



# Program Assessment

Identifying what works in your state or locality

## Overview

Government leaders can improve public outcomes, reduce costs, and increase accountability by ensuring that resources are directed toward effective, cost-beneficial programs. A program assessment, the first component of the larger evidence-based policymaking framework<sup>1</sup> developed by the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, is a three-step process to help policymakers address key questions about their programs:<sup>2</sup>

- 1. What programs does the government fund?** Many policymakers want more information about the programs operating in their jurisdiction. To address this need, state and local governments can create program inventories—detailed lists of the interventions provided by all or select government agencies—that can help officials better align resources with needs, avoid duplication, and ensure that services reach the right clients.
- 2. Are the programs likely to work?** Rigorous research shows that some programs are much more likely than others to achieve desired outcomes. An evidence review categorizes programs by evidence of their effectiveness and enables government leaders to make more informed funding decisions and guide program monitoring and evaluation.
- 3. Do program benefits outweigh the costs?** An expensive program will not necessarily achieve better outcomes than a lower-cost option. Benefit-cost analyses help policymakers identify, fund, and advocate for interventions likely to generate the highest returns on taxpayer investment.

This brief describes a process that governments can use to learn about their programs and highlights best practices and resources to help states and localities conduct a program assessment.

## A Framework for Evidence-Based Policymaking

Evidence-based policymaking uses the best available research and information on program results to guide decisions at all stages of the policy process. It identifies what works, enables policymakers to use evidence in budget and policy decisions, monitors implementation, and measures key outcomes, using the collected information to continually improve program performance.

The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative's framework identifies five basic components of evidence-based policymaking:

1. **Program assessment.** Review available evidence on the effectiveness of public programs.
2. **Budget development.** Incorporate evidence of program effectiveness into budget decisions, giving funding priority to programs that deliver a high return on investment.
3. **Implementation oversight.** Ensure that programs are delivered effectively and in accordance with their design.
4. **Outcome monitoring.** Routinely measure and report outcome data to determine whether programs are achieving desired results.
5. **Targeted evaluation.** Conduct rigorous evaluations of new and untested programs.

## Inventory programs that government funds

Most government officials have limited information on the programs operating in their states or localities. Budget documents typically track information by organizational unit or expenditure type and rarely provide detail on the specific interventions that clients actually receive.<sup>3</sup> This lack of data tends to encourage traditional budget processes that treat all programs the same—whether through incremental increases or across-the-board cuts—without considering which are most effective at addressing community needs.<sup>4</sup> Traditional budgeting also obscures detail that is useful in identifying and eliminating redundancies and in ensuring better coordination of services that perform a similar function.

Policymakers with access to a program inventory—a detailed list of the interventions agencies are providing—better understand how government funds are being spent. And they can use the information to reduce wasteful spending and support programs that produce tangible results.

Government leaders have used program inventories to:

- **Address gaps in service.** A program inventory in Rhode Island helped corrections administrators determine the extent to which existing programs addressed the risks and needs of inmates and offenders under community supervision. “This inventory is the first time that capacity has been matched up with need,” said Brian Daniels, director of performance management in the Rhode Island Office of Management and Budget and coordinator of the state’s Results First Initiative.<sup>5</sup> “It helped us identify where there is the greatest need for expansion and understand how many more people we could serve with additional programming.”

- **Match clients with the right services.** Real-time information on program options and capacity can help decision-makers determine the best services for their clients. For example, to promote offender rehabilitation, some judges consider program availability when determining how to sentence a defendant.<sup>6</sup> An inventory can help judges identify and determine the capacity of programs available to defendants, ensuring that sentencing recommendations can be met with existing resources.
- **Identify and eliminate duplication.** Federal agencies and the Government Accountability Office have used program inventories to identify areas of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in service delivery and to estimate the savings that could be realized by eliminating those inefficiencies.<sup>7</sup> Some agencies have also used the information to strengthen collaboration among programs and to better understand how grants and contracted services can complement existing efforts.

## Getting started

As shown in Table 1, a program inventory is a list of the programs that receive government funding, along with information on each program’s activities, goals, caseload and capacity, and budget.

