

National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) The Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

BEST PRACTICES FRAMEWORK BENCHMARKING PROJECT

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Executive Summary

The objective of this benchmarking project was to study how other federal agencies design and deploy a “best practices” framework. Promising, best, proven, effective, or evidence-based practices—although the adjectives differed, indicating distinct levels of rigor, the intent of the practice framework is commonly the same: **to learn, to improve, and to innovate**. The key element for the project was to identify “the best of all that is possible” for designing a transfer of best practices (TBP) approach that will meet the needs of NASWA-DOL-ETA. A successful transfer of best practices can support the organization’s technical assistance goals of helping constituents leverage what others find successful or useful to improve their own work outcomes.

One of the most prevalent findings of this project is that the benchmarking participants illustrated that the intent of the assistance (provide good ideas, proven practices, or evidence-based practices) directly links to the level of effort required to develop and sustain a best practices framework. This finding directly aligns to APQC’s research focused on the transfer of best-practice approaches that shows a similar range from the less formal, “spontaneous,” to the more formal and structured, “mandated” (or in the case of this project, evidence-based). Moreover, the participants painted a picture that illustrated a range of scope, rigor, and resource requirements. For those participants who focused on a rigorous scope, funding, staffing, and operations requirements were more considerable. This is an important element that must be factored in the design of the TBP framework—the intent will dictate the potential required resources (staff, infrastructure, technology, etc.) and funding as illustrated in Figure 1. Identification of and consensus on what the best-practice framework will provide is an essential first step to designing an effective TBP strategy.

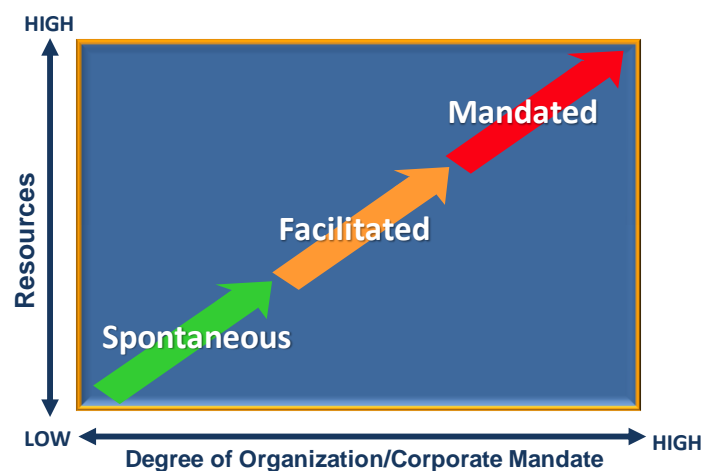


Figure 1: Best-Practice Transfer Types

Below is a list of the 23 findings and observations the project team identified as being most relevant and applicable to our project. Examples and more details are included in the remainder of this report.

1. The intent or objective of the “best-practice” framework was articulated and linked to the organization’s strategy.
2. Multiple terms were used to define a practice. Using the term “best practice” can be distracting from the objective of sharing practices.
3. Up to three specific levels of practices were employed by multiple organizations (tied to the rigor behind each type of practice).
4. To develop a successful framework, elicit the feedback of constituents and collect and understand their needs (requirements).
5. Two primary approaches were evident in our research, illustrating different levels of rigor for “best practices”:
 1. a focus on evidence-based practices; and
 2. an inclusive range of rigor that includes good ideas, proven practices, etc.—not just evidence-based practices.
6. Participants with a rigorous review process achieved this by having a dedicated resource made available through a contract, agreement, or grant.
7. For those that employed a contractor, the role as an agency staff person was very involved (“hands-on”) versus those that employed a grant whose role was generally less involved (“hands-off”).
8. For those who established a best practice framework that was managed internally with some degree of challenge, the framework was “turned over” to an external resource (contractor) who could more successfully manage and operate the framework.
9. For some organizations, a contractor was responsible for outreach (collecting practices) of the best-practice framework.
10. Using a well-articulated and documented validation process that sets the guidelines to identify a practice according to its specific level of rigor may result in a decrease the number of people challenging it as a “best practice.”
11. Quality ratings indicate rigor or evidence supporting the practice.

12. A number of participants published explicit criteria in order to be transparent to their best-practice community.
13. More than one review may be involved in the review process.
14. In many instances, subject matter experts (SMEs) were involved in the review process.
15. Most participants employ FAQs and minimal online training to disseminate their best practices. However, implementation of the practices could require more extensive training, coaching, or facilitation.
16. Professional recognition can be a strong motivator for sharing or submitting practices from the field. However, professional recognition is not enough to ensure ongoing contribution and participation; further effort is required for a successful best-practice collection.
17. A number of participants employ Drupal, an open-source content management system (www.drupal.org).
18. All participants employ social media to varying degrees to share practices.
19. Google Web Analytics is employed by some as a measurement tool.
20. Some participants employed a separate contract for Web design and development.
21. Technology is used as the enabler, not the focus of the best-practice framework.
22. Measures employed were mostly Web site activity measures.
23. Even the most rigorous and well-funded efforts have not included formal evaluations of the best practices frameworks.

