Research and Evaluation Notes

December 2020

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the quarterly *Research and Evaluation Notes*! To support the public workforce system's research and evaluation efforts, these notes share:

- select research and evaluation initiatives, reports, and resources relevant to the nation's education and training system, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, and target populations; and
- technical assistance efforts to support positive customer and program outcomes through research, evaluation, and evidence-based program design.

SELECT READING
Technology-Based Learning in the Public Workforce System: Emerging Policy and Practices in States and American Job Centers

This report explores the use of technology-based learning (TBL), i.e., educational technology or digital learning, in the public workforce system, where it has been used to extend learning opportunities geographically, reduce costs, and allow for individualized learning. The study documents the use of and experiences with TBL, perceived barriers related to TBL implementation, perceptions of the effectiveness of existing TBL-based services, and promising strategies for effective implementation in five states. Key findings include:

- TBL use was widespread but highly variable, ranging from the early pilot stages to the adoption of diverse sets of TBL software and support

- Access to technology demonstrated improvement but was still a challenge, particularly in rural areas with sparse broadband coverage. Individuals have limited financial resources for at-home internet access or lack reliable transportation options to utilize technology resources or computer labs at AJCs.

- Lack of technological literacy and costs are the most common barriers to the adoption and use of TBL in AJCs.

Read the abstract and download the final report for details.

The accompanying literature review and the report both provide more context on technology-based learning within workforce development, education and basic skills in Job Corps; and also describe how TBL can help improve access to training while reducing costs for personalized learning experiences.

Recent Update about State TBL Strategies:

A more recent report from the National Governors Association (NGA) describes states' efforts to increase and expand affordable broadband access. Link to NGA abstract page to download the report: https://www.nga.org/center/publications/expand-affordable-broadband/.

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR LABOR EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

DOL's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) is releasing new rapid evidence reviews that provide up-to-date syntheses of rigorous evidence of important labor-related topics. Newly added reports summarize what is known about emergency response strategies to support workers and businesses in the context of COVID-19. Read more on the CLEAR trending research page.

