

ICF - CNCS Webinar  
2019 AmeriCorps State & National Grant Competition  
Best Practices in Demonstrating Evidence\_6\_0

TAMIKA: Hello and welcome to the 2019 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition Best Practices in Demonstrating Evidence. [inaudible] lines are on mute at this time and we'll leave them on mute throughout the duration of this webinar. The webinar is being recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you can disconnect at any time. The recording and slides will be available on the 2019 AmeriCorps State and National NOFO Funding Opportunity page.

You may use the chat box to ask questions at any time. We may wait for an opportune time to answer them so please be patient if your question is not answered right away. If you have any technical difficulties, please let us know through chat box as well. And if you do that, our webinar facilitator, Emily, will assist you via private chat. I would now like to turn it over to Roshni Menon from the Office of Research & Evaluation to begin the webinar.

ROSHNI: Thank you, Tamika. Good afternoon, everyone, and I know it's good morning for some of you. Welcome to the Demonstrating Evidence portion for the 2019 AmeriCorps State and National Grants competition. In

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this webinar in the next hour we will be talking about CNCS's approach to evidence, some new criteria items in the evidence section and overview of the evidence tiers in the NOFU, or Notice of Funding Opportunity. And we will also keep aside some time for questions and answers.

Why is evidence important? Evidence is both important for accountability and learning purposes. There are numerous federal evidence initiatives including tiered-evidence initiative that [inaudible] the study and scale the most promising program models and direct more federal resources to initiatives with strong evidence. AmeriCorps State and National is not a true tiered-evidence initiative, however, AmeriCorps does prioritize evidence in grant-writing by including points for evidence in the scoring criteria and item-defined evidence as a strategic characteristic in the NOFU.

AmeriCorps first introduced evidence into its grantmaking in 2014 and in later competitions, we have provided the definitions of our evidence tiers

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to make them more consistent than the definitions of other federal agencies. And we will be going over all of this very shortly. This slide shows the CNCS evidence continuum. CNCS recognizes that it takes time to build evidence and that the strength of a program's evidence varies according to where the program is in its lifecycle.

As you can see, there are five stages in this lifecycle starting from evidence-informed, which would be the stage one where you identify a strong program design, one that you want to replicate or adapt, and moving on from stages two, three, four and five to ensuring effective implementation, which would be stage two which would also be looking at fidelity of implementation. Stage three would be affecting the program outcome.

Stage four would be obtaining evidence of positive program outcomes to make sure your program is achieving the intended outcomes. And stage five is where you can attain causal evidence of positive program outcomes where you can you say with

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confidence that it's your selection making the difference in the outcome that you're looking for.

CNCS believes there is value at all stages of the continuum. There is something to be learned and improved upon at every step of the continuum. A program should know where they are on the continuum and have a plan for building evidence over time. This is going back to the stage one, identify a strong program design, and this is really important right now because this also goes back to one of the key things to be noted in this year's NOFU, which is the intervention you describe in the application should be the same intervention that you submit the evaluation for or evidence report for.

You would find this information on page six of the Mastery Supplemental Guidance and core components of the intervention: that should be very clearly described in the application to include characteristics of the beneficiary population. So who are you serving and who is benefitting from this intervention? Characteristics of the population

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delivering the intervention. Dosage and design of the intervention. What is the frequency?

Is it once a week? Once in two weeks? For how long? All the facts should be the same as the program that you're seeking to replicate. Setting in which the outcome is delivered. Is it for second graders? Is it for middle schoolers? And I'm just using that example. And outcomes of the intervention. All of these five characteristics should be exact same as the program described in the application as the intervention that you're choosing to replicate, and should be clearly described in the application narrative. And now I'm gonna turn it over to my colleague, Greg Wallinger, also from the Office of Research & Evaluation, who will talk about more specifics of the NOFO and the evidence base.

GREG: Thanks so much, Rosni. I'm gonna talk a little bit first about how your evidence base is going to be scored as part of your application and then we'll get into a little bit more information about the difference evidence tiers. For the 2019 applications, the evidence base is going to be worth 16 points, and

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that's going to break down evenly. That 16 points are going to break down evenly between eight points for evidence tiers and eight points for evidence quality.

