The Rhode Island Evidence Scale

Proven Effective

5

4

5: Proven Effective

A program or service that is "proven effective" has a high level of research on effectiveness for at least one outcome of interest, determined through multiple rigorous evaluations. Qualifying evaluations include studies such as randomized controlled trials and evaluations that incorporate strong comparison group designs. These programs have been tried and tested by many jurisdictions, and typically have specified procedures that allow them to be successfully replicated. We expect that very few budget requests will be "proven effective"—this is the highest evidence-based standard, and most programs have not yet been studied rigorously enough to achieve it.

Promising

3

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3: Promising

A "promising" program or service has some research demonstrating effectiveness, but not as much as would be required for a "proven effective" designation. This could include, for example, a single randomized controlled trial or evaluation with a comparison group design that is not contradicted by other studies, but not confirmed by multiple such evaluations. It could also include the existence of a robust body of outcome data that your agency, or another agency that delivers a similar program, has collected and analyzed about the program over time. We expect that some, but not many, budget requests will be "promising."

Theory-based

1

1: Theory-based

A "theory-based" program or service has no qualifying evaluations on effectiveness or conclusive randomized controlled studies. Typically, theory-based programs have been tested using less rigorous research designs that do not meet the standards outlined above but have a well-constructed logic model or theory of change. Often, theory-based requests are based on anecdotal evidence or expert opinions. We expect that most expansionary budget requests will be in the "theory-based" category. The best and most compelling of these requests will include a plan for study that would theoretically allow the intervention to move up the evidence scale within a designated time period.

Evidence of Insufficient Impact or Unintended Effects

0

0: Evidence of Insufficient Impact or Unintended Effects

A program has "evidence of insufficient impact" if quality evaluations have measured no meaningful difference in outcomes between program participants and those in a comparison group. A program that regularly fails to reach its outcomes targets also falls into this category. A program has "evidence of unintended effects" if quality evidence suggests that it has a negative impact on outcomes for program participants. We expect that many constrained proposals will involve programs that fall into this category.