

Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence

Vermont



The **Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence** sets a national standard – a “north star” – for how state governments can consistently and effectively use data and evidence in their budget, policy, and management decisions to achieve better outcomes for their residents. The purpose of the Standard is to:



Define the data and evidence infrastructure state governments need to have in place in order to invest in what works.



Showcase examples of results-driven and evidence-based practices, policies, programs, and systems within state governments



Provide a road map for state government leaders committed to investing in what works.

How did the state stack up in 2019?

The State Spotlight highlights Vermont's leading and promising data and evidence efforts featured in Results for America's 2019 State Standard of Excellence.

Vermont had **1 example** from the 15 criteria, including **0 leading examples** and **1 promising examples**. Vermont had **no examples in 14 criteria**.

To accelerate its progress, Vermont could focus on investing in **evaluation capacity** (criteria #8) and **using evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds for grant programs** (criteria #12).

15 Criteria

1 criteria with promising examples

14 criteria with no examples

1. Strategic Goals

Did the governor have public statewide strategic goals?

The creation of statewide strategic goals is an important first step in aligning state government budgets, policies, and programs to improve outcomes on a state government's highest priorities.

Leading Example

COLORADO

In 2019, Colorado launched the Governor's Dashboard, which outlines four high-priority strategic goals: tax reform and economic development, energy and renewables, health, and education and the workforce. Each high-priority strategic area is supported by a cabinet working group as well as aligned goals, metrics, and strategies contained within agency performance plans. The governor's annual budget request also links these goals to specific agency activities and outcomes.

Promising Example



VERMONT

In 2018, the Vermont Governor's Office released the state's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, which outlines four statewide goals related to the economy, affordability, vulnerability, and modernization. The goals were established in a 2017 executive order. As required by a 2014 law, and a related executive order, the state's Chief Performance Officer annually reports data related to these goals and fiscal transparency.

4 Other Promising Examples

Arizona, Oregon, Utah, Washington

2. Performance Management / Continuous Improvement

Did the state or any of its agencies implement a performance management system aligned with its statewide strategic goals, with clear and prioritized outcome-focused goals, program objectives, and measures; and did it consistently collect, analyze, and use data and evidence to improve outcomes, return on investment, and other dimensions of performance?

Performance management helps state governments monitor and improve customer service, program performance, and outcomes for their residents.

Leading Example

WASHINGTON

A 2013 Washington State Executive Order established Results Washington within the Governor's office as "an innovative, data-driven, performance management initiative, that will drive the operations of state government." As part of its work, Results Washington proactively and regularly publishes outcome data within the state's priority areas of: world-class education; prosperous economy; sustainable energy and clean environment; healthy and safe communities; and efficient, effective and accountable government. In each of these areas, the state measures progress. Since 2014, Results Washington has conducted Results Review meetings with the Governor 10 times per year. The meetings are recorded and publicly posted and allow the "Governor and state agency directors to discuss objectives, improvement strategies and metrics."

No Vermont examples of this criteria



11 Promising Examples

Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington

3. Data Leadership

Did the governor's office or any state agency have a senior staff member(s) with the authority, staff, and budget to collect, analyze, share, and use high-quality administrative and survey data—consistent with strong privacy protections— to improve (or help other entities including, but not limited to, local governments and nonprofit organizations improve) federal, state, and local programs? (Example: chief data officer)

A designated chief data officer can create a coherent set of policies, structures, and guidance for how state agencies should routinely use data to improve programs.

Leading Example

CONNECTICUT

A **2018 Connecticut law** formalized the position of **Chief Data Officer**, created the **Connecticut Data Analysis Technology Advisory Board**, and required each state agency to designate an agency data officer to manage high value data sets and coordinate data-related activities with the state Chief Data Officer. The Chief Data Officer, along with individual agency data officers, are required to biannually update the **state data plan**, which covers open data and creates data standards for agencies. The plan also contains **11 principles** and accompanying practices that all agencies should adopt in order to improve their management, use, sharing, and analysis of data.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



7 Promising Examples

Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, Washington

4. Data Policies / Agreements

Did the state or any of its agencies have data sharing policies and data sharing agreements—consistent with strong privacy protections—with any nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, local government agencies, and/or federal government agencies which were designed to improve outcomes for publicly funded programs, and did it make those policies and agreements publicly available? (Example: data sharing policy, open data policy)

Data sharing policies and agreements allow state governments to take a coordinated approach to identifying and using relevant data to improve programs while implementing strong privacy protections.

