains that ED considers whether grantees make “substantial progress” when deciding whether to continue grant awards. In deciding whether a grantee has made substantial progress, ED may consider grantee performance data, among other information. If a continuation award is reduced, more funding may be made available for other applicants, grantees, or activities.

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

The Department conducts a variety of technical assistance to support grantees to improve outcomes. Department staff work with grantees to assess their progress and, when needed, provide technical assistance to support program improvement. On a national scale, the Comprehensive Centers program, Regional Educational Laboratories, and technical assistance centers managed by the Office of Special Education Programs develop resources and provide technical assistance. The Department uses a tiered approach in these efforts, providing universal general technical assistance through a more general dissemination strategy; targeted technical assistance that addresses needs common issues among a number of grantees, and intensive technical assistance that is more focused on specific issues faced by specific recipients. The Department also supports program-specific technical assistance for a variety of individual grant programs.



**68**

FY20 Score

**U.S. Department of Housing and**  
**Urban Development**



### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) has been a consistent leader in taking a strategic approach to research and evaluation. Even before agency learning agendas were required by the *Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Evidence Act* (Evidence Act), HUD's learning agenda, the [Research Roadmap](#), linked the Department's performance management, research, and evaluation activities. Now with the Evidence Act in place, HUD has issued an updated Research Roadmap, informed by an [exemplary stakeholder engagement process](#) that the Department has developed over the years to identify key research questions from the field.

Beyond using its own research to build evidence, HUD provides resources to help states and localities build their own capacity for using evidence and data. In FY20, the Community Compass program provided \$91 million of [technical assistance](#) to help grantees effectively use federal funding, including improving program management, evaluation, and performance measurement. Also in FY20, HUD offered a new \$3 million technical assistance program that helps cities recently affected by natural disasters to build fiscal health and administrative capacity, including capacity for [data collection, analysis, and outcome tracking](#). The Department's Community Development Block Grant program authorizes recipients to use up to 20% of their allocations for administration and planning costs that may include evaluation-capacity building efforts and evaluations.

To improve HUD's evidence-building and knowledge about effective housing programs, HUD should provide explicit guidance for states and localities about leveraging the CDBG 20% set aside for evaluations, research, evidence-building, and data activities.

Read more about the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence [here](#).

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 9 points)

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The General Deputy Assistant Secretary of the [Office of Policy Development & Research](#) (PD&R) serves as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) [evaluation officer](#). HUD’s [Office of Policy Development & Research](#) (PD&R) is led by an Assistant Secretary and the career General Deputy Assistant Secretary. PD&R comprises six offices, 153 staff including a team of field economists in HUD’s 10 regional offices, and a budget of \$98 million in FY20. The Assistant Secretary and Evaluation Officer ensures that evidence informs policy development through frequent personal engagement with other principal staff, the Secretary, and external policy officials including consultation with Congress, speeches to policy audiences, sponsorship of public research briefings, and policy implications memoranda.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

The Chief Technology Officer in the Office of the Chief Information Officer serves as the acting [Chief Data Officer](#) for HUD. The FY21 Budget requested funding to stand up the CDO’s office with 13 staff. The PD&R General Deputy Assistant Secretary and [Statistical Official](#) are responsible for numerous data infrastructure functions such as the collection and analysis of national housing market data (including [survey collaborations with the Census Bureau](#)); developing [income limits and factors](#) to support program operations; advising and assisting program offices with the development and analysis of administrative data collections; and supporting data linkages and developing open data [products from administrative data](#), including [geospatial data products](#) that are crucial for addressing housing and urban development policy challenges.

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency’s major programs?**

HUD has engaged and coordinated within the Department its evidence-building efforts, which in FY20 included developing HUD’s learning agenda and conducting the first agency-wide assessment of evidence-building capacity. In FY21, HUD will be focused on establishing an enterprise data governance model, which will include a data governance board consisting of key decision-makers from across the agency, which will include the Evaluation Officer, Chief Data Officer, Statistical Official, and Performance Improvement Officer. HUD’s enterprise data governance model will bring together evaluation, statistical, performance, and data activities and focus on growing the agency’s evidence-based practices in order to improve HUD’s organizational performance.

**2. Evaluation and Research:** Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

PD&R has published a [Program Evaluation Policy](#) that establishes core principles and practices of PD&R's evaluation and research activities. The six core principles are rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, ethics, and technical innovation.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

HUD's learning agendas, called the [Research Roadmap](#), have served as agency-wide evaluation plans that list and describe research and evaluation priorities for a five-year planning period. Annual evaluation plans are developed based on a selection of Roadmap proposals, newly emerging research needs, and incremental funding needs for major ongoing research and are submitted to Congress in association with PD&R's annual budget requests. Actual research activities are substantially determined by Congressional funding and guidance. Under the Evidence Act, PD&R will prepare public Annual Evaluation Plans informed by the new Research Roadmap to be submitted in conjunction with the Annual Performance Plan.

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

HUD's [Research Roadmap](#) has served as the Department's evidence-building plan and learning agenda for eight years, and a new Roadmap was developed in FY19-20. HUD's participatory process (see for example pp. 14–16 of [Roadmap Update 2017](#)) engages internal and external stakeholders to identify research questions and other evidence-building activities to support effective policy-making. Stakeholders include program partners in state and local governments and the private sector; researchers and academics; policy officials; and members of the general public who frequently access the HUDuser.gov portal. Outreach mechanisms for learning agenda development include [email](#), [web forums](#), [conferences and webcasts](#), and targeted listening sessions. The 2019 roadmapping

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

process added a new public-access conference and webcast. The updated Roadmap provides critical content for developing a learning agenda under the Evidence Act as a component of the next Strategic Plan.

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

PD&R's [Program Evaluation Policy](#) requires timely publishing and dissemination of all evaluations that meet standards of methodological rigor. Completed evaluations and research reports are posted on PD&R's website, [HUDUSER.gov](http://HUDUSER.gov). Additionally, the policy includes language in research and evaluation contracts that allows researchers to independently publish results, even without HUD approval, after not more than six months.

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

PD&R is HUD's independent evaluation office, with scope spanning all the Department's program operations. In FY20 PD&R is leading the effort to assess the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts, consistent with the values established in [HUD's Evaluation Policy](#). The forthcoming Research Roadmap covers much of this content, and a formal Capacity Assessment process was designed by evaluation leaders in coordination with the Chief Data Officer and performance management personnel. The initial Capacity Assessment addresses updated content requirements of OMB Circular A-11 (2020) and includes primary data collection through an exploratory key informant survey of senior managers across the Department. The identified weaknesses in evidence-building capacity will become the focus of subsequent in-depth assessments and interventions to be integrated in the Department's next Strategic Plan.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

[For decades](#), PD&R has been a federal leader in the use of random assignment and other rigorous methods for research and evaluation purposes. Examples of random-assignment program demonstrations found on [HUDUSER.gov](http://HUDUSER.gov) include landmark research in the [Housing Allowance experiment](#), the [Moving to Opportunity Demonstration](#), and the [Family Options Demonstration](#). Ongoing random-assignment experiments include the [Moving to Work Demonstration](#), [Family Self-Sufficiency Demonstration](#), the First-Time

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

Homebuyer Education and Counseling demonstration, the Rent Reform Demonstration, and the Integrated Wellness in Supportive Housing Demonstration (See the [PD&R Biennial Report FY 2017–2018](#)).



**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**3.1 \_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$ \_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_% of the agency's \$ \_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.**

HUD invested \$98 million on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing 0.18% of the agency's \$54.195 billion [FY20 appropriation](#).

**3.2 Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)**

For FY20, Congress appropriated \$98 million for the Office of Policy Development and Research's Research & Technology account. FY20 funding was up \$2 million from FY19, reflecting congressional support for the value of PD&R's research, evaluations, and demonstrations. This budget includes \$54 million for core research activities; \$14 million for research, evaluations, and demonstrations; and \$30 million for technical assistance. The total represents an FY20 investment in evaluations and evidence amounting to 0.18 percent of HUD's \$54.195 billion gross discretionary [budget authority, net of salaries and expenses, for FY20](#). The funding for core research is used primarily for the American Housing Survey, other surveys, data acquisition, and research dissemination that support evaluation of HUD's mission activities in domains such as affordable housing and housing finance.

PD&R's FY20 appropriation of \$28 million for Salaries and Expenses, up \$2 million from FY19, also supports evidence in the form of PD&R's in-house research and evaluation program; economic analyses; data linkage initiatives; and management of housing surveys, contract research, and evaluation.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

**3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

For FY20, HUD is providing \$91 million of [technical assistance](#) to equip the Department's program partners with the knowledge, skills, tools, capacity, and systems to implement HUD programs and policies successfully and to provide effective oversight of federal funding. State and local governments and authorities are among the eligible applicants, with approximately 23 awards expected. Community Compass integrates technical assistance funding from four major HUD program areas to better reflect the cross-cutting nature of housing and community development challenges. [Eligible technical assistance activities](#) include training and tool development to help program partners improve program management, evaluation, and performance measurement, and the Community Compass program itself has an increased [evidence-based focus](#) for FY20.

In FY20, HUD is offering a new \$3 million [Distressed Cities](#) technical assistance program that helps cities that recently experienced disasters build capacity for processes including [data collection, analysis, and tracking outcomes](#). HUD operates a [Section 4 Capacity Building](#) grant program that funds national intermediaries and rural jurisdictions in building capacity for functions including assessing needs, planning programs, and evaluation.

HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which provides formula grants to entitlement jurisdictions, increases local evaluation capacity. Specifically, federal regulations ([24 CFR 570.200](#)) authorize CDBG recipients (including city and state governments) to use up to 20% of their CDBG allocations for administration and planning costs that may include evaluation-capacity building efforts and evaluations of their CDBG-funded interventions (as defined in [570.205](#) and [570.206](#)).

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement:** Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?

FY20 Score

**9**

(out of 10 points)

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

HUD's [FY 2018–2022 Strategic Plan](#), as amended by HUD's [FY 2021 Annual Performance Plan](#), defines strategic objectives, priority outcome goals, and program metrics supporting each objective. Progress on program metrics is tracked through the Annual Performance Plan.

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

HUD uses data and evidence extensively to improve outcomes and return on investment. The primary means are through PD&R's [investments](#) in data collection, program demonstrations and evaluations, and research guided by a multi-year learning agenda; HUD's extensive use of outcome-oriented performance metrics in the [Annual Performance Plan](#); and senior staff oversight and monitoring of key outcomes and initiatives through the [Prescription for HUD](#), the [Advancing Economic Opportunity Task Force](#), and the [Agency-Wide Integrity Task Force](#), which bring together senior staff for quarterly performance management meetings.

In 2019, HUD expanded the [Standards for Success](#) data collection and reporting framework for discretionary grant programs to cover Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency Service Coordinator (ROSS) grants, Multifamily Housing Service Coordinator grants, and Multifamily Housing Budget-Based Service Coordinator Sites. The framework supports better outcomes by providing a more standardized performance measurement framework, better alignment with Departmental strategies, and more granular reporting to support analytics.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement:** Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?

**4.3 Did the agency have continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

HUD's senior staff support continuous improvement and oversight and monitoring of key outcomes and initiatives through the [Prescription for HUD](#), the regular meetings of the [Advancing Economic Opportunity Task Force](#), and the [Agency-Wide Integrity Task Force](#). These processes are supported by ongoing, significant investments in evidence-building as documented in the [Annual Performance Plan](#) and the iterative process of developing the [Research Roadmap](#) learning agenda. Monitoring and analysis based on administrative data have a symbiotic and complementary relationship with structured evaluation and program demonstrations.

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

In FY21, HUD will develop a strategic data plan, which will include an open data policy. Currently, HUD's open data program includes existing assets including administrative datasets on [data.hud.gov](https://data.hud.gov), spatially enabled data on the [eGIS portal](#), [PD&R datasets](#) for researchers and practitioners, a robust partnership with the [Census Bureau](#), U.S. Postal Service [vacancy data](#), and [health data linkages](#) with the National Center for Health Statistics.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

In FY21, HUD will review its existing data inventory and update it accordingly to produce a comprehensive data inventory. HUD will also revisit its data inventory schedule to ensure the agency is performing the activities necessary to develop and maintain a comprehensive data inventory.

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

HUD has extensively promoted data access and data linkage, including the following approaches:

- An updated list of [open data assets](#); numerous [PD&R-produced datasets](#) for researchers and practitioners, including tenant public use microdata samples; and an [eGIS portal](#) providing geo-identified open data to support public analysis of housing and community development issues using GIS tools.

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

- Data linkage agreements with the [National Center for Health Statistics](#) and the [Census Bureau](#) to enhance major national survey datasets by identifying HUD-assisted households, with updates continuing in FY20; making available major program demonstration datasets in secure environments; and producing special open-access tabulations of census data for HUD's partners.
- Engagement in cooperative agreements with research organizations, including both funded [Research Partnerships](#) and unfunded [Data License Agreements](#), to support innovative research that leverages HUD's data assets and informs HUD's policies and programs. [Data licensing protocols](#) ensure that confidential information is protected.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

HUD's Statistical Official supports the Evidence Officer on issues related to protection of confidential data and statistical efficiency. HUD's [Evaluation Policy](#) specifies that HUD protects client privacy by adhering to the Rule of Eleven to prevent disclosure from tabulations with small cell sizes. PD&R's [data licensing protocols](#) ensure that researchers protect confidential information when using HUD's administrative data or program demonstration datasets.

The Statistical Official collaborates with statistical agencies to create data linkages and develop data products that are machine-readable and include robust privacy protections. HUD has an interagency agreement with the Census Bureau to conduct the American Housing Survey and collaborates with Census staff to examine disclosure issues for AHS public use files and the potential for "synthetic" public datasets to support researchers in estimating summary statistics with no possibility of reidentifying survey respondents. Another interagency agreement allows the Census Bureau to link data from HUD's randomized control trials with other administrative data collected under the privacy protections of its Title 13 authority. These [RCT datasets](#) are the first intervention data added to Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (RDCs) by any federal agency. Strict RDC protocols and review of all output ensure that confidential information is protected, and the open data and [joint support](#) for researchers are currently facilitating seven innovative research projects at minimal cost to HUD.

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

HUD has an updated list of [open data assets](#), an open data program, numerous [PD&R datasets](#) for researchers and practitioners, and an [eGIS portal](#) providing geo-identified data to support public analysis of housing and community development issues related to multiple programs and policy domains using GIS tools. These accessible data assets have privacy protections. Researchers needing detailed microdata can obtain access through [data licensing agreements](#).

[HUDEXchange](#) offers numerous resources and training opportunities to help program partners use data assets more effectively. Additional technical assistance is offered through the program, a \$91 million [technical assistance](#) program to equip HUD's customers with the knowledge, skills, tools, capacity, and systems to implement HUD programs and policies successfully and provide effective oversight of federal funding.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:** Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?

FY20 Score

**3**

(out of 10 points)

## U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

PD&R's [Program Evaluation Policy](#) defines standards that prioritize rigorous methods for research and evaluation covering impact evaluations; implementation of process evaluations; descriptive studies; outcome evaluations; and formative evaluations; and both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It also provides for dissemination of such evidence to stakeholders in a timely fashion.

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

HUD seeks to employ tiered evidence in funding decisions by embedding implementation and impact evaluations in funding requests for program initiatives, including major program demonstrations that employ random assignment methods. These include the Moving To Work Expansion demonstration, the Rental Assistance Demonstration, the Rent Reform Demonstration, the Family Self-Sufficiency Demonstration, the Housing Counseling Demonstration, and the Family Options Demonstration. Such trials provide robust evidence to inform scale-up funding decisions.

HUD extended its standardized data collection and reporting framework, [Standards for Success](#), to additional discretionary grant programs in FY19. The framework consists of a repository of data elements that participating programs use in their grant reporting, creating common definitions and measures across programs for greater analysis and coordination of services.



**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:** Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user-friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

HUD provides resources and assistance to support community partners in evidence-based practice through the [HUD Exchange](#) web portal and through Community Compass technical assistance. PD&R provides the public, policymakers, and practitioners with evidence of what works through the [Regulatory Barriers Clearinghouse](#) and [HUD USER](#), which is a portal and web store for program evaluations, case studies, and policy analysis and research. The evaluations of major program demonstrations provide rigorous evidence about effect sizes and variations in effects between key subgroups.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

HUD provides resources and assistance to support community partners in evidence-based practice through the [HUD Exchange](#) web portal and through technical assistance. PD&R provides the public, policymakers, and practitioners with evidence of what works primarily through [HUD USER](#), a portal and web store for program evaluations, case studies, and policy analysis and research; the [Regulatory Barriers Clearinghouse](#); and through [initiatives](#) such as Innovation of the Day, [Sustainable Construction Methods in Indian Country](#), and the [Consumer's Guide to Energy-Efficient and Healthy Homes](#). This content is designed to provide current policy information, elevate effective practices, and synthesize data and other evidence in accessible formats such as [Evidence Matters](#). Through these resources, researchers and practitioners can see the full breadth of work on a given topic (e.g., rigorous established evidence, [case studies](#) of what has worked in the field, and new innovations currently being explored) to inform their work.

