Blueprint for Delivering Results in State Government

Investing for Results

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Blueprint Overview

This *Blueprint for Delivering Results in State Government* (Blueprint) is an implementation guide for Results for America's *Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence* (State Standard of Excellence). The State Standard of Excellence sets a national benchmark for how state governments can use evidence and data to achieve better outcomes for their residents, whereas the Blueprint provides state governments with specific implementation strategies and actions for consistently and effectively using evidence and data in budget, policy, and management decisions.

Taken together, the State Standard of Excellence and Blueprint provide state governments with a set of comprehensive resources to:

Create a high-level roadmap for how they can increase their capacity to use evidence and data in their decision-making

Build capacity to foster and sustain an organizational culture focused on learning and results

Improve investments by using their evidence and data capacity to spend taxpayer dollars on evidence-based solutions that achieve better results for their residents

This Blueprint is designed for state government leaders in governors' offices, state budget offices, and within state agencies who are charged with making their state's critical budget, policy, and management decisions. The Blueprint describes explicit Strategies, detailed Actions, useful resources, and specific examples of leading practices to help state governments make progress on the State Standard of Excellence and improve results for their residents.

Blueprint Development

The Blueprint was developed with the assistance of senior staff from a bipartisan group of governors offices as part of the What Works Bootcamps training series hosted by Results for America and the National Governors Association to help advance evidence-based policymaking in state governments. Through a series of in-depth, facilitated learning sessions in 2019 and 2020, senior staff from more than a dozen governors' offices contributed their expertise to developing this Blueprint. As such, this Blueprint is a practical guide that reflects the collective experience of many of the country's most effective state government leaders.

Strategies for Delivering Results in State Government

The Blueprint is organized into the following Blueprint Themes, which are aligned with the State Standard of Excellence. Each Theme has three related Strategies, detailed Actions for executing these Strategies, and specific examples of how state governments have implemented these Actions.

Blueprint Theme	Blueprint Strategies	Relevant State Standard of Excellence Criteria
Managing for Results	A. Establish public, customer oriented, measurable strategic **goals** and metrics that reflect the governor's priorities. B. Create a **systematic approach to managing results** that aligns budget, policy, and legislative activities to advance the governor's statewide priorities and supports continuous learning. C. Promote a **culture of using data and evidence** to deliver results for customers.	1. Strategic goals 2. Performance management/ continuous improvement
Leveraging Data	D. Develop the vision, framework and governance for effectively **collecting and using data** across state agencies to improve programs and operations. E. Build **talent** in the governor's office and agencies to advance the state's vision for collecting and using data. F. Establish a roadmap for **more integrated data usage** that links program data across state activities through better process and technology, while ensuring strong privacy protocols.	3. Data leadership 4. Data policies/ agreements 5. Data use
Building and Using Evidence	G. Create **leadership structures** to effectively build and use evidence across state programs and departments. H. Build the **infrastructure to evaluate state programs** through evaluation policies, evidence definitions, program inventories, and funding to support state leaders. I. Position the **budget** as a key tool to build state evaluation capacity and apply that capacity to focus resources on evidence-based investments.	6. Evaluation leadership 7. Evaluation policies 8. Evaluation resources 9. Outcome data 10. Evidence definitions and program inventory
Investing for Results	J. **Prioritize key areas** for analysis and improvement based on statewide goals. K. Use data-driven tools and methods to **preference evidence** by spending on the most effective and cost-efficient programs and initiatives. L. **Redirect grant dollars and contract spending** towards interventions with evidence of effectiveness in order to deliver results and encourage innovation.	11. Cost-benefit analysis 12. Use of evidence in grant programs 13. Innovation 14. Contracting for outcomes 15. Repurpose for results

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Government spending is policy in action. Incorporating evidence and data into these spending decisions is the best way for state governments to make improvements over the status quo, which too often reinforces historical inequality. Rather than making spending decisions based on assumptions and hunches, leaders and policymakers should spend resources on programs, interventions, and services that have evidence of effectiveness. To improve results, government should shift public resources to the most effective interventions in order to increase their scale and impact.

There are a range of tools for making government spending more evidence-based, from legislatively mandating public spending on evidence-based interventions to using outcome-focused contracts. These tools can be used across state government to shift funding away from strategies that fail to deliver the desired outcomes and towards evidence-based interventions that achieve better results for state residents.

Strategy J

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*Prioritize **key areas** for analysis and improvement based on statewide goals.*

Actions

- Identify top priorities where evidence–based investments can improve results in the short and long term   🏛 **Policy**

- Consider building momentum by starting with a handful of high-potential use cases that demonstrate how better use of data can deliver actionable insights that improve outcomes and equity   🏛 **Policy**
  - › For the longer term, consider a more expansive learning agenda that addresses broader, more systemic challenges (e.g. education cost reduction, supporting those who are "high users" of multiple government services) that can utilize innovative problem–solving approaches, such as service matching improvements, rapid–cycle evaluations, behavioral science, design thinking, agile project management, and other cutting–edge public policy approaches

- Focus resources and energy on key areas (versus taking an approach that prioritizes all activities at once), and work towards building momentum and systems that will lay the groundwork for future related efforts (as opposed to one-off projects)   👥 **People** 🏛 **Policy**

Blueprint Strategies in Practice

COLORADO

Governor's Office and Agencies Partner with External Research Lab

The Colorado Governor's Office and the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab (The Lab) co-designed the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC) to facilitate data sharing for research and analytics purposes as a way to improve state policies and programs. Using this data, the Lab and state agencies have collaborated on projects to improve outcomes in areas such as child welfare, criminal justice, health, education, economic opportunity, and workforce. LINC has also issued a request for proposals that would provide funding for each of the Governor's Cabinet Groups, which support implementation of the governor's strategic goals, to utilize LINC for high-priority cabinet business analytic needs in meeting these goals.
More information: 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 5).

