

## Resources for Finding Evidence

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The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and a list of resources to agency staff on how to search for existing evidence to inform decisions about government programs, policies, and operations. You can use evidence to better understand what contributes to a problem, craft an effective solution to an issue, and/or understand what has worked (or not!) elsewhere.

- (1) **Where to find research on program effectiveness? Start with evidence clearinghouses:** Evidence clearinghouses collect - and in some cases rate the strength and quality of - research that measures the impact of government programs and policies. Start with the [Results First Clearinghouse](#) database and/or the other clearinghouses listed below by topic to find vetted research about the effectiveness of specific government programs or policies. If the government program or policy of interest has been well-researched, evidence clearinghouses will save time synthesizing the information needed to inform decision making and assess confidence in the findings.
- (2) **Information found in clearinghouses not relevant? Use Google Scholar or AI-assisted search:** Most evidence clearinghouses are narrowly focused on specific federally-funded programs or social policy areas and might not have the information agency staff seek. In these instances it may be necessary to search for individual research studies directly. [Google Scholar](#) and emerging AI search tools such as [Elicit](#) and [SciSpace](#) can help find research across a wide universe of both free open access and paywall journal publications.
- (3) **Questions about needs, problem drivers, or implementation? Leverage NC state data resources:** Don't forget about the insights one can glean from descriptive data. NC state government agency's program and operational data, [Open Data Resources](#) collected by other agencies, or new data collected (e.g., monitoring, interviews, surveys) can help identify problems or needs, spot inefficiencies, measure how well current solutions are being implemented, and build intuition and theory about what changes or new solutions might improve outcomes.
- (4) **Doing something innovative or context-specific? Conduct your own evaluation:** Plan in advance to test it and generate new evidence! OSBM can help state agencies think through approaches and the resources and data that may be needed. The NC [Office of Strategic Partnerships](#) can also help find external research partners with subject matter expertise to help answer your policy or programmatic research question.

### Google Scholar

[Google Scholar](#) provides access to scholarly literature and academic resources that are in both public and private databases. It is a good tool to start with a search for research covering many publication sources. For more information about how to get the best results from Google Scholar, see The Policy Lab's [11 Tips for Doing Desk Research](#), and guidance for constructing search queries in Appendix A.

### AI-assisted literature search

New generative AI tools can help quickly find and filter relevant research using conversational natural language questions – no keyword and search syntax techniques required. They can also help quickly identify key details about the intervention, methods and results.

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Avoid general purpose tools like ChatGPT, Bard, Bing, etc because they tend to “hallucinate,” or make up, plausible sounding research summaries and citations. Instead, use AI-assisted literature search tools built by [Elicit](#) and [SciSpace](#) and trained for this purpose.

In addition to searching, AI tools can auto-generate summaries and syntheses of the research. Although these tools are evolving and improving rapidly, these summaries can still be inaccurate. While the technology can make the work of finding and understanding relevant research faster and easier, it does not take the place of human judgement. Always check the source to verify the information before making decisions.

### Evidence Clearinghouses by Topic <sup>1</sup>

Provided below is a listing of evidence clearinghouses organized by topic. The quality and navigability of each varies widely and the evidence standards used by each are not the same.

OSBM recommends starting with the Results First Clearinghouse Database as it incorporates and rates the research found in multiple other clearinghouses, indicated in the list by an \* asterisks.

#### Social programs – multiple topics

- [Results First Clearinghouse Database\\*](#)
- [Poverty Action Lab’s Policy Insights](#)
- Results for America [Economic Mobility Catalogue](#)
- [The Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)

#### Child and Family Wellbeing, Mental and Behavioral Health

- [\\*Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#)
- [\\*California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#) (CEBC)
- [Child Care & Early Education Research Connections](#)
- [Curated Library about Opioid Use for Decision-makers \(CLOUD\)](#)
- [EdResearch for Action](#)
- [Evidence-based Leadership Council](#)
- [Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness \(HomVEE\)](#)
- [Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#)
- [Prenatal-to-3 Policy Clearinghouse](#)
- Results for America [Economic Mobility Catalogue](#)
- [SAMHSA’s Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#)
- [\\*Penn State Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness’ Continuum of Evidence](#)
- [The Campbell Collaboration](#)
- [\\*The Laura and John Arnold Foundation’s Social Programs That Work](#)
- [Title IV- E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Synthesized from [Minnesota Office of Management and Budget, evaluation.gov](#), and [Research2Policy.org](#)

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- \*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review](#)
- \*U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation ([OPRE's Resource Library](#))
- U.S. Department of Labor [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\)](#)
- \*U. Wisconsin and RWJF's [County Health Rankings and Roadmaps What Works for Health](#)
- [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)

### Public Health, Healthcare, Aging

- [Administration for Community Living](#)
- [Cochrane Library](#)
- [Evidence-based Leadership Council](#)
- [National Council on Aging](#)
- [The Community Guide](#)
- \*The Laura and John Arnold Foundation's [Social Programs That Work](#)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture [RIDGE Project Summaries](#) (food and nutrition)
- \*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Evidence-Based Cancer Control Programs](#) (EBCCP)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [Evidence-based Practice Center Reports](#)
- \*U. Wisconsin and RWJF's [County Health Rankings and Roadmaps What Works for Health](#)
- [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)