The project showed that, regardless of the scope, the initial framework can grow and evolve as necessary and according to what constituents may require. Adapting the approaches, practices, and enablers from this project can ensure that the transfer framework for NASWA-DOL-ETA fits the culture, grows, evolves, and leads to sustainable outcomes.

Methodology

Developed in 1993, APQC's consortium benchmarking study methodology (Figure 2) serves as one of the world's premier methods for successful benchmarking. It was recognized by the European Center for Total Quality Management in 1995 as first among 10 leading benchmarking organizations' models. It is an extremely powerful tool for identifying leading and innovative practices and for facilitating the actual transfer of those practices.

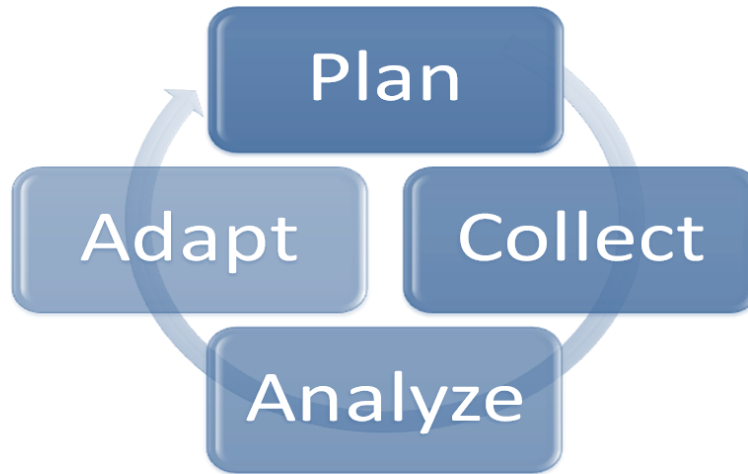


Figure 2

PHASE 1: PLAN

Identify Potential Participants

To begin this project, the Education and Training Administration (ETA) conducted research to identify organizations that met its criteria. This research effort identified organizations that had meaningful content related to the topic of best practices.

ETA identified five organizations, which were approached to participate as benchmarking partners. While ETA identified additional potential participants, these five were deemed representative of the range of efforts in our scope. Please see appendix B for the full list of other best-practice initiatives and the organizations undertaking them.

Organization	Best-Practice Framework(s)
U.S. Department of Education	The What Works Clearinghouse Doing What Works
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	National Registry of Evidence-Based Practices (NREPP)
Corporation for National and Community Service	The Effective Practices Collection
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Innovation of the Day
National Science Foundation	ATE Central

Conduct Planning Meeting

An initial planning meeting was held with a joint APQC-ETA benchmarking team. APQC staff prepared for and facilitated the planning session. The planning meeting was conducted virtually via a Web session and conference call. Additional input was gathered via e-mail or telephone communications with key ETA team members before, during, and after the meeting.

During this planning phase, APQC used various benchmarking tools to:

- ▶ understand NASWA-ETA learning objectives;
- ▶ define the processes or business areas to be benchmarked as a part of this effort;
- ▶ educate the ETA team on the benchmarking process and APQC’s methodology;
- ▶ identify the specific goals and objectives for this project;
- ▶ finalize the project scope, plan, timeline, and deliverables;
- ▶ discuss the criteria for selecting the organizations to participate in this effort;
- ▶ understand how benchmarking lessons learned would be used by NASWA-ETA; and
- ▶ begin the development of the project data collection tool (i.e., interview guide).

Develop Data Collection Tool (Interview Guide)

APQC’s data collection method is designed to uncover leading practices while providing answers to the same questions from several organizations. With this in mind, APQC worked with NASWA-ETA to develop a data collection tool, or interview guide, that addressed those questions and explored the critical success factors for our project. The project team made every effort to keep the questionnaire to a manageable length. Our experience indicates that questionnaires in excess of 30 questions deter potential respondents from participating. Hence, the interview guide consisted of 19 questions.

PHASE 2: COLLECT

Contact Partner Organizations and Secure Participation

APQC aimed to secure commitment from applicable organizations to participate in this benchmarking endeavor. In addition, the APQC Benchmarking Code of Conduct, APQC's international reputation in benchmarking, and our extensive work helping organizations benchmark areas of common interest usually prove helpful and positively influence the level of participation. A copy of the Benchmarking Code of Conduct can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Based on the results of the planning session and the contribution from the ETA team, the five organizations previously noted were identified to participate. APQC shared an overview of the project and the interview guide to confirm and coordinate the interview with each organization.

