



Impact Evaluation Reporting Tips for RESEA Evaluators



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When reporting findings from an impact evaluation of your Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, details matter. An evaluation report from an impact study will typically include detailed descriptions of the intervention being studied, the study context, the research questions and study design, the data used for the study, the characteristics of study participants, the statistical techniques used during analysis, and key findings. Reporting these details helps readers understand the motivation for the study, assess the quality of causal evidence provided by the evaluation, identify key findings, and gauge whether study findings might be applicable in other settings.

This tip sheet identifies and describes details that should typically be addressed in reports of RESEA impact evaluations to help different audiences understand the evaluation and its findings. Strong impact evaluations typically also have complementary implementation or process studies that provide programmatic and contextual details that help interpret impact findings and provide insights for replicating the intervention. Information from an implementation or process study could also be included as a section within the final report of the evaluation, or in a separate report. The details and reporting topics described in this tip sheet are highlighted because they are critical for assessing the quality of causal evidence provided by an evaluation. Including the pieces of information identified in this tip sheet in your impact evaluation report can help ensure that it receives the highest possible causal evidence rating from the Department of Labor's [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research](#) (CLEAR). When reviewing impact evaluations, CLEAR reviewers assign causal evidence ratings to studies based on CLEAR's [Causal Evidence Guidelines](#). Reviewing these guidelines is another helpful way to ensure that your evaluation report contains all the information needed to achieve the highest possible causal evidence rating.

This tip sheet is organized into sections¹ that each briefly describe categories of details that should typically be addressed in your impact evaluation report:

1. [Intervention Overview](#)
2. [Study Context](#)
3. [Research Questions and Study Outcomes](#)
4. [Research Design](#)
5. [Data and Measures](#)
6. [Sample / Participant Characteristics](#)

¹ These categories (and the order in which they are presented in this tip sheet) should not be interpreted as a template for the sections of an evaluation report. Rather, the categories used here are meant to assist readers in identifying relevant pieces of information that should be included in their report.

[7. Statistical Analysis](#)

[8. Key Findings](#)

1. Intervention Overview

Impact evaluations of RESEA programs might focus on whole-program impacts or they might examine the impact of a specific program component. In either case, detailed information about the intervention being evaluated (e.g., the program or program component) will help readers understand the intervention's details, goals, and target population. Details about the intervention are valuable for policy and program audiences who might be interested in replicating or building on the intervention in other contexts, and for CLEAR reviewers who might need to determine whether other evaluations of similar interventions have also been conducted. Details about an intervention that are useful to present in your evaluation report include:

- **Intervention Design.** If conducting a whole-program evaluation, what are the features of your RESEA program? If conducting a component evaluation, what are the features of the component being evaluated? These features might include descriptions of services or assistance provided by the intervention, or descriptions of any program requirements that might be imposed or waived by the intervention.
- **Participant Eligibility.** Who is eligible (or ineligible) to receive the intervention? What is the target population? What is the comparison group and what, if anything, might they be offered?
- **History.** How was the intervention developed? What were the ideas, evidence, or assumptions that informed the intervention's design?
- **Motivation.** Why was this intervention selected for implementation and evaluation?

2. Study Context

Detailed descriptions of the study context can help readers assess how similar the study's context was to their own. That can also inform their thinking about reasons why the evaluation's findings might or might not apply to their own contexts. Details about the study context that are useful to present in your evaluation report include:

- **Location.** Where did the evaluation take place? If the evaluation was conducted only in specific sites (e.g., at specific American Job Centers (AJCs) or in certain areas of a state), what were the sites and how were they selected? Was the evaluation conducted primarily in urban, suburban, or rural settings?
- **Time.** When did the evaluation take place?
- **Labor Market Conditions.** What were relevant labor market conditions like at the time and place that the evaluation was conducted? Relevant features of the labor market to describe in the evaluation report might include unemployment rates, information about the local industry mix, or information about typical education levels and wages.

