



Understanding the Legislation on RESEA Evidence and Evaluations

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June 2023

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) fact sheet responds to questions states might have about the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) evidence and evaluation provisions in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. It is part of a series of evaluation technical assistance resources developed to support states in designing and carrying out evaluations of their RESEA programs.

What legislation specifically applies to RESEA?

The [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018](#) (BBA) added Section 306 to the Social Security Act. This section:

- establishes a permanent authorization for the RESEA program;
- introduces a tiered evidence approach to promote states' use of effective interventions and service delivery strategies;
- promotes and rewards new and innovative service delivery strategies and interventions that improve employment outcomes and reduce the duration of Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefit receipt.

Section 308 of the BBA outlines the following goals:

- to improve employment outcomes and reduce UC benefit duration;
- to strengthen program integrity and reduce improper UC payments;
- to promote integration with the vision of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
- to establish RESEA as an entry point to other workforce system partners.

The legislation requires that states evaluate their RESEA programs. These evaluations are intended to increase states' use of evidence-based reemployment interventions and strategies and to promote evidence-building. "Evidence-based" means that findings from existing research studies inform the intervention's design. "Evidence-building" refers to conducting evaluations whose findings add to the literature on strategies to improve outcomes for RESEA participants.

What does the legislation say about the use of evidence in RESEA programs?

The BBA legislation specifies that State RESEA programs must use interventions or strategies with evidence demonstrated to reduce the number of weeks that participants receive UC and improve employment outcomes, particularly earnings. Starting in Fiscal Year 2023, states must dedicate 25 percent of their state RESEA grant to interventions or strategies that have received a "High" or "Moderate" causal

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Box 1: About the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR)

The mission of [CLEAR](#) is to make research on labor topics more accessible to practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and the public to inform decisions about labor policies and programs. For *causal* research—defined as research intended to assess the effectiveness of an intervention—CLEAR uses its Causal Evidence Guidelines to objectively assess and rate the degree to which the research is able to credibly estimate the causal impact of the intervention on the outcomes of interest. CLEAR assigns causal evidence ratings on the effectiveness of RESEA intervention under CLEAR's "Reemployment" topic area evidence review. Causal evidence ratings are based on the strength of the findings and study quality: [High, Moderate, and Low](#). Descriptions of causal evidence ratings for RESEA intervention effectiveness can be found under the "[RESEA](#)" tab on CLEAR's homepage. See also CLEAR's [guidelines on effectiveness of RESEA interventions](#).

evidence rating from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)'s Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR). Box 1 provides further information about CLEAR.

What does the legislation mean for state RESEA programs?

RESEA programs must include program services or approaches that evidence has shown to be effective in moving unemployed UC claimants to work. Specifically, starting in Fiscal Year 2023 states can dedicate an increasing percentage of funding to interventions with evidence of effectiveness. Evidence of effectiveness in increasing reemployment must be "causal," meaning the evidence derives from a causal impact study, a rigorous form of evaluation.

Based on the legislation, it is important for states to implement RESEA interventions that receive a high or moderate causal evidence rating from CLEAR. Some interventions in the CLEAR Reemployment Synthesis, currently have evidence available; these include the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program (a predecessor program to RESEA), Job Search Assistance (JSA) services, and profiling interventions.

However, the RESEA evidence is limited. Some state evaluations are ongoing and in various stages of completion. As a result, some potentially successful reemployment strategies and program components do not yet have sufficient evidence to demonstrate whether or not they are effective. As states complete evaluations and as those evaluations receive causal evidence ratings, the evidence base for reemployment strategies will grow.

The BBA legislation addresses the fact that evidence-building efforts are still underway. The legislation stipulates that states can implement interventions and strategies not yet backed by evidence so long as those interventions are simultaneously under evaluation. States implementing an intervention that does not have a high or moderate causal evidence rating from CLEAR may use some of their RESEA grant funds (up to 10 percent) to evaluate the intervention.

What is a *tiered evidence approach*?

