

Texas Talent Connection Grant Program

Evidence-based grant making in Texas

Why evidence-based grant making?

The most effective job training programs can ultimately help change a person's life resulting in high-quality, meaningful employment in a career pathway that is well-suited to the individual and supports economic mobility. Texas Talent Connection grant programs serve populations with significant barriers to employment and seek to increase the number of job seekers prepared to attain and retain jobs in high-demand fields while providing skilled workers for Texas employers.

In 2020, Texas implemented a two-pronged approach to introduce evidence-based grant making in workforce programs. Texas Talent Connection continues to support new, innovative practices while linking grant funds directly to common priority outcomes. This evidence-based approach creates incentives for grant applicants to identify and use program models that demonstrate a record of effective outcomes. To continue to encourage innovative, but less-tested program models, the state designed a tiered strategy. Evidence tiers are defined to support a graduated method for programs and applicants to adapt to evidence-based grants.

Outcome-based applications and reporting in state workforce grant programs help the state learn about the implementation, effectiveness, and cost of various approaches. The interventions that have been introduced by the workforce system to date have been producing a growing body of evidence that can be used to identify effective practices that help participants develop the skills required to find and maintain employment. Similarly, outcomes of pilot programs can be shared to incentivize replication if the measures are clearly defined and relevant to the priority outcomes. Applicants will find that while the application asks for evidence to support the proposed program design and anticipated outcomes, all programs are encouraged to apply. The process awards bonus points for program design and anticipated outcomes that are based on evidence.

For more information on evidence-based grant making, visit <https://www.twc.texas.gov/agency/texas-workforce-commission-evidence-basedgrantmaking>.

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Evidence Tier Definitions and Requirements

High evidence program tier

High evidence programs are supported by rigorous evaluations of the program or 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. These 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](#) at [CLEAR.dol.gov](#), noting that applicants must have two or more studies that meet the High Evidence rating in CLEAR or Other Entity (see next page) to be considered for the High Evidence Program Tier.

The proposed program must be a replication of programs cited by CLEAR or OTHER Entity (see next page) as a high evidence program with positive and meaningful outcomes. In the Documentation of Evidence section of this application, applicants must include an explanation as to why the studies are appropriate, relevant to the proposed program, and whether similar outcomes are expected.

Moderate evidence program tier

Moderate evidence programs 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](#) 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. In the Documentation of Evidence section of this application, applicants must include an explanation as to why the study is appropriate, relevant to the proposed program, and whether similar outcomes are expected.

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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 outputs and outcomes data from programs that the applicant conducted in the past five years. Primary support for these programs' effectiveness is provided through historical data within the past five years 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 on the basis of previously implemented programs, an applicant must have historical output and outcome data for at least two years within the past five years, either directly collected or from the similar program being used as evidence.

Theory-based program tier

These programs have no research on effectiveness, because they are entirely new or do not have research or data that meets the standards of the other three evidence tiers. Theory-based programs have a well-constructed project design that lays out a clear depiction of what the program entails and how its inputs and activities are expected to produce the intended outputs and outcomes. To qualify for bonus points, applicants selecting this tier will be required to fill out a complete logic model, detailing the specific resources and activities that will be used to produce the intended outputs and outcomes of the program. An evaluation performed by an external entity on a program with a very similar design and documented outcomes may also be used to support this evidence tier.

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Where to access models for high or moderate tier programs

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 particular policies and programs.

<http://clear.dol.gov/study-database>

Other Entities:

Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse

<https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/studies>

CrimeSolutions

<https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/search-tips>

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Determining, selecting, and providing documentation for an evidence tier

SELECT ONLY ONE TIER by using the decision tree below.

1. Is the program developed internally, or is it based on the program design of another program or organization?
 - **Yes**, it is developed internally. Go to Question 2.
 - **No**, it is based on the program design of another program. Go to Question 5.

2. Is the program new or has it been offered in an essentially consistent and comparable way in past years?
 - **Yes**, the program is new.
 - Because the program is new and developed internally, select the Theory-Based Program Tier.
 - **No**, the program has been offered in past years. Go to Question 3.

3. In prior years, has data been collected on the outputs and outcomes of the program? Please refer to the Performance Chart on page 22 of the application for the relevant data sets.
 - **Yes**, data has been collected on the performance metrics. Go to Question 4.
 - **No**, data has not been collected on the performance metrics.
 - Because the program has been delivered previously but data was not collected on the performance metrics, select the Theory-Based Program Tier.

4. Has an evaluation of your program been reviewed by [DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\)](#) or Other Entity?
 - **Yes**, a program evaluation has been submitted to CLEAR or Other Entity.
 - If the program evaluation received a "high" rating and demonstrated both a positive and meaningful outcome and there is another review from CLEAR or Other Entity that supports the same, select the High Program Tier, and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High or Moderate Program Tier to reference the CLEAR or Other Entity Review Study.
 - If the program evaluation received a "moderate" rating and demonstrated both a positive and meaningful outcome, select the Moderate Program Tier and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High or Moderate Program Tier to reference the CLEAR or Other Entity Review Study.
 - If the program evaluation has not yet been reviewed, or received the "low" rating, select the Performance Program Tier, submit performance metrics, and complete the Performance Chart.
 - **No**, a program evaluation has not been submitted to CLEAR or Other Entity.
 - Select the Performance Program Tier and submit performance metrics and requirements in the Performance Chart.

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5. Is the design of your program essentially similar to the program design and theory of change of the original program that this application proposes to implement?
 - **Yes**, our program will be essentially similar and have high fidelity to the original. Go to Question 6.
 - **No**, our program will incorporate significant changes from the model program.
 - Because your program is not a high-fidelity implementation of an existing program, select the Theory-Based Program Tier.

6. Was an evaluation of the original program reviewed by CLEAR or Other Entity and is there another study from CLEAR or Other Entity that supports the same, and demonstrated both a positive and meaningful outcome?
 - **Yes**, an evaluation was reviewed by CLEAR or Other Entity and there is a second study that supports the same.
 - If the program evaluation received a “high” rating, select the High Program Tier, and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High or Moderate Evidence Program Tier to reference the CLEAR or Other Entity Review Study.
 - If the program evaluation received a “moderate” rating, select the Moderate Program Tier and complete the Documentation of Evidence Chart for the High or Moderate Evidence Program Tier to reference the CLEAR or Other Entity Review Study.
 - If the evaluation has not yet been reviewed or received the “low” rating, select the Performance Program Tier and complete the Performance Chart.
 - **No**, an evaluation was not submitted. Go to question 7.

7. Do you have performance data from the program or one that is similar that can be used to demonstrate the applicant's ability to achieve program outcomes?
 - Yes, we have performance data from the original program or one that is similar that we implemented within the past five years.
 - Select the Performance Program Tier and complete the Performance Chart as completely as possible with data from the original program.
 - No, we do not have performance metrics data from the original program.
 - Because your program does not have data from the original program select the Theory-Based Program Tier.

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Evidence Glossary

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 success in achieving intended goals, outputs, and outcomes

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