



Assessing the Evidence Behind Programming

If an organization wants to make the case that a specific impact is the result of programming they are providing in the real world (i.e., not as a part of a scientific study), the case is best made if one of the following is true.

➤ **Highest standard for making the case**

There have been controlled, scientific studies proving the programming being used – for the population being served – results in specific impact. Such programming is called **evidence-based programming**.

- The evidence might be strong or moderate, depending on the quality and number of scientific studies of the program.
- There are searchable databases of evidence-based programming (many can be found in ImpactStory™ resources).
- Evidence-based programming may come with surveys and a list of outcomes that can be used to assess impact in real life – although sometimes they are not well suited for real life.

➤ **Reasonable standard for making the case**

There is a body of scientific research that strongly suggests the programming being used – for the population being served – *should* result in specific impact. Such programming is called **evidence-informed programming**.

- There are no specific criteria for identifying programming as evidence-informed. The organization must use the scientific literature to defend why the programming is expected to result in impact. This needs to happen all the time because there are not enough evidence-based programs to address all problems in all environments. Evidence-based programs that are changed to fit your needs and community are then called evidence-informed.
- There are policy and practice organizations that conduct and compile research that help organizations understand the scientific evidence supporting various practices (many can be found in ImpactStory™ resources).
- There may or may not be established surveys and a list of outcomes which can be used to assess impact in real life.

➤ **Generally accepted standard for making the case**

There is consensus in the community of practice that the programming being used – for the population being served – results in specific impact. Such programming is called **best-practice programming**. Best-practice programming may be evidence-informed, but most often exists in the absence of scientific literature on the particular programming approach.

- There are no specific criteria for identifying programming as best-practice. Programming is often deemed best-practice, and published by the community of practice (e.g., the National Association of). Some of these can be found in ImpactStory™ resources.
- There may or may not be established surveys and a list of outcomes which can be used to assess impact in real life.