MARYLAND

Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services

The Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services focuses on achieving the governor's child welfare goals. The Office incentivizes the use of data by requiring at least three years of performance information from grant applicants and incorporates evidence by allocating 10 points (out of 100) for evidence of effectiveness with a bonus point to any applicant who proposes an evidence-based home visiting program (utilizing a model approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).
More information: 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 12).

INDIANA

Efforts to Lower Statewide Infant Mortality Rates

To meet the governor's goal of having the lowest infant mortality rate in the Midwest, Indiana leveraged its Management Performance Hub, which facilitates the linkage, storage, and analysis of administrative data. By linking data across 17 data sets, Management Performance Hub staff were able to better understand and map mortality rates, discovering that the infant mortality rate in Indiana is 7.3%, compared to the national rate of 5.8%, which accounts for 602 babies dying before their first birthdays in the state. This information drove increased investment in a targeted strategy to identify those at risk and connect them with vital resources to reduce infant mortality through an innovative program focused on building a network of wraparound services for mothers and infants. As a result, infant mortality rate decreased significantly from 2017 to 2018 and is at its lowest since 2012. By 2019, the initiative had linked 44 de-identified maternal and infant health mortality data sets.
More information: Results for America blog.

Strategy K

$ Use data-driven tools and methods to **preference evidence** by spending on the most effective and cost-efficient programs and initiatives.

Actions

- Incorporate cost-benefit analysis into the ongoing evaluation of programs   🏛 **Policy**
  - › Consider providing centralized resources and guidance for cost-benefit efforts (e.g. through a university-supported research center outside of the agencies) to provide more standardized, public, and rapid assessments
  - › As individual programs or interventions are evaluated, make sure to consider the benefits that are accrued across each agency and to the public more generally, versus just looking at one agency's view of savings

- Build evidence and outcome requirements into programmatic efforts by using evidence of effectiveness (level of evidence or past performance) as a factor in assessing grantee applicants   🏛 **Policy**
  - › Consider offering more funding for state or local programs that are backed by proven results
  - › Consider creating a tiered approach that directs more funding to proven programs (versus established programs with no or limited results), while also supporting innovative programs that do not have a track record yet

- Adopt performance-based contracting with service providers   🏛 **Policy**
  - › Consider shifting to contracts that tie part of payments to specific, quantitative outcomes that directly benefit customers (results-driven contracting or Pay for Success)
  - › Increase the use of active contract management (regular communication with service providers based on performance indicators to monitor the progress of implementation) and identify corrective actions to support improvement

Blueprint Strategies in Practice

NEVADA

Commitment to Funding Evidence-Based Interventions

Since 2017, the Nevada Department of Education has allocated 100% of the state's $8.5 million in federal Title I school improvement funds to districts and schools for interventions backed by strong, moderate, or promising evidence (using the top three tiers of evidence as defined by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]).
More information: Results for America case study and 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 12).

RHODE ISLAND

Active Contract Management Strategies and Results-Driven Contracting

Rhode Island's Department of Children, Youth, and Families relied on active contract management strategies in restructuring 116 contracts (totaling $90 million), which resulted in a reduction in the number of foster children in groupcare and an expansion of foster care.
More information: 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 14).

WASHINGTON

Institute for Public Policy's Cost-Benefit Analyses

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) has published hundreds of cost-benefit analyses in a wide variety of issue areas over the past 10 years. The WSIPP cost-benefit framework has been widely adopted by governments across the country.
More information: 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 11).

Strategy L

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Redirect grant dollars and contract spending towards interventions with evidence of effectiveness in order to deliver results and encourage innovation.

Actions

- Identify programs where results could be improved, including those that consistently do not achieve desired policy outcomes or equity goals 🏛 **Policy**
    › Determine if program outcomes can be improved by using evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds to more effective practices or providers
    › If improved results cannot be achieved by using evidence of effectiveness, then consider how to best redirect existing funding to other programs, practices, or service providers that are more likely to achieve the desired outcomes
    › Consider a measured, but clear, process that is not automatic, but provides a rubric–based indication of if a program is a candidate to have its funding redirected (e.g. 3+ years of missed outcomes by 20% or more, and no clear plan for remediation)
    › Assess the potential for agencies and programs (given their mission, scale, and statutory requirements) to successfully redirect funding when outcomes are not achieved; consider other options like a partnership with outside experts to improve performance (or use of active contract management) to drive continuous improvement with service providers and grantees

