

Review of External Programs Submitted - Researchers

Each program submission will be reviewed to determine if (1) evidence of reducing recidivism is observed and (2) other BOP-relevant criteria are met. The BOP will decide what programs are included on the approved list based on the information from the independent reviews.

Criteria for Reviewing Evidence

Each program study submitted will be reviewed to determine if the program reduces recidivism (i.e., results in a positive effect on recidivism). Evidence of any effect on outcomes must be determined by comparing outcomes of individuals participating in the program **relative** to the outcomes of individuals not participating in the program.¹ Therefore, to determine effects, studies must include individuals from a comparison group, and outcomes (e.g., recidivism) for those individuals in both the program and the comparison group.²

Reviewers will use established, objective, and high-quality systematic evidence review standards to ensure external credibility for all ratings. They will review the studies of the programs using an abbreviated and modified version of existing systematic evidence standards for study design and outcomes detailed in the table below.³ The modifications allow for a more inclusive review of studies.

Table. Description of Evidence Review Standards

| Standard | Purpose | Criteria |
|------------------------|--|---|
| A. Study Design | Assessment of the research design (to provide evidence of a statistical and positive effect on outcomes) Assessment of threats to validity (to determine limits of the study) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of research design to determine any effect (i.e., type of comparison) • Sample size • Statistical adjustment in analysis, if applicable • Instrumentation/measures (reliability/validity) • Internal validity • Follow-up period, if applicable (i.e., any sustained effect) • Diffusion of results, if applicable⁴ |

¹ Outcomes include recidivism/rates and measures/instruments/assessments of recidivism-related outcomes/behaviors. Individual studies may include more than one outcome.

² A program may have changed over time or been modified since the time of the study, but any evidence the study provides is based on the program *as it was implemented* for that individual study.

³ These are two of the four standards used by the web-based clearinghouse CrimeSolutions.gov established by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

⁴ May only apply to community-delivered and based program studies.

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| Standard | Purpose | Criteria |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| B. Study Outcomes | Assessment of changes on intended outcomes (e.g., recidivism, related behaviors) Assessment of the results/effects on intended outcomes (e.g., recidivism, related behaviors) <i>Note: Outcomes are considered and rated separately within this dimension because programs may target multiple outcomes.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed program change on outcomes • Observed substantive program change on outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statistical significance of any observed effect, direction of the effect (positive or negative)⁵ ○ Magnitude of differences of any effect (positive or negative) |

Reviewers will establish interrater reliability (IRR) during training and again during each phase of the evidence review process for each program study review. If reviewers do not reach consensus at any phase of the evidence review, an additional reviewer will be added to conduct the review and establish IRR.

Final Evidence Rating. After reviewers calculate the criteria ratings for study design and outcome standards, they will use the following criteria to assign the final evidence rating for the program, as described below.

- **Effective:** Well-designed and rigorous studies that *provide evidence of a positive effect* of the program on outcomes.⁶
- **Promising:** Well-designed studies, though slightly less rigorous or have identified limitations or inconsistencies, that *provide promising evidence of a positive effect* of the program on outcomes.
- **Ineffective:** Well-designed and rigorous studies that *provide evidence of a negative effect* of the program on outcomes.
- **No Effect:** Well-designed and rigorous studies that *do not provide conclusive evidence of a positive effect* of the program outcomes.
- **Inconclusive:** Studies that *do not provide conclusive evidence* to determine the effect of the program on outcomes.

⁵ A positive or negative effect on an outcome is determined by the statistical results reported by the study. ⁶ A positive effect on an outcome is determined by the statistical results reported by the study.

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Only those programs rated as “Effective” and “Promising” will be considered by the BOP for inclusion on the [First Step Act Approved Programs Guide](#).

Criteria for Reviewing Programs

Each program submitted will also be reviewed to determine if the program meets BOP- relevant criteria based on information entered in the submission form. Program oversight staff will determine whether and how to utilize the program. Staff will use criteria from the BOP to assess programs based on the following:

- **Requirements of the program and/or specifications** for delivery (e.g., staff/inmate ratio, sequence and length of sessions, and frequency and duration of the program).⁶
- **Populations or subpopulations** the program was designed for or used with including federal offenders/inmates, subpopulations of federal offenders/inmates, (e.g., women inmates, violent offenders), others with needs “similar” to the needs of federal offenders/inmates (e.g., those in need of drug treatment).
- **Criminogenic or other critical needs** of federal offenders/inmates or similar needs the program was designed to address (e.g., those in need of work/vocational training).
- **Program characteristics** including potential innovative solutions/efficiencies and similarity to current BOP programs delivering information/intervention to address a need. For example, the BOP currently uses cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to address trauma but a program that addresses a gap in the CBT programming may be considered relevant.
- **Program costs/time** (e.g., purchase, training, delivery/implementation).

Questions about submitting or the review process?

Questions should be submitted to RSDFSAProgramSubmissions@bop.gov. Questions about specific programs, studies, and review status **will not** be answered.

Program Submissions

Each program submission must contain a completed Program Submission Form and at least one, but no more than three, program studies. Complete program submission packages can be emailed to RSDFSAProgramSubmissions@bop.gov. Hard copy submission packages can be sent to:

⁶ Source: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/core-intervention-components-identifying-and-operationalizing-whatmakes-programs-work>.

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FSA Program Submissions
320 First Street NW
400 Building, Room 2054 Washington
D.C. 20524

DISCLAIMER

This is a request for program submissions *only to review evidence to determine whether an effect on reducing recidivism is observed.*

- The ratings of evidence from the reviews do not constitute an endorsement of the program by the BOP.
- The BOP will decide what programs are included on the approved list based on the information from the independent reviews.

If responses are requested by outside parties (i.e. Freedom of Information Act / FOIA request), this information is not protected as source selection information (Federal

Acquisition Regulation / FAR 2.101 and 3.104). The submitter will be responsible for removing or identifying any proprietary or competition-sensitive information contained in their response. To aid the BOP, submitters that intend for their submissions to be exempt from disclosure under FOIA Exemption 4 should enter “proprietary information” when responding to “*Provide any additional relevant information about the program for the BOP*” on submission form. Otherwise, any information received will become the property of the Government.

BOP recognizes that new studies of previously submitted programs may be conducted. Programs may be re-submitted for review **only** if the following conditions have been met for rereview.

- New studies of program provide additional information **or** results were not already provided in a previously submitted study.
- Re-submissions of programs and the new studies are **at least** 180 days from the date of the prior submission.

This request for submissions does not constitute a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. This request does not commit the Government to a contract with any agency or entity. The BOP is not seeking proposals and will not accept unsolicited proposals. Should an RFP be issued in the future, it will be posted publicly. It is the responsibility of the potential offeror to monitor these sites for additional information. Participation in this request for submission is not a requirement for any future RFP. Submitting or providing responses to questions will not result in preferential treatment or automatic consideration for any forthcoming RFPs or funding opportunities.