For evidence tiers, we're talking about understanding a level and the strength of evidence base of the intervention relative to its intended outcomes as identified in the logic model. This is where we're talking about pre-preliminary, preliminary, moderate or strong. And then based on that evidence tier, the quality of the evidence will be assessed differently depending on whether you've been assessed at the pre-preliminary level or at a level above that.

I'm gonna talk about pre-preliminary first. If you are assessed at the pre-preliminary evidence tier, the reviewers will be scoring the narrative that you provide in the evidenced-based section of your application. And the criteria that they're gonna be looking at are: How relevant is the evidence? How recent was the evidence? Preferably it would be from the last six years. And they'll be looking to see whether the applicant indicates a meaningful positive

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effect on program beneficiaries in at least one outcomes area of interest.

If you are at a higher level, that is preliminary, moderate or strong, rather than looking at the narrative, they'll be looking at the submitted evaluation reports. They'll be looking for methodological quality and rigor for the type of the evaluation conducted. They'll be looking again, at relative recency, hopefully within the last six years. And here we want to see not only meaningful positive effects, but also significant positive effects on program beneficiaries.

Just to give you a sense of where folks have been assessed over the last three funding cycles, we're looking at 2016, 2017 and 2018 applicants that were funded. In the first section there, you're looking at folks that were tested at pre-preliminary and below, moving up to preliminary, moderate and strong. And we are starting to see some trending upwards here, notably in 2017, you'll see that 65% were pre-preliminary and below.

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Last year that number dropped to 26%, while pre-preliminary and below for 2017 was 46% and moved to 40%. We are seeing some folks that were likely funded in the pre-preliminary and below area moving up to a preliminary level. Moderate and strong have remained relatively stagnant so we're hoping to see some upward movement in that area this year as well. Let's dig into these evidence tiers a little bit. I'm going to try to say "pre-preliminary" as few times as possible on this call.

I practiced it quite a few times before, but I seem to stumble over it once every five times, but there is pre-preliminary, preliminary, moderate and strong. One note here is if you are a former applicant or have been through this process in the past, you will see not see "no evidence" as an evidence tier. That has been eliminated from the 2019 outcome applicant process. Pre-preliminary: in this case, there should be applicants that do not submit an evaluation of their intervention.



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If you do not submit an evaluation or a report, you will be in the pre-preliminary category. We could see that you had collected some performance data and have talked about that. Regardless we'll want to see that you've described how your program design is evidence-informed. Now what does that mean? Programs in this category is the best available knowledge, research and evaluation to guide program design and implementation but they do not have a scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the intervention described in the application.

You could be evidence-informed if you have incorporated aspects of research from other evidence-based programs into your design or maybe you collected some performance upon the intervention that you're describing in your application. And finally, you may, again, cite prior performance measure data. Looking at an example here, our applicant has identified their Ready to Read program as their intervention.

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And they provided services to five students. 452 have completed their required dosage, and this program adapted from famous mentoring programs' successful approach. It's going to become important. We're going to talk a little bit more about the difference between adapting from and replication. At the pre-preliminary level, we're talking about adapting from. This is an evidence-informed program, not an evidenced-based program.

But they are basing it off of famous mentoring programs. 2015, randomized control trial finding that students' scores improved by one and a half grade levels on the famous standardized literacy assessment. That would be an example of something that would be assessed at the pre-preliminary level. Moving up a level to preliminary, here the applicant would have submitted up to two outcome evaluation reports.

These can be internal or external, but you would have needed to have submitted at least one evaluation report to make it to the preliminary level. This is a

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key point that Roshni touched on early and we're going to touch on again: the reports that you're submitting, they need to evaluate the same intervention described in the application. And that's actually a very specifically defined term on page six of the mandatory supplemental guidance.

The intervention evaluated and submitted by your original reports must match the intervention proposed in the application in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the program design and logic model sections of the application: again, we're going to be looking at the characteristics of the beneficiary population, the characteristics of the population delivering the intervention, dosage, again that's frequency and duration, and design of the intervention, and then the setting in which the intervention is delivered, and finally the outcomes of the intervention.