Table 1

### Sample Program Inventory: Adult Recidivism-Reduction Programs

Program	Activity	Number served	Capacity	Fiscal year 2014 budget
Thinking for a Change	Cognitive behavioral therapy	150	150	\$75,000
Education programs	Education	35	35	\$305,000
Stayin’ Clean	Outpatient drug treatment	45	50	\$150,000
Sober Living Environment	Inpatient drug treatment	60	60	\$380,000
Meditation	Spiritual/religious	30	50	\$75,000

Note: Data created by author for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to reflect any actual program or budget.

© 2015 The Pew Charitable Trusts

Jurisdictions wishing to develop a program inventory must clarify the purpose of the work, set clear definitions, and oversee the inventory process.

## Set expectations

It is important for government leaders to specify goals for developing a program inventory, stipulate which agencies will participate, identify the personnel who will construct the inventory, and establish a deadline to ensure that the work will be completed in time to inform the budget.

## Establish definitions

To ensure that the inventory provides useful information across government programs, policymakers should establish a clear definition of a qualifying program and the format that will be used to report collected data. The importance of this step was noted by a 2014 review of the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010, which found that a lack of consistency and comparability across programs—each agency had discretion in how it submitted required information and how it defined programs—had “led to challenges in identifying similar programs in different agencies” and greatly impeded the usefulness of the inventory.<sup>8</sup>

## Oversee the inventory process

Governments should assign responsibility for the inventory process to a central unit that can oversee agency efforts to develop the list of funded programs. The central entity should develop templates to guide staff as they collect program data. Although the specific information collected may vary, inventories for each program typically include goals, a brief description of the services provided, desired outcomes, target populations, capacity, and number of clients served (often including the duration and frequency of client interactions). Some of this information may be available through existing performance measurement systems. The central entity should ensure that data collection is consistent across agencies.<sup>9</sup>

## Review which programs are likely to work

Despite increasing nationwide interest in using research to improve outcomes and reduce costs, most governments have little information about the results being achieved by their programs, due in part to limited resources for conducting internal evaluations. Fortunately, rigorous research studies have tested the effectiveness of many public programs and identified those most likely to generate positive outcomes, generally referred to as evidence-based programs.<sup>10</sup>

An evidence review uses information from these evaluations to categorize a government’s funded interventions by the degree to which each has been shown effective, identifying which programs work, which do not, and which need more study. An evidence review can help policymakers make more strategic choices to direct funds to the programs most likely to produce results and to better monitor program implementation.

Government leaders have used evidence reviews to:

- **Replace ineffective programs.** The Iowa Department of Corrections used its evidence review to identify and replace a community-based domestic violence treatment program that research had shown to be ineffective in reducing recidivism. The department replaced the program with a new model based on the principles and techniques of the evidence-based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy method.<sup>11</sup> Iowa State University is evaluating the new program to determine whether it produces expected results.<sup>12</sup>
- **Guide funding decisions.** In Sonoma County, California, decisions about funding for early childhood and various prevention programs are informed partially by an evidence review developed and maintained by the county’s Upstream Investments Policy Initiative. The initiative was created in 2007 to identify policies and initiatives that reduce the likelihood of first-time criminal offending and have a high return on investment, and it offers an up-to-date, online inventory of evidence-based, promising, and innovative early childhood interventions offered by local service providers.<sup>13</sup> For more information, see Page 6.

- **Secure federal funds.** Agencies that can identify which of their funded programs work for their communities may be better positioned to receive federal grants targeting evidence-based programs. For example, to qualify for funding through the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant program, states must demonstrate that at least 75 percent of funds will be spent on effective, evidence-based, or promising home visiting programs. To meet this requirement, 47 states and the District of Columbia developed inventories of their programs and reported information, including funding levels, evidence of effectiveness, and service gaps.<sup>14</sup>
- **Ensure programs deliver expected results.** Leaders can use program assessments to establish benchmarks for expected outcomes. In many cases, enough rigorous evaluations have been conducted nationwide to establish performance targets for each intervention. For example, Washington state found that a properly delivered functional family therapy program should reduce juvenile felony recidivism by 38 percent.<sup>15</sup> Rhode Island is using its assessment to identify evidence-based and promising programs that should be monitored for fidelity with their underlying design. Administrators can establish implementation standards, such as a maximum caseload size or minimum service duration for each program based on existing research, and then monitor performance to ensure that they are met.
- **Target evaluations.** In 2013, the North Carolina Governor’s Crime Commission requested an evidence review in select policy areas to “ensure that [it] is selecting and funding programs that address [the] greatest criminal justice needs in the state.” The report found that most programs had not been formally evaluated, concluding that “it [is] nearly impossible to recommend specific programs over others” and that a greater focus on evaluation was needed.<sup>16</sup>