Leading Example

WASHINGTON

The Washington Education Research and Data Center has a memorandum of understanding which identifies how data will be collected and shared among partners with a strong focus on protecting individual privacy. The Center brings together eleven partners, including state workforce, education, and child welfare agencies, to compile education and workforce data to improve student achievement and workforce outcomes.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services maintains an Integrated Client Database with data from 10 state agencies, 40 separate data systems, and 2.4 million individuals. This data is used for rapid-cycle policy analysis, program evaluation, predictive modeling, and performance measurement to help agencies understand how health and other factors are related to outcomes for persons served by public assistance programs. The database has been used by the state's Health Home Program, which provides intensive care management services to high-risk Medicaid beneficiaries, to improve beneficiary health outcomes and lower costs. These lower costs have included over \$20 million in savings to the state as well as tens of millions in dollars in shared savings payments from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which has evaluated the program and encouraged other states to consider developing similar programs.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



12 Promising Examples

Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas

5. Data Use


Did the state or any of its agencies have data systems consistent with strong privacy protections that linked multiple administrative data sets across state agencies, and did it use those systems to improve federal, state, or local programs?

The linking of agency data allows state governments to increase the effectiveness of state services and get better results for their residents.

Leading Example

INDIANA

The Indiana Management Performance Hub, overseen by the state's Chief Data Officer, houses the integrated Education and Workforce Development database, which brings together data from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Indiana Department of Education, the Department of Workforce Development, and the Family and Social Services Administration. In addition, the Hub has created integrated databases to address pressing policy issues related to opioids, vehicle crashes, medicaid, fiscal transparency, and other areas. According to a 2018 annual report, the Hub has generated an estimated return on investment of \$40 million for the state.

No Colorado examples of this criteria 

17 Promising Examples

Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah, Washington

6. Evaluation Leadership

Did the governor's office or any state agency have a senior staff member(s) with the authority, staff, and budget to evaluate its major programs and inform policy decisions affecting them? (Example: chief evaluation officer)

Evaluation leadership positions are an important tool for state governments to ensure that evidence of what works is a primary consideration when making programmatic and budget decisions.

Leading Example

OHIO

The Director of the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Research, Evaluation and Advanced Analytics is responsible for helping educational leaders across the state recognize, gather, analyze, evaluate, and leverage data to solve problems and improve student outcomes. Initiatives such as Empowered by Evidence and the Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse are designed for "a culture of continuous learning... [and to] create the framework and processes needed for actionable research." The Department has partnered with the Ohio Education Research Center to share education data across the state.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



3 Promising Examples

Connecticut, Massachusetts, Mississippi

7. Evaluation Policies

Did the state or any of its agencies have an evaluation policy, evaluation plan, and research/learning agenda(s), and did it publicly release the findings of all completed evaluations?

Evaluation policies allow state governments to align their evaluation and research priorities, learn about what works, and share information with outside researchers about additional areas where they want to increase their knowledge base.

Leading Example

MINNESOTA

In 2018, Minnesota Management and Budget adopted an evaluation policy, which governs its use of evaluations and requires the release of all completed evaluation reports regardless of findings. The policy outlines key principles for evaluation: rigor; relevance; independence; transparency; and ethics. Relatedly, Minnesota Management also defines evidence for research, evaluation, and funding purposes.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



7 Promising Examples

Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia

8. Evaluation Resources

Did the state or any of its agencies invest at least 1% of program funds in evaluations?

Making specific funding commitments to evaluation is critical and ensures that state governments have the necessary funds to evaluate whether state programs are achieving their desired outcomes. At the federal level, several agencies have made commitments to spend 1% of program funds on evaluation, which has allowed them to improve programmatic outcomes and build their knowledge base about what works.

Leading Example

NO LEADING EXAMPLE IDENTIFIED

No leading examples identified for this criteria.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



0 Promising Examples

No promising examples identified for this criteria.

9. Outcome Data

Did the state or any of its agencies report or require outcome data for its state-funded programs during their budget process?