3. Research Questions and Study Outcomes

The impact evaluation report should clearly state the study's research questions. The outcome measures used to address each research question should be clearly identified and should be relevant to the intervention being studied. In an impact evaluation, research questions will often take some version of the form, "What is the impact of [being offered / assigned to] [the intervention] on [outcome]?"

Federal guidance for the RESEA evaluation and evidence requirements² indicates that for a program or program component to demonstrate effectiveness, it must be shown to improve the following outcomes:

- **Unemployment Insurance (UI) Duration.** The number of weeks of paid unemployment insurance;
- **Q2 Employment.** Whether individuals were employed during the second full calendar quarter after the initial UI claim; and,
- **Q2 Earnings.** Earnings during the second full calendar quarter after the initial UI claim.

But RESEA impact evaluations *may also examine additional outcomes*, such as meeting attendance rates, the number of job applications submitted by UI claimants, claimant satisfaction with RESEA services, or employment and earnings measured over longer time periods.

Clearly stating the study's research questions and outcomes early in the evaluation report will help readers understand the study's objectives and enable the audience to assess whether the methods and data used in the evaluation are suitable for addressing these questions.

4. Research Design

Detailed information about the impact evaluation's research design can allow readers to assess the quality of causal evidence provided by the evaluation. Only by clearly reviewing a study's research design can the audience determine whether the effects detected by the evaluation capture the impact of the intervention or whether they were caused by other factors.

Many of the relevant details about a study's design will depend on the type of research design employed. However, certain details will be essential for the reader, regardless of the design type. Examples of such details include:

- **Design Type.** What type of evaluation design did your study employ (e.g., a randomized controlled trial, a difference-in-differences approach, an interrupted time series)? Clearly stating the design type can help readers and reviewers know what to expect and what details to look for when assessing the quality of causal evidence provided by your evaluation report.
- **Study Contrast.** In general, impact evaluations generate estimates of intervention impact by drawing comparisons (contrasts) between units of observation. Depending on the study, the unit of observation might be individual UI claimants or claimants from sets of locations (such as AJCs). In an evaluation report it is important to clearly describe who is being compared to whom and what determines which study group someone is included in. If the evaluation uses an experimental, random assignment design, the report should provide details about how random assignment took place and how it was monitored by the research team to ensure that assignment was truly random. For evaluations that rely on a quasi-experimental design, such as regression-based matching or difference-in-differences approaches, it is often the case that many factors will influence who does or does not receive an intervention. Evaluations that use quasi-experimental designs should detail these factors and explain how their approach generates comparable treatment and comparison groups and adequately accounts for any baseline differences between the treatment and comparison groups.

² See UIPL 01-10 and UIPL 02-23 for DOL guidance current as of the time of writing:
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/unemployment-insurance-program-letter-no-01-20>,
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/uipl-no-02-23>.

- **Treatment (Intervention) Condition.** How does the study define the treatment or intervention condition used in the contrast? If the intervention includes services, activities, or program requirements, what are they and how often are they intended to be administered? Did the definition of the treatment condition change at any point during the study period? Details on the design of the intervention are important for understanding the theory and basis of causal evidence but details on how the intervention was implemented are key for replicating the intervention and interpreting impact findings. For instance, was the intervention implemented as designed? What percent of the individuals or study sites in the treatment condition actually received the intervention? Were there staffing or resource challenges? These details are typically covered in a companion implementation or process study, or they might be included in a section of a combined implementation and impact report.
- **Comparison Condition.** What services, activities, or requirements, if any, were offered or provided to individuals or study sites in the comparison condition? For RESEA whole program evaluations, this might involve providing a detailed description of the services and requirements that UI claimants who are *not* assigned to RESEA might still access or be subject to. For RESEA component evaluations, describing the comparison condition might involve providing a detailed description of your business-as-usual RESEA program, absent the intervention being evaluated.