## Spotlight on Sonoma County, California

In 2007, the Sonoma County, California, Board of Supervisors chartered the Upstream Investments Policy Initiative, a project to identify policies and initiatives to reduce the likelihood of first-time criminal offending. The culmination of the initiative's work, presented to the board in 2010, included a detailed inventory of 141 evidence-based and promising early childhood programs, indicating which of these programs were operated locally and estimating each program's return on investment.

Since that presentation, the initiative has grown in scope and influence. The project team maintains an up-to-date online inventory—referred to as the Portfolio of Model Upstream Programs—of early childhood and other prevention-focused interventions offered by local service providers, sorted into three tiers of evidence:

- Tier 1: Evidence-based practices that are empirically proved to produce positive outcomes. These programs must be listed in a preapproved national research clearinghouse and demonstrate fidelity to the original model; deviations from the original design (such as changing the target population or the frequency with which services are delivered) are discouraged.
- Tier 2: Promising practices that, while not meeting the criteria for Tier 1, have been shown in at least one internal evaluation to demonstrate positive outcomes and follow an evidence-based program design that is implemented consistently for all clients.
- Tier 3: Innovative practices that have not been evaluated but that follow set policies and procedures designed to achieve targeted outcomes and have created an evaluation plan based on evidence-based practices.

To be included in the inventory, providers complete a rigorous application demonstrating how their programs meet the above criteria, usually with technical assistance from Upstream staff. Providers also must document either model fidelity (Tier 1) or positive outcomes from an evaluation (Tiers 2 and 3) every three years or be removed from the portfolio.

Because of the rigorous selection process and ease of accessing information, “many local funders are now using the portfolio to make decisions about whom to fund,” said Angie Dillon-Shore, research and evaluation manager for the Sonoma County Human Services Department, which manages the project. “While some organizations just use the portfolio to guide their decisions, others have added language to their funding notices requiring that programs be in the portfolio to receive funding.”

Dillon-Shore credits the initiative's early successes to a strong local commitment to prevention programs, an emphasis on change management, and early and continuous involvement of grant-making institutions. Going forward, Upstream will place more emphasis on the cost-effectiveness of programs; the project recently contracted with an organization to conduct cost-benefit studies of select programs and develop a process that can allow the county to conduct its own analyses in the future.

## Getting started

Governments wishing to conduct an evidence review can begin by identifying credible sources of research, establishing standards of evidence to be used in categorizing programs, and matching their inventory to lists of evidence-based programs, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Sample Evidence Review: Adult Recidivism-Reduction Programs

Program	Activity	Rating	Source	Fiscal year 2014 budget
Thinking for a Change	Cognitive behavioral therapy	Evidence-based	CrimeSolutions	\$75,000
Education programs	Education	Evidence-based	CrimeSolutions	\$305,000
Stayin' Clean	Outpatient drug treatment	Evidence-based	Internal evaluation	\$150,000
Sober Living Environment	Inpatient drug treatment	No evaluation	N/A	\$380,000
Meditation	Spiritual/religious	Promising	What Works-Reentry	\$75,000

Note: Data created by author for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to reflect any actual program or budget.

© 2015 The Pew Charitable Trusts

### Identify credible research sources

The first step in conducting an evidence review is to identify the research on program outcomes that already exists. The staff can begin by examining national research clearinghouses that collect, vet, and summarize information from rigorous program evaluations; typically focus on specific policy areas<sup>19</sup> in a consistent, easy-to-understand format; and help answer questions for the review:<sup>20</sup>

- **Where can staff find rigorous studies?** Evaluation studies can be difficult to find individually because they are often published in subscription-based academic journals and limited-circulation reports and papers.<sup>21</sup> Research clearinghouses aggregate many relevant, rigorous studies and provide an online portal where users can easily and quickly access findings.
- **What information is credible?** Program advocates often make claims about success that are based on incomplete or poorly designed studies (such as small samples or inadequate comparison groups). Research clearinghouses sift through the studies and typically include only rigorous evaluations.<sup>22</sup> Clearinghouses also present their findings in a consistent format, providing users with credible, transparent information on which to base decisions.
- **How should findings be interpreted?** Research studies tend to be lengthy and highly technical and use jargon when presenting results. Research clearinghouses provide succinct, accessible information on program effectiveness, often with simple ratings that allow users to quickly scan for effective interventions.

