Title: Evidence Clearinghouses and Registries: Methods for Locating and Including Studies in Evidence Syntheses

Authors and Affiliations:

Lisa Foster
Robin LaSota
Martha Yeide

Development Services Group, Inc.

Abstract Body
Limit 4 pages single-spaced.

Background

The first paper will provide a general summary of the different methods for identifying relevant studies for evidence reviews and the various options for making decisions about the characteristics of included studies. Comparisons of the search strategies employed by several research clearinghouses will be provided, highlighting the nature of evidence that results from the different search strategies. The presenters will use studies of interventions in postsecondary education to highlight how different conclusions might result from employing different methods of identifying studies.

One of the primary objectives of the various research clearinghouses, including the What Works Clearinghouse, is to provide evidence to the public suitable for use in decision-making. As the use of evidence-based repositories for decision-making becomes more commonplace, the organizations may also become de facto gatekeepers of information. That is, decision-makers may only have access to what the clearinghouses decide to put forward as evidence. Considering the implications the gatekeeper role of clearinghouses in the context of how evidence might be used by the public is the topic of this paper.

Purpose

The purpose of this investigation is to report about study identification practices across evidence-based registries and clearinghouses in social policy fields, which serve as a resource for scientific, evidence-based decision-making about practices about desired outcomes in these social policy fields. The information retrieval procedures of the What Works Clearinghouse will be described in detail. Using the general study identification and search procedures for the WWC and other evidence-based repositories, the presenters will highlight how differences in comprehensiveness and transparency can result in different studies available for review and synthesis.

Population

Study identification practices from eight evidence registries will be analyzed and reported. The registries to be included are: (1) Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, (2) the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC), (3) the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, (4) CrimeSolutions.Gov, (5) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP), (6) the Promising Practices Network (PPN), (7) What Works in ReEntry, and (8) What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). Table 1 provides a summary of the general study identification practices for the evidence-based repositories included in this investigation.

Table 1		
Registries	**Type of Study Identification Process (Literature review and/or Nomination)**	**Search by Programs or by Studies (in particular outcome/topic domains)**
1. Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development	Literature review and nominations	Studies by outcomes of interest
2. California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse	Literature review	Programs and interventions by topic areas
3. Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy	Nominations	Studies on targeted social policy issues
4. CrimeSolutions.Gov	Literature review and nominations	Programs and practices by fields of interest
5. National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices	Nominations	Programs and interventions by fields of interest
6. Promising Practices Network[2]	Nominations	Programs by outcomes of interest
7. What Works in ReEntry	Literature review	Studies by topic areas in the clearinghouse framework
8. What Works Clearinghouse	Literature review	Studies by established topics

Research Design, Data Collection, and Analysis

Information about study identification processes across eight registries will be compiled through analysis of websites, and follow-up contact with contact persons for various registries through email or phone inquiry. Website documents and follow-up information will be used to uncover the specific strategies used for electronic database searches, identification of unpublished studies, and how the different repositories handle nominations from researchers, program developers, and the public.

For registries employing electronic database searches, the following research questions will be addressed:

1) What databases are used to conduct searches? (e.g., PsycINFO, ERIC, etc.)
2) How often is the literature scanned for each topic area or field of interest?
3) How are search terms developed and revised?
4) According to what criteria are study abstracts screened?
5) According to what criteria are studies rated as eligible for review?
6) What is the date range of electronic database searches? (e.g., 1994 for a twenty year time frame)

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[2] Funding for the Promising Practices Network ended in June 2014; however, information is archived on the website.

For registries employing nominations, or some combination of nomination and electronic database searches, questions to be addressed include:

1) After a program or intervention has been nominated, are additional literature scans conducted to identify additional studies?
2) If other studies are located about an intervention or program, how are these considered?

In addition, because publication bias can have significant impacts on the impact estimates reported in a systematic review, the presentation will discuss how (or if) unpublished research is included in the search strategies employed by the different repositories and the methods for collecting such research. In the postsecondary education field, unpublished research is common. Using postsecondary education research reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse, the presenters will demonstrate What Works Clearinghouse search procedures and highlight benefits of a comprehensive and systematic search.

Table 2 lists eight evidence-based practice repositories, their general policies on the inclusion of unpublished research, and the number of studies included in the repository.

Table 2		
Registries	**Publication Requirements**	**Number of Studies Reviewed/Results of Searches (per website on 09/28/14)**
1. Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development	Does not specify publication requirement	More than 1,250 programs assessed since founding in 1996
2. California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse	Published, peer-reviewed studies only.	339 programs have been rated
3. Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy	Published or unpublished	21 interventions have been rated in "top tier" or "near top tier"
4. CrimeSolutions.Gov	Studies published in English in a peer-reviewed journal or other professional publication, or comprehensive evaluation report	319 programs have been rated; and 26 practices have been rated
5. National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices	Studies published in English in a peer-reviewed journal or other professional publication, or comprehensive evaluation report	339 interventions have been rated
6. Promising Practices Network[3]	Studies are publicly available	28 proven programs
7. What Works in ReEntry	Studies conducted by independent researcher or	55 interventions and 50 evaluations.

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[3] Since the Promising Practices Network is no longer in operation, follow-up questions may be limited to information that may be currently provided by RAND staff who formerly worked on the project, or available only on the archived website.

	published in a peer-reviewed journal	
8. What Works Clearinghouse	Studies published in English in a peer-reviewed journal or other professional publication, or comprehensive evaluation report	552 interventions and 10,310 studies since 2005

Results and Conclusions

Among these eight registries, four use literature reviews, three use nominations, and one uses a combination of literature reviews and nominations for study identification. Four registries conduct searches for studies by topic area or outcome; and four registries conduct searches by programs or interventions, and then apply study appraisal guidelines.

Three registries specify that publications must be in English in a peer-reviewed journal or other professional publication, or comprehensive evaluation report (Crimesolutions.gov, National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, and What Works Clearinghouse). One registry specifies studies must be in peer-reviewed journals (California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse). Unpublished studies may be considered by Blueprints, the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, and the Promising Practices Network (if publicly available).