Texas Higher Education
COORDINATING BOARD

TEXAS EVIDENCE-BASED GRANT-MAKING

The RFA incorporates the Texas Evidence-Based Grant-Making (TEBGM) model. The core purpose of TEBGM is to support and develop high-quality evidence-based programs in Texas, while allowing colleges the flexibility to propose new programs for which data do not yet exist. This section introduces the Texas Evidence-Based Grant-Making methodology, including:

- a glossary of evidence terms;
- the rationale for the Texas Evidence-Based Grant-Making approach; and
- the Texas Evidence-Based Grant-Making evidence tiers.

GLOSSARY OF EVIDENCE TERMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Intervention: An action taken to improve a situation

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

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

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

Performance Metrics: Measure the performance of a program through the documentation

of specific data sets and measurement methodologies, allowing a basis to be formed regarding overall program success in achieving intended goals, outputs, and outcomes

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

WHY EVIDENCE-BASED GRANT-MAKING?

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

Grant funding can be used to facilitate innovative approaches toward improved job training programs and to scale proven methods that lead to better employment outcomes for workers and higher productivity for employers in Texas. Texas is implementing a two-pronged approach that will link grant funds directly to common priority outcomes while continuing to support innovative practices. This approach will create incentives for grant applicants to identify and use program models that have a demonstrated record of effective outcomes. To continue to encourage innovative but less well-tested program models, the state has designed a tiered strategy.

Evidence tiers have been defined to support a graduated method for programs and applicants to adapt to evidence-based grants. Some grant programs in Texas have already introduced and defined performance-based outcomes metrics, and prior grant outcomes data will be required in the application process, where relevant effective practices that help participants develop the skills required to find and maintain employment. Grant applicants will be encouraged to consider and identify applicable evidence. Similarly, the outcomes of pilot programs can be shared to incentivize replication if the measures are clearly defined and relevant to the priority outcomes.

BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE

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

EVIDENCE TIER DEFINITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

This section explains the evidence tiers and requirements for each. See below for instructions on how to determine the correct evidence tier for the applicant's proposed project.

High Evidence Program Tier

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

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

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

The proposed program must be a replication of a program cited by CLEAR or Other Entity (see next page) as a high evidence program with positive and meaningful outcomes. An explanation of (1) why the program is appropriate for the proposed region and population and (2) whether similar outcomes are expected must be included in the Documentation of Evidence section of this application.

Moderate Evidence Program Tier

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

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

For a full description of criteria to achieve the Moderate Evidence rating, please see Causal Evidence Guidelines, Version 2.1. at CLEAR.dol.gov.

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

Performance Program Tier

These programs offer outputs and outcomes data and information as evidence, conduct assessments of participants to demonstrate effectiveness of their programs, and conduct at least one post program follow up to track the outcomes of participants. The data provided to demonstrate evidence for this tier must be output and outcomes data from programs that the applicant conducted during the past five years.

Primary support for these programs' effectiveness is provided through historical data showing that the program creates an intended change in participants, and that participants show a positive outcome following participation in the program. To be reviewed based on previously implemented programs, an applicant must have historical output and outcome data for at least two years, either directly collected or from the similar program being used as evidence.

Experience Program Tier

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

New Program Tier

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

WHERE TO ACCESS MODELS FOR HIGH OR MODERATE TIERS DEFINITIONS AND STUDIES

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)
CLEAR's mission is to make research on labor topics more accessible to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public more broadly so that it can inform their decisions about labor policies and programs. CLEAR identifies and summarizes many types of research, including descriptive, implementation, and impact studies. In addition, CLEAR assesses the quality of research that looks at the effectiveness of policies and programs.
Link: https://clear.dol.gov/study_database

Other Entities

- Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse. Link: https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/studies.

- Link: https://www.crimesolutions.gov/advsearch.aspx.