



Assisting LEAs With the Use of Evidence-Based Practices and Programs

INFORMATION SHEET

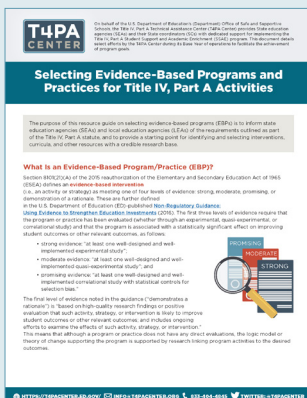
This information sheet describes the process of, and best practices for, identifying, selecting, and implementing evidence-based practices and programs (EBPs). Title IV, Part A State coordinators can use the tools and resources included in this information sheet to guide and work alongside local education agencies that want to use EBPs in their work.

Evidence-Based Practices and Programs in Title IV, Part A

The Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A) statute indicates that State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) should use evidence-based programs or practices (EBPs) whenever possible. Specifically, the Title IV-A statute charges SEAs and LEAs to use programs or activities that are “evidence-based (to the extent a State determines that such evidence is reasonably available)” (Sec. 4104(b)(3)(B)(ii)(I); Sec. 4104(b)(3)(C)(iii)). It is important to note that this requirement applies only to drug and violence prevention programs and activities under the Safe and Healthy Students content area. For all other areas, it is recommended, but not required.



Need more information on the ESSA Levels of Evidence? Check out this T4PA Center resource.



The 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) defines an evidence-based intervention as having one of four levels of evidence: strong, moderate, promising, or demonstration of a rationale (Sec. 8101(21)(A)). For more information about the requirements outlined in the statute and the levels of evidence, see the T4PA Center resource titled [Selecting Evidence-Based Programs and Practices for Title IV, Part A Activities](#). This resource builds on the information provided in that resource to describe each step of the process for identifying, selecting, and implementing an EBP; this resource also provides accompanying resources and tools that State coordinators (SCs) can use alongside LEAs to implement each step.

Role of SCs in the Process

SCs can use the information and resources in this information sheet to provide support, training, and technical assistance to their subgrantees as they select and implement EBPs. For example, SCs can help identify tools and resources that will be most relevant to LEAs, given each LEA's unique context and its familiarity or past experience with EBPs and given the SCs' capacity for translating needs when searching for EBPs and supporting a selection process. SCs can then help LEAs utilize the tools and implement steps in the process. For example, SCs can fill out questionnaires or work plans alongside LEA staff, review EBPs in clearinghouses to identify those that meet LEA needs, or serve on advisory groups to select the most appropriate programs or practices.

Overview of the Process of Identifying, Selecting, and Implementing an EBP

Selecting an EBP is a multistep process that starts with an LEA identifying a need and concludes when the EBP has been successfully implemented (see Figure 1). In the first step, LEAs can review available data to identify needs (as required by statute to access Title IV-A funds) and the context in which the selected EBP will be implemented. Next, LEAs may search for potential programs or practices that fit the basic criteria defined during the first step of identifying needs (e.g., the target population or setting for which the program needs to be effective). Third, from this pool of potential EBPs, LEAs can involve multiple stakeholders to assess which EBP (or EBPs, in some cases) best fits their need(s) and context, and select one (or multiple) to implement. Finally, LEAs can implement and monitor the EBP, including a planning and preparation period before rolling out the program or practice in schools or classrooms. Monitoring might include formal evaluation, which has been discussed in [other resources](#). Each step is covered in more detail below.

Figure 1. Steps to Identify, Select, and Implement an Evidence-Based Program or Practice

	Role of LEA	Role of the SC
Step 1: Identify need(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct needs assessment • Inventory current programs and practices • Assess readiness for implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select appropriate tools for assessment • Complete assessments with LEA
Step 2: Identify potential EBPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for EBPs • Target search or filter lists to identify EBPs that meet needs and context • Review evidence for each program or practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for EBPs • Review studies
Step 3: Select EBP(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare short list of potential EBPs to identified needs, context, and resources • Involve stakeholders in selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review short list of EBPs • Serve on selection advisory group
Step 4: Implement EBP(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to implement • Implement and monitor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve on implementation advisory group • Develop implementation plans with LEA

Step 1: Identify Needs

The EBP selection process will work best when LEAs can clearly state

- What need they want to address or outcomes they want to change with the EBP.
- What group or groups of students will the EBP be implemented with (i.e., the target population).
- Who will deliver the EBP and in what setting (e.g., a teacher in a classroom, a behavioral health professional in a small group).



Two types of activities can provide this information: a needs assessment and a readiness assessment. These assessments are part of what is considered the “exploration” stage of implementation. SCs and/or LEAs can use the Title IV-A Needs Assessment Tool (see the [Resources for Step 1 box](#)) to help identify and articulate needs.¹

Some schools or communities could be more ready to implement EBPs than others, and identifying who may need additional support will also help LEAs implement an EBP successfully.