Collect Data from Participant Organizations

Once the process owner was identified, the study objective, scope, and value were communicated. Moreover, as APQC confirmed commitment from the potential organizations, a copy of the interview guide was provided to review and determine whether potential participants would be comfortable with committing to participate in an interview. The project team continued to pursue partner organizations that expressed interest until:

- ▶ they had scheduled and attended an interview session,
- ▶ the project team had reached the data collection deadline and had an adequate number of completed interviews, and/or
- ▶ ETA determined that it would go forward with the interviews completed as of the collection deadline.

Data collected via interviews occurred from March 15 to April 28, 2011.

PHASE 3: ANALYZE

APQC examined all collected information to identify the key practices and information that enabled the design and development of a best-practice framework. Findings and observations became the basis of this report. Recommendations were based upon understanding the current state of NASWA-ETA's best practices capabilities.

PHASE 4: ADAPT

Create Benchmarking Results Report

APQC compiled all collected interview data and created this final report, which includes methods used to conduct the benchmarking study, key findings uncovered, implications of those

findings for NASWA-ETA, gaps between NASWA-ETA and the partner organizations, and recommendations for potential actions that NASWA-ETA may take to reduce the gaps.

It is APQC's practice to provide a copy of the report to the participating organizations.

This final report contains the following sections:

- ▶ Executive summary
- ▶ Methodology Overview
- ▶ Participant Background
- ▶ Findings and Observations
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Appendices

Knowledge Transfer Session

APQC facilitated a project debrief, or knowledge transfer session, via Web conference with NASWA-ETA team members and key personnel.

Adaptation and improvement, stemming from identified best practices, occur after the participants apply recommendations and key lessons learned to operations.

Participant Background

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE, DOING WHAT WORKS

Established in 2002 by the Institute for Educational Science (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is a central source of scientific evidence for what works in education (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>). Clearinghouse customers are school administrators, curriculum specialists, teachers, and a wider research community.

The What Works Clearinghouse assesses the research on effective educational interventions. Specifically, the Clearinghouse is among the three key activities of the evaluation division that focuses on:

- producing user-friendly practice guides for educators that address instructional challenges with research-based recommendations for schools and classrooms;
- assessing the rigor of research evidence on the effectiveness of interventions (programs, products, practices, and policies), thereby giving educators the tools to make informed decisions;
- developing and implementing standards for reviewing and synthesizing education research; and

- providing a public and easily accessible registry of education evaluation researchers to assist schools, school districts, and program developers with designing and carrying out rigorous evaluations.

Established in 2006 to complement the What Works Clearinghouse, Doing What Works (DWW) is a Web site sponsored by the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD) at the U.S. Department of Education (<http://dww.ed.gov/>). Based on the Practice Guides produced by the What Works Clearinghouse, Doing What Works provides research-based practices to teachers, professional developers, curriculum directors, principals, and people assembling materials for teachers. The goal of DWW is to create an online library of resources that helps teachers, schools, districts, states, and technical assistance providers to implement research-based instructional practices.

DWW translates research-based practices into practical tools to improve classroom-based instruction. Practice Guides are produced by the What Works Clearinghouse. Doing What Works breaks down the content of the WWC Practice Guides into three major areas for each practice recommended in a guide.

1. **Learn What Works**—this area presents the research evidence, with multimedia overviews of what the research illustrates and interviews with key experts in the field.
2. **See How It Works**—this area provides examples from schools where the practice shows success. It consists of video interviews with teachers. Images and videos from classrooms enable others to see how a practice is employed. Lastly, it provides sample materials such as curriculum guides or student work and how the teacher evaluated it.
3. **Do What Works** (part of the cycle of learn, see, do)—this area provides tools and templates to help practitioners self-assess and plan how they might be able to conduct the practice.

The What Works Clearinghouse employs the term “effective interventions,” and Doing What Works employs the term “research-based education practices.”

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES: THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (SAMHSA)—NATIONAL REGISTRY OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES (NREPP)

Established in 1992 by a directive from the U.S. Congress, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) under the U.S. Health and Human Services Department seeks to target substance abuse and mental health services to those who need them most. The organization focuses on eight strategic initiatives:

1. prevention of substance abuse and mental illness;
2. trauma and justice;
3. military families;
4. recovery support;
5. health reform;
6. health IT;
7. data, outcomes, and quality; and

8. public awareness and support.

To support its eight initiatives, SAMHSA administers a combination of competitive, formula, and block grant programs and data collection activities.

The agency employs the National Registry of Evidence-Based Practices (NREPP, www.nrepp.samhsa.gov) in support of mental health promotion, substance abuse prevention, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. NREPP is a searchable online registry containing more than 180 interventions that promote mental health and prevent and/or treat mental illness and substance abuse. Interventions listed on NREPP have served more than 100 million people.

Individuals submit interventions for review and potential inclusion in the registry, and independent experts generate summaries and ratings for each intervention. The ratings focus on the quality of the research to support an intervention's outcomes, as well as the readiness of the intervention for broader dissemination. The registry seeks to connect the public to intervention developers so that they can implement effective approaches and practices in their own communities.