In order to reach the preliminary level, you'll need to have described in the program design and logic model sections all five of these areas.

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SARAH: This is Sarah, who's actually CNCS 2 as you can see on the chat. A question has come in on the chat from Trisha Harritty that says, in talking specifically about that definition of "sustained interaction", she says, "If my program has AmeriCorps members implementing the intervention, does my submitted evidence report have to describe a program using AmeriCorps members as the program implementers? Tricia, that's a great question and one that's probably relevant to a lot of folks on the webinar today.

When we talk about characteristics of a population delivering the intervention, their status as AmeriCorps members is not necessarily the type of characteristics we're talking about. To give you one example, if you have an evaluation report that describes an intervention where certified teachers are the ones delivering the intervention, and you're proposing a program where the intervention looks the same.

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But the individuals you will be enrolling as AmeriCorps members are high schools graduates but don't have any formal training and education. That would be an example where the characteristics of a population delivering the intervention are not sufficiently the same so it doesn't really matter if the certified teachers were AmeriCorps members or not, what matters more is their background, their training, what they bring into their position as delivering the intervention.

GREG: Great. Thank you. We also wanna see that you've yielded positive results in one of our key desired outcomes. Here again, the evaluation report that you submit, it does not have to be of your own program, but the study design must include either a pre- and post-assessment, data comparison group or it could be a post-comparison assessment between intervention and comparison groups. It could be a retrospective pre-post-assessment but you'll need to justify why that was necessary in your narrative.

And you're gonna see this fifth bullet a number of times moving forward. If you're in your third

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competitive cycle, you will need to submit an evaluation report of your CNCS-funded program. Now, this can be one of the two required reports that you're submitting or it could function as a third document. In any case, all of the submitted reports will count towards the evidence review. Here's an example of preliminary evidence.

Again, we're looking at the applicant's Ready to Read program providing tutoring services, same dosage, but here you'll see based on a pre- and post-assessment at one of its 14 sites, 350 students gained at least one and a half grade levels on this same famous standardized [audio cuts out] literacy assessment. This evaluation was conducted internally. It could be either. But we do see effect sizes that were significant and represent a positive result.

In this case, your additional documentation would be the internal evaluation report that you, the applicant, have conducted of your Ready to Read program. I'm gonna point out a difference when we get to the moderate level. It's not necessary that it be

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internal. More important is the rigor of the study that's conducted here. So for preliminary, this one was conducted of our own program, Ready to Read, and that's what we're submitting as our additional - as our documentation.

Let's look at moderate. Here we're upping the game a little bit again and we're talking about two reports from well-designed and well-implemented evaluation studies. And at this level and above, we're looking at independent external evaluators. Again, the evaluator's reports submitted as additional documents, same intervention, we talked about that. But now we're gonna need to see some evidence of effectiveness, some positive findings that are based on either randomized control trial or a quasi-experimental design where matched comparison/treatment groups are used.

Now we're going to talk about generalization a little bit, but this generalization may be limited. Perhaps it was only conducted on a single site. We can talk about the effect that it had on the population that

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we studied, but we were really gonna have a hard time generalizing beyond that point. That's gonna be a difference when we move to the strong evidence level. Again, if you're in your third competitive cycle, you'll need to submit that evaluation report.

Here's our example again. Now, I mentioned earlier, I think we talked about adapted [inaudible] being evidence-informed. Now we're talking about replicating, but importantly, this was not a study that was done of Ready to Read. The additional documents, the report that's submitted here, was actually done of famous mentoring programs' successful approach. But that report was submitted it was 2017, very recent, quasi-experimental evaluation at one of famous mentoring programs' 14 sites we saw this positive gains for students.

Again, it was conducted by an independent, external evaluator. And students in the program outperformed students in the match comparison group, and we saw a moderate effect size. But again, the documents that are submitted here are of an external evaluation of



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the program that Ready to Read is seeking to replicate.

SARAH: Before you go on, Greg, I think if we're pointing out the difference between this moderate example and the pre-preliminary example that we had previously, and this relates to a question that Amy Salinas sent in here. As you might remember from a couple of slides ago, the pre-preliminary example talks about a randomized control trial, and yet it was only pre-preliminary evidence. And Amy's question is: I thought randomized controlled trial studies were proof of moderate or even a strong evaluation level, so why was this one pre-preliminary whereas the other example you just showed was moderate? Can you say more about that?