[Community Compass](#) technical assistance for urban, rural, and tribal partners is designed to facilitate understanding of community and housing development issues in a way that cuts across program silos. It supports them in evaluation, evidence-building, integrating knowledge management principles, and sharing practices.

**7. Innovation:** Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 7 points)

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

HUD extensively engages leadership in innovation efforts through two task forces of principal staff focusing on [Advancing Economic Opportunity](#)—with an emphasis on [measuring and improving outcomes for assisted tenants](#)—and on the Finance Transformation Initiative, a [\\$20 million program](#) to strengthen people, process, and technology to remediate material weaknesses, strengthen financial management and internal controls, and implement best practices.

HUD has an [Office of Innovation](#) led by a Deputy Assistant Secretary that organized the five-day [Innovative Housing Showcase](#) on the national mall with federal and private sector partners in June 2019 to demonstrate new housing technology and discuss innovation barriers and opportunities. The entire local HUD staff was encouraged to attend and view the innovative technologies, and another Showcase is planned for 2021. The Office of Innovation is developing prize competitions to stimulate innovation in housing and HUD policy and programs.

HUD administers five types of juried [Secretary's Awards](#) to encourage excellence in addressing housing and community development challenges: [Public-Philanthropic Partnerships](#), [Opportunity and Empowerment](#), [Healthy Homes](#), [Historic Preservation](#), and [Housing and Community Design](#). An [Innovation in Affordable Housing Competition](#) engages multidisciplinary teams of graduate students in addressing a specific housing problem developed by an actual public housing agency.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

The Department promotes evidence-based innovation by using program demonstrations to experimentally test potential policy enhancements, which have included eight low-cost, behaviorally informed experiments using interagency data matching and assistance from the [GSA Office of Evaluation Sciences](#). Other innovative research ideas from external stakeholders are supported by the [Research Partnerships](#) program. Competitive awards for [Healthy Homes Technical Studies](#) generate innovation in the evaluation and control of housing-related health and safety hazards.

An interagency agreement with the Census Bureau has made datasets from HUD's randomized control trials available for linkage with census data and administrative datasets. The [RCT datasets](#) are the first intervention data added to Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (RDCs) by any federal agency, and [joint support](#) is available to help researchers gain access and learn to use the restricted data successfully for innovative research, with [seven projects](#) currently underway.

HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration, which restructures the financing of the nation's public housing to address capital needs backlogs, has the additional innovative feature of providing tenants with a [Choice Mobility option](#). Choice Mobility supports self-sufficiency by offering priority receipt of a Housing Choice Voucher providing freedom to move to neighborhoods with greater economic opportunities or better schools and amenities.

HUD established the Office of Innovation in 2019 to advance innovation in several domains. The office managed the 2019 Innovative Housing Showcase and is developing a similar Showcase for 2021 and prize competitions to stimulate innovation in housing and HUD policy and programs. [FY20 grants](#) fund cooperative agreements for pre-competitive research in homebuilding innovations, with a similar program for [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#), for more affordable, energy efficient, resilient, and healthier housing.

HUD's regulation of manufactured housing production is guided by a federal advisory committee, the Manufactured Housing Consensus Committee, to provide increased ability for the industry to produce some of the nation's most innovative, safe, and affordable housing.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

HUD has a [Robotics Process Automation](#) initiative devoted to freeing the workforce from low-value, repetitive work through software robotics solutions. Specialized computer programs known as “bots” automate and standardize repeatable business processes without costly investments in conventional automation. Planned efforts involving payroll, accounts receivable and payable, invoice processing, inventory management, report creation, and data migration have potential to shift over 50,000 hours of employee time from low-value to high-value work.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

PD&R is conducting numerous random-assignment program demonstrations to test new, innovative program models, as described in PD&R’s [biennial report](#) and [online](#): the [Family Self-Sufficiency Demonstration](#), [First-Time Homebuyer Education and Counseling Demonstration](#), [Pre-Purchase Homeownership Counseling Demonstration](#), [Support and Services at Home \(SASH\) Demonstration for elderly households](#), [Supportive Services Demonstration](#) for health services in elderly housing, [Rent Reform Demonstration](#), [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#), and the [Small Area Fair Market Rent Demonstration](#).

HUD also is using random assignment and administrative data linkages to test the impact of [education navigators](#) on rates of application for federal student aid by young residents of public housing.

The [Secretary’s Awards](#) competitions use expert juries who assess quantitative and qualitative information submitted by applicants to identify particularly creative solutions to challenging problems.

HUD’s [Office of Innovation](#) is advancing innovation in several domains. The office managed the 2019 Innovative Housing Showcase and is developing FY20 prize competitions, supported by evaluation, to stimulate innovation in housing and HUD policy and programs.

In 2019, PD&R published an [independent review](#) of building technology innovation policies, programs, and strategies to increase the impact of federal research and development investments.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**8**  
(out of 15 points)

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**8.1 What were the agency’s five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, HUD’s five largest competitive grant programs are:

- 1) [Continuum of Care](#) (\$2.35 billion; eligible grantees: state and local governments and coalitions)
- 2) [Lead-Hazard Reduction](#) (\$275 million; eligible grantees: local governments)
- 3) [Choice Neighborhoods Implementation](#) (\$182 million; eligible grantees: state and local governments)
- 4) Section 202 Service Coordinators (\$100 million; eligible grantees: service coordinators/housing providers)
- 5) [Indian Housing](#) (\$91 million; eligible grantees: tribes and tribally designated housing entities).

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in its five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

The [Continuum of Care program](#) (CoC) provides homelessness assistance awards on the basis of system performance measures focused on outcomes and evidence of effectiveness. This includes up to 56 points (out of 200) for past “performance related to reducing homelessness” and four points for “reallocat[ing] lower performing projects to create new higher performing projects that are based on performance review of existing projects.” Additionally, a precondition for Continuum of Care applicants to be awarded FY19 expansion bonus funding was that they [rank homeless assistance](#) projects on the basis of how they improve system performance (p. 34).

[Lead Hazard Reduction Grants](#) require applicants to demonstrate a strategic approach to address low-income neighborhoods having concentrated lead hazards for children. The FY20 grants required the grantees to use evidence-based lead hazard control methods and meet cost-savings, productivity, and grant compliance benchmarks. The application assigned 13 points (out of 100) based on

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

grantees' past performance. Past [research](#) showing large returns on investment supported HUD's decision to request a [26 percent increase in program funding](#) for FY20, and HUD is funding [studies using an implementation science framework](#) to continue improving efficiency and efficacy of lead interventions.

The Indian Housing [competitive grant](#) program was established to address issues of overcrowded and physically inadequate housing identified by a PD&R needs assessment completed in 2017, [Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas](#).

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

As a condition of grant award, all HUD competitive grantees are [required to cooperate](#) (p. 5) in any HUD-sponsored research or evaluation studies.

The Continuum of Care program is supported by the [National Homeless Data Analysis Project](#), which provides communities with resources to improve data collection and consistent reporting about individuals experiencing homelessness to support national Annual Homeless Assessment Reports.

HUD [Lead Paint](#) grantees are required to integrate evidence into their work by conducting clearance testing of all housing units treated. Technical studies provide evidence to improve lead hazard detection, evaluation, and control technologies, as well as [implementation](#), and [rigorous evaluation](#) has demonstrated the large return on investment related to children's health from controlling lead hazards.

All HUD-funded programs require recipients to submit, not less than annually, a report documenting achievement of outcomes under the purpose of the program and the work plan in the award agreement for accountability purposes and to build evidence of effective practices in the field.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

HUD's [Housing Counseling Grant Program](#) (\$43 million in FY19) provides counseling services to tenants and homeowners. One of the program's [main objectives](#) is to "Distribute federal financial support to housing counseling agencies based on past performance." As such, the program [allocates](#) seven points (out of 100) for past performance based on the "the positive impacts that an Applicant's housing counseling services had on clients." HUD scores this item based on its own performance records.

HUD continues to extend the Standards for Success reporting framework to additional competitive grant programs, establishing a performance outcomes framework that will both [drive performance and determine future funding recipients](#) by providing strategically aligned performance metrics that are standardized and sufficiently granular to provide information on relative effectiveness.

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Continuum of Care programs are the nation's primary structure for assisting people experiencing homelessness. Over more than a decade, increased CoC effectiveness has been supported by Homeless Management Information Systems and evidence-based funding of increased permanent supportive housing. As a result, the [estimated number](#) of chronically homeless individuals declined 27 percent between 2010 and 2016; subsequent increases in unsheltered chronically homeless individuals, however, motivated increases in [emergency shelter beds](#). Following [federal criteria](#), 78 communities and 3 states have effectively ended veteran homelessness.

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

HUD operates a centralized evaluation program under the guidance of the evaluation officer. As a condition of grant award, all HUD competitive grantees are [required to cooperate](#) in any HUD-sponsored research or evaluation studies and to provide program monitoring data. A number of program statutes do not authorize formal evaluation as an eligible activity for use of program funds. HUD also provides [technical assistance](#) to strengthen grantees' capacity for evaluation and performance management capacity.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

The Continuum of Care FY19 homelessness assistance program NOFA offers one point for applicants who propose to use requested funds to improve their ability to evaluate the outcome of projects funded by the [CoC Program](#) and the Emergency Solutions Grant program (p. 39).



**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**4**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**9.1 What were the agency's five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest non-competitive grant programs are:

- 1) [Public Housing Operating Fund](#) (\$4.55 billion; eligible applicants: Public housing authorities);
- 2) [Public Housing Capital Grants](#) (\$2.87 billion; Public housing authorities);
- 3) [Housing Choice Voucher \(HCV\) Administrative Fees](#) (\$1.98 billion; eligible applicants: Public housing agencies that administer Housing Choice Vouchers);
- 4) [Community Development Block Grant Entitlement/Non-Entitlement](#) (\$3.43 billion; eligible applicants: entitlement cities and counties and state allocation agencies);
- 5) [HOME Investment Partnerships](#) (\$1.35 billion; eligible applicants: participating jurisdictions).

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in its five largest non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

Although the funding formulas are prescribed in statute, evaluation-based interventions are central to each program. HUD used evidence from a 2015 [Administrative Fee study](#) of the costs that high-performing PHAs incur in administering a HCV program to propose a new FY17 approach for funding Administrative Fees while strengthening PHA incentives to improve HCV outcomes by providing tenant mobility counseling.

HUD's funding of public housing is being radically shifted through the evidence-based [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#) (RAD), which enables accessing private capital to address the \$26 billion backlog of capital needs funding. Based on demonstrated success of

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

RAD, for FY20 HUD proposed to transfer \$95 million from the Operating Fund and Capital Fund to the [Tenant-Based Rental Assistance fund](#) to support RAD conversions. For [FY21](#) HUD is proposing to remove the cap on the number of public housing developments to be converted to Section 8 contracts. HUD is beginning to evaluate [RAD's impacts on children](#). HUD is also conducting a [Rent Reform demonstration](#) and a [Moving To Work](#) (MTW) demonstration to test efficiencies of changing rent rules and effects on tenant outcomes.

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

Evidence-building is central to HUD's funding approach through the use of prospective program demonstrations. These include the Public Housing Operating Fund's [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#) (RAD), the Public Housing Capital Grants' [Rent Reform demonstration](#), and the Housing Choice Voucher program's [Moving To Work](#) (MTW) demonstration grants. As Congress moved to expand MTW flexibilities to additional public housing authorities (PHAs), HUD sought authority to [randomly assign cohorts](#) of PHAs to provide ability to rigorously test specific program innovations.

Program funds are provided to operate demonstrations through the HCV account, [Tenant-Based Rental Assistance](#). These include the [Tribal HUD-VA Supportive Housing](#) (Tribal HUD-VASH) demonstration of providing permanent supportive housing to Native American veterans and the [FSS-Family Unification Program](#) demonstration that tests the effect of providing vouchers to at-risk young adults who are aging out of foster care.

**9.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other non-competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest)?**

HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers are allocated in part on the administrative performance of housing agencies as measured by their past utilization of HUD-VASH vouchers in HUD's Voucher Management System ([Notice PIH-2019-15 \(HA\)](#)). The performance information helps ensure that eligible recipients are actually able to lease units with the vouchers that HUD funds. The [HUD-VASH Exit Study](#) documented that 87,864 VASH vouchers were in circulation in April 2017, contributing substantially to the 47-percent decline in the number of homeless Veterans since 2010.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

**9.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

To address a severe backlog of capital needs funding for the nation's public housing stock, the Rental Assistance Demonstration was authorized in 2011 to convert the properties to project-based Section 8 contracts to attract an infusion of private capital. The 2019 [final report](#) on the RAD evaluation showed that conversions successfully raised \$12.6 billion of funding, an average of \$121,747 per unit to improve physical quality and stabilize project finances. Based on the program's successes, the limit on the number of public housing conversions was increased to 455,000 units in 2018, nearly half of the stock, and HUD has been proposing to eliminate the cap. Additionally, HUD extended the conversion opportunity to legacy multifamily programs through [RAD 2](#).

**9.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

[Communities receiving HUD block grant funding](#) through Community Development Block Grants, HOME block grants, and other programs are required to consult local stakeholders, conduct housing needs assessments, and develop needs-driven Consolidated Plans to guide their activities. They then provide Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPERs) to document progress toward their Consolidated Plan goals in a way that supports continued community involvement in evaluating program efforts.

HUD's Community Development Block Grant program, which provides formula grants to entitlement jurisdictions, increases local evaluation capacity. Specifically, federal regulations ([Section 24 CFR 570.200](#)) authorize CDBG recipients (including city and state governments) to use up to 20% of their CDBG allocations for administration and planning costs that may include evaluation-capacity building efforts and evaluations of their CDBG-funded interventions (as defined in [570.205 and 570.206](#)).

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

FY20 Score  
**5**  
(out of 8 points)

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

The Evaluation of the Housing First model of rehousing chronically homeless individuals with serious mental illness supported a policy shift toward first achieving housing stability to provide a platform for social services. Based on such evidence, HUD continues to encourage the use of more cost-effective rapid rehousing approaches combined with increased permanent supportive housing that is integrated with mainstream services provided by HHS, VA, and others. Additionally, a precondition for Continuum of Care applicants to be awarded FY19 expansion [bonus funding](#) was that they rank homeless assistance projects on the basis of how they improve system performance.

CDBG-DR (Disaster Recovery) is a large and growing program funded by emergency appropriations outside of HUD's regular budgeting process. In FY18, HUD started promoting [mitigation activities](#) for disaster-prone communities, allocating \$16 billion of the \$28 billion in emergency disaster recovery funds for disaster mitigation in previously disaster-stricken communities. This policy shift was informed by [evidence](#) that vulnerability of communities to disasters is increasing even as frequency and severity of severe weather events might also be increasing, such that the National Institute of Building Sciences estimated that society saves \$4 in future losses for every dollar spent on mitigation. HUD also drew on the evidence of mitigation pilots through the Hurricane Sandy Rebuild by Design competition and the National Disaster Resilience Competition. By investing in mitigation activities, rather than paying to rebuild existing infrastructure in its previous form, HUD shifted funds in order to help break the cycle of publicly-funded rebuilding and repeated loss.

HUD grant programs typically provide for [recapture of funds](#) that are not committed in a timely fashion, or that remain unexpended after the limits. Effective management by grantees can be especially crucial for timely completion of complex housing development projects, such as with the [Capital Fund](#) for public housing and [Housing Trust Fund](#) for states. Such funds are reallocated to more

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

effective grantees.

Preference points used by competitive programs favor grantees that provide evidence of successful outcomes and strategies. The [Continuum of Care](#) program awards points that shift funds toward grant applications that have demonstrated better outcomes, that rank and fund better-performing projects, and that take over programs from small and struggling recipients. As noted in the [notice of funding](#): "To encourage CoC mergers and mitigate the potential adverse scoring implications that may occur when a high performing CoC merges with one or more lower performing CoC(s), HUD will award up to 25 bonus points to CoCs that completed a merger..."

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

Through the Community Compass technical assistance program, HUD offers numerous prepared training opportunities as well as [in-depth program assistance](#) for grantees or program recipients needing intensive, tailored assistance or long-term capacity-building support to remediate challenges and achieve their potential as HUD program partners.

HUD has proposed to use [Public Housing operating funds](#) set aside for receivership of troubled housing authorities more proactively to address the needs of high-risk PHAs before they go into receivership, including through competitive grants for PHAs that are troubled, substandard, at-risk, or insolvent to help preserve affordable housing for the future. The Real Estate Assessment Center collects extensive data on physical condition, finances, and management to determine PHA status, and field staff have expertise to identify risk factors and useful corrective actions.



**68**

FY20 Score

## U.S. Department of Labor

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



### U.S. Department of Labor

The [U.S. Department of Labor](#) (DOL) was one of the first agencies to create the position of a [Chief Evaluation Officer](#), paving the way for the *Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act* (Evidence Act), which requires agencies to designate such a position in order to build a centralized capacity for research and evaluation. Several examples of the long-standing federal leadership is demonstrated by DOL's evidence [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research](#) (CLEAR), a model federal evidence database and DOL's commitment to publishing [public use data](#) for researchers use. The data are generated from DOL-funded evaluations.

