Frequently Asked Questions
FY25 Evidence-Based Budgeting

To best support the state in meeting state fiscal policy objectives, Tennessee uses evidence-based budgeting (EBB), which facilitates the use of research and evidence to inform funding decisions in a way that improves outcomes. The goal is to identify and prioritize the most effective, evidence-based programs to inform decision making, and to increase transparency during the budgeting process using a common language and procedure across the enterprise.

The FY25 evidence-based budgeting forms—the cost increase request and reduction form—are located on the budget instructions page. There, you can also find BEARS user support, and a link to OEI's evidence-based budgeting resources. **All forms are due by Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2023**.

Have an idea of what you're looking for? Use these quick links to jump to the section you need.
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Program Measures (Outputs & Outcomes) | Evaluations | Contact Info | Clearinghouses

General

1. **Do I need to complete EBB forms if I am _not_ submitting any cost increases or reductions?**

No. EBB forms are synonymous with cost increase requests and reduction forms. If you are not submitting cost increases or reductions, these forms do not need to be completed.

2. **Will there be exceptions to any form requirements?**

No. To ensure the budget team and governor's office have all the information they need to make decisions based on evidence, the requirements outlined in the EBB forms and in the trainings stand for FY25. Agencies did a great job completing the forms last year, and we don't anticipate the need for exceptions. Remember, you are only asked to provide **current, existing** information. If outputs or outcomes are not currently being tracked, for example, you will not include them.

3. **Should we complete the reduction form for *any* reduction in staff, or only staff directly involved in a program?**

If a reduction would eliminate vacant positions, administrative positions, or positions that do not directly or solely manage a program, a reduction form is not needed—just enter it into BEARS. However, a reduction form should be completed if positions that **directly affect a program** are being reduced or eliminated.

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tn.gov/finance/oei
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Identifying Programs

4. How do I decide whether a request is programmatic or operational?

If a **systematic activity has participants or recipients** and has its own name, it is likely a program. A program might be a *service*, *intervention*, or *practice*. Operational requests are those that do not impact core components of individual programs that serve constituents or the positions that oversee those programs.

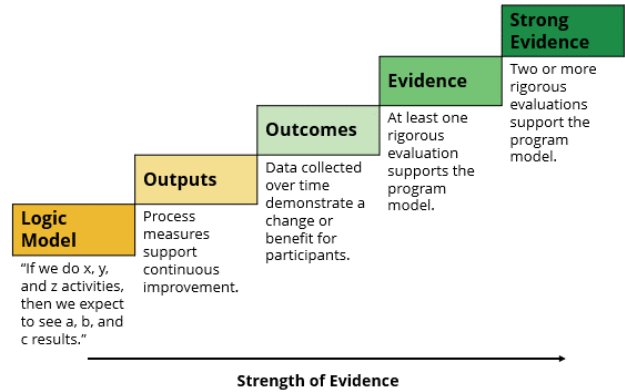| Programmatic *Complete the EBB increase or reduction form in full.*	Operational *Complete sections 1-3 of the EBB increase form.*
- Program, service, intervention, or support - Disbursed grant, fund, or scholarship - Direct benefit to individual or family who meet qualifications at a set frequency (e.g., SNAP, WIC) - Education, communication, or marketing campaign overseen by the agency (e.g., training, class, awareness campaign) - Requests for positions that manage or are directly tied to a program	- Regulatory functions - Most internal operations - IT functions/projects - Advisory committees - Facility or building establishment, maintenance, or security - Requests for positions that serve general department management or operations
Examples - Tennessee Early Intervention System - Safe Baby Court - Tennessee Promise - Tobacco Quit Line - Launch TN - SNAP - ACES grants - Lottery scholarship - Tourism or safety awareness campaign	**Examples** - Professional licensure, permits - Legal, budget, purchasing, procurement - Warehousing/logistics - Accreditation - Oversight - General communications - IT improvement - Boards or advisory councils or committees - Internal staff training - Building safety

5. What type of program do you mean? Is it primarily social service programs?

There are **several types** of programs, not just social services. If a group of participants is being served, where some impact is expected as a result of that service, this should be considered a program. In some cases, state employees or future employees might be that group, such as statewide diversity and inclusion efforts led by DOHR. In other cases, counties or other localities might be that group, such as economic & community development programming. There may also be programs in a non-social service department that are social service programs, such as educational efforts related to the department's work (this would be specific training efforts or classes, not general engagement strategies of the department). **Please contact the OEI team if you are unsure whether a request is programmatic.**

Completing the Evidence & Impact Section

6. I am not familiar with the Tennessee Evidence Framework. Help!

The Tennessee Evidence Framework is designed to standardize the language we use about the level of available evidence that supports our programs. See the figure to the right. While some of Tennessee's programs have an evidence base, it may not be possible to conduct a rigorous evaluation for some programs for a variety of reasons. So ultimately, the expectation is that all programs are operating with a foundation of sound logic, collecting process data, and measuring outcomes.