GREG: Yes. Here's we're getting back to that adapted-from versus replication. And that is going back to, and we're going to try to pound you over head very thoroughly with this point. I think, of the same intervention and those five of six qualities that make the intervention you're using the same as. If you're adapting from, and it's not going to be very

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similar right now the line, that's going to be pre-preliminary.

In order to get to what we would call replication - I'll go back to the example we're talking about at moderate: to get to replication, we're [inaudible] where we're talking about the same intervention. In both cases you would use a randomized control trial QED. In fact, in this case, I think we're using a QED as opposed to a randomized control trial, which is a step below, but it's that replication that really gets us to that next tier.

SARAH: And as long as we're paused for questions, we have one from [unintelligible] which says: given the evidence tiers, should applicants only present one intervention for their proposed project or are multiple interventions allowed, particularly with multi-state applications? I can go ahead and answer that one. Yes, you absolutely may propose more than one intervention. When the reviewers assess evidence tier, they're going to assess it based on the strongest evidence you present from one of your interventions.

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So if you have a couple of interventions in your application, if one of those interventions has moderate or strong evidence associated with it, even if the other interventions do not, you would still be classified in the moderate evidence tier. But I should mention, of course, in terms of the overarching, global evaluation of your application, your theory of change is really important. A big component, as you know, in the theory of change in the evidence to support your intervention.

If you are proposing multiple interventions that have a strong theory of change, you need to have solid evidence backing up all your interventions. But in terms specifically of how evidence tiers are assigned would be based on the portion of your intervention that has the strongest level of evidence.

GREG: Yeah, we'll come back to that in a minute when we talk about what additional documents you would want to submit with your report. I think that's going to be relevant here and I'll hold off on that. To move on to the strong evidence tiers, again we'll look at

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well-designed, well-implemented, external entity in terms of our reports. You're gonna need to see the evidence of effectiveness. So we're looking at RCT/QED matched comparison/treatment groups.

Where we're really getting into a difference, and what's going to get you a strong as opposed to moderate is we're looking at multi-site study. If you remember before, we were looking at a single one of 14 sites. Here this study would have been conducted on all of your sites or many of your sites in different locations or in different populations within the local area. That's where we start to get to the ability to talk about causal attribution and generalization beyond the context of the study.

We can start to say, "This is working" even when we're looking at people who are all over the country or in second grade or middle school. We can really start to generalize at this point. Again, third cycle folks will need to submit an evaluation report. Here's our strong example: back to Ready to Read, still tutoring services, but now we're talking about

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5,000 students. And it's an RCT in all 25 sites state-wide, 3,500 gains - that's one and a half grade levels, again external but by the end of the year students in all sites in the program outperformed students in the control group.

The effects were not only significant but substantial in magnitude and the Ready to Read program was not effective regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, dual-language learner status and across multiple sites and site types. The applicants submitted an external evaluation of their Ready to Read program in this case. But, Sarah, correct me if I'm wrong here. That's not required to get strong evidence. It would not have to be an evaluation of your own program. This could be a replication as long as you're able to show that same intervention piece.

SARAH: That is correct in 2019. And again, for those who have been around for previous grants cycles, that is a change. That is different than the way evidence tiers were assessed in previous years so that's definitely worth nothing.

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GREG: Thanks. I believe I'm handing things over back to Dr. Menon.

ROSHNI: Thank you, Greg. Coming back to data collection [inaudible]. In addition to the evidence documents that you submit, you applicants are required to submit a data collection plan which will not be scored, and applicants re-competing for the second cycle are required to turn in with the application narrative an evaluation plan, which will also not be scored. However, once the awarding decisions have been made, successful applicants or applicants who have been awarded, their data collection and evaluation plans will be revealed and feedback will be provided post-award.

You will be required to turn these things in with the applications. And they will not be scored during the awarding time but will be scored afterward. And then for applicants re-competing in the third cycle, an evaluation report will be required, which will be scored because these evaluation reports will be reviewed to ensure it meets CNCS requirements and is of satisfactory quality, and it will also be weighing

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into the evidence based rating the application received.