With the passage of the Evidence Act, DOL built on the important leadership of the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) by establishing a new evidence-building role, with the establishment of the Chief Data Officer (CDO) and the Department's Data Board. Established through a [Secretary's Order](#), the new CDO provides department-wide support on building an infrastructure to leverage data as a strategic asset. This increased collaboration between the CEO, the Department's Chief Data Officer, Chief Performance Officer, and Chief Statistical Officer has allowed DOL to more closely coordinate its evaluation and data activities. For example, in FY19, all four of these mandated Evidence Act officials reviewed DOL's learning agendas and related Evidence Act reports.

This coordination has also presented the opportunity to broaden the Department's use of its robust performance management infrastructure. The [Performance Management Center](#), a leader in the federal performance reporting, engages with the Deputy Secretary and the Chief Evaluation Officer in quarterly performance stat meetings. These dashboard reviews ensure the Department is meeting the goals described in its [FY18-22 strategic plan](#). In addition to this internal performance structure, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) allows state and local governments to build their own performance infrastructure by using federal funds for data collection, performance management, research, and evaluation activities. WIOA encourages state and local governments to link funding to performance and evaluation data through [performance-based grants and contracts](#).

While DOL has been a leader in creating a centralized approach to evaluation, DOL should increase its funding for such activities. Over the past several years, the appropriation for evaluation has been constant at \$8 million, with the Secretary's given authority to transfer an additional set aside amount (up to 0.75%) from Department accounts to fund research and evaluations efforts led by CEO. However, in recent years, the use of that authority has resulted in limited supplemental funds. To advance DOL's investment in evidence-based policymaking, DOL should increase its use of this authority to set aside sufficient funds for evidence-building, as continued divestment will have long-term implications for effectiveness of federal workforce programs.

 **RESULTS**  
**FOR AMERICA** **2020 Invest in What Works**  
**Federal Standard of Excellence**

*Read more about the U.S. Department of Labor in the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence [here](#).*



**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score

**9**

(out of 9 points)

### **U.S. Department of Labor**

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The [Chief Evaluation Officer](#) serves as the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) evaluation officer. The Chief Evaluation Officer oversees DOL’s Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), housed within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (OASP), and the coordination of Department-wide evaluations, including office staff and leadership to interpret research and evaluation findings and to identify their implications for programmatic and policy decisions.

CEO is directly appropriated \$8.04 million and then, may receive up to 0.75% from statutorily specified program accounts, based on the discretion of the Secretary. In FY19, that number was .03% of funds, or \$3.3 million, bringing the spending total to \$11.34 million. The FY20 number is not known yet, because the Secretary has not determined the set-aside amount.

CEO includes nine full-time staff plus a small number of contractors and one to two detailees at any given time. This staff level is augmented by staff from research and evaluation units in other DOL agencies such as the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), which has nine FTE’s dedicated to research and evaluation activities with which the CEO coordinates extensively on the development of a learning agenda, management of studies, and dissemination of results.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

The Chief Data Officer serves as the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Chief Data Officer. Building on existing efforts initiated before the OPEN Government Data Act, the Secretary released a [Secretary’s Order \(02-2019\)](#) directing the department to create a [Chief Data Officer position and a data governance board](#) to help realize the strategic value in data, as well as to establish,

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

coordinate, and manage policy, processes, and standards for data management. The Chief Data Officer chairs DOL's data governance body, and leads data governance efforts, open data efforts, and associated efforts to collect, manage, and utilize data in a manner that best supports its use to inform program administration and foster data-informed decision-making and policymaking.

DOL has arranged for temporary staffing to support governance and open data efforts as well as compliance with the Evidence Act, the Federal Data Strategy, and DOL's data governance goals. DOL has also hired two permanent staff to support the office through customized position descriptions.

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency's major programs?**

DOL, through a [Secretary's Order](#), has created a structure that coordinates and leverages the important roles within the organization to accomplish objectives like those in the Evidence Act. The Secretary's Order mandates collaboration between the Chief Data Officer, the Chief Performance Officer, Chief Evaluation Officer, Chief Information Officer, and Chief Statistical Officer. This has allowed DOL's Evidence Officials to more closely coordinate with both regular and ad hoc meetings. For example, in FY19, all four Evidence Officials reviewed DOL agency learning agendas and Evidence Act reports.

The Secretary's Order mandates a collaborative approach to reviewing IT infrastructure and data asset accessibility, developing modern solutions for managing, disseminating and generating data, coordinating statistical functions, supporting evaluation, research and evidence generation, and supporting all aspects of performance management including assurances that data are fit for purpose.

DOL continues to leverage current governance structures, such as the Chief Evaluation Officer continuing to play a role in the formation of the annual budget requests of DOL's agencies, recommendations around including evidence in grant competitions, and providing technical assistance to the Department leadership to ensure that evidence informs policy design. There are a number of mechanisms set up to facilitate this: The Chief Evaluation Officer traditionally participates in quarterly performance meetings with DOL leadership and the Performance Management Center (PMC). The Chief Evaluation Officer reviews agency operating plans and works with agencies and the PMC to coordinate performance targets and measures and evaluates findings;

 **RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20?

quarterly meetings are held with agency leadership and staff as part of the Learning Agenda process; and meetings are held as needed to strategize around addressing new priorities or legislative requirements.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

DOL has an [Evaluation Policy](#) that formalizes the principles that govern all program evaluations in the Department, including methodological rigor, independence, transparency, ethics, and relevance. The policy represents a commitment to using evidence from evaluations to inform policy and practice.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) develops, implements, and publicly releases an annual [DOL evaluation plan](#). The evaluation plan is based on the agency learning agendas as well as the Department’s Strategic Plan priorities, statutory requirements for evaluations, and Secretarial and Administration priorities. The evaluation plan includes the studies the CEO intends to undertake in the next year using set-aside dollars. Appropriations language requires the Chief Evaluation Officer to submit a plan to the U.S. Senate and House Committees on Appropriations outlining the evaluations that will be carried out by the Office using dollars transferred to the CEO– the DOL evaluation plan serves that purpose. The evaluation plan outlines evaluations that the CEO will use its budget to undertake. The CEO also works with agencies to undertake evaluations and evidence building strategies to answer other questions of interest identified in learning agencies, but not undertaken directly by the CEO.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

In FY20, the Department is developing its annual evaluation plan, building from individual agencies and learning agendas to create a combined document. DOL has leveraged its existing practices and infrastructure to develop the broad, four-year prospective research agenda, or Evidence-Building Plan, per the Evidence Act requirement. Both documents will outline the process for internal and external stakeholder engagement.

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

All DOL program evaluation reports and findings funded by the CEO are publicly released and posted on the complete reports section of the [CEO website](#). DOL agencies, such as the Employment & Training Administration (ETA), also post and release their own research and evaluation [reports](#). CEO is also in the process of ramping up additional methods of communicating and disseminating CEO-funded studies and findings, and published its [first quarterly newsletter](#) in September 2020.

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

DOL's [Evaluation Policy](#) touches on the agency's commitment to high-quality, methodologically rigorous research through funding independent research activities. Further, CEO staff have expertise in research and evaluation methods as well as in DOL programs and policies and the populations they serve. The CEO also employs technical working groups on the majority of evaluation projects whose members have deep technical and subject matter expertise. The CEO has leveraged the FY20 learning agenda process to create an interim Capacity Assessment, per Evidence Act requirements, and will conduct a more detailed assessment of individual agencies' capacity, as well as DOL's overall capacity, in these areas for publication in 2022.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

DOL employs a full range of evaluation methods to answer key research questions of interest, including when appropriate, impact evaluations. Among DOL's active portfolio of approximately 50 projects, the study type ranges from rigorous evidence syntheses to implementation studies to quasi-experimental outcome studies to impact studies. Examples of current DOL studies with a random assignment component include an evaluation of a Job Corps' demonstration pilot, the [Cascades Job Corps College and Career Academy](#). An example of a multi-arm randomized control trial is the [Reemployment Eligibility Assessments evaluation](#), which assesses a range of strategies to reduce Unemployment Insurance duration and wage outcomes.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**3.1 \_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$\_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_% of the agency's \$\_\_\_\_ billion FY19 budget.**

The Department of Labor invested \$11.34 million on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing .1% of the agency's \$10.9 billion discretionary budget in FY20.

**3.2 Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)**

CEO is directly appropriated \$8.04 million and then, may receive up to 0.75% from statutorily specified program accounts, based on the discretion of the Secretary. In FY19, that number was .03% of funds, or \$3.3 million, bringing the spending total to \$11.34 million. The FY20 number is not known yet, because the Secretary has not determined the set-aside amount. CEO also collaborates with DOL program offices and other federal agencies on additional evaluations being carried out by other offices and/or supported by funds appropriated to other agencies or programs. In FY19, CEO oversaw approximately \$9.94 million in evaluation and evidence building activities, and in FY18, CEO oversaw approximately \$21 million in evaluation and evidence building activities. While in FY 17, DOL's CEO oversaw an estimated \$40 million in evaluation funding.

This amount only represents the dollars that are directly appropriated or transferred to the CEO. Additionally, many DOL evaluations and research studies are supported by funds appropriated to DOL programs and/or are carried out by other offices within DOL. In some programs, such as the America's Promise grant evaluation and the Reentry Grant Evaluation, evaluation set asides exceed 1% (2.9% and 2.8% respectively for these programs).

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

**3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

Grantees and programs that participate in DOL evaluations receive technical assistance related to evaluation activities and implementation such as the [Evaluation and Research Hub \(EvalHub\)](#). DOL agencies, like ETA, are also making a concerted effort to help states and local areas build evaluation capacity to meet the program evaluation requirements for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) through tools such as RESEA program evaluation technical assistance (RESEA EvalTA). A suite of evaluation technical assistance resources is being developed throughout FY20, including webinars and other tools and templates to help states understand, build, and use evidence. DOL's evaluation technical assistance webinar series for states has been [posted online](#) to the RESEA community of practice. This series will ultimately hold 11 webinars. To date, most of the posted webinars have been viewed by the field between 2,000-4,000 times. Additional RESEA EvalTA products are being developed and will be posted on the RESEA community of practice, the DOL Chief Evaluation Office's website, and in CLEAR, as appropriate.



**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

DOL's Performance Management Center (PMC) leads the development of DOL's four-year [Strategic Plan \(FY 2018-2022\)](#) and [Annual Performance Report](#).

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

Using a performance and budget system linked to component agencies' annual operating plans, PMC coordinates quarterly reviews of each agency's program performance to analyze progress and identify opportunities for performance improvements. Learning agendas updated annually by DOL agencies in collaboration with DOL's CEO include program performance themes and priorities for analysis needed to refine performance measures and identify strategies for improving performance. The annual Strategic Reviews with leadership include specific discussions about improving performance and findings from recent evaluations that suggest opportunities for improvement. Using a performance stat reporting and dashboard system linked to component agencies' annual operating plans, PMC coordinates quarterly reviews of each agency's program performance by the Deputy Secretary to analyze progress and identify opportunities for performance improvements.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

DOL's performance reporting and dashboard system support quarterly reviews of each agency's program performance by the Deputy Secretary to analyze progress and identify opportunities for performance improvements. These performance reviews connect to DOL's broader performance and evaluation activities. DOL's OCIO developed a new dashboard last year for agency leadership use only – the CXO Dashboard – to interactively assess progress on performance by providing instant access to key administrative data to enable data-driven decisions.

DOL leverages a variety of continuous learning tools, including the learning agenda approach to conceptualize and make progress on substantive learning goals for the agency, as well as DOL's [Performance Management Center's \(PMC\) Continuous Process Improvement](#) (CPI) Program, which supports agencies in efforts to gain operational efficiencies and improve performance. The program directs customized process improvement projects throughout the department and grows the cadre of CPI practitioners through Lean Six Sigma training.

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

FY20 Score

**5**

(out of 10 points)

### U.S. Department of Labor

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

DOL's [open government plan](#) was last updated in 2016, and subsequent updates are being considered after the formal release of the Federal Data Strategy and the Evidence Act.

DOL also has [open data assets](#) aimed at developers and researchers who desire data-as-a-service through application programming interfaces hosted by both the [Office of Public Affairs](#) and the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (BLS). Each of these has clear documentation, is consistent with the open data policy, and offers transparent, repeatable, machine-readable access to data on an as-needed basis. The Department is currently developing a new API v3 which will expand the open data offerings, extend the capabilities, and offer a suite of user-friendly tools.

The Department has consistently sought to make as much data available to the public regarding its activities as possible. Examples of this include DOL's [Public Enforcement Database](#), which makes available records of activity from the worker protection agencies and the Office of Labor Management Standards' [online public disclosure room](#).

The Department also has multiple restricted-use access systems which go beyond what would be possible with simple open-data efforts. BLS has a confidential researcher access program, offering access under appropriate conditions to sensitive data.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

Similarly, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) has stood up a centralized research hub for evaluation study partners to leverage sensitive data in a consistent manner to help make evidence generation more efficient.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

The Department has conducted extensive inventories over the last ten years, in part to support common activities such as IT modernization, White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) data calls, and the general goal of transparency through data sharing. These form the current basis of DOL's planning and administration. Some sections of the Evidence Act have led to a different federal posture with respect to data, such as the requirement for data to be open by default, and considered shareable absent a legal requirement not to do so, or unless there is a risk that the release of such data might help constitute disclosure risk. Led by the Chief Data Officer and DOL Data Board, the Department is currently re-evaluating its inventories and its public data offerings in light of this very specific requirement and re-visiting this issue among all its programs. Because this is a critical prerequisite to developing open data plans, as well as data governance and data strategy frameworks, the agency hopes to have a revised inventory completed during FY21.

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

DOL's CEO, Employment & Training Administration (ETA), and Veterans Employment & Training Service (VETS) have worked with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop a secure mechanism for obtaining and analyzing earnings data from the Directory of New Hires. In this past year DOL has entered into interagency data sharing agreements with HHS and obtained data to support 10 job training and employment program evaluations.

During FY20, the Department continued to expand efforts to improve the quality of and access to data for evaluation and performance analysis through the Data Analytics Unit in CEO, and through new pilots beginning in BLS to access and exchange state labor market and earnings data for statistical and evaluation purposes.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

The Data Analytics unit also continued to leverage its Data Exchange and Analysis Platform (DEAP) with high processing capacity and privacy provisions to share, link, and analyze program data for recently separated veterans, public workforce outcomes, and sensitive worker protection data such as complaint filings. This work helps to identify trends and patterns in the data which become the foundation for future program improvements. The analysis also results in a feedback loop that can improve data quality and allows for inquiries to determine if the data from the program are appropriate to support more rigorous performance and evaluation approaches.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

DOL has a [shared services approach](#) to data security. In addition, the privacy provisions for BLS and ETA are publicly available [online](#).

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

DOL's ETA has [agreements with 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico](#) for data sharing and exchange of interstate wage data for performance accountability purposes. Currently, ETA is finalizing an updated data sharing agreement with states that will facilitate better access to quarterly wage data by states for purposes of performance accountability and research and evaluation requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This work aims to expand access to interstate wage data for the U.S. Department of Education's Adult and Family Literacy Act programs (AEFLA) and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, among others.

ETA continues to fund and provide technical assistance to states under the [Workforce Data Quality Initiative](#) to link earnings and workforce data with education data longitudinally to support state program administration and evaluation. ETA and VETS also

 **2020 Invest in What Works**  
**Federal Standard of Excellence**

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

have modified state workforce program reporting system requirements to include data items for a larger set of grant programs, which will improve access to administrative data for evaluation and performance management purposes.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

DOL's [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research's \(CLEAR\) evidence guidelines](#), which describe quality standards for different types of studies, are applied to all independent evaluations, including all third party evaluations of DOL programs, determined eligible for CLEAR's evidence reviews across different topic areas. Requests for proposals also indicate these CLEAR standards should be applied to all Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) evaluations when considering which designs are the most rigorous and appropriate to answer specific research questions.

In addition, the [DOL Evaluation Policy](#) principles and standards for evaluation planning and dissemination. Additionally, DOL collaborates with other agencies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)) to develop technological procedures to link and share reviews across clearinghouses.

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

DOL uses the [CLEAR evidence guidelines and standards](#) to make decisions about discretionary program grants awarded using evidence-informed or evidence-based criteria. The published guidelines and standards are used to identify evidence-based programs and practices and to review studies to assess the strength of their causal evidence or to do a structured evidence review in a particular topic area or timeframe to help inform agencies what strategies appear promising and where gaps exist.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user-friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

DOL's [CLEAR](#) is an online evidence clearinghouse. CLEAR's goal 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 statistical studies and outcome analyses, implementation studies, and causal impact studies. For causal impact studies, CLEAR assesses the strength of the design and methodology in studies that look at the effectiveness of particular policies and programs. CLEAR's study summaries and icons, found in each topic area, can help users quickly and easily understand what studies found and how much confidence to have in the results.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

DOL promotes the utilization of evidence-based practices in a variety of ways. For example, the Employment & Training Administration (ETA) maintains a user friendly technical assistance tool that promotes state and local service providers' use of evidence-based interventions through [Workforce System Strategies](#), a comprehensive database of over 1,000 profiles that summarize a wide range of findings from reports, studies, technical assistance tools and guides that support program administration and improvement. Additionally, recognizing that research over the past four decades has found subsidized on-the-job training strategies like apprenticeship to improve participants' employment and earnings outcomes, DOL has awarded or announced several apprenticeship grant opportunities this fiscal year in addition to the State Apprenticeship Expansion Grants awarded in 2018. These include the ETA's Scaling Apprenticeship Through Sector-Based Strategies and Apprenticeships: Closing the Skills Gap opportunities and the Women's Bureau's Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations grant program.



