**Four Tiered Evidence Levels**

Evidence Base (8 points)

Applicants will be awarded up to 8 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change. In this section, applicants shall provide a description of the studies and evaluations conducted that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge. This section must include specific citations of studies and/or publicly available evaluation and research reports.

The evidence presented by applicants will be scored and placed into one of the four tiered evidence levels described below:

* **Pre-preliminary evidence** (applicants awarded 1 point) means the applicant presents evidence that it has collected quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking.  An example could be gathering feedback from program participants following their service year.
* **Preliminary evidence** (applicants awarded 2 points)means the applicant presents an initial evidence base that can support conclusions about the program’s contribution to observed outcomes. The evidence base consists of at least 1 non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention). A study that demonstrates improvement in program participants over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence. Examples of research that meet the standards include:1) outcome studies that track program participants through a service pipeline and measure participants’ responses at the end of the program; and 2) pre- and post-test research that determines whether participants have improved on an intended outcome.
* **Moderate evidence** (applicants awarded 4 points) means the applicant presents a reasonably developed evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with moderate confidence. The evidence base consists of 1 or more quasi-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention) with positive findings on one or more intended outcome OR 2 or more non-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcome OR 1 or more experimental studies of another relevant program that uses a similar intervention. Examples of research that meet the standards include: well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies that compare outcomes between the group receiving the intervention and a matched comparison group (i.e. a similar population that does not receive the intervention).
* **Strong evidence** (applicants awarded 8 points) means the applicant presents an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence. This consists of 1 or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcome.

For all studies presented by applicants to meet the four tiered evidence levels above, reviewers will examine: a) how closely the program model evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant; b) the methodological quality of the studies presented (e.g., statistical power, internal and/or external validity, sample size, etc.); c) the recency of the studies, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years; d) strength of the findings, with more weight given to findings that show a large and persistent positive effect on participants.