

## GCC Request for Applications Evidence Frequently Asked Questions

The NC Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) is partnering with the NC Governor’s Crime Commission (GCC) to develop and implement evidence-based grantmaking into its Request for Applications (RFAs) for the Byrne-JAG, Children’s Justice Act (CJA), Juvenile Justice/Title II, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants.

OSP and GCC drafted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) below to introduce prospective GCC grantee applicants to key evidence-based programming concepts and definitions. The FAQs are not meant to require grantees to meet these standards but instead educate prospective grantees on evidence-based programming concepts and definitions. GCC anticipates moving in the direction of prioritizing funding towards evidence-based programming in future RFA funding cycles.

1. The GCC [Request for Applications \(RFA\) Scoring Matrix](#) includes a criterion “Follows proven program techniques” and the Glossary includes definitions for “Evidence-based” and “Promising Practices.” What resources are available to grantees to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different types of evidence-based project activities included in my grant proposal?

*A key resource prospective GCC grantees should review is the [North Carolina Evidence Scale](#) which provides a shared framework to assess the effectiveness of a program or policy (positive or negative) and the level of confidence one can have in the findings based on the evaluation methods. The rating scale ranges from "Proven Harmful" to "Proven Effective."*

NC Evidence Scale Definitions	
<b>Proven Effective</b>	A service or practice that is proven effective offers a high level of research on effectiveness for at least one outcome of interest. This is determined through multiple qualifying evaluations outside of North Carolina or one or more qualifying North Carolina-based evaluations. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
<b>Promising</b>	A promising service or practice has some research demonstrating effectiveness for at least one outcome of interest. This may be a single qualifying evaluation that is not contradicted by other such studies but does not meet the full criteria for the proven effective designation. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
<b>Theory-based</b>	A theory-based service or practice has no research on effectiveness or research designs that do not meet the standards for “promising” or “proven effective.” These services and practices may have a well-constructed logic model or theory of change that has not been tested. This ranking is neutral. Services may move to another category after research reveals their causal impact on measured outcomes.

<b>Mixed Effects</b>	A mixed effects service or practice offers a high level of research on the effectiveness of multiple outcomes. However, the outcomes have contradictory effects, and there is not additional analysis to quantify the overall favorable or unfavorable impact of this service. This is determined through multiple qualifying studies outside of North Carolina or one or more qualifying North Carolina-based evaluations. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
<b>No Effect</b>	A service or practice with no effects has no impact on the measured outcome. It does not include the service’s potential effect on other outcomes. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
<b>Proven Harmful</b>	A service or practice that is proven harmful offers a high level of research that shows participation adversely affects outcomes of interest. This is determined through multiple qualifying evaluations outside of North Carolina or one or more qualifying North Carolina-based evaluations. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.

*For example, “Proven Effective” means we can be confident that the program or policy will generate meaningful outcomes, based on the findings of multiple rigorous experimental evaluations that employ a randomized control trial (RCT) or a quasi-experimental research design (QED). Both RCTs and QEDs use treatment and control groups to determine the outcomes caused by program participation.*

*GCC encourages prospective grantee applicants in their Project Narratives to describe the underlying rationale and evidence-base for their project activities. GCC anticipates that many proposed project activities will fall under the “Theory-based” rating. Theory-based project activities may be backed by strong theoretical models or output metrics, but experimental or QED evaluations are needed to measure their effects.*

*For more information on evidence in state government, visit the [NC Office of Strategic Partnerships About Evidence page](#) and [NC Office of State Budget and Management’s Using Evidence to Drive Decisions page](#).*

- 2. GCC uses the terms “rigorous scientific research methods” and “scientific research methods” in its definitions “Evidence-based” & “Promising Practices” in the Byrne-JAG, CJA, Juvenile Justice/Title II, VAWA, and VOCA Requests for Applications (RFA) Glossaries. What do these terms mean in the RFAs?**

*“Rigorous Scientific Methods” and “Scientific Research Methods” are research methods that use an experimental or quasi-experimental research design. Experimental evaluation designs use randomized control trials (RCTs) which provide the strongest evidence of causal impact. RCT evaluations randomly assign people to receive the program or not and then compare the outcomes between these two groups. Quasi-experimental designs (QEDs) use research methods to statistically construct control groups to approximate randomization as closely as possible. Some common QED methods are difference-in-difference, propensity score matching, regression discontinuity. Both RCTs and QEDs use treatment and control groups to determine if program participation caused observed outcomes of interest.*

**3. I am not familiar with experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation methods like RCTs and QEDs. Where can I find resources to learn more?**

*The NC Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) and the [SERVE Center](#) at UNC Greensboro have hosted three Supporting State Agencies with Program Evaluations workshops. The [first workshop](#) (May 2022) was developed following OSP’s [January 2022 Monthly Connect](#) on conducting randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in state government. Stemming from participant interest, OSP and the SERVE Center hosted two additional sessions ([September 2022](#) and [March 2023](#)). These recorded and publicly available workshops include an introduction to the purpose and value of considering causal impact evaluations.*

*Additional Resources:*

- [Introduction to randomized evaluations | The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab](#)
- [Quasi-Experimental Evaluation Designs](#)
- [The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation: Third Edition | The Administration for Children and Families](#)

**4. Where can I find research on the effectiveness of my programs?**

*OSP conducted a training “How to Use Evidence Clearinghouses for State Agency Decision Making.” This [slide presentation](#) provides an overview of different types of evidence, their quality, and their applicability to agency priority research questions. The presentation also shares guidance on how to use evidence clearinghouses to help inform decision making. OSP collaborated with NC Office of State Budget and Management (NCOSBM) to [develop an accompanying guide](#) that includes resources for finding existing research literature and sources for leveraging existing state data.*