**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

FY20 Score

**5**

(out of 7 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

DOL's Chief Data Officer and Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) Data Analytics team developed a secure data analysis platform accessible to all DOL staff, pre-loaded with common statistical packages and offering the capability to access and merge various administrative data for analysis. DOL supports staff in executing limitless web-based A/B testing and other behaviorally-informed trials, with the shared service of the advanced [Granicus](#) platform's GovDelivery communications tool, including free technical support. This tool enhances the Department's ability to communicate with the public, such as through targeted email campaigns, and to adjust these communications, informed by testing and data, to increase engagement on relevant topics. The CEO also has developed [toolkits](#) and detailed [resources](#) for staff to effectively design behaviorally informed tests.

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

The CEO uses a variety of communication tools to share rigorous research results, lessons learned, promising practices, and other implications of its research. These include internal briefings from independent contractors and researchers, a brownbag series that features evidence-based promising practices and results shared by DOL staff, for DOL staff, and an external expert seminar series featuring new findings or innovations in relevant areas of work. CEO staff consistently use research findings in the development of new research, and DOL agencies use findings to design and guide new discretionary grant programs, to refine performance measures for grantees, and to make decisions on compliance and enforcement practices.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

DOL is strongly committed to promoting innovation in our policies and practices. For example, the Employment & Training Administration's (ETA) competitive funding routinely funds innovative programming, since grantees typically bundle various program services and components to best meet the needs of the people being served by them in their local contexts. A particularly good example of where this innovation is happening is in the Administration's high priority area of apprenticeships. DOL is funding \$150 million to support sector-based innovations in apprenticeship. DOL has invested more than \$95 million through the [ApprenticeshipUSA initiative](#) – a national campaign bringing together a broad range of stakeholders, including employers, labor, and states as well as education and workforce partners, to expand and diversify registered apprenticeships in the United States. This includes more than \$60 million for [state-led strategies](#) to grow and diversify apprenticeship, and [state Accelerator Grants](#) to help integrate apprenticeship into education and workforce systems; engage industry and other partners to expand apprenticeship to new sectors and new populations at scale; conduct outreach and work with employers to start new programs; promote greater inclusion and diversity in apprenticeship; and develop statewide and regional strategies aimed at building state capacity to support new apprenticeship programs. All of these grants include funding for data collection; additionally, ETA and CEO are conducting an evaluation of the [American Apprenticeship Initiative](#).

In addition, CEO's Behavioral Insights team works with a number of DOL agencies on a continuous basis to identify and assess the feasibility of conducting studies where insights from behavioral science can be used to improve the performance and outcomes of DOL programs. The Wage and Hour Division's (WHD) Transformation Team is one such example where continuous improvement efforts are driving innovation. Their work has identified potential areas where behavioral interventions and trials may inform program improvement. CEO is also working across agencies – including WHD, ETA, Women's Bureau, Veterans Employment & Training Service (VETS), Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), and International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB) – to identify and assess the feasibility of other areas where insights from behavioral science can be used to improve the performance and outcomes of DOL programs.

DOL has also built capacity for staff innovation through the Performance Management Center's [Continuous Process Improvement](#) (CPI) Program, an agency-wide opportunity which trains and certifies agency staff on Lean Six Sigma (LSS) methodologies through real-time execution of DOL process improvement projects. The program includes classroom sessions that prepare participants for LSS Black Belt certification examinations, including the American Society for Quality (ASQ) as well as DOL's own certification.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

DOL, through the annual Learning Agenda process, systematically identifies gaps in the use of evidence. Innovation is about filling known gaps via dissemination, further research, or generation of quick turnaround assessments, like those offered to the Department by CEO's [Behavioral Insights Program](#).

DOL typically couples innovation with rigorous evaluation to learn from experiments. For example, DOL is participating in the [Performance Partnership Pilots \(P3\)](#) for innovative service delivery for disconnected youth which includes not only waivers and blending and braiding of federal funds, but gives bonus points in application reviews for proposing "high tier" evaluations. DOL is the lead agency for the evaluation of P3. A final report is available on the CEO's [completed studies](#) website.

DOL routinely uses Job Corps' demonstration authority to test and evaluate innovative and promising models to improve outcomes for youth. Currently, the CEO is sponsoring a [rigorous impact evaluation](#) to examine the effectiveness of one of these pilots, the Job Corps Experimental Center Cascades, with results expected in FY21.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 15 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**8.1 What were the agency's five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest competitive programs and their appropriation amounts were:

- 1) [Scaling Apprenticeship Through Sector-Based Strategies](#) (\$183,800,000; eligible grantees: public/private partnerships where lead applicants are institutions of higher education (IHE) representing a consortium of IHEs, or a state system of higher education, such as a community college system office or single state higher education board);
- 2) Expanding Opportunity Through Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAP) (\$150,000,000; expected Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) release FY19);
- 3) [Apprenticeships: Closing the Skills Gap](#) (\$100,000,000; eligible grantees: public/private partnerships where lead applicants are IHEs or an IHE representing a consortium of IHEs, a state system of higher education, such as a community college system office or a single state higher educational board, a nonprofit trade, industry, or employer association, labor unions, or labor-management organizations);
- 4) [Reentry Projects](#) (\$82,000,000; eligible grantees: non-profit organizations, state or local governments, Indian and Native American entities eligible for grants under Section 166 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)); and
- 5) [YouthBuild](#) (\$80,000,000; eligible grantees: private non-profit or public agencies including community and faith-based organizations, local workforce development boards or one-stop center partner programs, educational institutions, community action agencies, state or local housing development agencies, any Indian and Native American entity eligible for grants under Section 166 of WIOA, community development corporations, state or local youth service conservation corps, and any other

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

public or private non-profit entity that is eligible to provide education or employment training under a federal program and can meet the required elements of the grant).

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in its five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

The Reentry Projects funding opportunity [provides up to eight points](#) (out of 100) for past performance. Grant applicants must specifically provide information on their [performance goals](#). The application states, “[a]ll applicants must specifically address the placement in education or employment and certificate/degree attainment outcomes.”

The Employment & Training Administration’s (ETA) YouthBuild applicants are also [awarded points](#) based on past performance (a [possible 28 points](#) out of 100), viewing these metrics as important to demonstrating successful career outcomes for youth.

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

All five of DOL’s largest grant programs have been or will be involved in evaluations designed by the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) and the relevant DOL agencies. In each case DOL required or encouraged (through language in the funding announcement and proposal review criteria) grantees to use evidence-based models or strategies in grant interventions and/or to participate in an evaluation, especially to test new interventions that theory or research suggest are promising.

For example, DOL will conduct an implementation evaluation of the Sector Based Apprenticeship Program. This evaluation will also include the development of an impact evaluation design options paper that identifies areas of opportunity for testing the impacts of apprenticeship strategies on employment or other outcomes. The objective of this study is to identify innovative and promising models, practices, and partnership strategies to expand apprenticeship opportunities in high-growth occupations and industries to build the evidence on apprenticeship. There are options for more rigorous evaluations in the contract as appropriate.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

Additionally, DOL currently has an [evaluation underway](#) of the Reentry Projects grant program. The Reentry Projects grant program used a tiered evidence framework to require applicants to propose evidence-based and informed interventions, or new interventions that theory or research suggests are promising, (or a combination of both) that lead to increased employment outcomes for their target populations and must frame their goals and objectives to address this issue. The evaluation will identify and evaluate promising practices used in reentry employment programs through both an implementation and impact study among select grantees to understand their effectiveness in improving participant outcomes such as employment, earnings, and recidivism.

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

DOL includes requirements of demonstrated effectiveness in the allocation of funds, as well as the commitment to building new evidence in order to receive funds, both of which are of equal importance given the fact that many DOL-funded programs lack a sufficient body of evidence to only support those that are already evidence-based. For example, among current Employment & Training Administration (ETA) competitive grant programs, this has involved requiring: (1) a demonstration of an approach as being evidence-based or promising for receipt of funds (i.e., [Reentry Funding Opportunity Announcement](#)) or for potential to receive additional funds (i.e., [TechHire](#)); (2) an independent third-party local or grantee evaluation with priority incentives for rigorous designs (e.g., tiered funding, scoring priorities, bonus scoring for evidence-based interventions or multi-site rigorous tests); or (3) full participation in an evaluation as well as rigorous grantee (or local) evaluations. Additionally, applicants for the International Labor Bureau's (ILAB) competitive funding opportunities are required to conduct and/or participate in evaluations as a condition of award.

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

In 2015, DOL funded an evaluation of the 36-month [Linking Employment Activities Pre-Release \(LEAP\) Program](#) which included an implementation study of LEAP pilot programs that provided jail-based American Job Centers (AJCs) to individuals preparing to re-enter society after time in jail. The findings of the evaluation identified many promising practices for offering both pre- and post-

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

release services and were published in 2018 (see the [Final Report](#) and [Issue Brief Compendium](#)). In 2020, DOL funded a 42-month [Pathway Home Pilot Project](#) and accompanying evaluation that builds on lessons learned from the LEAP program by providing workforce services to incarcerated individuals pre- and post-release. For example, the requirement in the Pathway Home grant for participants to maintain the same caseworker pre- and post-release, was suggested as a promising practice in the LEAP Implementation Study.

DOL funded a national [evaluation](#) of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, which was a \$1.9 billion initiative consisting of four rounds of grants, from 2011 to 2018. The grants were awarded to institutions of higher education (mainly community colleges) to build their capacity to provide workforce education and training programs. The implementation study assessed the grantees' implementation of strategies to better connect and integrate education and workforce systems, address employer needs, and transform training programs and services to adult learners. The synthesis identified key implementation and impact findings based on a review of evaluation reports completed by grantees' third-party evaluators. The outcomes study examined the training, employment, earnings, and self-sufficiency outcomes of nearly 2,800 participants from nine grants in Round 4. Findings from these studies provide evidence-based practices and insights that are being applied to the new [Strengthening Community College Initiative Funding Opportunity Announcement](#), as well as future DOL investments.

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

DOL has a formal [Evaluation Policy](#). Guidance on using funds to conduct and or participate in program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation–building efforts can be found in each grant funding opportunity, and is a condition of each grant. The “Special Program Requirements” section of the respective grant funding opportunity notifies grantees of this responsibility. Generally, this section states: “As a condition of grant award, grantees are required to participate in an evaluation, if undertaken by DOL. The evaluation may include an implementation assessment across grantees, an impact and/or outcomes analysis of all or selected sites within or across grantees, and a benefit/cost analysis or assessment of return on investment. Conducting an impact analysis could involve random assignment (which involves random assignment of eligible participants into a treatment

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

group that would receive program services or enhanced program services, or into control group(s) that would receive no program services or program services that are not enhanced). We may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the evaluation. As a part of the evaluation, as a condition of award, grantees must agree to: (1) make records available to the evaluation contractor on participants, employers, and funding; (2) provide access to program operating personnel, participants, and operational and financial records, and any other pertaining documents to calculate program costs and benefits; (3) in the case of an impact analysis, facilitate the assignment by lottery of participants to program services (including the possible increased recruitment of potential participants); and (4) follow evaluation procedures as specified by the evaluation contractor under the direction of DOL, including after the period of operation. After award, grantees will receive detailed guidance on ETA's evaluation methodology, including requirements for data collection. Grantees will receive technical assistance to support their participation in these activities.



**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**9.1 What were the agency's five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the 5 largest non-competitive grant programs at DOL are in the Employment and Training Administration:

- 1.) [Adult Employment and Training Activities](#) (\$845,000,000; eligible grantees: city, county, and/or state governments);
- 2.) [Youth Activities](#) (\$903,416,000; eligible grantees: city, county, and/or state governments);
- 3.) [Dislocated Worker Employment and Training](#) activities (\$1,040,860,000; eligible grantees: city, county, and/or state governments);
- 4.) [UI State Administration](#) (\$2,137,945,000; eligible grantees: city, county, and/or state governments);
- 5.) Employment Security grants to States (\$663,052,000; eligible grantees: city, county, and/or state governments).

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in the largest five non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

A signature feature of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (Pub. L. 113-128), is its focus on the use of data and evidence to improve services and outcomes, particularly in provisions related to states' role in conducting evaluations and research, as well as in requirements regarding data collection, performance standards, and state planning. Conducting evaluations is a required statewide activity, but there are additional requirements regarding coordination (with other state agencies and federal evaluations under WIOA), dissemination, and provision of data and other information for Federal evaluations.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

WIOA's evidence and performance provisions: (1) increased the amount of WIOA funds states can set aside and distribute directly from 5-10% to 15% and authorized them to invest these funds in Pay for Performance initiatives; (2) authorized states to invest their own workforce development funds, as well as non-federal resources, in Pay for Performance initiatives; (3) authorized local workforce investment boards to invest up to 10% of their WIOA funds in Pay for Performance initiatives; and (4) authorized states and local workforce investment boards to award Pay for Performance contracts to intermediaries, community based organizations, and community colleges.

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

Section 116(e) of WIOA describes how the state, in coordination with local workforce boards and state agencies that administer the programs, shall conduct ongoing evaluations of activities carried out in the state under these state programs. These evaluations are intended to promote, establish, implement, and utilize methods for continuously improving core program activities in order to achieve high-level programs within, and high-level outcomes from, the workforce development system.

**9.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in any other non-competitive grant programs (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) funds **must** be used for interventions or service delivery strategies demonstrated to reduce the average number of weeks of unemployment insurance a participant receives by improving employment outcomes. The law provides for a phased implementation of the new program requirements over several years. In FY19, DOL awarded \$130 million to states to conduct RESEA programs that met these evidence of effectiveness requirements. Beginning in FY23, states must also use no less than 25% of RESEA grant funds for interventions with a high or moderate causal evidence rating that show a demonstrated capacity to improve outcomes for participants; this percentage increases in subsequent years until after FY26, when states must use no less than 50 percent of such grant funds for such interventions.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**9.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

[Institutional Analysis of American Job Centers](#): the goal of the evaluation was to understand and systematically document the institutional characteristics of American Job Centers (AJCs), and to identify variations in service delivery, organization structure, and administration across AJCs.

[Career Pathways Descriptive and Analytical Study](#): WIOA requires DOL to “conduct a multistate study to develop, implement, and build upon career advancement models and practices for low-wage healthcare providers or providers of early education and child care.” In response, DOL conducted the Career Pathways Design Study to develop evaluation design options that could address critical gaps in knowledge related to the approach, implementation, and success of career pathways strategies generally, and in early care and education specifically. The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) has recently begun the second iteration of this study. The purpose of this project is to build on the evaluation design work CEO completed in 2018 to build evidence about the implementation and effectiveness of career pathways approaches and meet the WIOA statutory requirement to conduct a career pathways study. It will include a meta-analysis of existing impact evaluation results as well as examine how workers advance through multiple, progressively higher levels of education and training, and associated jobs, within a pathway over time, and the factors associated with their success.

[Analysis of Employer Performance Measurement Approaches](#): the goal of the study was to examine the appropriateness, reliability and validity of proposed measures of effectiveness in serving employers required under WIOA. It included knowledge development to understand and document the state of the field, an analysis and comparative assessment of measurement approaches and metrics, and the dissemination of findings through a report, as well as research and topical briefs.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

**9.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

The Employment & Training Administration's (ETA) RESEA grantees may use up to 10% of their grant funds for evaluations of their programs. ETA released [specific evaluation guidance](#) to help states understand how to conduct or cause to conduct evaluations of their RESEA interventions with these grant funds. The goal of the agency guidance, along with the evaluation technical assistance being provided to states and their partners, is to build states' capacity to understand, use, and build evidence.

[Section 116 of WIOA](#) establishes performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements to assess the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system's core programs. Section [116\(e\) of WIOA](#) requires states to "employ the most rigorous analytical and statistical methods that are reasonably feasible, such as the use of control groups" and requires that states evaluate the effectiveness of their WIOA programs in an annual progress which includes updates on (1) current or planned evaluation and related research projects, including methodologies used; (2) efforts to coordinate the development of evaluation and research projects with WIOA core programs, other state agencies and local boards; (3) a list of completed evaluation and related reports with publicly accessible links to such reports; (4) efforts to provide data, survey responses, and timely visits for Federal evaluations; (5) any continuous improvement strategies utilizing results from studies and evidence-based practices evaluated. States are permitted to use WIOA grant funds to perform the necessary performance monitoring and evaluations to complete this report.