### Employment, Homelessness, Military

- [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#)
- [Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#)
- \*Penn State [Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness' Continuum of Evidence](#)
- [Poverty Action Lab's Policy Insights:](#)
- Results for America [Economic Mobility Catalogue](#)
- \*The Laura and John Arnold Foundation's [Social Programs That Work](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\)](#)
- [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)

## Education

- [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#)
- [ArtsEdSearch](#)
- [Child Care & Early Education Research Connections](#)
- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- [EdResearch for Action](#)
- [Evidence for ESSA](#)
- John Hopkins University [The Best Evidence Encyclopedia](#)
- [National Dropout Prevention Center's Model Programs Database](#)
- [The Campbell Collaboration](#)
- \*The Laura and John Arnold Foundation's [Social Programs That Work](#)
- \*U.S. Department of Education's [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
- \*[Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)

## Crime and Violence Prevention

- \*[Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#)
- [Center for Evidence-based Crime Policy](#)
- Results for America [Economic Mobility Catalogue](#)
- \*The Laura and John Arnold Foundation's [Social Programs That Work](#)
- \*The U.S. Department of Justice's [CrimeSolutions.gov](#)
- The U.S. Department of Justice's [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Model Programs Guide](#)
- [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)
- [What Works in Policing?](#)
- [What Works in Re-entry Clearinghouse:](#)
- [Youth.gov's Program Directory:](#)

## Environment, Economic Development

- [AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange](#)
- [Poverty Action Lab's Policy Insights](#)
- U.S. Department of Transportation's [Transportation and Climate Change Collection](#)
- U.S. Agency for International Development's [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#)
- U.S. Agency for International Development's [YouthPower — What Works](#)

## Appendix A: Guidance for Constructing Search Queries in Google Scholar

Provided below is a guide on common operators used to construct search queries and specific examples and terms for meta-analyses, systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials, and quasi-experimental methods. This appendix assumes prior knowledge of each type of research method.

Common Boolean <sup>2</sup> Operators	Example Syntax
<p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Used to <u>narrow</u> down results that contain both terms</p>	<p>Chocolate <b>AND</b> Vanilla</p> <p>(Returns articles that contains both “Chocolate” and “Vanilla”)</p>
<p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Used to <u>expand</u> results that contain either term</p>	<p>Bike <b>OR</b> Car</p> <p>(Returns articles that contains “Bike” or “Car”)</p>
<p>“ “</p> <p>Used to <u>narrow</u> results for the exact phrase</p>	<p>“Long Leaf Pine”</p> <p>(Returns articles that contain exact phrase “Long Leaf Pine”)</p>
<p>~</p> <p>Used to <u>expand</u> results to find synonyms of the term</p>	<p>~education</p> <p>(Returns articles with the term “education” and its synonyms)</p>
<p>*</p> <p>Used to <u>expand</u> results for words with same beginning but different endings</p>	<p>Employ*</p> <p>(Returns articles that include words beginning with “employ” such as “employment” and “employed”)</p>

### How to Construct Query for Meta-Analyses and Systematic Reviews

**Example Question: What are the most effective reemployment programs to help unemployed individuals find jobs?**

<b>Question-Specific Terms</b>	(job OR employ* OR unemploy*) AND (reemployment OR “employment service” OR “job search”)
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<sup>2</sup> Boolean is the term used to refer to common operator commands used to perform online keyword searches.

<b>Methodological Terms</b>	AND (“systematic review” OR meta-analy* OR meta analy*)
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## How to Construct Query for Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)

**Example Question: What are the most effective reemployment programs to help unemployed individuals find jobs?**

<b>Question-Specific Terms</b>	(job OR employ* OR unemploy*) AND (reemployment OR “employment service” OR “job search”)
<b>Methodological Terms</b>	<p><b>BLOCK 1:</b> AND (random* OR “randomized controlled trial” OR RCT OR trial OR experiment)</p> <p><b>BLOCK 2:</b> AND (assign* OR baseline OR causal OR counterfactual* OR “comparison group” OR “control group”)</p> <p><b>BLOCK 3:</b> AND (impact* OR effect* OR efficac* OR caus*)</p> <p>Note: each “Block” is used for separate searches to comply with Google Scholar’s 256-character limit for searches</p>

## How to Construct Query for Quasi-Experimental Research Methods

**Example Question: What are the most effective reemployment programs to help unemployed individuals find jobs?**

<b>Question-Specific Terms</b>	(job OR employ* OR unemploy*) AND (reemployment OR “employment service” OR “job search”)
<b>Methodological Terms</b>	<p><b>BLOCK 1:</b> AND (“instrumental variable*” OR “propensity score matching” OR “regressions discontinuity” OR “non-experimental” OR quasi-experimental)</p> <p><b>BLOCK 2:</b> AND (“difference*-in-difference*” OR “difference* in difference*” OR experiment* OR “fixed effect”)</p> <p><b>BLOCK 3:</b> AND (impact* OR effect* OR efficac* OR caus*)</p> <p><b>BLOCK 4:</b> AND (regression OR “two stage least squares” OR “two-stage least squares” OR “interrupted time series”)</p> <p><b>BLOCK 5:</b> AND (study OR studies OR research OR evaluat* OR analysis OR examin* OR intervention* OR trial OR pilot OR assess*)</p>

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Note: each "Block" is used for separate searches to comply with Google Scholar's 256-character limit for searches