5. Data and Measures

Impact evaluations often use a variety of data sources to gather information about study participants. Describing these data sources in detail, as well as the specific data elements in these data sources used for the evaluation, can help readers understand how the study measured key participant characteristics or outcomes and identify any limitations in the data that might make it difficult to determine whether effects detected by the evaluation capture the impact of the intervention or whether they were caused by other factors. Details about data and measures to address in your impact evaluation report include:

- **Data Sources.** What were the data sources used for the evaluation (e.g., state or inter-state UI wage data, UI claims data, workforce system data on service use, customer surveys, etc.)? Who do these data sources collect information about, and how is that information collected? Do the data cover post-program employment outside the state or only within the state? For evaluations that gathered data via surveys (as opposed to relying exclusively on administrative or program data), the survey instrument and sampling approach should be described in detail. For evaluations that rely on administrative data, what systems provided the data? What date ranges were covered? How were individuals identified? If multiple systems were used, how were data linked?
- **Measures.** These include both participant characteristics and study outcomes. For all measures used in the study, provide a plain language definition of the measure and clarify how the measure was collected and the data source. Readers should be able to understand when and how measures were collected and what information they provide about study participants.
- **Missing Data.** Survey responses or administrative databases often include data elements that are missing information for some study participants. For instance, some information on the UI claim form (such as demographics) may be optional and not provided by all claimants. If this is the case, your evaluation report should detail the extent to which information was missing and how the analysis accounted for these cases (e.g., did the study impute missing values or exclude observations missing information).

6. Sample / Participant Characteristics

Including a detailed description of the evaluation's sample and study participant characteristics can allow readers and reviewers to assess the quality of causal evidence provided in your report and consider whether study findings are likely to be applicable in other contexts where population characteristics may differ. Important pieces of information to include about the evaluation's sample include:

- **Sample Eligibility.** Who participated in the study? How were study participants selected and recruited? Under what conditions, if any, were individuals or sites deemed ineligible for participation?
- **Sample Size and Attrition.** If you are conducting a random assignment study, how many participants were randomly assigned? How many were included in the final sample used for the impact analysis? The loss of study participants due to non-response or other factors is known as attrition. High rates of attrition (e.g., cases in which the analysis sample ends up being substantially smaller than the baseline sample) can make it difficult or impossible for an evaluation to provide high-quality causal evidence. Your evaluation report should make it straightforward for the audience to understand how many participants were included in the sample, and to what extent (and why) that number might have changed over time.
- **Sample Characteristics and Baseline Equivalence.** Impact evaluations typically rely on comparisons between treatment and comparison groups in order to estimate intervention impacts (see [Research Design](#), above). For such comparisons to generate plausible causal evidence, the treatment and comparison groups must be similar enough to one another at baseline (e.g., prior to receiving the intervention) that subsequent differences in outcomes can be attributed to the impact of the intervention rather than to other factors. Reporting information about the characteristics of the sample as a whole, as well as for both the treatment and comparison groups, can help readers assess the extent to which baseline equivalence has been established. Relevant demographic characteristics (if measures are available) include: age, gender, education, race, and ethnicity. If possible, it is also important to report information on pre-intervention measures that align with key outcomes for study participants. For instance, studies that examine intervention impacts on employment and earnings should report on treatment and comparison group members' pre-claim employment and earnings measures (such as the number of weeks employed or total earnings during the base period). Studies that examine intervention impacts on UI claim duration could report on treatment and comparison group members' total number of UI weeks claimed and any instances of benefit exhaustion in prior years.

More information about the details you can provide in your report to establish that baseline equivalence has been adequately met are provided in CLEAR's [Causal Evidence Guidelines](#).³ Requirements of what baseline information to report vary across quasi-experimental designs, so if your evaluation is using a quasi-experimental design, you and your evaluator should make sure to attend to those requirements. If baseline equivalence was not established but differences between the treatment and comparison groups were accounted for via statistical adjustments during the impact analysis, this should be detailed for the reader in the report's description of its statistical analysis (see Statistical Analysis, below).