SPOTLIGHT

The Evaluation and Research Hub (EvalHub) Webinar

Evaluation Planning for Remote Workforce Services and Online Learning

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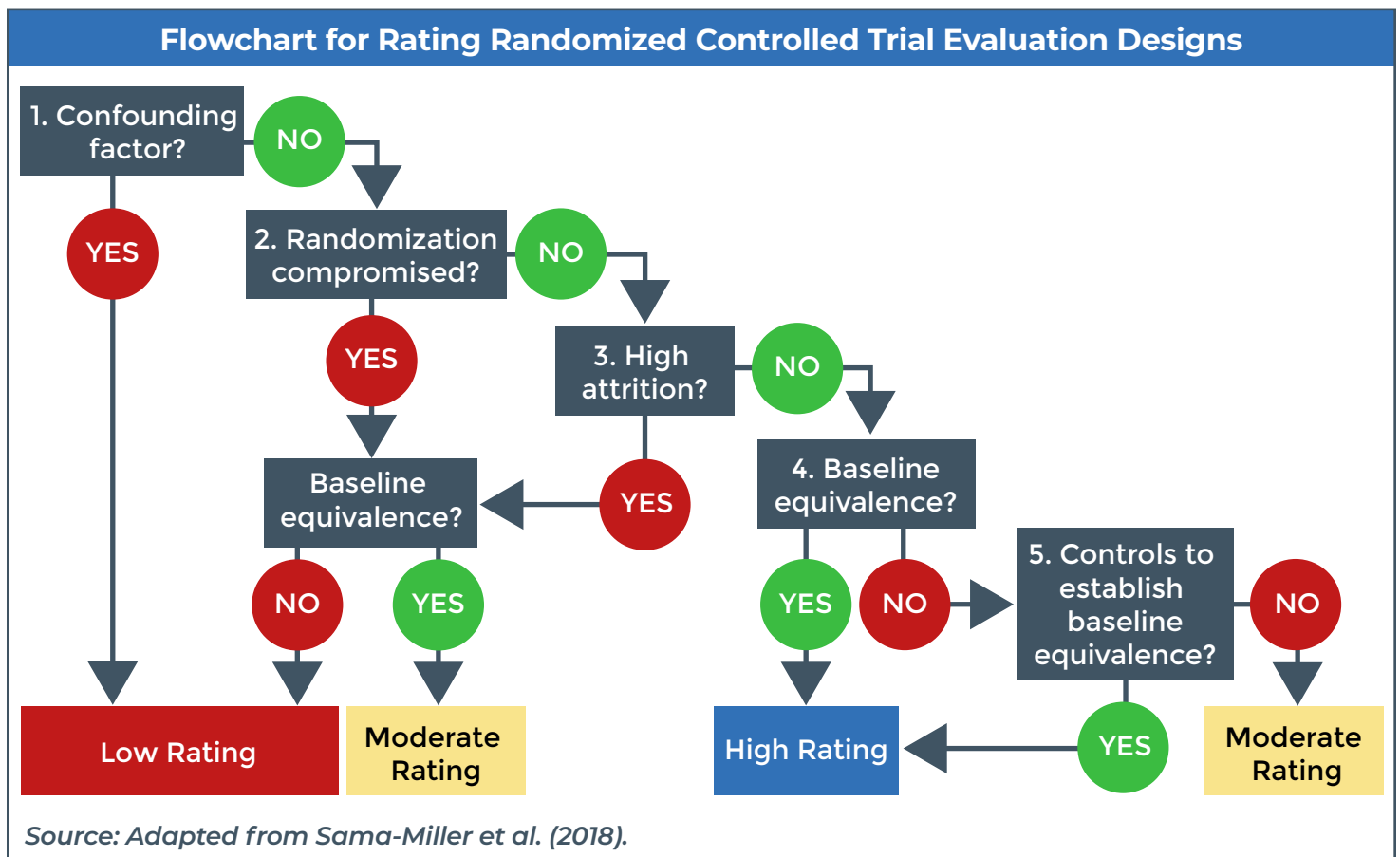
The Virtual Research and Evaluation Conference (RECS) on Self-Sufficiency

PATHWAYS TO WORK EVIDENCE CLEARINGHOUSE

The US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) launched Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse this past summer. The Clearinghouse contains evidence-based interventions to help low-income job seekers succeed in the labor market. Users, such as employment service providers, can sort the interventions by population characteristics and desired outcomes to find the effectiveness ratings of each intervention and to find rigorous evaluations, policy, and program inspiration for state evaluation collaboratives. For additional information on the Clearinghouse view the webinar.

RESEARCH IN LIVING COLOR

A 2020 report, *Local Evaluations of the Cohort 1 P3 (Performance Partnership) Pilots for Disconnected Youth: A Synthesis of their Findings,* illustrates the steps evaluators can follow to determine an evidence rating for a randomized controlled trial (RCT). The flowchart walks a user through major factors that contribute to rating an RCT design. A high rating indicates that the RCT design meets the most stringent standards – that is, that it avoids confounding factors, compromised randomization, and high attrition, and that treatment and control groups are equivalent at baseline. Meeting these standards indicates that the user may draw inferences that the outcomes result from the intervention rather than these factors. An RCT with confounding factors has other factors outside randomization that may affect the outcome of an intervention, meaning the design rating would be considered low. If no confounding factors are present, then to receive at least a moderate rating, the design must ensure that randomization was not compromised, attrition (that is, dropout) from the RCT was reasonable, and groups were equivalent at baseline. For more details on how to rate RCT designs, read the synthesis of the report available at https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/ETA_P3_SynthesisReport_June2020.pdf.

Flowchart for Rating Randomized Controlled Trial Evaluation Designs

Source: Adapted from Sama-Miller et al. (2018).

For more evidence-based research, resources, and emerging evaluation practices, subscribe to the Workforce System Strategies (WSS) and Evaluation and Research Hub (EvalHub) communities on WorkforceGPS and visit the Employment and Training Administration's Research page.

Share research and evaluation questions, suggestions, and resource needs with the Employment and Training Administration's Office of Policy Development and Research at workforcepractices@dol.gov.