The agency generally uses the minimum requirements for NREPP review as the operational definition of "evidence based." NREPP is considered a decision support system that informs and enables practitioners who have a desire to implement evidence-based interventions with a mechanism to identify and select those practices.

The principal audience, or users, of the registry are state and local community-based and substance abuse and mental health organizations. The registry can be used by anyone, but a number of states encourage, or in some instances require, state-funded organizations to select programs from NREPP.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE—THE EFFECTIVE PRACTICES COLLECTION

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) is a federal agency that administers grants to nonprofits in the area of service and volunteerism. One of the better-known programs of the corporation is AmeriCorps, which provides opportunities for Americans to make ongoing, intensive commitments to service. Other programs include the following.

- **Senior Corps** coordinates senior mentors, coaches, and companions to help people in need and to contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations.
- **Learn and Serve America** provides grants to schools, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations.
- The **Nonprofit Capacity Building Program** increases the capacity of a small number of intermediary grantees to work with small to mid-sized nonprofits facing resource challenges.

- The **Social Innovation Fund** targets millions in public-private funds to expand effective solutions across three key areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development/school support.
- The **Volunteer Generation Fund** seeks to recruit, manage, support, and retain individuals in high-quality volunteer assignments.

In addition, the corporation also supports initiatives including United We Serve; the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service; the President's Volunteer Service Award; and other special initiatives detailed at www.nationalservice.gov/about/initiatives.

The corporation is primarily a grant-providing organization.

CNS provides a variety of online technical assistance resources, mostly broken out by programs. The resource center, one of the resources, shares training among Senior Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA, the National Civilian Community Corps, and Learn and Serve America. The center also connects potential grantee programs to grant opportunities and resources and provides technical assistance to any organization that strengthens communities through volunteers. (It accomplishes this through a cooperative agreement with nonprofit Educational Training Resources Associates, which coordinates the center's knowledge management efforts and online learning resources.)

Through its Web site, the resource center organizes content by topic and resource type, and social networking. Topics include service activities; volunteer, member, and staff management; program, financial, and grant management; and resources for specific groups. Resource types follow.

- Online Courses
- Calendar of Events
- Effective Practices Collection
- Samples from the Field
- E-newsletter
- E-mail Discussion Lists
- Lending Library
- Special Publications

Finally, a social networking component of the resource center's site offers opportunities for collaboration and learning, with connections through the traditional social media sites.

In addition, the resource center has the Effective Practices Collection that offers ideas, strategies, and study findings in support of service and volunteer programs. The collection started through an internal focus on outcome-specific practices. There were some challenges with the amount of time involved in identifying and vetting those practices. For that reason, the center hired Educational Training Resources Associates (ETR) to assist with the collection. ETR has spent many years developing the collection by travelling to grantee meetings and events and holding best-practices sessions where individuals submit and discuss best practices. From

there, the collection gathered practices that ranged from good ideas in the service-sector field to evidence-based research.

The effective practices collection and various other technical assistance (TA) resources are part of ETR's cooperative agreement. There are three or four cooperative agreements in place to provide technical assistance. One individual at ETR was tasked with interviewing people, reviewing practices against CNS criteria, and documenting practices in order to have a consistent "voice."

Content in the collection includes general nonprofit capacity-building tools, training, and information organized and consolidated by the resource center. Content is obtained in a variety of ways. Over the years, an investment had been made in content providers that are contract-based or provided through cooperative agreements that have been funded to develop training materials for technical assistance. Resources are offered in specific service area types.

Effective practices are defined as an action or a series of actions by a grantee or program staff or national service participant that helps solve an essential problem in the community it serves that leads to a positive outcome. (For full definition, visit www.nationalserviceresources.org/ep-about.) The practice can be replicated or adapted to serve in more than one locale, and it can be described and documented in terms of the context in which it was used and evidence of its success. Three levels of indicators illustrate different types of practices:

1. project idea or program highlight—a good idea,
2. proven replicated practice, and
3. evidence-based practice (through research or study).

At the beginning of the collection, evidenced-based practices were the sole focus. These practices took eight or more months to implement, with 11 practices presented in the first year by internal agency staff. The collection was then handed over to Educational Training Resources Associates, which helped the Corporation for National and Community Service develop the three levels.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT—INNOVATION OF THE DAY

The Office for International and Philanthropic Innovation (IPI) is located within the Office for Policy Development and Research and supports the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by working across public, private, and civil sectors to find new solutions to old problems and align ideas and resources. IPI supports HUD in its mission to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transforms the way HUD does business. IPI conducts research, develops networks, and facilitates collaboration

among key partners and resources. Overall, IPI is working to position “HUD as a Hub” for innovation in three important ways by:

1. serving as a portal for civil society—foundations and international partners;
2. scouting out and lifting up innovative ideas that work—to inform policy and programs—to work smarter; and
3. working with partners who share interests in issues related to housing and community development to align and leverage investments so that funding is strategic and targeted. This alignment allows HUD to be more effective at transformation—getting programs to enact change and increase scale.