**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20 Score

**4**

(out of 8 points)

**U.S. Department of Labor**

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

The Employment & Training Administration's (ETA) prospective YouthBuild and Job Corps grant applicants are selected, in part, based on their past performance. These programs consider the entity's past performance of demonstrated effectiveness in achieving critical outcomes for youth. For the Job Corps reform, the Department's FY21 budget request also proposes new legislative flexibilities that would enable the Department to more expediently close low-performing centers, target the program to groups more likely to benefit, and make the necessary capital investments to ensure successful pilot programs. These reforms would save money and improve results by eliminating ineffective centers and finding better ways to educate and provide skills instruction to youth.

Reforming [Job Corps](#) provides an example of such efforts to repurpose resources based upon a rigorous analysis of available data. As part of this reform effort, DOL's FY20 budget request ends the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) involvement in the program, unifying responsibility in DOL. Workforce development is not a core USDA role, and the 25 centers it operates are overrepresented in the lowest performing cohort of centers.

**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

A rigorous 2012 evaluation of the Trade Readjustment Assistance (TAA) Program demonstrated that workers who participated in the program had lower earnings than the comparison group at the end of a four-year follow-up period, in part because they were more likely to participate in long-term job training programs rather than immediately reentering the workforce. However, this training was not targeted to in-demand industries and occupations, and, as found in Mathematica’s evaluation of the TAA program, only 37% of participants became employed in the occupations for which they trained. In the FY21 budget request, the Department addresses these issues by continuing to propose reauthorization of the TAA program that focuses on apprenticeship and on-the-job training, earn-as-you-learn strategies that ensure that participants are training for relevant occupations.

DOL’s FY20 budget request eliminates funding for the [Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) (SCSEP). SCSEP has a goal of transitioning half of participants into unsubsidized employment within the first quarter after exiting the program, but has struggled to achieve even this modest goal.

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

The Department’s Employment and Training Administration sponsors the [WorkforceGPS](#), which is a community point of access to support workforce development professionals in their use of evaluations to improve state and local workforce systems. Professionals can access a variety of resources and tools, including a [learning cohort community](#) to help leaders improve their research and evaluations capacities. The WorkforceGPS includes links to resources on assessment readiness, evaluation design, performance data all focused on improving the public workforce system.



**82**

FY20 Score

## Millennium Challenge Corporation

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



### Millennium Challenge Corporation

As a foreign assistance agency, accountability is core to the [Millennium Challenge Corporation's](#) (MCC) organizational culture. This culture is reinforced by MCC's evaluation leaders who oversee the agency's performance, research, and evaluation activities. This commitment is further supported by the agency's robust investment in research and evaluation: 2.3% of the agency's budget, the highest relative spending on evaluation among the agencies featured in the *2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence*. This allows MCC to closely monitor the effectiveness of the projects it funds.

Beyond monitoring, MCC has increased its focus on sharing research and evaluation information with country partners, development assistance organizations, and the general public in recent years. This approach equips stakeholders to make better use of evidence-based approaches and accelerate results. Specifically, developed in FY20, MCC's new [Sector Packages](#) provide a one-stop, interactive repository of sector-level common indicators, research questions, evaluation findings, and applied learnings. These Sector Packages complement the agency's [Evaluation Briefs](#), launched in FY19, which distill key findings and lessons learned from MCC's independent evaluations. As of October 2020, MCC has published 76 Evaluation Briefs, which are also published in local country languages.

Finally, MCC is working to improve the [Evaluation Catalog](#) to seamlessly link evaluation, data, and access with better usability and findability features. The new MCC Evidence Platform will transform stakeholders' ability to access and use MCC evaluation data and evidence.

*Read more about the Millennium Challenge Corporation in the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence [here](#).*



**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**9**  
(out of 9 points)

### **Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The [Monitoring and Evaluation \(M&E\) Managing Director](#) serves as the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s (MCC) Evaluation Officer. The Managing Director is a career civil service position with the authority to execute M&E’s budget, an estimated \$17.4 million in due diligence funds in FY20, with a staff of 30 people. In accordance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, MCC [designated](#) an Evaluation Officer.

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

The Director of Product Management in the Office of the Chief Information Officer is MCC’s Chief Data Officer. The Chief Data Officer manages a staff of eight and an estimated FY20 budget of \$1.5 million in administrative funds. In accordance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, MCC [designated](#) a Chief Data Officer.

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency’s major programs?**

The [MCC Evaluation Management Committee](#) (EMC) oversees decision-making, integration, and quality control of the agency’s evaluation and programmatic decision-making in accordance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. The EMC integrates evaluation with program design and implementation to ensure that evaluations are designed and implemented in a manner that increases their utility, to both MCC and in-country stakeholders as well as external stakeholders. The EMC includes the agency’s evaluation officer, Chief Data Officer, representatives from M&E, the project lead, sector specialists, the economist, and gender and

 **RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency's major policy and program decisions in FY20?

environmental safeguards staff. For each evaluation the EMC has between 11-16 meetings or touchpoints, from evaluation scope-of-work to final evaluation publication. The EMC plays a key role in coordinating MCC's Evidence Act implementation.

**2. Evaluation and Research:** Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

MCC's Independent Evaluation Portfolio is governed by its publicly available [Policy for Monitoring and Evaluation](#) (M&E). This Policy requires all programs to develop and follow comprehensive [M&E plans](#) that adhere to [MCC's standards](#). The Policy was revised in March 2017 to ensure alignment with the [Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act of 2016](#). Pursuant to MCC's M&E policy, every project must undergo an independent evaluation.

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

Every MCC investment must adhere to MCC's rigorous [Policy for Monitoring and Evaluation](#) (M&E) that requires every MCC investment to contain a comprehensive [M&E Plan](#). For each investment MCC makes in a country, the country's M&E plan is required to be published within 90 days of entry-into-force. The M&E Plan lays out the evaluation strategy and includes two main components. The monitoring component lays out the methodology and process for assessing progress towards the investment's objectives. The evaluation component identifies and describes the evaluations that will be conducted, the key evaluation questions and methodologies, and the data collection strategies that will be employed. Each country's M&E Plan represents the evaluation plan and learning agenda for that country's set of investments.

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency's process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

In FY20, in an effort to advance MCC's evidence base and respond to the Evidence Act, MCC specifically embarked on a learning agenda around women's economic empowerment (WEE) with short- and long-term objectives. Women's economic empowerment is

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

one of the priorities of MCC leadership and, as such, the agency is focused on expanding the evidence base to answer these key research questions:

- How do MCC's WEE activities contribute to MCC's overarching goal of reducing poverty through economic growth?
- How does MCC's WEE work contribute to increased income and assets for households—beyond what those incomes would have been without the gendered/WEE design?
- How does MCC's WEE work increase income and assets for women and girls within those households?
- How does MCC's WEE work increase women's empowerment, defined through measures relevant to the WEE intervention and project area?

These research questions were developed through extensive consultation within MCC and with external stakeholders.

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

MCC publishes each independent evaluation of every project, underscoring the agency's commitment to transparency, accountability, learning, and evidence-based decision-making. All independent evaluations and reports are publicly available on the [MCC Evaluation Catalog](#). As of September 2020, MCC had contracted, planned, and/or published 208 independent evaluations. All MCC evaluations produce a final report to present final results, and some evaluations also produce an interim report to present interim results. To date, 110 Final Reports and 41 Interim Reports have been finalized and released to the public.

In FY20, MCC also continued producing [Evaluation Briefs](#), a new MCC product that distills key findings and lessons learned from MCC's independent evaluations. MCC will produce Evaluation Briefs for each evaluation moving forward, and is in the process of writing Evaluation Briefs for the backlog of all completed evaluations. As of October 2020, MCC has published 76 Evaluation Briefs.

Finally, in FY20, MCC began the process of re-imagining its Evaluation Catalog to seamlessly link evaluation, data, and access with better usability and findability features. The new MCC Evidence Platform will transform stakeholders' ability to access and use MCC evaluation data and evidence.

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency's evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

MCC is currently working on a draft capacity assessment in accordance with the Evidence Act. Additionally, once a compact or threshold program is in implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) resources are used to procure evaluation services from external independent evaluators to directly measure high-level outcomes to assess the attributable impact of all of MCC's programs. MCC sees its independent evaluation portfolio as an integral tool to remain accountable to stakeholders and the general public, demonstrate programmatic results, and promote internal and external learning. Through the evidence generated by monitoring and evaluation, [the M&E Managing Director, Chief Economist](#), and [Vice President for the Department of Policy and Evaluation](#) are able to continuously update estimates of expected impacts with actual impacts to inform future programmatic and policy decisions. In FY20, MCC began or continued comprehensive, independent evaluations for every compact or threshold project at MCC, a requirement stipulated in Section 7.5.1 of MCC's [Policy for M&E](#). All evaluation designs, data, reports, and summaries are available on MCC's [Evaluation Catalog](#).

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

MCC employs rigorous, independent evaluation methodologies to measure the impact of its programming, evaluate the efficacy of program implementation, and determine lessons learned to inform future investments. As of September 2020, 37% of MCC's evaluation portfolio consists of impact evaluations, and 63% consists of performance evaluations. All MCC impact evaluations use random assignment to determine which groups or individuals will receive an MCC intervention, which allows for a counterfactual and thus for attribution to MCC's project, and best enables MCC to measure its impact in a fair and transparent way. Each evaluation is conducted according to the program's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan, in accordance with MCC's Policy for M&E.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

FY20 Score

**8**

(out of 10 points)

**Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**3.1 \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$\_\_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_\_% of the agency's \$\_\_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.**

MCC invested \$16.1 million on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing 2.3% of the agency's \$694 million FY20 budget (minus staff/salary expenses).

**3.2 Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)**

MCC budgeted \$16.1 million on monitoring and evaluation in FY20, a decrease of \$10.2 million compared to FY19 (\$26.3 million total). MCC notes that this is not a reduction in investment, but a reflection of the number of evaluations conducted in FY20, which was lower than in FY19.

**3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

In support of MCC's emphasis on country ownership, MCC also provides substantial, intensive, and ongoing capacity building to partner country Monitoring and Evaluation staff in every country in which it invests. As a part of this, MCC provides training and ongoing mentorship in the local language. This includes publishing select independent [evaluations](#), [Evaluation Briefs](#), and other documentation in the country's local language. The dissemination of local language publications helps further MCC's reach to its partner country's government and members of civil society, enabling them to fully reference and utilize evidence and learning beyond the program. MCC also includes data strengthening and national statistical capacity as a party of its evidence-building investments. This agency-wide commitment to building and expanding an evidence-based approach with every partner country is a key component of MCC's investments.

**3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

In FY20, MCC also realized a first-of-its-kind partnership in its Morocco investment. MCA-Morocco, the local implementing entity, signed MCC's first Cooperation Agreement, a funded partnership within a country program, under the new Partnership Navigator Program Partnership Solicitation process. This first MCA-driven partnership agreement will bring Nobel prize-winning economic analysis approaches from MIT and Harvard to partner with a Moroccan think tank to create an Employment Lab to conduct rigorous research into Moroccan labor market programs and policies. This research will be coupled with training and capacity building to key Moroccan policymakers to promote evidence-based decision-making.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement:** Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**5**  
(out of 10 points)

### Millennium Challenge Corporation

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

MCC's strategic plan, "[NEXT: A Strategy for MCC's Future](#)," lays out five specific goals and priority actions for deepening and expanding impact and meeting the challenges of the new landscape of global poverty and development.

In an effort to track and aggregate evidence across its entire portfolio, MCC has implemented a [common indicators](#) structure across the seven sectors in which it invests: [energy](#); [land and property rights](#); [education](#); [water, sanitation, and irrigation](#); [health](#); [roads and transport infrastructure](#); and [agriculture](#). In all MCC countries, projects in these sectors capture evidence across a common set of indicators to allow MCC to build an agency-wide evidence base around its investments.

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

MCC is committed to using high-quality data and evidence to drive its strategic planning and program decisions. The [Monitoring and Evaluation plans for all programs](#) and [tables of key performance indicators for all projects](#) are available online by compact and threshold program and by sector, for use by both partner countries and the general public. Prior to investment, MCC performs a Cost-Benefit Analysis to assess the potential impact of each project, and estimates an [Economic Rate of Return](#) (ERR). MCC uses a 10% ERR hurdle to more effectively prioritize and fund projects with the greatest opportunity for maximizing impact. MCC then recalculates ERRs at investment closeout, drawing on information from MCC's monitoring data (among other data and evidence), to test original assumptions and assess the cost effectiveness of MCC programs. This year, MCC has also pushed to undertake and publish evaluation-based ERRs. As a part of the independent evaluation, the evaluators analyze the MCC-produced ERR five or more years



**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

after investment close to understand if and how benefits actually accrued. These evaluation-based ERRs add to the evidence base by better understanding the long-term effects and sustainable impact of MCC's programs.

In addition, MCC produces periodic reports that capture the results of MCC's learning efforts in specific sectors and translate that learning into actionable evidence for future programming. In FY20, MCC produced two new Principles into Practice reports. MCC compiled evidence and learning on its technical and vocational education and training activities in the education sector, called [Training Service Delivery for Jobs and Productivity](#). MCC is also finalizing a report on its research related to learning in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector through a new report called *Lessons from Evaluations of MCC Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Programs*.

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

MCC continues to implement and expand a [new reporting system](#) that enhances MCC's credibility around results, transparency, learning, and accountability. The [Star Report](#) and its associated quarterly business process captures key information to provide a framework for results and improve the ability to promote and disseminate learning and evidence throughout the compact and threshold program lifecycle. For each compact and threshold program, evidence is collected on performance indicators, evaluation results, partnerships, sustainability efforts, and learning, among other elements. Critically, this information is available in one report after each program ends. Each country will have a Star Report published roughly seven months after completion.

Continual learning and improvement is a key aspect of MCC's operating model. MCC continuously monitors progress towards compact and threshold program results on a quarterly basis using performance indicators that are specified in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan for each country's investments. The M&E Plans specify indicators at all levels (process, output, and outcome) so that progress towards final results can be tracked. Every quarter each partner country submits an [Indicator Tracking Table](#) that shows actual performance of each indicator relative to the baseline that was established before the activity began and the performance targets that were established in the M&E Plan. Key performance indicators and their accompanying [data by country](#) are updated every quarter and published online. MCC management and the relevant country team review this data in a formal Quarterly Performance

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

Review meeting to assess whether results are being achieved and integrate this information into project management and implementation decisions.

Also in FY20, MCC is producing and publishing a new product called [MCC Sector Packages](#). For each sector in which MCC works, MCC will have a one-stop, interactive repository of sector-level common indicators, research questions, evaluation findings, and applied learnings. These documents will also show how past evidence is being used in developing new investments

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

In FY20, MCC began development of a strategic data plan. As detailed on MCC’s [Digital Strategy](#) and [Open Government](#) pages, MCC promotes transparency to provide people with access to information that facilitates their understanding of MCC’s model, MCC’s decision-making processes, and the results of MCC’s investments. [Transparency](#), and therefore [open data](#), is a core principle for MCC because it is the basis for accountability, provides strong checks against corruption, builds public confidence, and supports informed participation of citizens.

As a testament to MCC’s commitment to and implementation of transparency and open data, the agency was again the highest-ranked U.S. government agency in the [2020 Publish What You Fund Aid Transparency Index](#) for the sixth consecutive Index. In addition, the U.S. government is part of the [Open Government Partnership](#), a signatory to the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#), and must adhere to the [Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act](#). All of these initiatives require foreign assistance agencies to make it easier to access, use, and understand data. All of these actions have created further impetus for MCC’s work in this area, as they establish specific goals and timelines for adoption of transparent business processes.

Additionally, MCC convened an internal [Data Governance Board](#), an independent group consisting of representatives from departments throughout the agency, to streamline MCC’s approach to data management and advance data-driven decision-making across its investment portfolio.

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

MCC makes extensive program data, including financials and results data, publicly available through its [Open Data Catalog](#), which includes an “enterprise data inventory” of all data resources across the agency for release of data in open, machine readable formats.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

The Department of Policy and Evaluation leads the [MCC Disclosure Review Board](#) process for publicly releasing the de-identified microdata that underlies the [independent evaluations](#) on the [Evaluation Catalog](#), following MCC's [Microdata Management Guidelines](#) to ensure appropriate balance in transparency efforts with protection of human subjects' confidentiality.