Governments can also look to internal evaluations of programs in the jurisdiction. While often not included in a national clearinghouse, rigorous studies conducted by local agencies or universities can be a useful source of information on the effectiveness of existing programs.

### Establish standards of evidence

Government leaders will also need to establish clear definitions of the types and levels of information that will be used to classify programs as evidence-based. Definitions may vary depending on the goals of the assessment, but several governments and research clearinghouses have defined hierarchies that can serve as a starting point. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1

## What Works Clearinghouse Ratings of Effectiveness

++	+	+-	0	-	--
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Potentially positive</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Not discernible</b>	<b>Potentially negative</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Strong evidence that intervention had a positive effect on outcomes	Evidence that intervention had a positive effect on outcomes with no overriding contrary evidence	Evidence that intervention's effect on outcomes is inconsistent	No evidence that intervention had an effect on outcomes	Evidence that intervention had a negative effect on outcomes with no overriding contrary evidence	Strong evidence that intervention had a negative effect on outcomes

Source: Institute of Education Sciences, "What Works Clearinghouse," accessed Jan. 27, 2015, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

© 2015 The Pew Charitable Trusts

Some states have established standards of evidence in statute. In 2014, the Mississippi Legislature passed H.B. 677, which requires the departments of Corrections, Education, Health, and Transportation to develop inventories that identify all funded programs, including their goals, outputs, and outcomes, and to categorize programs as evidence-based, research-based, promising, or none of the above.<sup>23</sup>

### Categorize programs by their level of evidence

In this step, the staff compares each program in the inventory to the available evidence and categorizes each program by its level of evidence. When making this assessment, it is important to use information from the inventory, such as description, intended outcome, and duration, to ensure that implemented programs have the same goals and designs as those evaluated by research.

Some proprietary evidence review tools can help facilitate this process:

- The **Correctional Program Checklist**, developed by the University of Cincinnati, compares corrections programs against known principles of effective interventions.<sup>24</sup> The Santa Clara County, California, Department of Correction hired external consultants to administer the checklist and found that only one of its 21 programs provided effective treatment and quality assurance, such as performance monitoring and evaluation.<sup>25</sup>



- The **Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol** helps agencies understand the extent to which juvenile justice interventions, including programs developed within the state that do not follow a known, brand-name model, employ strategies and practices shown to be effective in reducing recidivism. Tennessee contracted with an evaluator to conduct the protocol and found that 94 percent of its programs employed effective interventions for reducing juvenile recidivism.<sup>26</sup>
- The **Results First Clearinghouse** provides a single access point to information from eight national research clearinghouses that conduct independent, transparent, systematic, and rigorous reviews of available research.<sup>27</sup> The online database helps users view and interpret results from these clearinghouses, each of which applies different criteria for ranking programs, and then use them in program matching. States and localities participating in the Results First Initiative receive technical assistance on how to match funded programs to those in the database.

## Analyze whether programs' benefits outweigh their costs

When making investment choices, policymakers must weigh the cost to taxpayers of a new opportunity against the short- and long-term changes in the lives of residents it is likely to generate. Such information is critically important to any major budget or policy decision. Unfortunately, these types of analyses tend to be limited in both production and use.<sup>28</sup>

**Benefit-cost analysis**, the comparison between a program's expense and its expected benefits, enables government leaders to understand what each dollar invested in public programs "buys" in short- and long-term benefits to the community (some returns can be realized within one annual budget cycle, while others will accrue over a longer period).<sup>29</sup>

Although these analyses have traditionally focused on a specific program or policy, a comparative or portfolio benefit-cost study, such as those pioneered by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, allows policymakers to consider the relative return on investment of multiple interventions and to determine what combinations of programs would achieve the best outcomes with the most prudent use of public dollars.