IPI has 7 to 10 employees and is part of HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R). IPI provides support to HUD program offices and 10 regions with international exchanges, monthly speaker series and funder briefings and research, as well as acting as a portal for foundations and their partner organizations to gain access to HUD information, priorities, and initiatives.

IPI, in collaboration with teams across PD&R and HUD, is working to establish an online Innovation of the Day platform. Facilitated by IPI, the site is an online platform for submissions and a best practices repository. The platform will collect best models, practices, and systems concerning housing and community development from inside and outside of HUD to share with the public, nationally and internationally.

Innovation of the Day is one piece of HUD’s knowledge-sharing strategy and the rigorous research undertaken within the Office for Policy Development and Research. Other examples of HUD’s evidence-based research are available at huduser.gov.

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION—ATE CENTRAL

Created by congress in 1950 as an independent agency, the National Science Foundation (NSF) funds approximately 20 percent of all federally supported basic research at American colleges and universities. The NSF provides support for all fields of fundamental science and engineering, except medical science.

The NSF supports 40 advanced technological education (ATE) centers, some national and some regional, through 210 active projects (grants of up to \$300,000 per year for three years). The centers receive funding for a set number of years and eventually may become resource centers, which continue with core activities with reduced funding. Some resource centers have been around since ATE was first set up in 1993. In addition to the centers, ATE mentors a number of projects focused on material development, professional development, and course improvement.

The overall ATE program is supported through \$64 million in grants annually. One of the ATE grants is for the online portal and digital library ATE Central (<http://atecentral.net/>). In 2011 ATE Central is on year three of a four-year grant.

ATE Central helps educators, students, and the general public learn about and use materials from the ATE program, which focuses on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) technician occupations that require more than a post-secondary education but not necessarily a four-year education. Because of the focus, the program involves industry organizations in advisory boards and serving as adjunct faculty, speakers, and mentors to interning students.

ATE Central contains a collection of materials and services that highlight the work of ATE projects and centers on education, not training. ATE Central resources include curricula, learning objects, and podcasts for grantees. The site aggregates information from materials developed by ATE centers and projects and organizes it through subject taxonomies, context-appropriate keywords, and other digital cataloging techniques. Centers and projects provide content to ATE Central on a voluntary basis.

ATE Central also links 11 ATE resource centers and connects ATE with the Applied Math and Science Education Repository (AMSER), a portal of free educational resources and services for instructors at community and technical colleges and part of the National Science Digital Library (NSDL). ATE Central and AMSER both draw from a single underlying resource database, and resources cataloged in ATE Central automatically list with AMSER and the NSDL.

ATE Central does not specifically promote any of its content as evidence-based. However, it does employ vetting criteria for the content that is provided. Its evidence center is tasked with reviewing practices to validate the evidence. (Projects and centers are strongly encouraged to provide evidence for the effectiveness of their products.)

Findings and Observations

In conducting interviews with the participant organizations, APQC sought to capture those key enablers that led to the design and development of an effective best-practice framework. As noted in the executive summary section of this report, a number of key observations and findings surfaced in the scope area shown in Table 1. The findings and observations listed are most applicable to our project and are not representative of all the practices exhibited by the participants.

Strategy	The intent or objective of the “best-practice” collection was articulated and linked to the organization’s strategy.
	Multiple terms were used to define a practice. Using the term “best practice” may be distracting from the objective of sharing practices.
	Up to three specific levels of practices were employed by multiple organizations (tied to the rigor behind each type of practice).
	To develop a successful framework, elicit the feedback of constituents and collect their needs (requirements).
	Two primary approaches were evident in our research, illustrating different levels of rigor for “best practices”: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a focus on evidence-based practices; and 2. an inclusive range of rigor that includes good ideas, proven practices, etc. not—just evidence-based practices.
Governance, Roles, and Responsibilities	Participants with a rigorous review process achieved this by having a dedicated resource made available through a contract, agreement, or grant.
	For those who employed a contractor, the role as an agency staff person was very involved (hands-on”) versus those that employed a grant whose role was generally less involved (“hands-off”).
	Some organizations that encountered challenges while establishing a best-practice framework internally subsequently hired a contractor or another external resource to manage it.
	For some organizations, a contractor was responsible for outreach (collecting practices) of the best-practice framework.
Process	Using a well-articulated and documented validation process that sets the guidelines to identify a practice according to its specific level of rigor will decrease the number of people challenging it as a “best practice.”