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

In addition to the Evaluation Catalog, which links and provides access to all of MCC's microdata from evaluation packages, MCC's [Data Analytics Program](#) (DAP) enables enterprise data-driven decision-making through the capture, storage, analysis, publishing, and governance of MCC's core programmatic data. The DAP streamlines the agency's data lifecycle, facilitating increased efficiency. Additionally, the program promotes agency-wide coordination, learning, and transparency. For example, MCC has developed custom software applications to capture program data, established the infrastructure for consolidated storage and analysis, and connected robust data sources to end user tools that power up-to-date, dynamic reporting and also streamlines content maintenance on MCC's public website. As a part of this effort, the Monitoring and Evaluation team has developed an Evaluation Pipeline application that provides up-to-date information on the status, risk, cost, and milestones of the full evaluation portfolio for better performance management.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

[MCC's Disclosure Review Board](#) ensures that data collected from surveys and other research activities is made public according to relevant laws and ethical standards that protect research participants, while recognizing the potential value of the data to the public. The board is responsible for: reviewing and approving procedures for the release of data products to the public; reviewing and approving data files for disclosure; ensuring de-identification procedures adhere to legal and ethical standards for the protection of research participants; and initiating and coordinating any necessary research related to disclosure risk potential in individual, household, and enterprise-level survey microdata on MCC's beneficiaries.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

The [Microdata Evaluation Guidelines](#) inform MCC staff and contractors, as well as other partners, on how to store, manage, and disseminate evaluation-related microdata. This microdata is distinct from other data MCC disseminates because it typically includes personally identifiable information and sensitive data as required for the independent evaluations. With this in mind, MCC's Guidelines govern how to manage three competing objectives: share data for verification and replication of the independent evaluations, share data to maximize usability and learning, and protect the privacy and confidentiality of evaluation participants. These Guidelines were established in 2013 and updated in January 2017. Following these Guidelines, MCC has publicly released 76 de-identified, public use, microdata files for its evaluations. MCC's experience with developing and implementing this rigorous process for data management and dissemination while protecting human subjects throughout the evaluation life cycle is detailed in [Opening Up Evaluation Microdata: Balancing Risks and Benefits of Research Transparency](#). MCC is committed to ensuring [transparent, reproducible, and ethical data and documentation](#) and seeks to further encourage data use through a new MCC Evidence Platform.

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

Both MCC and its partner in-country teams produce and provide data that is continuously updated and accessed. MCC's website is routinely updated with the most recent information, and in-country teams are required to do the same on their respective websites. As such, all MCC program data is publicly available on MCC's website and individual MCA websites for use by MCC country partners, in addition to other stakeholder groups. As a part of each country's program, MCC provides resources to ensure data and evidence are continually collected, captured, and accessed. In addition, each project's evaluation has an [Evaluation Brief](#) that distills key learning from MCC-commissioned independent evaluations. Select Evaluation Briefs have been posted in local languages, including Mongolian, Georgian, French, and Romanian, to better facilitate use by country partners.

MCC also has a partnership with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), referred to as the [Data Collaboratives for Local Impact](#) (DCLI). This partnership is improving the use of data analysis for decision-making within PEPFAR and MCC partner countries by working toward evidence-based programs to address challenges in HIV/AIDS and health, empowerment of women and youth, and sustainable economic growth. Data-driven priority setting and insights gathered by citizen-generated data and community mapping initiatives contribute to improved allocation of resources in target communities to address local priorities, such as job creation, access to services, and reduced gender-based violence. DCLI continues to inform and improve the capabilities of PEPFAR activities

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**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

through projects such as the [Tanzania Data Lab](#), which has trained nearly 700 individuals, nearly 50% of whom are women, and has hosted a one-of-a-kind “Data Festival.” Recently, the Lab has announced a partnership with the [University of Virginia Data Science Institute](#) and catalyzed the launching of the first Masters in Data Science in East Africa, in partnership with the University of Dar es Salaam.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations:** Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

For each investment, MCC's Economic Analysis (EA) division undertakes a [Constraints Analysis](#) to determine the binding constraints to economic growth in a country. To determine the individual projects in which MCC will invest in a given sector, MCC's EA division combines root cause analysis with a cost-benefit analysis. The results of these analyses allow MCC to determine which investments will yield the greatest development impact and return on MCC's investment. Every investment also has its own set of indicators as well as standard, agency-wide sector indicators for monitoring during the lifecycle of the investment and an evaluation plan for determining the results and impact of a given investment. MCC's [Policy for Monitoring and Evaluation](#) details MCC's evidence-based research and evaluation framework. Per the Policy, each completed evaluation requires a summary of findings, now called the Evaluation Brief, to summarize the key components, results, and lessons learned from the evaluation. Evidence from previous MCC programming is considered during the development of new programs. Per the Policy, "monitoring and evaluation evidence and processes should be of the highest practical quality. They should be as rigorous as practical and affordable. Evidence and practices should be impartial. The expertise and independence of evaluators and monitoring managers should result in credible evidence. Evaluation methods should be selected that best match the evaluation questions to be answered. Indicators should be limited in number to include the most crucial indicators. Both successes and failures must be reported."

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

MCC uses a rigorous evidence framework to make every decision along the investment chain, from country partner eligibility to sector selection to project choices. MCC uses evidence-based [selection criteria](#), generated by independent, objective third parties, to select countries for grant awards. To be eligible for selection, World Bank-designated [low- and lower-middle-income countries](#) must first pass the MCC – a collection of 20 independent, third-party [indicators](#) that objectively measure a country's policy performance in the areas

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

of economic freedom, investing in people, and ruling justly. An in-depth description of the country selection procedure can be found in the annual report.

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

All evaluation designs, data, reports, and summaries are made publicly available on MCC's [Evaluation Catalog, which includes evaluation information for every MCC program](#). Evaluation packages have a depth of information for each program including evaluation designs and questions, baseline data, surveys, questionnaires, microdata, interim reports, and final reports. To further the dissemination and use of MCC's evaluations' evidence and learning, the Agency publishes [Evaluation Briefs](#), a new product to capture and disseminate the results and findings of its independent evaluation portfolio. An Evaluation Brief will be produced for each evaluation and offers a succinct, user-friendly, systematic format to better capture and share the relevant evidence and learning from MCC's independent evaluations. These accessible products will take the place of MCC's [Summaries of Findings](#). Evaluation Briefs will be published on the [Evaluation Catalog](#) and will complement the many other products published for each evaluation. In FY20, MCC also began the process of re-designing the Evaluation Catalog into a new MCC Evidence Platform, in part to make MCC's evaluation evidence and data easier to find and use.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

Using internal research and analysis to understand where and how its published evaluations, datasets, and knowledge products are utilized, MCC is embarking on a re-designed Evaluation Catalog, prioritizing evidence-building in key sectors, and continuing to refine and publish new evidence dissemination products. Under this comprehensive approach, [Evaluation Briefs](#) act as a cornerstone to promoting utilization across audience groups. Enhanced utilization of MCC's vast evidence base and learning was a key impetus behind the creation and expansion of the Evaluation Briefs and Star Reports, two new MCC products. A push to ensure sector-level evidence use has led to renewed emphasis of the Principles into Practice series, with recent reports on the transport, education, and water & sanitation (forthcoming) sectors.



**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

MCC has also enhanced its in-country evaluation dissemination events to ensure further results and evidence building with additional products in local languages and targeted stakeholder learning dissemination [strategies](#).

**7. Innovation:** Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**7**  
(out of 7 points)

**Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

MCC supports the creation of multidisciplinary [country teams](#) to manage the development and implementation of each compact and threshold program. Teams meet frequently to gather evidence, discuss progress, make project design decisions, and solve problems. Prior to moving forward with a program investment, teams are encouraged to use the lessons from completed evaluations to inform their work going forward.

In FY20, MCC launched its second-ever internal Millennium Efficiency Challenge (MEC) designed to tap into the extensive knowledge of MCC's staff to identify efficiencies and innovative solutions that can shorten the compact and threshold program development timeline while maintaining MCC's rigorous quality standards and investment criteria.

In September 2014, MCC's [Monitoring and Evaluation](#) division launched the agency's first [Open Data Challenge](#), which continued into FY20. The Open Data Challenge initiative is intended to facilitate broader use of MCC's U.S.-taxpayer funded data, encourage innovative ideas, and maximize the use of data that MCC finances for its independent evaluations.

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

MCC's approach to development assistance hinges on its innovative and extensive use of evidence to inform investment decisions, guide program implementation strategies, and assess and learn from its investment experiences. As such, MCC's Office of Strategic Partnerships offers an [Annual Program Statement](#) (APS) opportunity that allows MCC divisions and country teams to tap the most innovative solutions to new development issues. In FY20, the Monitoring and Evaluation division, using MCC's APS and traditional evaluation firms, has been piloting partnerships with academics and in-country think tanks to leverage innovative, lower cost data technologies across sectors and regions. These include:

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

- using satellite imagery in Sri Lanka to measure visible changes in investment on land to get early indications if improved land rights are spurring investment;
- leveraging big data and cell phone applications in Colombo, Sri Lanka to monitor changes in traffic congestion and the use of public transport; independently measuring power outages and voltage fluctuations using cell phones in Ghana, where utility outage data is unreliable, and where outage reduction is a critical outcome targeted by the Compact;
- using pressure loggers on piped water at the network and household levels to get independent readings on access to water in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and using remote sensing to measure water supply in water kiosks in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

MCC regularly engages in implementing test projects as part of its overall compact programs. A few examples include: (1) in Morocco, an innovative [pay-for-results](#) mechanism to replicate or expand proven programs that provide integrated support; (2) a “[call-for-ideas](#)” in Benin for information regarding potential projects that would expand access to renewable off-grid electrical power; (3) a regulatory strengthening project in Sierra Leone that includes funding for a [results-based financing system](#); and (4) an [Innovation Grant Program](#) in Zambia to encourage local innovation in pro-poor service delivery in the water sector.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

Although MCC rigorously evaluates all program efforts, MCC takes special care to ensure that innovative or untested programs are thoroughly evaluated. In addition to producing final program evaluations, MCC is continuously monitoring and evaluating all programs throughout the program lifecycle, including innovation efforts, to determine if mid-program course-correction actions are necessary. This interim data helps MCC continuously improve its innovation efforts so that they can be most effective and impactful. Although 37% of MCC’s evaluations use random-assignment methods, all of MCC’s evaluations – both impact and performance – use rigorous methods to achieve the three-part objectives of accountability, learning, and results in the most cost-effective way possible. Of particular interest in the innovation space in FY20, MCC conducted its first impact evaluation of an institutional reform program with the publication of the [evaluation](#) of the Indonesia Procurement Modernization Project. This project was specifically designed as a pilot with the evaluation results being used to determine further scale. MCC also published an [evaluation](#) of another pilot effort in Namibia that sought to improve community-based rangeland and livestock management. MCC took a comprehensive approach to measuring the various aspects of the program logic, including direct measurement of livestock (weighing and aging cows), direct measurement of rangeland health (measured grass height), and direct observation to verify self-reported behaviors. The resulting learning is extremely nuanced, which has proved especially useful to MCC and Namibian stakeholders since the intervention was advertised as a pilot.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

FY20 Score  
**15**  
(out of 15 points)

**Millennium Challenge Corporation**

**8.1 What were the agency’s five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

MCC awards all of its agency funds through two competitive grants: (1) the [compact](#) program (\$634.5 million in FY20; eligible grantees: developing countries) and (2) the [threshold](#) program (\$30.0 million in FY20; eligible grantees: developing countries).

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in its five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

For country partner selection, as part of the [compact](#) and [threshold](#) competitive programs, MCC uses [20 different indicators](#) within the categories of economic freedom, investing in people, and ruling justly to determine country eligibility for program assistance. These objective indicators of a country’s performance are collected by independent third parties.

When considering granting a [second compact](#), MCC further considers whether countries have (1) exhibited successful performance on their previous compact; (2) improved [Scorecard](#) performance during the partnership; and (3) exhibited a continued commitment to further their sector reform efforts in any subsequent partnership. As a result, the MCC Board of Directors has an even higher standard when selecting countries for subsequent compacts. Per MCC’s policy for [Compact Development Guidance](#) (p. 6): “As the results of impact evaluations and other assessments of the previous compact program become available, the partner country must use this use data to inform project proposal assessment, project design, and implementation approaches.”

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

Per its [Policy for Monitoring and Evaluation \(M&E\)](#), MCC requires independent evaluations of every project to assess progress in achieving outputs and outcomes and program learning based on defined evaluation questions throughout the lifetime of the project and

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

beyond. As described above, MCC publicly releases all these evaluations on its [website](#) and uses findings, in collaboration with stakeholders and partner countries, to build evidence in the field so that policymakers in the United States and in partner countries can leverage MCC's experiences to develop future programming. In line with MCC's [Policy for M&E](#), MCC projects are required to submit quarterly [Indicator Tracking Tables](#) showing progress toward projected targets.

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other competitive grant programs in FY20 (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

MCC uses evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in all its competitive grant programs as noted above.

**8.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Based on the results of a rigorous impact evaluation, MCC's compact in Burkina Faso improved educational infrastructure, by renovating 396 classrooms in 132 primary schools and funding ancillary educational needs for students (e.g., latrines, school supplies, and food) and adults (e.g., teachers' housing and gender-sensitivity training). Students in intervention schools had overall student enrollment rates increase by 6%, with girls' enrollment increasing by 10.3%; higher test scores; higher primary school graduation rates; and lower early marriage rates. In completing this program, MCC learned that addressing the factors that specifically threaten female education helps girls access and remain in school. Additionally, addressing schools' weak educational quality (e.g., curriculum, faculty, management), coupled with improving the quality of students' access to and facilities for education, should further improve students' learning. This learning has since been applied in current education investments.

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

As described above, MCC develops a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Plan for every grantee, which describes the independent evaluations that will be conducted, the key evaluation questions and methodologies, and the data collection strategies that will be employed. As such, grantees use program funds for evaluation.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

MCC's [Policy for Monitoring and Evaluation](#) stipulates that the “primary responsibility for developing the M&E Plan lies with the MCA [grantee] M&E Director with support and input from MCC’s M&E Lead and Economist. MCC and MCA Project/Activity Leads are expected to guide the selection of the indicators at the process and output levels that are particularly useful for management and oversight of activities and projects.” The M&E policy is intended primarily to guide MCC and partner country staff decisions to utilize M&E effectively throughout the entire program life cycle in order to improve outcomes. All MCC investments also include M&E capacity-building for grantees.

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

FY20 Score  
**10**  
(out of 10 points)

**Millennium Challenge Corporation**

*MCC does not administer non-competitive grant programs (relative score for criteria #8 applied).*

**10. Repurpose for Results:** In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

FY20 Score  
**8**  
(out of 8 points)

### Millennium Challenge Corporation

**10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

MCC has established a [Policy on Suspension and Termination](#) that lays out the reasons for which MCC may suspend or terminate assistance to partner countries, including if a country “engages in a pattern of actions inconsistent with the MCC’s eligibility criteria,” by failing to achieve desired outcomes such as:

- A decline in performance on the indicators used to determine eligibility;
- A decline in performance not yet reflected in the indicators used to determine eligibility; or
- Actions by the country which are determined to be contrary to sound performance in the areas assessed for eligibility for assistance, and which together evidence an overall decline in the country’s commitment to the eligibility criteria.

Of 61 compact selections by MCC’s Board of Directors, including regional compacts, 14 have had their partnerships or a portion of their funding ended due to concerns about country commitment to MCC’s eligibility criteria or a failure to adhere to their responsibilities under the compact. MCC’s Policy on Suspension and Termination also allows MCC to reinstate eligibility when countries demonstrate a clear policy reversal, a remediation of MCC’s concerns, and an obvious commitment to MCC’s eligibility indicators, including achieving desired results.

In a number of cases, MCC has repurposed investments based on real-time evidence. In MCC’s first compact with Lesotho, MCC cancelled the Automated Clearing House Sub-Activity within the Private Sector Development Project after monitoring data determined that it would not accomplish the economic growth and poverty reduction outcomes envisioned during compact development. The remaining \$600,000 in the sub-activity was transferred to the Debit Smart Card Sub-Activity, which targeted expanding financial services to people living in remote areas of Lesotho. In Tanzania, the \$32 million Non-Revenue Water Activity was re-scoped after the final design estimates on two of the activity’s infrastructure investments indicated higher costs that would significantly impact their economic rates of return. As a result, \$13.2 million was reallocated to the Lower Ruvu Plant Expansion



**10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

Activity, \$9.6 million to the Morogoro Water Supply Activity, and \$400,000 for other environmental and social activities. In all of these country examples, the funding is either reallocated to activities with continued evidence of results or returned to MCC for investment in future programming.

**10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

For every investment in implementation, MCC undertakes a Quarterly Performance Review with senior leadership to review, among many issues, quarterly results indicator tracking tables. If programs are not meeting evidence-based targets, MCC undertakes mitigation efforts to work with the partner country and program implementers to achieve desired results. These efforts are program- and context-specific but can take the form of increased technical assistance, reallocated funds, and/or new methods of implementation. For example, in FY20 MCC reallocated funds in its compact with [Ghana](#) after the country failed to achieve agreed-upon policy reforms to ensure the sustainability of the investments. Upon program completion, if a program does not meet expected results targets, MCC works to understand and memorialize why and how this occurred, beginning with program design, the theory of change, and program implementation. The results and learning from this inquiry are published through the country's Star Report.