³ The issue of whether meaningful comparisons can be drawn between a study's treatment and comparison groups is discussed under "Criterion Regression 1 – Before the intervention, were the intervention and comparison groups similar?" (pp.4-5).

7. Statistical Analysis

Typically, impact evaluations involve using statistical techniques to estimate the impact of an intervention. Providing details about the techniques used to generate these estimates can help readers assess whether the analysis approach was executed appropriately and the extent to which it addressed or adjusted for other factors – aside from the intervention – that might explain differences in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups. Important pieces of information about the evaluation’s statistical analysis include:

- **Regression Model.** Often, impact evaluations generate impact estimates using a regression model. Describing this model, including the control variables, if any, that were included in this model, helps readers understand how impact estimates were generated and what other factors these estimates do (or do not) account for. Because interpreting regression estimates may not be intuitive or familiar for some readers of an evaluation report, it can also be helpful to include a plain language description of how regression estimates should be interpreted, and to identify which regression coefficient or coefficients will provide the estimate of intervention impact.
- **Standard Error Adjustments.** Estimates from a regression analysis are just that—estimates. They include some uncertainty—or margin of error. The extent of that uncertainty is reflected by standard errors, which provide information about the precision of the estimates and are used when conducting tests for statistical significance. Attention to standard errors can be particularly important for interpreting findings in studies that do not find statistically significant impacts. If standard errors are large, then a failure to find statistically significant impacts may just mean that sample sizes were not large enough to tell whether or not the intervention had an impact. But if standard errors are small, then that suggests that the intervention probably did not have any substantial impact. Certain characteristics of the research design or data can require the use of standard error adjustments. For example, if observations in the data are clustered in some manner – such as the clustering of UI claimants within AJCs – this clustering must be addressed in the analysis in order to generate accurate standard errors and statistical tests. If analyses used any standard error adjustments, describing these adjustments in the evaluation report can help the audience assess whether statistical tests have been conducted appropriately.

8. Key Findings

Detailed reporting and interpretation of estimates from the impact analysis can help readers and reviewers understand whether the evaluation detected any impacts, whether those impacts were favorable or unfavorable, and whether impacts were large or small. The exact details to report when presenting findings will depend on the research design and statistical analysis. However, certain key details that are relevant regardless of design type include:

- **Unadjusted means.** It can be useful to present the simple outcome means for both the treatment and comparison groups, that have not been adjusted for any model covariates. In select cases – such as a well-implemented randomized controlled trial – the difference between unadjusted means may provide a reasonable estimate for intervention impacts. Even when unadjusted mean differences do not provide a reasonable estimate for intervention impacts – as is the case for most quasi-experimental designs – reporting descriptive unadjusted means can still help the reader to understand what outcome patterns looked like prior to any statistical adjustments and, in turn, how much those statistical adjustments mattered.
- **Adjusted means or regression coefficients.** Often, impact evaluations will use regression analyses to more precisely estimate intervention impacts. Sometimes, analysts will use regression

estimates to calculate adjusted outcome means for the treatment and comparison groups. Other times, analysts may report regression coefficients directly, with certain coefficients estimating the difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups. Tables reporting adjusted means or regression coefficients should be accompanied by plain language interpretations that help readers understand the impact estimates.

- **Standard errors or confidence intervals.** Regardless of whether an evaluation report presents unadjusted means, adjusted means, or regression coefficients, these estimates should always be accompanied by standard errors, confidence intervals, or both. Standard errors and confidence intervals provide the audience with important information about the precision of the impact estimates and are used when conducting tests for statistical significance.
- **P-values and statistical tests.** Statistical tests are widely used to provide information about whether an impact estimate indicates that the true, population-wide impact of the intervention is non-zero. Statistical tests use information about the precision of an estimate (e.g., the standard error) to determine how likely it is that the intervention impact might be zero. If that likelihood (the p-value) falls below a certain pre-defined threshold (usually referred to as a critical value), such as 5 percent (.05), it is conventional to say that an impact estimate or mean difference is statistically significant. When reporting findings from your impact evaluation, include p-values for each estimate, and describe the statistical tests and the critical value thresholds that were used to determine whether impact estimates were statistically significant.