Using data and evidence as part of the budget process helps state policymakers allocate funds based on information about what works.

Leading Example

COLORADO

The 2013 Colorado State Measurement for Accountable, Responsive and Transparent Government (SMART) Act required all Colorado state agencies to submit annual performance reports to the Colorado state legislature as part of the state's budget process. These reports include: (1) performance measures for the major functions of the department; (2) performance goals for at least the following three years; (3) a description of the strategies necessary to achieve those goals; and (4) a summary of the department's most recent performance evaluation. In addition, the state's FY 2019–2020 budget development instructions (pp. 43–47) prioritize new program requests "based on the evidence and body of research supporting the program's effect on desired outcomes and proposed implementation plan." The instructions also include information on tiered evidence frameworks and program evaluation requirements. In the FY 2020–2021 budget cycle, the state applied an evidence continuum to budget requests and used that criteria to inform resource allocation decisions.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



7 Promising Examples

Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon

10. Evidence Definition and Program Inventory

Did the state or any of its agencies release a common evidence framework, guidelines, or standards to inform its research and funding decisions and make publicly available an inventory of state-funded programs categorized based on at least two tiers of evidence?

Defining evidence and conducting program inventories can help state governments ensure that their programs are using proven practices and that their interventions are effective in meeting the state’s desired goals as well as improving outcomes for residents.

Leading Example

MINNESOTA

Under a 2015 Minnesota law (section 13), Minnesota Management and Budget has developed numerous inventories of evidenced-based programs, including in the areas of criminal justice, mental health, child welfare, and higher education. Minnesota Management and Budget also maintains the Minnesota Inventory, a searchable clearinghouse of more than 400 programs operating in the state. As part of the inventory, the state developed a guide for using evidence in policymaking and evidence definitions to categorize interventions as proven effective, promising, theory based, or no effect. These resources helped inform funding decisions in the state, including \$87 million in new or expanded evidence-based programming in the FY 2020–2021 budget.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



9 Promising Examples

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Washington

11. Cost-Benefit Analysis

Did the state or any of its agencies assess and make publicly available the costs and benefits of public programs?

Cost-benefit analysis helps state governments quantify outcomes and program costs to ensure that public dollars are being efficiently spent to get the most value for taxpayers and the best outcomes for residents.

Leading Example

WASHINGTON

A **2013 Washington State law** (pp. 105–106) directed the Department of Corrections, in consultation with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP), to (1) compile an inventory of existing programs; (2) determine whether its programs were evidence-based; (3) assess the effectiveness of its programs, including conducting a cost-benefit analysis; and (4) phase out ineffective programs and implement evidence-based programs. As a result of this and similar laws, 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.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



8 Promising Examples

Illinois, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah

12. Use of Evidence in Grant Programs

Did the state or any of its agencies (1) invest at least 50% of program funds in evidence-based solutions or (2) use evidence of effectiveness when allocating funds to eligible grantees (including local governments) from its five largest competitive and noncompetitive grant programs?

Requiring a portion of grant funds to be spent on evidence-based programs allows state governments to use and scale proven program models to achieve better results.

Leading Example

NEVADA

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)). This represented an increase over the approximately 15% of funds that had been allocated based on level of evidence in the 2016–2017 school year. Grant recipients may set aside funds to monitor and evaluate the identified evidence-based approaches to ensure the investments yield a positive impact on student outcomes. Applications for Title I school improvement funds must meet at least one of Nevada's three statewide priorities: focus on the lowest performing schools, data-driven decision making, and leadership development.

Beginning in 2017, the Nevada Department of Education began requiring school districts to invest awarded funds for two additional federal grant programs in interventions that meet one of the four tiers of evidence (strong, moderate, promising, and under evaluation) **defined** in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): (1) **ESSA Title IV-B** (\$9 million in 2017–2018), for the competitive 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants and (2) Competitive **ESSA Title IV-A** grants (\$3 million in federal funds to Nevada in 2017–2018 to increase students' access to a well-rounded education), where applications with stronger evidence are considered for funding before other applications. Applications for Title IV-A must meet at least one of Nevada's three statewide priorities: focus on the lowest performing schools, data-driven decision making, and leadership development.