Another activity that is not always included in a needs assessment, but can better set the LEA up for successful implementation of an EBP once it’s selected, is for an LEA to assess readiness for implementation of an EBP. Readiness is defined as “a developmental point at which a person, organization, or system has the capacity and willingness to engage in a particular activity.”² In the context of implementing an EBP, this could be the LEA staff’s readiness, a district’s or community’s readiness, and/or the readiness of the people or schools who will be responsible for implementation on the ground. Some schools or communities could be more ready to

implement than others, and identifying who may need additional support will also help LEAs implement an EBP successfully. Assessing readiness usually involves determining and articulating an entity’s (e.g., a school’s and/or community’s) motivation for change as well as its capacity to implement a program or practice. Considerations for capacity may include what resources are available to support the work and what staff members are (or will be) available and have the skills to plan and execute the work.^{2,3} This process may uncover a gap between the LEA’s needs and the LEA’s readiness to implement a program or practice to meet those needs.

After assessing needs and readiness, but before moving on to identify a new EBP, LEAs may want to inventory the programs and initiatives that are already in place in their state or LEA in order to determine how resources are already being committed to address various needs, and to identify successes and challenges.

Resources for Step 1

Resources below can be used by various stakeholders to identify needs.

- [T4PA Needs Assessment Tool](#)
- [Selecting Evidence-Based Programs; see Determining Readiness to Implement EBPs \(page 4\)](#)
- [Initiative Inventory](#)
- [Resource Mapping Tool](#)
- [Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA](#)



Step 2: Identify Potential Programs and Practices



Once an LEA has a clear vision of the need(s) to be addressed, the context in which the EBP will be implemented, and the readiness of various stakeholders to implement the program or practice, the LEA can search for EBPs to be screened and considered for use. There are many registries and clearinghouses of EBPs, several of which rate the evidence behind a program or practice on the basis of the rigor, the quality of its evaluations, and other characteristics (see the [Resources for Step 2 box](#) for a compilation of these sites). Programs and practices

can also be identified through searches for evaluation reports, such as articles in academic journals or on Websites compiled by funders of evaluation (primarily foundations and Federal agencies).

There are trade-offs to using different sources to search for EBPs. Registries and clearinghouses have searched and sorted through the evaluation research, and their screening and rating systems make it easier for users to understand what studies are of high quality and what level of evidence programs have. However, fewer programs tend to be represented in these databases because of their screening criteria (for example, some registries include only programs that have some evidence of effectiveness, while others include programs that have been evaluated whether or not there was evidence that the program had positive effects on outcomes). On the other hand, smaller and more innovative programs that have not had as rigorous evaluations or that have not yet been cataloged may be identifiable only through an independent Internet search. Further, registries tend to catalog fully developed and codified programs, rather than practices, which can make it hard to identify a program or practice that falls into the “demonstration of a rationale” level specified in ESEA. There are some exceptions, such as [What Works Clearinghouse](#), which includes guides that summarize effective practices (such as research-based classroom approaches for improving adolescent literacy), and the [Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#), which focuses on practices rather than programs. However, if searching for evaluation reports and research on practices outside of program registries, SCs and LEAs will want to be prepared to read and interpret the research reports themselves.

Because there are many different sources of information on various programs and practices, and the evidence behind them, using the priorities identified during the LEA’s needs assessment can help make the program search more manageable. For example, many program directories can be filtered by target population, outcomes, setting, and other program or evaluation characteristics.



Resources for Step 2

Resources below can be used to by SEAs and LEAs to identify potential evidence-based programs and practices.

- [Selecting Evidence Based Practices – Table 2. EBP Directories](#)
- [Reading and Understanding Education Research](#)
- [Aligning Evidence-based Clearinghouses with ESSA Tiers of Evidence](#)

Step 3: Select the Best-Fitting EBP



Once an LEA has a short list of EBPs identified through its search, it may pick the programs or practices that are the best fit. LEAs should select EBPs on the basis of not only the existing evidence but also which will be the best fit for the LEA's specific needs and context.

LEAs may want to convene an advisory group that includes students, families, teachers, administrators, and LEA staff to help select the best EBP to meet their needs. This group could be the stakeholder group that was consulted during the LEA application process or the members of that group who have the most relevant expertise for selecting the EBP. The advisory group can use tools designed to help organizations review and compare potential EBPs and assess how different EBPs align with an organization's needs and resources (see the [Resources for Step 3 box](#)). For example, tools will ask readers to reflect on questions about resources required to implement the intervention (such as staff time, space, equipment, etc.), what adaptations would be needed, and whether the EBP would align with school or district culture and practices. Group members can do their own assessments of the short list of EBPs, or the group can complete the tools together. Involving the broader school community in selecting an EBP will both bring in critical perspectives to help identify a program or practice that is a good match for the school(s) and the community and get initial buy-in and input from the community.

Involving the broader school community in selecting an EBP will both bring in critical perspectives to help identify a program or practice that is a good match for the school(s) and the community and get initial buy-in and input from the community.