### Portfolio Analysis: Washington State Institute for Public Policy

At the direction of the Washington Legislature, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy routinely conducts portfolio analyses of state programs in various policy areas to identify "evidence-based policies that improve outcomes with a positive return on investment." The work begins with a meta-analysis of existing rigorous evaluations in order to quantify the level of effectiveness of different evidence-based interventions. Institute staff then monetizes the costs and benefits of implementing those interventions in Washington and considers how different combinations of interventions and policy options would affect outcomes and fiscal health.

Government leaders have used benefit-cost analysis to:

- **Make smarter investments in new initiatives.** A benefit-cost analysis of a proposed program can help policymakers determine whether it is likely to generate enough benefits to justify its costs. For example, in Maine, a 2009 benefit-cost analysis of options to reduce homelessness helped inform the state’s decision to invest in cost-effective supportive housing. The analysis found that the selected programs could generate net savings of \$1,348 per participant through reduced use of criminal justice and emergency resources.<sup>30</sup>
- **Consider the relative return on investment of similar programs.** States and localities that analyze the costs and benefits of both existing programs and various alternatives can use the results to compare the relative strengths of the programs, prioritize funding for those that generate the highest return on investment, and eliminate others that do not deliver sufficient benefits to justify their continued funding. In its fiscal 2016 budget guidance, the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee directed its analysts to “identify successful programs that provide the best return to taxpayers and programs not producing positive results or of lower priority to the state” and to use cost-saving opportunities and analyses to prioritize funding and improve state outcomes.<sup>31</sup>
- **Secure outside funding.** Benefit-cost analysis can help leaders secure new or continued funding, especially when interventions must compete with other fiscal demands and constraints. For example, New York state’s recent portfolio analysis of its criminal justice system has resulted in new investments in evidence-based programs. “Our cost-benefit work allowed us to compete for and win a \$12 million federal Pay for Success grant to serve hard to employ recently released parolees,” said Marc Schabbes, cost-benefit project coordinator for the state’s Division of Criminal Justice Services. “We chose this population because our analysis showed that these individuals needed employment services and that offering this type of programming to this population had the potential to produce a positive cost-benefit return to the state.”<sup>32</sup>

## Getting started

Traditional benefit-cost analysis compares the cost of a program with the value of the outcomes it achieves for taxpayers, as shown in Table 3. Portfolio analysis, which compares the costs and benefits of multiple similar programs, and cost-effectiveness analysis, which considers how much each program costs to achieve the same outcome, are also depicted in Table 3.

Governments that want to calculate programs’ return on investment will need access to staff with experience in conducting benefit-cost analyses and time to devote to the work. These staff members will also need accurate, reliable data on program operations, often across multiple years of study. Although most states and localities that pursue traditional benefit-cost analysis can perform the calculations themselves, portfolio analysis may require technical assistance from outside experts, such as that provided by the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, to develop and run the analyses.

Programs for which it is difficult to calculate the dollar value of outcomes (either for practical reasons, such as limited analytical capacity, or for methodological reasons, such as the difficulty of valuing a human life saved by a medical intervention) can use cost-effectiveness analysis to compare the costs of similar interventions. This approach, distinguished from benefit-cost and portfolio analyses because it does not calculate a dollar value for benefits, may be used only to compare programs with a common goal or outcome.

Table 3

## Sample Economic Analyses: Adult Recidivism-Reduction Programs

Program	Fiscal year 2014 budget	Rating	Benefit-cost analysis	Portfolio analysis	Cost-effectiveness analysis
			Benefit-cost ratio	Benefit-cost ratio	Cost to prevent 1 crime
Thinking for a Change	\$75,000	Evidence-based	\$19.65	\$19.65	\$3,900
Education programs	\$305,000	Evidence-based	unknown	\$14.85	\$8,080
Stayin' Clean	\$150,000	Evidence-based	unknown	\$13.15	\$10,000
Sober Living Environment	\$380,000	No evaluation	unknown	unknown	N/A
Meditation	\$75,000	Promising	unknown	unknown	N/A

Note: Data created by author for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to reflect any actual program or budget.

© 2015 The Pew Charitable Trusts

## Conclusion

The program assessment process—program inventory, evidence review, and benefit-cost analysis—can help government leaders know more about the programs they fund, assess how effective those programs are in achieving results, and determine whether the expected benefits outweigh the investment of public dollars.