Strong Evidence — Two or more rigorous evaluations support the program model.

Evidence — At least one rigorous evaluation supports the program model.

Outcomes — Data collected over time demonstrate a change or benefit for participants.

Outputs — Process measures support continuous improvement.

Logic Model — "If we do x, y, and z activities, then we expect to see a, b, and c results."

Strength of Evidence

EBB forms walk through the framework step by step, asking only for data that currently exists. If there are no output measures currently being collected for a program, it's okay to leave the related question/table blank.

7. We are requesting an increase for a program that is already in OEI's program inventory. Since OEI has our if/then statement, program data, and evaluations, do I still have to complete the evidence questions?

If your department completed the annual update in June-August 2023 **(DCS, TDOC, THEC)**, then no—OEI can provide that content for inventoried programs, and you do not have to complete those questions. If your department has completed the inventory in 2023 with EY **(GELF, ECD, TDLWD, TDCI, F&A, DIDD, TennCare)**, then please just provide your most recent data for outputs and outcomes; OEI will provide the rest. For **any new or non-inventoried programs**, and all other departments and non-executive agencies: please complete the evidence and impact questions for all requests related to programs.

Program Inventory Experience	Agencies	Evidence Information Needed for Inventoried Programs*
Completed Inventory Annual Update in Summer 2023	DCS, TDOC, THEC	No need to complete the evidence questions.
Completed Inventory in 2023 with EY	DGS (GELF), ECD, TDLWD, TDCI, F&A, DIDD, TennCare	Add the most recent data for outputs and outcomes only. (Q9)
Inventory underway or not yet complete	MHSAS, DHS, TDH, TDOE, TDA, TDTD, TDFI, TDR, TDOT, TDEC, Military, TDSH, TDHR, TDVS, non-executive agencies	Please complete all evidence questions. (Q8-10)

***This applies to inventoried programs only.** If there is a request for a new program or something not in the OEI inventory, regardless of department, please answer all evidence questions.*

Program Measures (Outputs & Outcomes)

8. I am part of the budget staff and don't have information about the program measures. How do I complete the evidence questions?

You'll want to **collaborate with the manager of the program** to complete program questions. Subject matter experts should have, or know where to find, information and data for their program's outputs and outcomes. The EBB forms are meant to capture a program snapshot, and therefore only require the key, *current* measurements for outputs and outcomes—no new data needs to be collected for these forms.

9. What is the difference between outputs and outcomes?

Outputs are process measures that may support continuous improvement; outcomes are data collected over time that demonstrate a change or benefit to participants. This table provides a comparison:

Outputs	Outcomes
Answer the questions: • What does the program **provide**? • To what extent is the program **happening**?	Answer the questions: • What is the program's **impact**? • To what extent is the program **working**?
Measure countable products of the program	Measure change in participant/recipient behavior or wellbeing
Often start with "number of"	Are measures of what the program influences, but doesn't necessarily control
May also include efficiency or quality measures	Can be short, medium, or long term
Example Outputs	**Example Outcomes**
• Number of participants • Number of health screenings • Number of outreach sessions • Number of grants awarded • Average time to complete eligibility screening • Percentage of participants rating services "useful" or "very useful"	• Percentage of program participants employed six months after training • Percentage of students at grade level in reading by 3rd grade in TN • Job growth rate • Poverty rate • Number of fatal traffic accidents per year in TN • Dollars per $1 spent (ROI)*

If your agency has worked internally or with a vendor to calculate the **return on investment (ROI) or cost/benefit of a program, you may use that as a program outcome. Please let us know over what span of time data were used for the calculation and when it was last updated, or if you have multiple calculations at different points in time, please provide two for comparison.*

10. What does a strong outcome look like?

The three sets of outcomes below are strong examples, with OEI's explanation. Note that some of the outcome examples are adjusted or supplemented for the sake of demonstration and may not be accurate, so please do not use this data in any other materials.

