

***WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: BRINGING
CLARITY TO THE LANGUAGE IN
EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS AND
PRACTICES***

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Lots of Words...

Promising
Practice

Evidence
Based
Program

Gold
Standard

Research
Proven
Policy

Scientifically
Valid

Innovative
Program

Research-
Based
Program

Rigorous
Evidence

Effective
Practice

Model Program



Two Types of Terms

- Research/Evaluation Design terms
- Degree of Confidence About Program Effectiveness terms

Some Common Research/Evaluation Design Terms

- Gold Standard
- Systematic Review
- Meta-analysis
- Rigorous Evidence
- Scientifically Valid Evidence
- Experiment
- Quasi-experiment
- Randomized Control Trial
- Non-experiment
- Qualitative Evaluation
- Performance Measurement

Defining Research/Evaluation Design Terms

- **Randomized Control Trial (RCT):** experiment that studies individuals randomly assigned to receive the treatment and others who do not. Follows groups over time. Often referred to as the **gold standard** of designs.
- **Quasi-experiment:** does not include random assignment. May study people who do not receive the treatment. Follows groups over time.
- **Meta-analysis:** statistical technique to compare and synthesize results of studies on a topic.
- **Non-experiment:** studies only group receiving intervention. Does not follow over time.

Defining Research/Evaluation Design Terms (Cont.)

- **Performance measurement \neq evaluation.**
Performance measurement does not show causality; it shows if objectives were met.
- **Qualitative Evaluation:** systematic study with non-numerical data. Typically explain how or why. Different than **Anecdotal Data** (not systematic).
- Experiments, Quasi-experiments, RCTs, Meta-Analyses, Systematic Reviews, and Qualitative Evaluations are generally considered **rigorous evidence** or **scientifically valid**.
- **Systematic Review:** synthesis of research evidence on a topic. More thorough than a literature review, may include a **meta-analysis**.

Degree of Confidence About Program Effectiveness terms

- ◉ Model Program
- ◉ Promising Practice
- ◉ Evidence-Based Policy
- ◉ Innovative Program
- ◉ Research Proven
- ◉ Exemplary Program
- ◉ Research-Based
- ◉ Ineffective

Defining Degree of Confidence About Program Effectiveness terms

Evidence-Based,
Research-Based,
Research-Proven

Exemplary and Model: clear evidence of effectiveness with multiple, rigorous evaluations

Promising: some evidence of success; many questions remain

Innovative: derived from evidence-based programs; no evaluation yet

Ineffective: clear evidence program/policy/practice is not successful with multiple, rigorous evaluations

Overcoming Common Issues

- Request/Provide definition when using terms to ensure understanding.
- Focus on evidence-based programs and practices does not preclude innovation in problem-solving.
- Question(s) asked and current state of evidence should inform the evaluation design (i.e., not always ready for gold standard evaluation).
- Implementation of model program = no deviation from program design. Deviation = innovation.
- All programs, policies, practices can and should do at least performance measurement

**BJA Center for Program Evaluation and
Performance Measurement**
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/evaluation/>