Although each part of the assessment process provides useful information, states and localities that conduct all three stages can greatly enhance their capacity to make informed policy and budget choices. This process is a core part of evidence-based policymaking, informing funding decisions, ensuring better program monitoring, determining which outcomes should be tracked, and identifying programs that need more research into their effectiveness.

## Endnotes

- 1 See the full framework at <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/11/evidence-based-policymaking-a-guide-for-effective-government>.
- 2 A program is an intervention designed to modify targeted behaviors and deliver a specific outcome. For example, a child abuse prevention program provides prevention, early intervention, and treatment services to at-risk and underserved parents to promote greater family stability and decrease the incidence of child abuse or neglect.
- 3 See Aron Trombka and Karen Yoskowitz, *Legislative Uses of Performance Measures in Budget Decision-Making*, Report 2006-2, Maryland Office of Legislative Oversight (2005), <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/olo/resources/files/2006-2measures.pdf>; and Shayne C. Kavanagh, Jon Johnson, and Chris Fabian, "Anatomy of a Priority-Driven Budget Process," Government Finance Officers Association (2011), <http://icma.org/Documents/Attachment/Document/1328>.
- 4 Exceptions include zero-based budgeting. Many budget processes will also target specific programs for expansion or reduction, but leaders who lack reliable information on similar interventions may not understand the full impact of their decisions.

- 5 Brian Daniels (director of performance management, Rhode Island Office of Management and Budget), interview by Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, Nov. 13, 2014.
- 6 Elizabeth Davies, *Impact & Influence: The Role of Local Jurisdictions in Managing Prison Population Size*, Urban Institute (2011), [http://www.urban.org/research/publication/impact-influence-role-local-jurisdictions-managing-prison-population-size/view/full\\_report](http://www.urban.org/research/publication/impact-influence-role-local-jurisdictions-managing-prison-population-size/view/full_report).
- 7 The Government Accountability Office tracks and publicly reports what actions agencies have taken to resolve these issues. See GAO's Action Tracker, accessed Jan. 27, 2015, [http://www.gao.gov/duplication/action\\_tracker/all\\_areas](http://www.gao.gov/duplication/action_tracker/all_areas).
- 8 Government Accountability Office, *Government Efficiency and Effectiveness: Inconsistent Definitions and Information Limit the Usefulness of Federal Program Inventories* (October 2014), <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/666735.pdf>.
- 9 See Kavanagh, Johnson, and Fabian, "Anatomy of a Priority-Driven Budget Process," for more detail on how to develop a program inventory.
- 10 Evidence-based programs are those whose effectiveness has been determined by rigorous evaluations, such as randomized controlled trials and strong control or comparison group designs.
- 11 National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)," accessed Jan. 27, 2015, <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=191>.
- 12 The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Iowa's Cutting-Edge Approach to Corrections: A Progress Report on Putting Results First to Use" (December 2013), [http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs\\_assets/2013/RFIBriefResultsFirstIowaProgressReportFINALpdf.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2013/RFIBriefResultsFirstIowaProgressReportFINALpdf.pdf).
- 13 Angie Dillon-Shore, interview by Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, Nov. 5, 2014.
- 14 See Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting programs, accessed Jan. 27, 2015, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/maternal-infant-and-early-childhood-home-visiting.aspx>.
- 15 Washington State Institute for Public Policy, "Outcome Evaluation of Washington State's Research-Based Programs for Juvenile Offenders" (January 2004), [http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/852/Wsipp\\_Outcome-Evaluation-of-Washington-States-Research-Based-Programs-for-Juvenile-Offenders\\_Full-Report.pdf](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/852/Wsipp_Outcome-Evaluation-of-Washington-States-Research-Based-Programs-for-Juvenile-Offenders_Full-Report.pdf).
- 16 Julie Singer et al., *Governor's Crime Commission Funding Priorities: A Data Driven Approach, 2013*, Criminal Justice Analysis Center, [https://www.nccrimecontrol.org/div/GCC/pubs/SAC%20Data%20Driven%20Priorities%202013\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nccrimecontrol.org/div/GCC/pubs/SAC%20Data%20Driven%20Priorities%202013_FINAL.pdf).
- 17 Upstream Team, *Upstream Investments to Reduce Long-Range Demand for County Criminal Justice Strategic Plan Project #27: Report to the Board of Supervisors* (January 2010), <https://www.scoe.org/files/upstream-report.pdf>.
- 18 Dillon-Shore interview.
- 19 For example, the Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development clearinghouse (<http://www.blueprintsprograms.com>) examines evidence on programs designed to reduce antisocial behavior and promote positive youth development, and the Department of Justice's Crimesolutions.gov summarizes research on crime prevention strategies.
- 20 Information overload, fragmentation of research across fields, difficulty locating reports, unevenness in methodological quality among studies, and selective use of evidence by advocacy groups have been cited as common barriers to using research in decision-making. See Anthony Petrosino and Julia Lavenberg, "Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: Best Evidence on 'What Works' for Criminal Justice Decision Makers," *Western Criminology Review* 8, no. 1 (2007): 1-15, <http://www.westerncriminology.org/documents/WCR/v08n1/petrosino.pdf>.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Each clearinghouse uses its own criteria to rate effectiveness. For a description of some of the more well-known clearinghouses and a list of their respective criteria, see Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County, Florida, "Research Review: Evidence-Based Programs and Practices: What Does It All Mean?" (2007), [http://www.evidencebasedassociates.com/reports/research\\_review.pdf](http://www.evidencebasedassociates.com/reports/research_review.pdf).
- 23 According to the legislation, an evidence-based program is a program or practice with multiple-site, random-controlled trials across heterogeneous populations demonstrating its effectiveness for the population; a research-based program is a program or practice that has some research demonstrating effectiveness but not enough to meet the standard of evidence-based practices; and a promising practice is one that presents, based upon preliminary information, the potential for becoming a research- or evidence-based program or practice.
- 24 Several studies found strong correlations with outcome between both domain areas and individual items; see University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, accessed Jan. 27, 2015, <http://www.uc.edu/corrections/services/trainings.html>.
- 25 Huskey & Associates, "Recidivism Study of the Santa Clara County Department of Correction's Inmate Programs, Final Report" (January 2012), [http://www.sccgov.org/sites/doc/Documents/SCC\\_DOC\\_Final\\_Report\\_1-31-12.pdf](http://www.sccgov.org/sites/doc/Documents/SCC_DOC_Final_Report_1-31-12.pdf).