	Quality ratings indicate rigor or evidence supporting the practice.
	A number of participants published explicit criteria in order to be transparent to their best practice community.
	More than one review may be involved in the review process.
	In many instances, subject matter experts (SMEs) were involved in the review process.
	Most participants employ FAQs and minimal online training to disseminate their best practices. However, implementation of the practices could require more extensive training, coaching, or facilitation.
	Professional recognition can be a strong motivator for sharing or submitting practices from the field. However, professional recognition is not enough to ensure ongoing contribution and participation; further effort is required for a successful best-practice collection.
Technology	A number of participants employ Drupal, an open-source content management system (www.drupal.org).
	All participants employ social media to varying degrees to share practices.
	Google Web Analytics is employed by some as a measurement tool.
	Some participants employed a separate contract for Web design and development.
	Technology is used as the enabler, not the focus of the best-practice framework.
Measurement	Measures employed were mostly Web site activity measures.
	Even the most rigorous and well-funded efforts have not included formal evaluations of the best-practice frameworks.

Table 1

Strategy

For most of the benchmarking participants, the strategy for implementing a best-practices framework stemmed from a number of sources. In some instances, the need for a framework was surfaced by constituents. In other instances, it was due to an official mandate. Whatever the reason, the clear objective was to provide support to constituents to help them be more effective in their fields or respective work.

The strategies employed ranged from establishing a good ideas framework to a more rigorous evidenced-based framework. Table 2 below illustrates the focus in terms of rigor for each of the benchmarking participants in our project.

Evidence-Based Practices (high rigor behind each practice)	“Inclusive” Practices (includes practices offered: good idea [low to no rigor behind the practice], proven practice [some rigor], evidence-based [high rigor])
National Registry of Evidence-Based Practices (NREPP) —from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) under U.S. Health and Human Services)	Innovation of the Day (from the Office for International and Philanthropic Innovation (IPI) under the U.S. Housing and Urban Development)
The What Works Clearinghouse and Doing What Works (from the Institute for Educational Science (IES) under the U.S. Department of Education)	The Effective Practices Collection (from the National Service Resources under the Corporation for National and Community Service [NCS])
	ATE Central (from Advanced Technological Education under the National Science Foundation)

Table 2

The range of rigor employed aligned to specific criteria; Table 3 shows each framework practice type aligned to those criteria.

Framework	Practice Type	Criteria
HHS SAMHSA—NREPP	Evidence-based	<p>Quality of research (QoR) ratings are indicators of the strength of the evidence supporting the outcomes of the intervention. Higher scores indicate stronger, more compelling evidence. Each outcome is rated separately because interventions may target multiple outcomes (e.g., alcohol use, marijuana use, behavior problems in school), and the evidence supporting the different outcomes may vary.</p> <p>Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reliability of measures 2. Validity of measures 3. Intervention fidelity 4. Missing data attrition 5. Potential confounding variables 6. Appropriateness of analysis <p>Reviewers use a scale of 0.0 to 4.0, with 4.0 indicating the highest rating given.</p>
U.S. Department of Education—What Works Clearinghouse	Evidence-based	<p>Evidence Standards Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study relevance 2. Strength of evidence 3. Other important characteristics <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Variations in people, settings, and outcomes b. Analysis of intervention’s effect on different subgroups, settings, and outcomes c. Statistical reporting
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—Innovation of the Day	Best models, practices and systems (aka good ideas)	<p>Vetting Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Must be related to housing and/or community development 2. Must be existing innovation, already in practice 3. Must have a track record of success or specific examples




Framework	Practice Type	Criteria
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Must, in whole or in part, be replicable 5. Must serve more than one person or small group of people 6. Must combat a specific weakness, issue, or problem in its location
National Science Foundation—ATE Central	Collection of materials and services that highlight the work of ATE projects and centers.	No specific criteria
Corporation for National and Community Service—The Effective Practices Collection	<p>Good ideas, successful strategies, and studied findings; employs “use indicators”:</p> <p> a project idea or program highlight</p> <p> an effective practice that has been implemented by one or more programs and is easily replicated</p> <p> an effective practice that has been identified through research study</p>	<p>Criteria for Effective Practices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem(s) it solves 2. Context in which it has been successful 3. Evidence of success 4. Level of outcome it helped to achieve

Table 3

Moreover, the term “best practice” sparked much energy among constituents and proved distracting to the framework’s objective. A number of the benchmarking participants specifically

elected not to use the term “best practice.” Education’s **What Works Clearinghouse** employs the term **effective interventions** to describe the type of practices or content it provides. The Clearinghouse staff notes that the term “best practices” is viewed as anecdotal with no real evidence behind it. Education’s **Doing What Works** likewise focuses only on evidence-based practices and employs a term from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), “research-based practices.” Like the What Works Clearinghouse, CNS’ **Effective Practices Collection** employs the term “effective practice,” defined as an action or series of actions by a grantee, program staff, or national service participant that helps solve an essential problem in the community it serves that leads to a positive outcome. The practice can be replicated or adapted to serve in more than one locale, and it can be documented in terms of the context in which it was used and it showed success. HHS SAMHSA’s **NREPP** employs the term “evidence-based” for its practices, defined as approaches to prevention or treatment that are based in theory and have undergone scientific evaluation. “Evidence-based” stands in contrast to approaches that are based on tradition, convention, belief, or anecdotal evidence.

