Standards of Evidence

What are the Standards of Evidence?
The Standards of Evidence underpin the department’s Evidence Framework. They provide a consistent way of assessing the evidence we use and generate.

What is in the standards?
The standards incorporate four dimensions to consider when we use and generate evidence – design, impact, scalability and investment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Scalability</th>
<th>Investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of attribution</td>
<td>Measurable change</td>
<td>Potential to implement</td>
<td>Creating value</td>
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</table>

Each dimension contains five levels that indicate the relative strength of evidence. Levels may differ across the dimensions. For example, an initiative may have very high (level five) evidence of impact but the scalability may be unknown (level one). Building better evidence is an incremental process and in some circumstances it may not be possible to progress to the highest levels of evidence strength.

The standards recognise value in both qualitative and quantitative knowledge, acknowledging the benefits of using evidence from multiple sources and ensuring consistency in the collection of evidence.

Why do we have the standards?
When do the standards apply?
The standards are intended to help us gain a richer understanding of what is working, when, for whom and under what conditions.

The standards can be applied by all staff during the course of their work. For example, the standards could be used prospectively to design new initiatives and data collection processes that would enable better evidence generation with regard to attribution, impact, scale and cost. The standards could also be used to evaluate actions underway or to assess external evidence claims regarding impact.

Examples of when the standards apply:
- planning or designing new initiatives
- actions underway within the organisation
- external evidence

Examples of when the standards apply:
- provide a consistent way to assess the evidence we use and generate
- provide a common way of thinking and communicating about evidence
- facilitate a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different evidence claims
- provide pathways for building and maturing our evidence base
- articulate clearly the evidence requirements for each level in each dimension
- guide everyday practice and support the Evidence Framework and the Performance Improvement and Accountability Framework

More information
### Standards of Evidence

#### Design
- **Quality of attribution**
  - **Verified attribution**
    - An independent source or sources verifies the demonstrated measurable change can be attributed to the initiative
  - **Attribution**
    - Evidence from a high-quality study or studies establishes the measurable change can be attributed to the initiative
  - **Possible attribution**
    - A reasonable explanation supports attribution of the measurable change to the initiative
  - **Attribution unclear**
    - A logical plan describes the initiative and its objectives, target and comparison groups, inputs, outputs, outcomes and timelines. It includes the measures and methods for collecting, storing and analysing data
  - **No attribution possible**
    - The plan or design of the study and the quality of the data or monitoring are not sufficiently robust to support attribution

#### Impact
- **Measurable change**
  - **Very high**
    - Very large measured improvement
  - **High**
    - Large measured improvement
  - **Moderate**
    - Medium measured improvement
  - **Low**
    - Small measured improvement that can be reasonably linked to the initiative
  - **Unknown**
    - Impact cannot be measured or unintended impact is identified

#### Scalability
- **Potential to implement**
  - **Larger scale implementation**
    - An independent source or sources verifies the initiative has been implemented by others on a larger scale
  - **Implemented elsewhere**
    - The initiative can be implemented in more than one setting and/or with different groups with at least the same impact. Documentation supports implementation
  - **Well documented**
    - Documentation exists about how the initiative is implemented and is comprehensive enough to enable implementation with different groups or in other settings
  - **Could work**
    - Documentation describing the implementation of the initiative in one setting exists
  - **Unknown**
    - Insufficient documentation exists on the initiative

#### Investment
- **Creating value**
  - **Cost-effectiveness known**
    - Information on cost-effectiveness exists
  - **Outcomes costed**
    - Information on the costs per unit of outcome exists
  - **Outputs costed**
    - Information on the costs per unit of output exists
  - **Costs known**
    - The costs of the initiative (for example, financial, human resources, infrastructure, program licensing, implementation etc.) are known
  - **Unknown**
    - There is no or limited information on the cost

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