Outcome Example 1: Large health program for individualized support of a population with special needs

Outcome *Outcomes describe the impact of activities; typically, they show benefits or changes in behavior for the participant/recipient, and do not focus on operational changes, such as growth in participation or services. They can be individual benefits or system-level changes. What changes in behavior, benefit, or systems are you seeing?* **Provide 1-3 outcomes, with the most recent data AND one year of prior data, that tell the strongest story about the program.**	Year(s): Most Recent and Comparison *Please specify fiscal year (FY), calendar year (CY), academic year (AY), etc.*	Result: Most Recent and Comparison
Number of working age adults with I/DD who are employed in an integrated setting earning at or above minimum wage	CY 2022	1,946
	CY 2016	1,145

Why is this a strong outcome?
- *The focus is on impact to participants (adults receiving services).*
- *Two years of data are provided, including the most recent, complete year of data.*

Outcome Example 2: Agricultural cost-share program with return-on-investment calculation (ROI)

Outcome *Outcomes describe the impact of activities; typically, they show benefits or changes in behavior for the participant/recipient, and do not focus on operational changes, such as growth in participation or services. They can be individual benefits or system-level changes. What changes in behavior, benefit, or systems are you seeing?* **Provide 1-3 outcomes, with the most recent data AND one year of prior data, that tell the strongest story about the program.**	Year(s): Most Recent and Comparison *Please specify fiscal year (FY), calendar year (CY), academic year (AY), etc.*	Result: Most Recent and Comparison
1. Return on investment (calculated by the University of Tennessee Agri-industry Modeling & Analysis Group)	ROI last calculated in 2019, analyzing data from CY 2014-2018	Each program dollar generates $3.89 for local economies

Why is this a strong outcome?
- *This program may not capture data regarding the specific impacts to famers, but there is a broader impact to economies that the agency is working with a partner to capture.*
- *The source of the ROI calculation is named here. If the calculation is internal, OEI may request additional information regarding your formula.*
- *The listing includes the year the ROI was last updated and what years are included in the calculation. If there are two calculations, please provide both for comparison. But in this case, since there is only one calculation spanning several years, that is okay.*

Outcome Example 3: Large scholarship program with administrative data

| Outcome
Outcomes describe the impact of activities; typically, they show benefits or changes in behavior for the participant/recipient, and do not focus on operational changes, such as growth in participation or services. They can be individual benefits or system-level changes. What changes in behavior, benefit, or systems are you seeing? **Provide 1-3 outcomes, with the most recent data AND one year of prior data, that tell the strongest story about the program.** | Year(s): Most Recent and Comparison
Please specify fiscal year (FY), calendar year (CY), academic year (AY), etc. | Result: Most Recent and Comparison |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Success rate (students graduated or still enrolled) across cohorts | AY 2018-19 | 57.5% |
| | AY 2017-18 | 59.8% |
| 2. Tennessee's FAFSA filing rate | CY 2019 | 78.6% |
| | CY 2013 | 58.2% |

Why are these strong outcomes?
- *The outcomes focus on impact to participants (students graduating or still enrolled; more students accessing financial aid).*
- *They provide two different, complete years of data.*

11. My program has existed for a while but does not have data or metrics for outputs and/or outcomes. What can I do?

The EBB form is designed to capture **currently collected data**. So, if you are not currently collecting outcomes, do not create them—just leave the field blank. It's okay if parts of the tables are empty. However, it is important to discuss with your leadership team strategies for collecting those data as part of your program management plans to inform continuous improvement and future decision-making activities.

12. We are proposing a new/pilot program, so we do not have any program data. How do I complete the evidence questions?

For proposals outlining a new or pilot program/service, we expect you will complete the **logic model** step, and, if the program is backed by studies and is established as evidence-based in a clearinghouse, please cite that information in the **evidence** section as directed.

Leave the outputs and outcomes tables blank—this is a cue for OEI that this is a new program that does not yet have data. If there is a detailed evaluation plan, please describe that in question two, or feel free to share as a separate attachment.