Governance, Roles, and Responsibilities

The required investment in roles and responsibilities appears directly linked to the level of effort required to manage the best-practice framework. Hence, if an organization offers only practices that are evidence-based with a rigorous review process behind them, the level of effort required will be more than at those organizations that offer a range of practices with various levels of rigor. Table 4 illustrates the participants’ resource levels aligned to practice type and operating budget, if applicable.

Framework	Practice Type	Resources	Budget
HHS SAMHSA—NREPP	Evidence-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.75 management FTEs • 1.5 readiness for dissemination liaison FTEs • 1 expert consultant/reviewer FTE • 3.75 review consultant FTEs (Ph.D.-level resources) • 1.5 technology and data entry FTEs • 4 administrative, training, writer, and editor FTEs 	~\$2.1 million USD annually
U.S. Department of Education—What Works Clearinghouse	Evidence-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 principal investigator (PI) • 1 deputy PI • Team conducting literature searches • Ph.D.-level reviewers 	\$10 million USD annually

Framework	Practice Type	Resources	Budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production team • Communications resources • Quality assurance resources • Database and technology management 	
U.S. Department of Education—Doing What Works	Evidence-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FTE (made up of two staff members) • Multiple resources under contract performing content development, dissemination, and other support efforts, and Web design and hosting 	~\$4.1 million USD annually (based on two contracts, one focused on content and the other on Web support)
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—Innovation of the Day	Inclusive	<p>Framework is not “live” yet. Implementation resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 part-time coordinator (Federal staff) • 2-3 IT resources • 4-5 HUD-wide review team • other contributors such as people in public affairs 	Funding is part of existing budgets.
The National Science Foundation—ATE Central	Inclusive	Managed by a grantee	~\$750,000 annually
The Corporation for National and Community Service—Effective Practices Collection	Inclusive	<p>Managed under a co-operative agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FTE government resource was responsible for overseeing the work plan of the cooperative agreement (covers other activities beyond the Effective Practices Collection) 	<\$100,000 (cost for 1 FTE contractor under cooperative agreement and technology support)

Framework	Practice Type	Resources	Budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 FTE contractor responsible for managing the collection 	

Table 4

Participants who had a rigorous review process (those with evidence-based practices) typically employed a grantee or contractor to manage the process. Costs reflected the investment of that role: At the low end of the spectrum, funding is \$100,000 USD (NCS’ **Effective Practices Collection**) and at the high end of the spectrum, it is \$10 million USD (Education’s **What Works Clearinghouse**).

Moreover, the responsibilities of government resources were linked to the management approach for the framework, whether the approach included a contract that may require more hands-on involvement (**NREPP, What Works Clearinghouse**) from the government resource to a grant (NSF’s **ATE Central**) that requires a hands-off approach.

Process

Process commonalities among our benchmarking participants included identification or collection, review, and dissemination. Although commonalities were evident, the level of rigor and effort largely depended on the type of framework employed (evidence-based only or “inclusive”). Moreover, as previously noted under the “Strategy” section of this report, specific criteria are a critical component of the review process, which may involve more than one review. By clearly articulating review criteria, a number of the benchmarking participants avoided or decreased the number of individuals challenging review outcomes and promoted transparency.

Recognition and professional pride were employed by a number of participants to encourage submission of practices.

HHS SAMHSA NREPP’s process consists of an annual three-month open submission to collect practices. Following collection, NREPP employs its multi-step review process. The review process consists of eight high-level steps that include three review activities: 1) initial review, 2) quality of research review, and 3) readiness for dissemination (RFD) review. NREPP’s review process includes acceptance and dissemination of the practice. The practice is disseminated via posting to the NREPP Web site.

Education’s **What Works Clearinghouse’s** first step of the process is to identify priority areas. A review team develops a review protocol to define the parameters of a literature search (the definition of the population, the potential desired student outcomes, outcome domains, etc.). Once a study passes eligibility screening, the study is assigned to a reviewer who creates a

review guide with all of the details of the study. The review will determine whether the study meets clearinghouse research standards or meets the standards with reservations.

Education's **Doing What Works** staff takes the content (the practice guides) from the Clearinghouse and packages it for easy dissemination, with a focus on implementation. The process takes about seven to nine months to complete. The packages are in three distinct formats:

1. **Learn What Works**—presents the research evidence, multimedia overviews of what the research illustrates, and interviews with key experts in the field.
2. **See How It Works**—provides examples (schools) where the practices are being utilized and showing success; this demonstrates how work is occurring in real-life situations. It consists of video interviews with teachers discussing how or why they plan to do something the way they do it. Images from classrooms and other video are also shown to enable others to see how practices are employed. Lastly, sample materials are also provided under this area, such as a curriculum guides or sample student work and how the teacher is evaluating it.
3. **Do What Works** (part of the cycle of learn, see, do)—provides tools and templates to help practitioners self-assess and plan how they may be able to do the work.

Doing What Works publishes its content approximately eight to 12 months after a study is posted in the What Works Clearinghouse.