Closing

This tip sheet has introduced a number of details that are important to include in your impact evaluation report. However, it is not necessarily a comprehensive list. Additional critical details will depend on the study's research design, data sources, and analysis approach. Ultimately, the objective for your evaluation report should be to produce a document that allows the audience to clearly understand how the impact evaluation was conducted and what it found. If unsure about whether a specific detail or piece of information merits inclusion or discussion in your evaluation report, initiate a conversation with your evaluator or reach out to DOL's contractors with the RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance Team by contacting the RESEA Helpline: RESEA@abtassoc.com.

Additional Resources

Reporting RESEA Evaluation Findings:

This webinar provides additional information to help states effectively report RESEA evaluation findings: [WorkforceGPS - Reporting RESEA Evaluation Findings](#).

For descriptions of RESEA-relevant impact studies and latest findings, see:

Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research. *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA)*. https://clear.dol.gov/reemployment-services-and-eligibility-assessments-resea?_ga=2.175005413.651498861.1659380436-537087717.1644936304.

For completed reports of impact studies of REA, see:

Klerman, J. A., Saunders, C., Dastrup, E., Epstein, Z., Walton, D., and Adam, T., with Barnow, B. S. (2019). *Evaluation of impacts of the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Program: Final Report*. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates. <https://www.abtassociates.com/insights/publications/report/reemployment-and-eligibility-assessment-rea-program-final-report>

Manoli, D. S., Michaelides, M., & Patel, A. (2018). *Long-term effects of job-search assistance: Experimental evidence using administrative tax data. (Report no. w24422)*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Michaelides, M., & Mueser, P. (2016). *The labor market effects of U.S. reemployment programs during the Great Recession. (Working paper 08-2015)*. Nicosia, Cyprus: University of Cyprus, Department of Economics.

Michaelides, M., Poe-Yamagata, E., Benus, J., & Tirumalasetti, D. (2012). *Impact of the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Initiative in Nevada*. Columbia, MD: IMPAQ International, LLC.

For additional tips and information on setting up an evaluation of RESEA, see:

Mills De La Rosa, S., Souvanna, P., Clarkwest, A., Kappil, T., Epstein, Z., Rothschild, L., Kuehn, D., Wall, A., Klerman, J., and Nightingale, D. (2021) *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Evaluation Toolkit: Key Elements for State RESEA Programs*. U.S. Department of Labor. [Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment \(RESEA\) Evaluation Toolkit: Key Elements for State RESEA Programs \(dol.gov\)](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/unemployment-insurance-program-letter-no-01-20)⁴

USDOL [U.S. Department of Labor]. (2019). *Expectations for states implementing the Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program requirements for conducting evaluations and building program evidence*. Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 1-20. Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/unemployment-insurance-program-letter-no-01-20>

About this Series

State agencies' evaluations of their RESEA interventions and the reports produced from them are integral to expanding the evidence base of effective service delivery strategies. This *Tip Sheet* is part of a series developed to serve as a quick-reference tool for states planning, launching, and carrying out evaluations of their RESEA programs.

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Additional Resources and Information

DOL's RESEA Helpline: RESEA@abtassoc.com

Additional RESEA evaluation technical assistance resources are available here:

https://rc.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/07/30/17/32/RESEA_Evaluation_Evidence_Resources

Study reports, publications, and other materials are available here:

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/completedstudies/RESEA-Evidence-Building-Implementation-Study>

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⁴ Appendix I of the RESEA Evaluation Toolkit provides a template for an Evaluation Design Report (EDR). While an EDR should be prepared prior to launching an evaluation, many pieces of information that are typically included in an EDR are also important to include when reporting evaluation findings.