See 2019 State Standard of Excellence to read full example.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



10 Promising Examples

Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee

13. Innovation

Did the state or any of its agencies have staff, policies, and processes in place that encouraged innovation to improve outcomes?

Encouraging innovation allows state governments to implement new models that can improve programs and build new evidence about what works.

Leading Example

CALIFORNIA

The **California Government Operations Agency** (GovOps), which serves as an umbrella organization for the state's innovation work, is designed to institutionalize policies, tools, and training that can drive its mission to modernize the processes of government through lean process improvement, data, leadership, and performance improvement. GovOps brings together statewide initiatives such as the **Lean Academy**, **California Leadership Academy**, the **Office of Digital Innovation**, and **California's Open Data Portal** resources. Also, the California Health and Human Services Agency has an **Office of Innovation** that focuses on improving programs and services through the use of tools such as human centered design and data analytics.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



6 Promising Examples

Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington

14. Contracting for Outcomes

Did the state or any of its agencies enter into performance-based contracts and/or use active contract management (frequent use of data and regular communication with providers to monitor implementation and progress) to improve outcomes for publicly funded programs?

Performance contracting techniques allow state governments to get better results and value for each taxpayer dollar.

Leading Example

RHODE ISLAND

Since 2015, Rhode Island's Department of Children, Youth, and Families has worked to **reform and restructure** the department's procurement processes in four areas: improving service delivery through strategic planning, embedding results-driven procurement in new contracts, improving performance through active contract management practices, and supporting results-driven contracting practices through technical resources, tools, and processes for staff. As part of this initiative, the department executed \$90 million in 116 results-driven contracts that require providers to meet outcome goals rather than output metrics. As a result, DCYF has reduced the number of children in group care by over 20% since 2015, experienced a 50 percent expansion of foster care resources for the most challenging adolescents, doubled the capacity of high quality family visitation and reunification services, and made start-up investments of \$1.2 million in nonprofit community organizations to support new and expanded programming.

In 2015, Rhode Island's Department of Labor and Training launched Real Jobs Rhode Island, an innovative \$14 million workforce program. To track the program's success, Rhode Island **created** performance-based metrics and used frequent meetings with training providers to track results and make course corrections. As a result of this active contract management, Rhode Island was able to reconfigure the way it manages and **evaluates** its job training programs to capture meaningful long-term employment outcomes. The state also has created a Strategic Coaching Procurement Playbook, which includes **specific strategies** and **sample language** for using active contract management to get better results.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



6 Promising Examples

Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Nevada, Tennessee, Various States

15. Repurpose for Results

Did the state or any of its agencies shift funds away from any practice, policy, or program which consistently failed to achieve desired outcomes?

Repurposing funds from programs that fail to consistently achieve results to programs that consistently achieve results is a key strategy for state governments to improve their performance while building knowledge about what works.

Leading Example

PENNSYLVANIA

Since 2013, the 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. Following the introduction of these performance goals, the program's recidivism rate dropped by 11.3% in 2014, **another** 16% in 2015, and another 11% in 2016. In 2018, the Commonwealth Foundation's report on criminal justice reform in Pennsylvania **recommended** expanding the program to other areas based on these results.

No Vermont examples of this criteria



1 Promising Example

Minnesota

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.

Results for America's 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.

State Government Program

Results for America is hosting briefings and conference calls with senior government leaders to discuss strategies for building and using data and evidence to improve results for residents. To request a briefing or conference call, please contact info@results4america.org.

Local, State, and Federal Standards of Excellence

Results for America has developed standards of excellence—"north stars"—for local, state, and federal governments that highlight the data and evidence capacity governments need to invest in what works:

What Works Certification

The national standard of excellence for well-managed, data-driven local governments. In April 2019, Bloomberg Philanthropies announced seven cities to achieve 2019 What Works Cities Certification.

Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence

Sets a national standard – a "north star" – for how state governments can consistently and effectively use data and evidence in their budget, policy, and management decisions to achieve better outcomes for their residents.

Invest in What Works Federal Standard of Excellence

Highlights the extent to which nine U.S. federal agencies and departments have built the infrastructure necessary to be able to use data, evidence, and evaluation in their budget, policy, and management decisions.

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