Evaluations

13. Where do I start looking for rigorous evaluations/evidence for a program?

We suggest starting with the [Results First](#) clearinghouse database. This database combines evidence from several clearinghouses in the social service areas. The [Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)](#) also compiles research in various social and human service areas and contains added benefit-cost analyses and meta-analyses. Because many states offer similar services, consulting other states' inventories like [Minnesota's](#) can also be useful.

Some subject areas may not have these resources, such as emergency management, military, revenue, financial services, etc. These are areas where, if the department has programs, we expect nothing further than outcomes on the evidence steps. However, if you are aware of a research study that applies to the program, please include it. If you would like a tutorial on how to use these resources, please reach out to the OEI team.

14. I can't find existing studies for my program in the database. Where else can I look?

See the [appendix](#) of this document for a list of other clearinghouses to try. Some subject areas may not have these resources, such as emergency management, military, revenue, financial services, etc. These are areas where, if the department has programs, we expect nothing further than outcomes on the evidence steps. However, if you are aware of a research study that applies to the program, please include it.

Contact Information & Additional Resources

15. I still have questions or need more support. Who can I contact?

Here are a few important resources available online:
- F&A's [budget instructions page](#) contains links to download the FY25 EBB forms.
- OEI's [evidence-based budgeting page](#) contains additional resources like more information on the evidence framework and the slide deck from the live training. Use the last accordion tab on the page.
- The [BEARS user support page](#) contains additional information on the budgeting system.

You can contact the OEI team at OEI.Questions@tn.gov, or email OEI's evidence coordinators directly at Amanda.K.Armstrong@tn.gov or Victoria.Cooper@tn.gov. To contact the appropriate budget team member, search for your area on the [budget agency assignments](#) page.

Appendix: Additional Clearinghouse Resources by Policy Area*

*Registers included in the [Results First](#) clearinghouse database are not included here.

Education

- Child Care & Early Education Research Connections | https://www.researchconnections.org/
- Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Program Guides | https://www.casel.org/guide/
- Evidence for ESSA, Johns Hopkins University https://www.evidenceforessa.org/

Health

- Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (York University) | https://www.york.ac.uk/crd/
- Clearinghouse for Maternal and Child Health Programs, Georgetown University | https://www.mchlibrary.org/
- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews | http://www.cochrane.org/
- Compendium of Evidence Based Interventions and Best Practices for HIV Prevention | https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/research/interventionresearch/compendium/index.html
- Curated Library about Opioid Use for Decision-makers, Oregon Health & Science University | https://www.opioidlibrary.org/resource_category/policymakers/
- Effective Child Therapy: Evidence-based Mental Health Treatment for Children and Adolescents | https://effectivechildtherapy.org/
- Effective Interventions HIV Prevention that Works | https://effectiveinterventions.cdc.gov/
- Evidence-Based Cancer Control Programs, U.S. National Cancer Institute | https://ebccp.cancercontrol.cancer.gov/index.do
- Evidence-based Practices (EBP) Resource Center (SAMHSA) | https://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-resource-center
- Evidence-Based Reports, U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality | https://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/evidence-based-reports/search.html
- Healthy People Evidence-Based Resources, U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion | https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/tools-resources/Evidence-Based-Resources
- Society of Clinical Psychology | https://www.div12.org/treatments/
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) | https://www.sprc.org/
- The Community Guide, U.S. Centers for Disease Control | https://www.thecommunityguide.org/
- What Works for Health, University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute | https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health

Justice
- Model Programs Guide, U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention | https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/home
- OJJDP Model Programs Guide | https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg
- What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse | https://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/

Labor
- Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, U.S. Department of Labor | https://clear.dol.gov/
- Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse | https://pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/find-interventions

Social Policy
- Child Trends/What Works | http://www.childtrends.org/what-works/
- Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness | https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/
- Connecticut Clearinghouse | https://www.ctclearinghouse.org/
- Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness, U.S. Administration for Children & Families https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/
- National Clearinghouse on Homeless Youth & Families, U.S. Administration for Children & Families https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/
- PracticeWise | https://www.practicewise.com/
- Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education and Human Development | https://pn3policy.org/
- Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP) | http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/
- Social Programs That Work | http://evidencebasedprograms.org/
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration | https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs
- The Campbell Collaboration | https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/
- Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, U.S. Administration for Children & Families | https://preventionservices.acf.hhs.gov/
- Youth.gov | https://youth.gov/