- 26 Tennessee Legislature, "Tennessee Public Chapter 585, Senate Bill 1790" (June 2007), <http://state.tn.us/sos/acts/105/pub/pc0585.pdf>.
- 27 The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Results First Clearinghouse Database" (September 2014), <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2014/09/results-first-clearinghouse-database>.
- 28 In general, traditional benefit-cost analyses tend to be limited in the frequency with which they are produced and used. A 2013 study by the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative found that while all states had conducted at least one benefit-cost analysis over a five-year period, the frequency, quality, and impact of the work varied greatly by state, in part due to limited time, resources, and staff technical skills. As a result, many of the findings, while informative to policymakers with oversight or operational control over the studied program, were of limited use in comparing results between programs. The Pew Charitable Trusts, *States' Use of Cost-Benefit Analysis: Improving Results for Taxpayers* (July 2013), [http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pes\\_assets/2013/PewResultsFirst50statereportpdf.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pes_assets/2013/PewResultsFirst50statereportpdf.pdf).
- 29 For example, a program that reduces recidivism will also reduce the number of arrests, court proceedings, detainments, and programming associated with the prevented crime—each of which has an associated cost. The avoided crime also carries societal benefits, such as reduced victimization, that can be monetized. Added together and considered over time, these costs can be used to calculate a ratio that shows how much money is returned to the state or locality for every dollar invested.
- 30 The Pew Charitable Trusts, *States' Use of Cost-Benefit Analysis*.
- 31 New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, "Guidelines for FY16 LFC Appropriation Recommendation," accessed Jan. 27, 2015, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/lfc/lfcdocs/FY%202015%20Budget%20Guidelines.pdf>.
- 32 Marc Schabbes, interview by Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, July 2, 2014.



---

**Contact:** Gary VanLandingham, director, Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative  
**Email:** [gvanlandingham@pewtrusts.org](mailto:gvanlandingham@pewtrusts.org)  
**Phone:** 202-540-6207

---

**Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative**, a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, works with states to implement an innovative benefit-cost analysis approach that helps them invest in policies and programs that are proved to work.