As Greg explained earlier, this might be the third document you submit along with your evidence package. If you are unsure which documents you should submit, please clarify with your program officer or through the email collection box. Next we move to some tips for the applicants. The first most important note/tip would be: read the notice very carefully, page to page, every word. Describe clearly the body of evidence that exists for your program.

Make sure you summarize the study design and key findings from the submitted report, describe any other supporting evidence you have, for example, past performance measure data. Even if you do submit studies, make sure you describe them in the narrative. The narrative and the documents will be reviewed by different reviewers so don't think that, "Oh, I've submitted the additional documents. I don't need to correct them in the narrative."

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Please make sure they're in both places. If the program you're replicating has several evaluation reports or studies, make sure you're picking the two strongest, most relevant studies to the intervention you are planning to replicate and [inaudible] those documents as your evidence documents. Do not submit more than the allowable number of studies. Again, it's two studies for each application, and if you have an evaluation report required, that report indeed could be submitted.

And lastly, this goes back to the point of reading the notice carefully and describing clearly the body of evidence. Make sure you allocate space in the narrative that addresses all of the criteria that will be scored.

GREG: And Sarah, I think this goes back to where if you had multiple interventions you would still only get two reports that you could submit. It's two per application, not two per intervention. That's why I was thinking, too, that's where you're really going to be wanting to look at the strongest, most relevant - recency, all that's stuff's going to come into play



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as you're thinking about what to submit even if  
you're going across multiple interventions.

SARAH: Yes, that's right. The number that of reports that  
could submitted is the same regardless of how many  
interventions are proposed in the application. Again,  
that's two reports. If you have an evaluation report  
too, that can be a third, but that is gonna be the  
cap regardless of the number of interventions.  
Definitely this is an area where it's important to  
think strategically what reports are best able to  
showcase the evidence that you bring to this  
application.

FEMALE: And that was a very good question. Thank you.

ROSHNI: For submitting documents, who should be  
submitting documents? If you would like to be  
considered preliminary, moderate or strong evidence  
tiers, you may submit up to studies and [inaudible]  
like we mentioned several times already, if the  
[inaudible] to submit an evaluation report to meet  
evaluation requirements, those applicants can submit  
up to a third evaluation report. This goes back to  
that same point I had just mentioned, if you're  
required to submit an evaluation report to meet

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evaluation requirements, that can be the evaluation report that's submitted in addition to the up to two studies.

And very important last point, you would submit additional documents only if the intervention described in the application narrative is the same as the intervention in the evaluation reports. And again, please remember to go back to the explanation on page six of the mandatory supplemental guidance of what constitutes the same intervention as described in the application as [inaudible] in the report. It's five [inaudible] and you'll find it on page five of the mandatory supplemental guidance. Sorry, page six.

Lastly we have the resources up there. I will let you look through it. We have the [inaudible] funding opportunity, we have evaluation resources on the Knowledge Network. You'll find a whole bunch of useful resources there. We also have our evidence exchange. Did you want to add anything more on the evidence exchange?

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GREG: Yeah. I just wanted to point out that just in the last couple of weeks, we had posted inner resource to our evidence exchange so if you are an applicant looking at especially education programs, we have effective CNCS-funded education programs, evidence brief that was posted in the last couple of weeks. So you go to the evidence exchange and click, search, it's currently I think the second post you'll see on the site. That may move down over the next few weeks as we put more evidence up there but it should be pretty quick and easy to find.

FEMALE: Thank concludes our portion of the presentation and we can now open it up to questions. Sarah, did you want to add anything?

SARAH: I can take a look at the questions and a I am responding to some of them via chat, but I'm having some network issues so bear with me folks. I'm answering the questions that are more specific but a general question that came in through Audrey is about: what the CNCS requirements are for a scored evaluation report. I think by that means to what extent is the evaluation report that's submitted to meet the evaluation requirements.