There may not be a program that is a perfect match for the LEA's needs, so the LEA may need consider how much it would need to adapt a promising EBP's components or activities in order to implement it in the LEA's specific context. For most programs, some adaptation is likely, but if an LEA is considering changing many aspects of the program activities or implementation, it may consider consulting with the program developer. For example, some EBPs have identified their core components, that is, practices or activities that are essential for achieving outcomes for participants and should not be altered. If adaptations are needed, LEAs would be wise to invest some resources in data collection and evaluation to document whether the adapted program remained effective and, if not, adjust course as needed.

Resources for Step 3

Resources below can support stakeholders in selecting the best-fitting program or practice for an LEA's specific needs and context.

- [The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context](#)
- [Selecting Evidence-Based Programs; see Appendix Table 3. Exploring EBPs](#)
- [Selecting an Evidence-Based Program](#)
- [The Importance of Contextual Fit When Implementing Evidence-Based Interventions](#)
- [Aligning Evidence-Based Programs](#)



Step 4: Implementation

Once an LEA has selected an EBP, it is ready to prepare for and implement the program or practice. This step involves careful planning before implementation begins at the site level (see the [Resources for Step 4 box](#) for tools to help with this planning). LEAs may want to engage the advisory group that selected the EBP (which could include the stakeholder group that LEAs consulted when developing the application) or convene a new implementation-focused advisory group. Depending on how much the selected EBP was discussed and explored before its selection, the planning phase may begin with talking to the program developers or other communities implementing the EBP to better understand potential implementation challenges and solutions. If appropriate, LEAs may hold orientation or information sessions for parents and communities before rolling out the intervention. During this time, the LEA may



- Develop or plan for training staff on the EBP.
- Secure the needed resources, such as curriculum, program space, and materials.
- Develop a plan for collecting data on the implementation and outcomes of the EBP.
- Set up a system (i.e., a data system, as well as a written plan for who will review data and how often they will review data) for monitoring data being collected on an ongoing basis.

Many EBPs have established fidelity measures for tracking implementation, but in some cases, LEAs will have to determine how they will know that the program or practice is being implemented as intended; this might include establishing their own measures and benchmarks for tracking fidelity. Individual schools may also want to form implementation support teams that include staff members who will coordinate and oversee the EBP at their school. After planning, LEAs will train staff on the EBP, begin implementation, and begin collecting data and monitoring. LEAs may also want to make a plan for more formal evaluation of the program or practice after an initial implementation and monitoring period.



Resources for Step 4

Resources below can be used by stakeholders to support program implementation and monitoring.

- [Selecting Evidence-Based Programs; see Worksheet 5: Planning Checklist for Monitoring Fidelity of Evidence-Based Practices \(EBPs\)](#)
- [Implementation Stages Planning Tool](#)
- [Effectively Implementing Evidence-Based Programs and Practices](#)

Conclusion

The Title IV-A statute states that SEAs and LEAs should use EBPs whenever possible. Identifying, selecting, and implementing EBPs is a multistep process that goes beyond just finding a program or practice that meets evidence standards. Following this process can help ensure that LEAs engage in selection of EBPs thoughtfully, which will set them up to choose a program or practice that is well suited to their needs and context and help them plan for successful implementation. At each step, SCs can use the tools and resources outlined in this information sheet to support LEAs and guide them toward selecting an EBP that meets evidence standards; that makes sense for the students, staff, or families in their district; and that the LEA will be well prepared to implement.

ENDNOTES

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, Title IV, Part A Technical Assistance Center. (2021). Title IV-A implementation stages planning tool. https://t4pacenter.ed.gov/Docs/ProductResource/TitleIVImplementationStagesPlanningTool_508C.pdf

² Yoder, N., Darling-Churchill, K., Colombi, G. D., Ruddy, S., Neiman, S., Chagnon, E., & Mayo, R. (2017). *School climate improvement reference manual*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students. <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/SCIRP/referencemanualwhole.pdf>

³ National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion & Youth Violence Prevention. (n.d.). *Selecting evidence-based programs*. https://healthysafechildren.org/sites/default/files/Selecting_EBPs_Website_508.pdf



CONTACT US

Help Desk Toll-Free Number: (833) 404-4845

Help Desk Email: info@T4PACenter.org

T4PA Center Website: <https://t4pacenter.ed.gov>



[T4PACenter](#)

Established in 2018, the T4PA Center is operated by Synergy Enterprises, Inc. under Contract #ED-ESE-15-A-0015 awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools (OSSS). All materials created or disseminated by the T4PA Center, including the contents of this publication, should not be presumed to reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or to imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education and the T4PA Center do not guarantee the accuracy, timeliness, applicability, or completeness of any outside information provided in these materials. The T4PA Center does not endorse products, services, or service providers.

This publication may contain hyperlinks and URLs for information created and maintained by private organizations. This information is provided for the reader's convenience. The inclusion of information or a hyperlink or URL does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed or services offered. All hyperlinks and URLs were accessed 2022.