The BBA includes a “tiered evidence” approach to the RESEA program. A tiered evidence approach allows federal agencies, including DOL, to tie their funding to enacting strategies or programs that are based on evidence. For the RESEA program, the BBA legislation ties certain levels of future funding to interventions with high or moderate causal evidence

ratings (Box 2). States are encouraged to use evidence-based strategies for their RESEA programs, where such strategies exist, and to evaluate new ideas and build evidence for other interventions and service delivery strategies.

Box 2: The RESEA tiered evidence approach:

- requires the use of strategies that work;
- requires evaluations of strategies without evidence;
- ties some funding to implementing strategies with evidence;
- provides incentives to build new evidence around innovative strategies;
- requires states to use a specified percentage of funds on interventions with high or moderate causal evidence ratings.

What does the legislation mean for RESEA evaluations and how can states contribute to the evidence base through evaluation?

By conducting evaluations of their RESEA interventions and publishing their findings, states help build the base of evidence about effective reemployment services and RESEA programs. States using interventions that do not yet have a high or moderate rating in CLEAR must be undergoing an evaluation. In this situation, states can use up to 10 percent of RESEA grant funds for evaluation.

When possible, states conduct impact evaluations of their RESEA interventions. Impact evaluations that measure UC benefit duration and employment outcomes can be reviewed under the “Reemployment” topic area in CLEAR and potentially achieve high or moderate causal evidence ratings. CLEAR has numerous criteria for these ratings, which include using an “eligible” impact evaluation design, particularly a randomized controlled trial (RCT). To receive this rating, states can conduct impact evaluations of their whole RESEA program or program components (e.g., individual service delivery strategies). States that conduct whole program or program component impact evaluations using eligible evaluation designs can submit completed study reports to CLEAR to receive a causal evidence rating.

States can use their RESEA evaluations as an opportunity to identify what they want to learn about their programs. For example, states can use their RESEA evaluations to develop a RESEA learning agenda that establishes learning objectives to drive evaluation planning, identify of the type of evaluation design that meets their learning objectives, and develop research questions for an evaluation.

What guidance is available to support states in carrying out the evaluation-related goals of the legislation?

Each fiscal year, DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) issues operating guidance for RESEA grants, including provisions regarding evidence. This operating guidance is typically released in the form of Unemployment Insurance Program Letters (UIPLs) and Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs). Box 3 lists the UIPLs and TEGLs available as of the date of this FAQ that are relevant to RESEA evaluations.

Notes

1. Further information on RESEA evaluation and evidence requirements can be found in the webinar [RESEA: Overview of Evaluation and Evidence Requirements](#) (2019).
2. Further information on CLEAR and evidence-based interventions or strategies can be found in the webinar [Using the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\) - A Demonstration](#) (2019).
3. Further information on the research related to each intervention can be found on the [RESEA webpage on CLEAR and the Reemployment Synthesis webpage](#).

Additional Resources

DOL provides states with a range of resources to design and implement rigorous RESEA evaluations that are likely to produce high-quality evidence. Box 4 highlights several of these resources. Additional material can be found on the RESEA Evaluation and Evidence Resources page of DOL's [WorkforceGPS](#).

Box 3: RESEA Operating Guidance

FY2020, Expectations for States Implementing the RESEA Program Requirements for Conducting Evaluations and Building Program Evidence

- [UIPL 01-20](#)
- [TEGL 06-19](#)

FY2021, Funding Allotments and Operating Guidance for UI RESEA Grants

- [UIPL 13-21](#)
- [TEGL 12-20](#)

FY2022, Funding Allotments and Operating Guidance for UI RESEA Grants

- [UIPL 10-22](#)
- [TEGL 5-21](#)

FY2023, Funding Allotments and Operating Guidance for UI RESEA Grants

- [UIPL 02-23](#)
- [TEGL 8022](#)

Box 4: Key Resources for Designing and Implementing a RESEA Evaluation

- [RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance Helpline](#): The RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance team is available to support states in all aspects of evaluation planning and implementation. Reach out directly with questions by emailing RESEA@abtassoc.com.
- [RESEA Evaluation Toolkit](#): The Toolkit provides a comprehensive overview of evaluation design and the implementation process.

Suggested citation: Wheat, V. and Copson, E. (2023). *Understanding the Legislation on RESEA Evaluations*. RESEA Evaluation Technical Assistance FAQ. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office. Abt Associates.