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How is that considered as a part of this process? The answer to that is there are two standards for the evaluation reports that are in the [inaudible] funding opportunity and I'm pulling them up so that I can quote the directly. They are in the organizational capabilities section of the NOFO which is the bottom of page 15 actually, that says the CNCS requires evaluation report meets CNCS requirements if applicable and CNCS required evaluation report is of satisfactory quality if applicable.

Again, if you had an evaluation report due because of the amount of time you received competitive funding then when you submit the evaluation report it will be assessed against those standards and that will be scored as part of the application. In Addition, as Roshni and Greg referred to, the evaluation report may be considered as part of the evidence base for your intervention if it does still contribute towards [audio cuts out] meeting the requirements for the evidence tier.

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There was also a question that came in about evaluation plans. And I know that you [inaudible] evaluation plans discussed briefly so this is to some extent a preview of coming attractions because we really don't get into the evaluation plan aspect until after applications are selected for awards, but should you on the phone on the webinar today be selected ultimately for an award, this is something that you sure could use. Greg, why don't you talk through what happens with the evaluation plan?

GREG: Yes. Very exciting. Starting in 2018, evaluation plans are required to be approved for the first time and that's gonna remain true for 2019. There's more information on this on page 17 of the NOFO. It will give you some details but very broadly speaking if you're a large grantee there are specific requirements like if you received an average of \$500,000 over the last three funding cycles, if you're a small grantee those a little bit different.

If you're large, you need to do an impact evaluation; it's gotta be done externally. If you're a small grantee, it does not have to be impact. It can be

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done internally but this will be for folks that are in their second round of competitive funding. And so I would encourage you to spend some time looking at that if that applies to you. We have a lot of resources available to you on our Evaluation Resources page that are specific to evaluation planning.

Take some time and give some thought to how that's gonna look for you assuming that your grant is awarded. I think that will put you in a strong position moving into being able to implement that plan, which again, will put you in a stronger position for a third-round of competitive funding if you choose to seek that where you'll have to submit an evaluation report that will be assessed and actually potentially count towards scoring.

Additional questions on that, I think we'd be happy to see those sent in. But take a look first at the Evaluation Resources page of CNCS. And Emily, if you've got that page, I think we just put it on the slide but if you wanted to drop that into the

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weblinks. Emily also added a direct link to the evidence brief there as well. Thanks for doing that.

FEMALE: Let's see. I think we caught up on the questions that have come in via chat at the moment. The one general question that folks on the webinar are likely to have, though no one has asked it yet is: What are really the main differences in 2019 compared to previous? What should we be keeping an eye out for? I think we talked about some of those throughout the presentation. This is to call a couple of these tier [inaudible].

One is the evidence tiers - we formally had an evidence tier that was "no evidence." We don't have that in 2019. We have the four evidence tiers pre-preliminary through strong. Another is what Roshni and Greg did a great job at reminding repeatedly is that for preliminary, moderate and strong evidence, the reports you submit don't have to be of your own program. They do have to be of the same intervention and again, it's really, really important that you understand the definition of "same intervention" in the mandatory supplemental guidance.

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And it's really important that in your applications, you clearly describe your intervention in enough detail that it's possible for reviewers to assess whether what is in the submitted reports is or is not the same intervention as what you're proposing. Another difference is the submission of external reports and reports as attachments for the preliminary evidence tier. In previous years, we did not allow reports to be submitted to meet the preliminary evidence tier.

But in 2019 you are invited to submit up to two or three based on your evaluation requirements. Reports that can back up that preliminary evidence. Any other differences? Those are the main ones that come to mind at the moment.

GREG: And this is not new for 2019, but new for folks who are in their second-cycle and wouldn't have the requirement in 2018 is that you would need to submit an evaluation plan that will ultimately need to be [inaudible].

FEMALE: That's right.



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GREG: It's not new for this year, but let's say you're in your second funding cycle and you were not paying that much attention in 2018, that is new for folks in the second funding cycle.

SARAH: I did think of one other thing and that is the way in which the points are assigned for evidence has changed in 2019. For 2018, there was a fairly complex matrix that describes how points were assigned for evidence tier and for evidence quality. That's changed a little bit in 2019. And the phrasing of the evidence quality standards has also changed although the intent of the is largely the same but the phrasing has changed.