MCC also consistently monitors the progress of compact programs and their evaluations across sectors, using the learning from this evidence to make changes to MCC's operations. For example, as part of MCC's [Principles into Practice](#) initiative, in November 2017 MCC undertook a [review of its portfolio investments in roads](#) in an attempt to better design, implement, and evaluate road investments. Through evidence collected across 16 countries with road projects, MCC uncovered seven key lessons including the need to prioritize and select projects based on a road network analysis, to standardize content and quality of road data collection across road projects, and to consider cost and the potential for learning in determining how road projects are evaluated. In FY19, the lessons from this analysis are being applied to road projects in compacts in Côte d'Ivoire and Nepal as MCC roads investments see a shift toward increased maintenance investments. Critically, the evidence also pointed to MCC shifting how it undertakes road evaluations which led to a new request and re-bid for proposals for MCC's roads evaluations based on new guidelines and principles.



**42**

FY20 Score

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**  
**Administration**  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

**RESULTS** 2020 Invest in What Works  
**FOR AMERICA** Federal Standard of Excellence



**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) has demonstrated a commitment to evidence-based grantmaking. For example, [Mental Health Block Grant](#) (MHBG) included a 10% set aside for evidence-based interventions to address the needs of individuals with early serious mental illness, including psychotic disorders. As a result, SAMHSA scores well in Results for America's Federal Standard of Excellence criteria on [use of evidence in non-competitive grant programs](#) (criteria 9). Congress should continue to maintain this 10% set aside in future appropriations, even though the agency has requested a [50% reduction in this set aside for FY21](#).

In years prior to FY20, SAMHSA had a public-facing evaluation policy that governed research and evaluation activities across the agency. In FY20, it appears that SAMHSA has removed its Evaluation Policy and Procedure (P&P), which has publicly underpinned SAMHSA's clear commitment to research and evaluation. Over the last several years, SAMHSA similarly rolled back various public evidence-based resources -- like in FY18 when the [agency suspended its evidence-based clearinghouse](#), the National Registry of Evidence-based Practices, which supported states and grantees in their selection and implementation of mental health and substance abuse evidence-based interventions.

*Read more about the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence [here](#).*

**1. Leadership:** Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 9 points)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**1.1 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Evaluation Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 313)**

The director of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) [Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality](#) (CBHSQ) [Office of Evaluation](#) serves as the agency’s evaluation lead with key evaluation staff housed in this division. According to the SAMHSA [website](#): “The Office of Evaluation is responsible for providing centralized planning and management of program evaluation across SAMHSA in partnership with program originating Centers.” SAMHSA evaluations are funded from program funds that are used for service grants, technical assistance, and for evaluation activities. Evaluations have also been funded from recycled funds from grants or other contract activities, as described in the [FY21 Congressional Justification](#).

**1.2 Did the agency have a senior leader with the budget and staff to serve as the agency’s Chief Data Officer (or equivalent)? (Example: Evidence Act 202(e))**

CBHSQ, led by its [Director](#), designs and carries out special data collection and analytic projects to examine issues for SAMHSA and other federal agencies and is the government’s lead agency for behavioral health statistics, as designated by the Office of Management and Budget.

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

**1.3 Did the agency have a governance structure to coordinate the activities of its evaluation officer, chief data officer, statistical officer, performance improvement officer, and other related officials in order to support, improve, and evaluate the agency’s major programs?**

The SAMHSA [website](#) states: “The [Office of Evaluation](#) is responsible for providing centralized planning and management of program evaluation across SAMHSA in partnership with program originating Centers, providing oversight and management of agency quality improvement and performance management activities and for advancing agency goals and objectives related to program evaluation, performance measurement, and quality improvement.” The Evaluation Office describes 10 areas of support it provides to the Centers, including:

1. Develops evaluation language for Request for Proposals (RFPs), Request for Applications (RFAs), and other funding announcements to ensure a clear statement of evaluation expectations in the announcements;
2. Develops and implements standard measures for evaluating program performance and improvement of services;
3. Manages the design of SAMHSA program evaluations in collaboration with the relevant Center(s);
4. Monitors evaluation contracts to ensure implementation of planned evaluation and provides early feedback regarding program start-up for use in agency decision-making;
5. Works collaboratively with the National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory to provide support for SAMHSA evaluations;
6. Oversees the identification of a set of performance indicators to monitor each SAMHSA program in collaboration with program staff and the development of periodic program profiles for use in agency planning, program change, and reporting to departmental and external organizations;
7. Provides collaboration, guidance, and systematic feedback on SAMHSA’s programmatic investments to support the agency’s policy and program decisions;
8. Analyzes data in support of agency needs and develops evaluation and performance related reports in response to internal and external request;
9. Utilizes SAMHSA’s Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS) which serves as a mechanism for the collection of performance data from agency grantees; and
10. Responds to agency and departmental requests for performance measurement data and information; and conducts a range of analytic and support activities to promote the use of performance data and information in the monitoring and management of agency programs and initiatives

**1. Leadership: Did the agency have senior staff members with the authority, staff, and budget to build and use evidence to inform the agency’s major policy and program decisions in FY20?**

While evaluation authority, staff, and resources are decentralized and found throughout the agency, SAMHSA is composed of four Centers, the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) and the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ).

As such, CMHS, CSAT, and CSAP oversee grantee portfolios and evaluations of those portfolios with the support of the Office of Evaluation. Evaluation decisions within SAMHSA are made within each Center specific to their program priorities and resources. Each of the three program Centers uses their program funds for conducting evaluations of varying types. CBHSQ, SAMHSA’s research arm, provides varying levels of oversight and guidance to the Centers for evaluation activities. CBHSQ also provides technical assistance related to data collection and analysis to assist in the development of evaluation tools and clearance package

**2. Evaluation and Research:** Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?

FY20 Score  
**2**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**2.1 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation policy? (Example: Evidence Act 313(d))**

Formerly, SAMHSA had an [Evaluation Policy and Procedure](#) (P&P) that provided guidance across the agency regarding all program evaluations. Under “[Evaluation Policies](#),” the SAMHSA website states: “Under [the] Evidence Act, federal agencies are expected to expand their capacity for engaging in program evaluation by designating evaluation officers, developing learning agendas; producing annual evaluation plans, and enabling a workforce to conduct internal evaluations. To this end, SAMHSA seeks to promote rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, and ethics in the conduct of its evaluations.”

**2.2 Did the agency have an agency-wide evaluation plan? (Example: Evidence Act 312(b))**

While the [Evaluation P&P](#) served as the agency’s formal evaluation plan, a updated, draft evaluation plan is not available.

**2.3 Did the agency have a learning agenda (evidence-building plan) and did the learning agenda describe the agency’s process for engaging stakeholders including, but not limited to the general public, state and local governments, and researchers/academics in the development of that agenda? (Example: Evidence Act 312)**

As of August 2020, no public learning agenda is available on SAMHSA’s website. However, SAMHSA has posted a [National Research Agenda on Homelessness](#).

**2.4 Did the agency publicly release all completed program evaluations?**

As of August 2020, no evaluation reports or summaries are posted on the website, including any [ongoing evaluation studies](#). However, the publications page lists [63 reports](#), of which nine appears to be evaluation reports. A [word search](#) of SAMHSA’s

**2. Evaluation and Research: Did the agency have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and learning agenda (evidence-building plan), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed program evaluations in FY20?**

website for the term “evaluation” yielded five results, none of which are evaluation reports.

The following criteria is used to determine whether an evaluation is significant: (1) whether the evaluation was mandated by Congress; (2) whether there are high priority needs in states and communities; (3) whether the evaluation is for a new or congressionally-mandated program; (4) the extent to which the program is linked to key agency initiatives; (5) the level of funding; (6) the level of interest from internal and external stakeholders; and (7) the potential to inform practice, policy, and/or budgetary decision-making. Results from significant evaluations are made available on SAMHSA’s evaluation [website](#).

**2.5 What is the coverage, quality, methods, effectiveness, and independence of the agency’s evaluation, research, and analysis efforts? (Example: Evidence Act 315, subchapter II (c)(3)(9))**

SAMHSA did not describe progress in developing an interim or draft Capacity Assessment. In 2017, SAMHSA formed a new workgroup, the Cross-Center Evaluation Review Board (CCERB). According to the former Evaluation P&P, the CCERB reviews and provides oversight of significant evaluation activities for SAMHSA, from contract planning to evaluation completion and at critical milestones, and is comprised of representatives from each of the centers, and Office of Tribal Affairs and Policy (OTAP) for cultural competency consultation, as necessary. CCERB staff provide support for program-specific and administration-wide evaluations. It is unclear if the CCERB still exists. A word search of the SAMHSA website (August 2020) for “Cross-Center Evaluation Review Board” yielded no results.

**2.6 Did the agency use rigorous evaluation methods, including random assignment studies, for research and evaluation purposes?**

SAMHSA does not list any completed evaluation reports on its evaluation [website](#). Of the nine evaluation reports found on the [publications page](#), none appear to use experimental methods. According to the Evaluation P&P (p. 5): “evaluations should be rigorously designed to the fullest extent possible and include ‘...inferences about cause and effect [that are] well founded (internal validity), [...] clarity about the populations, settings, or circumstances to which results can be generalized (external validity); and requires the use of measures that accurately capture the intended information (measurement reliability and validity).’



## Draft 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence

### **3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

FY20 Score  
**1**  
(out of 10 points)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

#### **3.1 \_\_\_\_ (Name of agency) invested \$ \_\_\_\_ on evaluations, evaluation technical assistance, and evaluation capacity-building, representing \_\_% of the agency's \$ \_\_\_\_ billion FY20 budget.**

Results for America was unable to determine the amount of resources SAMHSA invested in evaluations in FY20.<sup>2</sup>

#### **3.2 Did the agency have a budget for evaluation and how much was it? (Were there any changes in this budget from the previous fiscal year?)**

Results for America was unable to determine the budget for evaluation at SAMHSA and, thus, any changes from the previous fiscal year. SAMHSA evaluations are funded from program funds that are used for service grants, technical assistance, and for evaluation activities. Each of the three program Centers uses their program funds for conducting evaluations of varying types. Evaluations have also been funded from recycled funds from grants or other contract activities.

#### **3.3 Did the agency provide financial and other resources to help city, county, and state governments or other grantees build their evaluation capacity (including technical assistance funds for data and evidence capacity building)?**

SAMHSA's [Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#) aims to provide communities, clinicians, policy-makers and others in the field with the information and tools they need to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings. The Center lists nine technical assistance projects, two of which appear to provide financial or other resources to help city,

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<sup>2</sup> Results for America was unable to determine the amount of resources SAMHSA invested in evaluations in FY20 for criterion #3.

## Draft 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence

### **3. Resources: Did the agency invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations in FY20?**

(Examples: Impact studies; implementation studies; rapid cycle evaluations; evaluation technical assistance, rigorous evaluations, including random assignments)

county, and state governments or other grantees build evaluation capacity (as of September 2019):

- The [Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy \(BRSS TACS\)](#) advances recovery supports and services for people with mental or substance use disorders and their families. The BRSS TACS [website](#) indicates it has provided training and technical assistance for building the capacity of peer-run, recovery community, and family organizations through evaluation, among six other topics.
- The [National Training and Technical Assistance Center for Child, Youth & Family Mental Health \(NTTAC\)](#) provides states, tribes, and communities with training and technical assistance on children's behavioral health, with a focus on systems of care. NTTAC's [Training and Technical Assistance activities](#) for clinical best practices, wraparound services, and workforce development focus on evaluation, fidelity assessment, and quality assurance, among nine other topics.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 10 points)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**4.1 Did the agency have a strategic plan with outcome goals, program objectives (if different), outcome measures, and program measures (if different)?**

The SAMHSA [Strategic Plan FY2019-FY2023](#) outlines five priority areas with goals and measurable objectives to carry out the vision and mission of SAMHSA. For each priority area, an overarching goal and series of measurable objectives are described followed by examples of key performance and outcome measures SAMHSA will use to track progress.

**4.2 Does the agency use data/evidence to improve outcomes and return on investment?**

According to the SAMHSA [website](#), the [Office of Evaluation](#) “oversees the identification of a set of performance indicators to monitor each SAMHSA program in collaboration with program staff and the development of periodic program profiles for use in agency planning, program change, and reporting to departmental and external organizations” and “utilizes SAMHSA’s Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS) which serves as a mechanism for the collection of performance data from agency grantees.”

According to the [FY2019-FY2023 Strategic Plan](#) (pp. 21-22), SAMHSA will modernize the Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS) by 1) capturing real-time data for discretionary grant programs in order to monitor their progress, impact, and effectiveness, and 2) developing benchmarks and disseminating annual Performance Evaluation Reports for all SAMHSA discretionary grant programs.

**4. Performance Management/Continuous Improvement: Did the agency implement a performance management system with outcome-focused goals and aligned program objectives and measures, and did it frequently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance in FY20?**

(Example: Performance stat systems, frequent outcomes-focused data-informed meetings)

The Centers have historically managed internal performance review boards to periodically review grantee performance and provide corrective actions as needed. The SAMHSA [website](#) states that the [Office of Evaluation](#) is charged with “providing oversight and management of agency quality improvement and performance management activities and for advancing agency goals and objectives related to program evaluation, performance measurement, and quality improvement.”

**4.3 Did the agency have a continuous improvement or learning cycle processes to identify promising practices, problem areas, possible causal factors, and opportunities for improvement? (Examples: stat meetings, data analytics, data visualization tools, or other tools that improve performance)**

As described on the SAMHSA website, the Office of Evaluation supports continuous improvement and learning in several ways:

- Analyzes data in support of agency needs and develops evaluation and performance related reports in response to internal and external request;
- Oversees the identification of a set of performance indicators to monitor each SAMHSA program in collaboration with program staff and the development of periodic program profiles for use in agency planning, program change, and reporting to departmental and external organizations;
- Utilizes SAMHSA’s Performance Accountability and Reporting System (SPARS) which serves as a mechanism for the collection of performance data from agency grantees; and
- Responds to agency and departmental requests for performance measurement data and information; and conducts a range of analytic and support activities to promote the use of performance data and information in the monitoring and management of agency programs and initiatives.

In 2016, SAMHSA’s [Office of Financial Resources](#) (OFR) established a Program Integrity Review Team (PIRT) staffed by representatives from each of its four Centers and managed by OFR. However, information about PIRT is no longer publicly available as of November 2020.

**5. Data:** Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

FY20 Score

**5**

(out of 10 points)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**5.1 Did the agency have a strategic data plan, including an open data policy? (Example: Evidence Act 202(c), Strategic Information Resources Plan)**

The SAMHSA [Strategic Plan FY2019-FY2023](#) (pp. 20-23) outlines five priority areas to carry out the vision and mission of SAMHSA, including Priority 4: Improving Data Collection, Analysis, Dissemination, and Program and Policy Evaluation. This Priority includes three objectives: 1) Develop consistent data collection strategies to identify and track mental health and substance use needs across the nation; 2) Ensure that all SAMHSA programs are evaluated in a robust, timely, and high-quality manner; and 3) Promote access to and use of the nation's substance use and mental health data and conduct program and policy evaluations and use the results to advance the adoption of evidence-based policies, programs, and practices. The SAMHSA [website](#) states: "CBHSQ coordinates an integrated data strategy, which includes collecting data each year on the national incidence and prevalence of various forms of mental illness and substance use."

**5.2 Did the agency have an updated comprehensive data inventory? (Example: Evidence Act 3511)**

SAMHSA's [Data and Dissemination site](#) identifies eight [data collection](#) initiatives: the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#) (NSDUH); [Treatment Episode Data Set](#) (TEDS); [National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services](#) (N-SSATS); the [National Mental Health Services Survey](#) (N-MHSS); [Drug Abuse Warning Network](#) (DAWN); [Mental Health Client-Level Data](#) (MH-CLD); [Uniform Reporting System](#) (URS); and [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive](#) (SAMHDA). SAMHSA has made numerous administrative and survey datasets publicly available for secondary use.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.3 Did the agency promote data access or data linkage for evaluation, evidence-building, or program improvement? (Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; downloadable machine-readable, de-identified tagged data; Evidence Act 3520(c))**

The Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ) oversees data collection initiatives and provides publicly available datasets so that some data can be shared with researchers and other stakeholders while preserving client confidentiality and privacy.

SAMHSA's [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive](#) (SAMHDA) contains substance use disorder and mental illness research data available for restricted and public use. SAMHDA promotes the access and use of SAMHSA's substance abuse and mental health data by providing public-use data files and documentation for download and online analysis tools to support a better understanding of this critical area of public health.

**5.4 Did the agency have policies and procedures to secure data and protect personal, confidential information? (Example: differential privacy; secure, multiparty computation; homomorphic encryption; or developing audit trails)**

SAMHSA's [Performance and Accountability and Reporting System](#) (SPARS) hosts the data entry, technical assistance request, and training system for grantees to report performance data to SAMHSA. SPARS serves as the data repository for the Administration's three centers, Center for Substance Abuse and Prevention (CSAP), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), and Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). In order to safeguard confidentiality and privacy, the current data transfer agreement limits the use of grantee data to internal reports so that data collected by SAMHSA grantees will not be available to share with researchers or stakeholders beyond SAMHSA, and publications based on grantee data will not be permitted.