- Create a clear incentive system to promote innovation in program development and overall operational improvement 🏛 **Policy**
    - Consider allowing departments that shift funds away from non–performing programs to automatically keep a percentage of that original funding to spend on innovative programs, especially those that help community organizations build their evidence base
    - Build a focus on innovation into the roles of key leaders, such as the Chief Evaluation Officer or Chief Performance Officer, to allow for a broader and more integrated approach

Blueprint Strategies in Practice

PENNSYLVANIA Performance–Based Contracts Policy	Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has set performance targets for its community corrections program through performance–based contracts. Providers that meet recidivism prevention goals receive a 1% increase in their rate while providers that fail to meet targets for two consecutive years can have their contracts terminated. **More information: 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 15).**
MINNESOTA Performance–Based Targets for Cash Assistance Programs	The Minnesota Department of Human Services requires counties that do not meet the Self–Support Index performance targets to submit performance improvement plans. In counties where "no improvement is shown by the end of the multi–year plan, the county's or tribe's allocation must be decreased by 2.5 percent" as required by law. **More information: 2019 State Standard of Excellence (Criteria 15).**

Blueprint for Delivering Results in State Government

What Could This Look Like Over Time?
Investing for Results

BLUEPRINT STRATEGIES

Strategy J:
*Prioritize **key areas** for analysis and improvement based on statewide goals.*

BEGINNING
- Identify a handful of near–term, high–potential projects to drive impact and generate momentum

BUILDING
- Establish a learning agenda that includes broader, more systemic challenges
- Explicitly lay the groundwork for expanded and integrated data and evidence–based results management

SUSTAINING
- Ensure appropriate level of resources committed to top priorities and more expansive results management

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Strategy K:
*Use data–driven tools and methods to **preference evidence** by spending on the most effective and cost–efficient programs and initiatives.*

BEGINNING
- Create inventory of current methods used to prioritize spending and identify gaps and opportunities
- Pilot one or more new or expanded methods to use evidence of effectiveness to fund programs
- Implement an active contract management approach to increase collaboration with service providers in order to improve results

BUILDING
- Assess pilot results and expand use of evidence of effectiveness to funding for additional programs
- Ensure new evidence–focused spending efforts are integrated into the budget process and performance management system
- Build capacity for cost effectiveness and evidence efforts through partnerships (such as a university)
- Expand active contract management to additional program areas

SUSTAINING
- Require that evidence of effectiveness be used to allocate funds in many/all major programs
- Establish fixed budget resources to continue to build capacity and maintain efforts to use evidence to improve outcomes
- Engage the legislature to build support and identify potential legislative opportunities

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Strategy L:
Redirect grant dollars and contract spending towards interventions with evidence of effectiveness in order to deliver results and encourage innovation.

BEGINNING
- Identify and assess a few programs where the track record of results indicates that using evidence of effectiveness could fund better outcomes
- Pilot an incentive–based approach to promote program and operational improvement

BUILDING
- Consider expanding evidence of effectiveness approach to additional programs based on learnings from initial efforts to improve outcomes
- Assess pilot and expand incentive–based approach

SUSTAINING
- Engage with the legislature on an approach to funding redirection and identify potential legislative opportunities to use evidence to improve program results

Wins

By following the actions above and building over time, states should aim to achieve wins along the way to galvanize internal and external support. Here are some sample wins, though there are many other types of achievements that states could use to mark their progress.

SHORT-TERM WINS

- Develop guidance on the use of evidence–based interventions (see Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services' list of recommended Evidence–Based Programs and Practices)
- Start using evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in small number of areas with strong evidence base or in high–priority strategic areas (see Nevada's use of evidence in its Title I education programs)

MID-TERM WINS

- Show improved results through use of evidence of effectiveness in grant programs and expand to additional programs (see how New Mexico funded more evidence–based programs and how the Nevada Department of Education is seeing promising results)
- Operate innovation challenges or fund tiered evidence frameworks to expand promising practices while growing the evidence base
- Identify contracts that could be improved through data–driven and results–focused contracting strategies (such as Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families use of active contract management strategies)

LONG-TERM WINS

- Demonstrate significant improvements in major programs by using evidence of effectiveness
- Budget for evaluations to identify more effective approaches by using a set–aside or carve–out of programs funds for evaluation activities (see Colorado's $500,000 evalution fund)

About Results for America

Results for America
Results for America is helping decision-makers at all levels of government harness the power of evidence and data to solve our world's greatest challenges. Our mission is to make investing in what works the "new normal," so that when policymakers make decisions, they start by seeking the best evidence and data available, then use what they find to get better results.

Invest in What Works Policy Series
This *Blueprint for Delivering Results in State Government* is part of Results for America's Invest in What Works policy series launched in 2012 to help local, state, and federal policymakers harness the power of evidence and data to increasingly shift taxpayer dollars toward results-driven, evidence-based solutions.

For Further Information

Please contact Results for America (info@results4america.org) for additional information about the Strategies and Actions contained in this Blueprint or for assistance with implementing these strategies in your state.

blueprint.results4america.org

info@results4america.org

@Results4America

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