Those are all things to look out for if you have been around before and have submitted applications to CNCS in the past. It's really, really important that you pay close attention to the 2019 notice of funding opportunity, the 2019 mandatory supplement guidance. It's a lot of [inaudible] information, important information in here. Don't assume that you know because you've done this before how this works because there have been changes this year.

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FEMALE: Multiple users are typing. That's awfully exciting. I feel like we should hang out a little bit and see what comes in. We have a question. Let's see. This is a specific question from Bethany about a particular grantee but I think we can talk in general about the evaluation plan's feedback process and kind of what the timeline has looked like this year and what the timeline will continue to look like. The question is: When we will get feedback from CNCS on the evaluation plan?

I'll let Greg answer that, but the one thing that I really would like to convey, especially from the AmeriCorps's program office point of view, is that for grantees that successfully re-competed last year in 2018 and had an evaluation plan due as part of that application, the deadline for all of those plans to be approved is August of 2019. And that's a really, really important timeline for any current grantees who are in the process of review for their evaluation plan to keep in mind.

GREG: If I'm reading this correctly, it's also just thinking about how long it's going to take. Okay, I

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submit my evaluation plan as part of my application. What's the turnaround for getting that approved so I can be up and running? Some of that is gonna be depended on, frankly, the time and effort that goes into the evaluation plan that's submitted. We do have a process whereby an external evaluator will review those evaluation plans and turn them around pretty quickly.

But it is an approval process and so we have folks that got their feedback from the first round, turned it around and responded to that feedback, got their plan approved and they're up and running. Some other folks, they're on their second or third rounds and frankly, did not submit their new plan back in as quickly and so that process is dragging out a little bit. Again, Sarah's point, all plans have to be approved by August 2019. But to a large extent, it depends on the quality of the plan that's submitted in terms of how quickly it can be approved and worked through to get on that plan.

FEMALE: And just to add to that, it would also be how much time? About two months? Because we stop looking

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at these evaluation plans once award decisions have been made and from that point on, would you say about two months for the first round of feedback?

GREG: I would say unless you had 86 violation plans that had to be reviewed so we try to go through them pretty quickly and get that initial round of feedback back and that honestly comes more on the applicant to implement that feedback and send it back.

FEMALE: We don't have a timeline at the moment that we can commit to for 2019. But certainly, generally speaking our goal is to get feedback as soon as we realistically can and make sure this is feedback that's helpful to you as you are working with your evaluator, as you're shaping your evaluation plan in the first year's approach. A question from Tricia says: I think my evaluation of my program done with an external evaluation is the strongest evidence to support my program. There is lesser quality evidence in the literature. Should I submit my additional evaluation reports of lesser quality to show abundance of evidence or will my one evaluation report suffice? That is a great question.

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MALE: Correct me if I'm wrong here, but my understanding of the evidence-review process is it's going to be based on the strongest evidence you submit. Let's say you would submit three reports: one of which is your required evaluation report which is the only way to [inaudible] your reports and your report is the strongest, that will be the basis of your evidence to your assessment but I don't think it can really hurt you to [inaudible] in a couple of other reports that illustrate the abundance. Maybe one more, but submitting an additional report's not gonna bring down your assessment. We don't average. It's the strongest report that you submit.

ROSHNI: Yeah. I would definitely submit your own external evaluations report and maybe include one more just to show that there's other programs that have also found some level of evidence for this intervention.

FEMALE: We do have a couple of other folks typing so perhaps we'll give it another minute or so. We have a little bit of time left. If you do have questions that haven't been answers or questions that are coming to mind as you're hearing the conversation

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back-and-forth conversation here, we are live in the chat box feel free to put those questions in. LaTonia had asked us about education priority intervention, which is one of the priority areas in the 2019 notice of funding opportunity you mentioned of course in the notice of funding opportunity.

But there is a lot more information about the education priority interventions in the mandatory supplemental guidance. If all of the folks on the webinar have been following the chat back and forth, this is a conversation we had had to some degree in the chat box. The guidance from the 2019 mandatory supplemental guidance is that these education priority interventions much be evidence-based interventions so harking back to what Roshni talked about with the continuum of evidence where over on the right hand side the higher levels of evidence, this is supported by evaluation of that intervention that shows a causal relationship between activities and outcomes.