**5. Data: Did the agency collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data - consistent with strong privacy protections - to improve (or help other entities improve) outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and/or the performance of federal, state, local, and other service providers programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Model data-sharing agreements or data-licensing agreements; data tagging and documentation; data standardization; open data policies; data-use policies)

**5.5 Did the agency provide assistance to city, county, and/or state governments, and/or other grantees on accessing the agency's datasets while protecting privacy?**

The [Center of Excellence for Protected Health Information](#) (CoE for PHI) is a SAMHSA funded technical assistance project designed to develop and increase access to simple, clear, and actionable educational resources, training, and technical assistance for consumers and their families, state agencies, and communities to promote patient care while protecting confidentiality. According to the SAMHSA website: "the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) data are available (1) as pre-published estimates, (2) via online analyses systems, and (3) as microdata files." A description of NSDUH products can be found under the [NSDUH landing page](#).

Through SAMHSA's [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive](#) (SAMHDA) SAMHSA has partnered with the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) to host restricted-use National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) data at their Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (RDCs). RDCs are secure facilities that provide access to a range of restricted-use microdata for statistical purposes.

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

FY20 Score  
**4**  
(out of 10 points)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**6.1 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *research and evaluation* purposes?**

There is great diversity across SAMHSA programming, ranging from community-level prevention activities to residential programs for pregnant and postpartum women with substance misuse issues. While this diversity allows SAMHSA to be responsive to a wide set of vulnerable populations, it limits the utility of a common evidence framework for the entire agency. Within Centers (the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and the Center for Mental Health Services), consistent evidence frameworks are in use and help to shape the process of grant-making (e.g., Center staff are familiar with the pertinent evidence base for their particular portfolios).

In 2011, based on the model of the National Quality Strategy, SAMHSA developed the [National Behavioral Health Quality Framework](#) (NBHQF). With the NBHQF, SAMHSA proposes a set of [core measures](#) to be used in a variety of settings and programs, as well as in evaluation and quality assurance efforts. The proposed measures are not intended to be a complete or total set of measures a payer, system, practitioner, or program may want to use to monitor the quality of its overall system or the care or activities it provides. SAMHSA encourages such entities to utilize these basic measures as appropriate as a consistent set of indicators of quality in behavioral health prevention, promotion, treatment, and recovery support efforts across the nation.

**6.2 Did the agency have a common evidence framework for *funding* decisions?**

SAMHSA has universal language about using evidence-based practices (EBPs) that is included in its Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) (entitled Using Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)). This language includes acknowledgement that,



**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

“EBPs have not been developed for all populations and/or service settings” thus encouraging applicants to “provide other forms of evidence” that a proposed practice is appropriate for the intended population. Specifically, the language states that applicants should: (1) document that the EBPs chosen are appropriate for intended outcomes; (2) explain how the practice meets SAMHSA’s goals for the grant program; (3) describe any modifications or adaptations needed for the practice to meet the goals of the project; (4) explain why the EBP was selected; (5) justify the use of multiple EBPs, if applicable; and (6) discuss training needs or plans to ensure successful implementation. Lastly, the language includes resources the applicant can use to understand EBPs. Federal grants officers work in collaboration with the SAMHSA Office of Financial Resources to ensure that grantee funding announcements clearly describe the evidence standard necessary to meet funding requirements.

SAMHSA developed a manual, [Developing a Competitive SAMHSA Grant Application](#), which explains information applicants will likely need for each section of the grant application. The manual has two sections devoted to evidence-based practices (p. 8, p. 26), including: 1) A description of the EBPs applicants plan to implement; 2) Specific information about any modifications applicants plan to make to the EBPs and a justification for making them; and 3) How applicants plan to monitor the implementation of the EBPs. In addition, if applicants plan to implement services or practices that are not evidence-based, they must show that these services/practices are effective.

**6.3 Did the agency have a *user friendly tool* that disseminated information on rigorously evaluated, evidence-based solutions (programs, interventions, practices, etc.) including information on what works where, for whom, and under what conditions?**

Until 2018, SAMHSA regarded the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) as the primary online user-friendly tool for identifying evidence-based programs for grantee implementation. In January 2018, SAMHSA [announced](#) that it was “moving to EBP [evidence-based practice] implementation efforts through targeted technical assistance and training that makes use of local and national experts and will assist programs with actually implementing services....” NREPP was taken offline in August 2018. In August 2019, the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative announced it had restored users’ access to this information, which can be found in the [Results First Clearinghouse Database](#). The [Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#)

**6. Common Evidence Standards/What Works Designations: Did the agency use a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding purposes; did that framework prioritize rigorous research and evaluation methods; and did the agency disseminate and promote the use of evidence-based interventions through a user-friendly tool in FY20?**

(Example: What Works Clearinghouses)

“provides communities, clinicians, policy-makers and others with the information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings.” As of August 2020, the EBP Resource Center included 149 items.

**6.4 Did the agency promote the *utilization* of evidence-based practices in the field to encourage implementation, replication, and application of evaluation findings and other evidence?**

In April 2018, SAMHSA [launched](#) the [Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#) (Resource Center) that aims to provide communities, clinicians, policy-makers and others in the field with the information and tools they need to incorporate evidence-based practices into their communities or clinical settings. The Resource Center contains a collection of science-based resources, including Treatment Improvement Protocols, toolkits, resource guides, and clinical practice guidelines, for a broad range of audiences. As of August 2020, the Resource Center includes 149 items, including 15 data reports, 24 toolkits, 24 fact sheets, and 96 practice guides.

The [Mental Health Technology Transfer Center \(MHTTC\) Network](#) works with organizations and treatment practitioners involved in the delivery of mental health services to strengthen their capacity to deliver effective evidence-based practices to individuals, including the full continuum of services spanning mental illness prevention, treatment, and recovery support. The [State Targeted Response Technical Assistance](#) (STR-TA), known as the Opioid Response Network, was created to support efforts to address opioid use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery, and to provide education and training at the local level in evidence-based practices.

To date SAMHSA has produced 11 [Evidence-Based Practice Knowledge Informing Transformation \(KIT\) guides](#) to help move the latest information available on effective behavioral health practices into community-based service delivery. The KITs contain information sheets, introductory videos, practice demonstration videos, and training manuals. Each KIT outlines the essential components of the evidence-based practice and provides suggestions collected from those who have successfully implemented them.

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

FY20 Score

**3**

(out of 7 points)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**7.1 Did the agency engage *leadership and staff* in its innovation efforts to improve the impact of its programs?**

SAMHSA participates in collaborations with other HHS agencies to promote innovative uses of data, technology and innovation across HHS to create a more effective government and improve the health of the nation, via the HHS IDEA Lab. SAMHSA has co-developed and submitted several innovative data utilization project proposals to the [Ignite Accelerator](#) of the HHS IDEA Lab, such as [Rapid Opioid Alert and Response](#) (ROAR), a project to monitor and prevent opioid overdoses by linking heroin users to resources and information.

**7.2 Did the agency have policies, processes, structures, or programs to promote innovation to improve the impact of its programs?**

Pursuant to the 21st Century Cures Act, SAMHSA established the [National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory](#) (NMHSUPL) as an office, led by a [Director](#). The NMHSUPL promotes evidence-based practices and service delivery models through evaluating models that would benefit from further development and through expanding, replicating, or scaling evidence-based programs across a wider area. Specifically, according to the SAMHSA [website](#), NMHSUPL:

- Identifies, coordinates, and facilitates the implementation of policy changes likely to have a significant effect on mental health, mental illness (especially severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorders), recovery supports, and the prevention and treatment of substance use disorder services;
- Works with CBHSQ to collect information from grantees under programs operated by the Administration in order to evaluate and disseminate information on evidence-based practices, including culturally and linguistically appropriate services, as appropriate, and service delivery models; and

**7. Innovation: Did the agency have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve the impact of its programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Prizes and challenges; behavioral science trials; innovation labs/accelerators; performance partnership pilots; demonstration projects or waivers with rigorous evaluation requirements)

- Carries out other activities as deemed necessary to continue to encourage innovation and disseminate evidence-based programs and practices.

The [SAMHSA Program Portal](#), a collection of technical assistance and training resources provided by the agency, provides behavioral health professionals with education and collaboration opportunities, and ample tools and technical assistance resources that promote innovation in practice and program improvement. Located within the Knowledge Network are groups such as the [Center for Financing Reform and Innovation](#), which works with states and territories, local policy makers, providers, consumers, and other stakeholders to promote innovative financing and delivery system reforms.

**7.3 Did the agency evaluate its innovation efforts, including using rigorous methods?**

SAMHSA does not list any completed evaluation reports on its evaluation [website](#). Of the nine evaluation reports found on the [publications page](#), none appear to use experimental methods.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**6**  
(out of 15 points)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**8.1 What were the agency’s five largest competitive programs and their appropriations amount (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the 5 largest competitive grant programs are:

1. [State Opioid Response Grants](#) (\$1.5 billion; eligible applicants: states);
2. Children Mental Health Services (\$1.25 billion; eligible applicants: States, Tribes, Communities, Territories);
3. [Strategic Prevention Framework](#) (\$119.5 million; eligible applicants: public and private nonprofit entities);
4. [Targeted Capacity Expansion – General](#) (\$100.2 million; eligible applicants: domestic public and private nonprofit entities);
5. [Project AWARE](#) (\$92 million; eligible applicants: State education agencies).

**8.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in its five largest competitive grant programs? (e.g., Were evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Was evidence a significant requirement?)**

The FY20 [State Opioid Response Grants application](#) required states to use evidence-based practices to address opioid use disorder (p. 19), as 1 of 5 evaluation criteria; however the application did not allot points for the various criteria.

The FY20 [Strategic Prevention Framework Grants application](#) states that applicants are expected to use evidence-based practices (p. 8), but this does not factor in the evaluation of applications (pp. 14-16).

The FY20 [Project AWARE State Education Agency Grants application](#) gave applicants 25 out of 100 points for the following: “Identify the Evidence-Based Practice(s) (EBPs) that will be used in each of the three LEAS [local educational agencies]. Discuss

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

how each EBP chosen is appropriate for your population(s) of focus and the outcomes you want to achieve. Describe any modifications that will be made to the EBP(s) and the reason the modifications are necessary” (p. 21).

The FY19 [Targeted Capacity Expansion Grants application](#) gave applicants 25 out of 100 points for proposing evidence-based services or practices (p. 19).

**8.3 Did the agency use its five largest competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

The [FY20 Strategic Prevention Framework Grants application](#) states that SAMHSA may negotiate additional terms and conditions with applicants prior to grant award, including “requirements relating to participation in a cross-site evaluation” (p. 51).

The FY20 [Project AWARE State Education Agency Grants application](#) states that SAMHSA may negotiate additional terms and conditions with applicants prior to grant award, including “requirements relating to participation in a cross-site evaluation” (p. 58).

The FY19 [Targeted Capacity Expansion Grants application](#) stated that SAMHSA may negotiate additional terms and conditions with applicants prior to grant award, including “requirements relating to participation in a cross-site evaluation” (p. 57).

**8.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to *allocate funds* in any other competitive grant program (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

Results for America was unable to identify any examples.

**8.5 What are the agency’s 1-2 strongest examples of how competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Results for America was unable to identify any examples.

**8. Use of Evidence in Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Tiered-evidence frameworks; evidence-based funding set-asides; priority preference points or other preference scoring for evidence; Pay for Success provisions)

**8.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

Results for America was unable to identify any examples.

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

FY20 Score  
**5**  
(out of 10 points)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**9.1 What were the agency’s five largest non-competitive programs and their appropriation amounts (and were city, county, and/or state governments eligible to receive funds from these programs)?**

In FY20, the five largest non-competitive grant programs are:

1. [Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program](#) (\$1.86 billion; eligible grantees: states);
2. [Community Mental Health Block Grant Program](#) (\$722.5 million; eligible grantees: states);
3. [Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness](#) (PATH) Program (\$64.6 million; eligible grantees: states); and
4. [Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness](#) (PAIMI) Program (\$36.1 million; eligible grantees: states).

**9.2 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in its five largest non-competitive grant programs? (e.g., Are evidence-based interventions/practices required or suggested? Is evidence a significant requirement?)**

In FY20, Congress maintained the 10 percent set-aside for evidence-based programs in SAMHSA’s Mental Health Grant Block (MHBG) grant to address the needs of individuals with early serious mental illness, including psychotic disorders, regardless of the age of the individual at onset (see p. 48 of the [FY20-FY21 Block Grant Application](#)). In the [FY21 budget request](#) (p. 348), SAMHSA expressed its desire to reduce the set-aside in half to 5%.

The [FY20-FY21 Block Grant Application](#) requires states seeking Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) and Substance Abuse and Treatment Prevention Block Grant (SAGB) funds to identify specific priorities. For each priority, states must identify the relevant goals, measurable objectives, and at least one-performance indicator for each objective, which must include strategies to deliver evidence-based individualized treatment plans (p. 21); evidence-based interventions for substance use or dependence (p. 21); building provider capacity to deliver evidence-based, trauma-specific interventions (p. 22); evidence-based programs, policies,



**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

and practices in prevention efforts (p. 22); evidence-based models to prevent substance misuse (p. 23).

**9.3 Did the agency use its five largest non-competitive grant programs to *build evidence*? (e.g., requiring grantees to participate in evaluations)**

The [FY20-FY21 Block Grant Application](#) requires states applying for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment funds to create an evaluation plan, which must include at least five specified evaluation elements. Additionally, the application [specifies](#) that SAMHSA will work with the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to plan for program evaluation and data collection related to demonstrating program effectiveness of the Mental Health Block Grant.

**9.4 Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in any other non-competitive grant program (besides its five largest grant programs)?**

Results for America was unable to identify any examples.

**9.5 What are the agency's 1-2 strongest examples of how non-competitive grant recipients achieved better outcomes and/or built knowledge of what works or what does not?**

Results for America was unable to identify any examples.

**9.6 Did the agency provide guidance which makes clear that city, county, and state government, and/or other grantees can or should use the funds they receive from these programs to conduct program evaluations and/or to strengthen their evaluation capacity-building efforts?**

The [FY20-FY21 Block Grant Application](#) clarified that “Section 1921 of the PHS [Public Health Services] Act (42 U.S.C. § 300x-21) authorizes the States to obligate and expend SABG [Substance Abuse and Treatment Prevention Block Grant] funds to plan, carry out and evaluate activities and services designed to prevent and treat substance use disorders” (p. 16). The Application

**9. Use of Evidence in Non-Competitive Grant Programs: Did the agency use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds from its non-competitive grant programs in FY20?**

(Examples: Evidence-based funding set-asides; requirements to invest funds in evidence-based activities; Pay for Success provisions)

further clarifies that states “may utilize SABG funds to train personnel to conduct fidelity assessments of evidence-based practices” (p. 35).

## Draft 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence

### **10. Repurpose for Results: In FY20, did the agency shift funds away from or within any practice, policy, or program that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

FY20 Score

4

(out of 8 points)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

#### **10.1 Did the agency have policy(ies) for determining when to shift funds away from grantees, practices, policies, interventions, and/or programs that consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes, and did the agency act on that policy?**

As a matter of policy, SAMHSA uses the term "[restricted status](#)" to describe grant recipients that are financially unstable, have inadequate financial management systems, or are poor programmatic performers. Grants placed on restricted status require additional monitoring and have additional award conditions that must be met before funds can be drawn. SAMHSA adheres to HHS [Grants Policy Statement](#), including the policy on suspension or termination, which states: "If a recipient has failed to materially comply with the terms and conditions of award, the OPDIV [Grant-Awarding Operating Division] may suspend the grant, pending corrective action, or may terminate the grant for cause" (p. II-89).

The FY18 [State Opioid Response Grants](#) program required states and subgrantees to only use evidence-based treatments, practices, and interventions. As such, SAMHSA disallowed the use of medical withdrawal (detoxification) in isolation since it "is not the standard of care for OUD, is associated with a very high relapse rate, and significantly increases an individual's risk for opioid overdose and death if opioid use is resumed" (p. 6). And SAMHSA clarified: "SAMHSA will monitor use of these funds to assure that they are being used to support evidence-based treatment and recovery supports and will not permit use of these funds for non-evidence-based approaches" (p. 7). Further, under Standard Funding Restrictions, SAMHSA included: "non-evidence-based treatment approaches" (p. 54).

## Draft 2020 Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence

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(Examples: Requiring low-performing grantees to re-compete for funding; removing ineffective interventions from allowable use of grant funds; incentivizing or urging grant applicants to stop using ineffective practices in funding announcements; proposing the elimination of ineffective programs through annual budget requests; incentivizing well-designed trials to fill specific knowledge gaps; supporting low-performing grantees through mentoring, improvement plans, and other forms of assistance; using rigorous evaluation results to shift funds away from a program)

In January 2018, SAMHSA [announced](#) it would shift resources away from the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) toward targeted technical assistance and training for implementing evidence-based practices. The reasoning was that NREPP had flawed and skewed presentation of evidence-based interventions, which “did not address the spectrum of needs of those living with serious mental illness and substance use disorders.”

#### **10.2 Did the agency identify and provide support to agency programs or grantees that failed to achieve desired outcomes?**

Results for America was unable to identify any examples.