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And this need to be evidence based interventions and they need to be assessed by the reviewers having moderate or strong evidence to that point of the causal connection. And then the mandatory supplemental guidance also says all components and outcomes must be prevalent. That really is a key thing about these education priority interventions is that we're talking about applicants that are doing awesome plans and seeking all of the outcomes of those interventions.

LaTonia asks a follow-up questions about: are there research studies? I would point you back to the evidence briefs that Greg mentioned. Actually there is a weblink now on the webinar down in the bottom left-hand corner for the evidence brief for effective CNCS-funded education program. That is really a great resource that Greg and Roshni's team has put out. And we definitely recommend that you take a look at that. It should be really helpful to you. If you're thinking about doing education and you like to look for evidence-based model.

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GREG: It was a labor of love. To speak to your question, too, LaTonia: it is in some ways an assumption - research supports that these core components are common in interventions that lead to the identified outcomes, and so the studies that are in that evidence brief are sort of the evidence to justify the connection between these components' outcomes. That's not to say that if your intervention includes these core components then you definitely will get the identified outcome identified. But these are common core components that we found. You'll find some more information about that again in the evidence brief. Did that answer your question?

Roshni, do you want to add to that?

ROSHNI: No. I think I would just point LaTonia back to the [unintelligible]; that would be the best resource at this point.

FEMALE: Another question from Tricia. This is an interesting one: Would an evaluation report for the intervention done in a different country (English-speaking) qualify for same characteristics of beneficiary populations? That would depend on who the population was. Yes, if it was in a different



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country, I'm just using a random example: if it's for second-graders, is it still second graders? So we'd have to look more carefully at what the population characteristics were.

If the population characteristics were the same, it would still need some [inaudible] there because it's a different country so that means the setting is not the same, the context is not the same so you would either have to provide some justification or that report would have to show how or you would have to do that in the narrative of why the context was the same if it's a similar English-speaking country. Anything to add?

GREG: I think it's the strength of the evidence, too. If we're talking about a very generalizable study that has been done on many sites throughout one country that's gonna be more generalizable - I'm looking at Roshni; she's kind of shaking her head, kind of nodding. I guess my point is that if it was done on a single site and is kind of a moderate strength, you're probably not going to be able to generalize that from one country to another.

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ROSHNI: Yes. If it's a different country, that's a different context depending on if we don't know what cultural factors impact there. I would need to see what countries are or you would make that case in the narrative of saying how they're both similar.

FEMALE: Generalizability is obviously really important in looking at moderate versus strong evidence and how reviewers make that determination. In terms of the definition of "same intervention", it's really important that you make the case in your application. Tell us why it's the same intervention and one of the aspects of same intervention is that you state the characteristics of the population receiving the intervention. Tell us why it's the same.

If it is a different country, tell us why the characteristics of the population are the same enough as the characteristics of the population that you will serve to be able to quality as meeting the definition of same intervention. As with everything in the application is really comes down to how well do you make your case, how convincing are you that

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you are meeting the requirements that have been set forth in this funding opportunity.

There are great questions. Thank you so much to everyone who wrote in on the chat and is contributing these very thought-provoking questions that you have been very, very helpful to flush out what we're looking for in terms of evidence-based and what the review requirements are for that aspect of your application. I don't see any other questions coming in on chat so unless we see something in the next five seconds or so, I think maybe we'll go ahead and wrap up. Greg, Roshni, any final thoughts at the time?

GREG: Good luck!

FEMALE: Thank you so much for joining today. We really appreciate all of your participation and your great questions and if you have further questions after the webinar that were not answered, you can send them to [AmeriCorpsgrants@cms.gov](mailto:AmeriCorpsgrants@cms.gov). I think we'll go ahead and put that in the chat so everybody can see it: [americorpsgrants@cms.gov](mailto:americorpsgrants@cms.gov) is our outreach mailbox so that is where any questions related to the notice of

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funding opportunity, or the review requirements or anything else can be send and you'll get an official response back. Thank you so much to Greg and Roshni for presenting, and again, good luck to all of you. Have a great rest of your day!

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