The overall process for **Innovation of the Day** consists of the submission and vetting process and the publishing process. Individuals submit ideas via a link posted on the main HUD Web site to a standard submission form. After the launch of the Innovation of the Day submission platform and the submissions begin to flow in, IPI/PDR will begin accepting and collecting the submissions from the online form through the automatic form's spreadsheet and begin the vetting process to develop a "cache" of innovations to be placed on the site daily from a given point forward—with the aim to stay 60 or 90 days (approximately 40 to 60 vetted daily innovations) ahead in the process for a buffer. Selected innovations will not begin displaying on the "viewing pages" until that buffer of two months is reached. All published ideas will be archived.

CNS' **Effective Practices Collection** is still available online, but new practices are not currently being collected. When practices were being collected, the contractor for the Effective Practices Collection was responsible for executing the process. The contractor employed a number of ways to identify practices (via listservs, at conference workshops, or submissions). The review process consisted of interviewing the person(s) who provided or submitted the practice. The contractor used a set of questions to validate and categorize a practice. Finally, the practices were published on the Effective Practices Collection Web site.

TRAINING

A consistent approach for training was employed by most of the benchmarking participants. Participants used online training and FAQs to educate constituents on the intent of the framework and how to access practices. It is important to note that the training offered pertains to access, not to implementation, of a practice. Implementation of the practice could require additional guidance and support.

PROMOTION

Promotion of the framework was done via a number of typical communication mediums, such as newsletters, Web sites, meetings, and conferences. In some cases, social media is used to share and promote.

Technology

One philosophy espoused by many of the benchmarking participants is that technology is viewed as the enabler of the process. In one instance with **Innovation of the Day**, existing technology was used to operationalize the framework; in other instances the technology component was outsourced to a contractor. Two participants employed the open-source content management system Drupal (**Innovation of the Day and the Effective Practices Collection**). A majority of the participants employed Google Web Analytics for site activity measures and Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and DIGG to share practices. RSS feeds were also used to alert users of updates to the framework (new postings). Other functionality offered by one participant was the “like,” “don’t like” indicator. Below is a list of the technology employed by the benchmarking participants.

- Microsoft: .NET, SQL, Web Server, Excel
- Drupal
- Google Web Analytics

Measurement

A majority of the benchmarking participants employed site activity measures to evaluate the performance of their frameworks. In addition to the activity measures, one participant prepared case studies highlighting how practices are used and the impact or outcomes they provide. Table 5 illustrates the framework and the measures employed to evaluate performance.

Framework	Measures
HHS SAMHSA’s NREPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of intervention summaries added per year to the Web site • Number of submissions both received and accepted for review • Traffic to the site (number of visitors and number of Web pages viewed) • Informal feedback via a feedback button directly from the site
Education’s What Works Clearinghouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of reports released annually • Number of practice guides released annually • Number of Web site visits
Education’s Doing What Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Web hits and visits • Number of organizations that link to the site • Case studies • Pop-up surveys measuring response rate • Implementation award that highlights how the content was used
HUD’s Innovation of the Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of submissions per day • Number of submissions meeting criteria • Quality of submissions • Hits per day on vetted ideas
CNS’ Effective Practices Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of practices downloaded and other activity measures • Rating of practices (scheduled to be implemented this year)

Table 5

Lessons Learned and Recommendations from Participants

The advice and lessons learned offered by the benchmarking participants were each unique based on their specific circumstance and experience. Their practical advice can help those who are adopting a best-practice framework to mitigate and address potential challenges and enable more effective decisions.

HHS SAMHSA'S NREPP

SAMHSA encourages: 1) engaging stakeholders in a dialogue to uncover their true needs for a best practices system, 2) striving for transparency with stakeholders, and 3) clearly communicating the intent and correct use of the site. SAMHSA believes it has been successful in addressing the needs of its constituents while meeting its objectives for NREPP. Those involved in the development of the NREPP system emphasize the importance of managing expectations by not setting the system as the gold standard. Instead, they communicate that the site has useful information for those interested in assessing evidence-based interventions for promoting mental health and preventing and/or treating mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

In regard to implementation, the staff says to anticipate pushback from others with financial interests that will be adversely affected by your actions. There is a lot of money to be made in the marketing of some of the evidence-based programs, so it is vital that the review and rating process be objective and highly credible. Moreover, the staff urges the provision of sufficient information so that the target audiences are both informed and empowered. This supports the philosophy that NREPP is a decision support system. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that—given the short shelf life of scientific knowledge—the content of any best practices system will need to continually evolve and be updated. Hence, best practices today may not be best practices three to five years from now.

EDUCATION'S WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE AND DOING WHAT WORKS

- Launch with a highly visible product. (When launching, the clearinghouse selected a topic that had considerable research available but was not of as substantial interest as other topics, such as math or science. Users then questioned the value the clearinghouse could provide.)
- It can take considerable time to develop evidence standards and a process to report on the findings.
- Anticipate unusable research. (Only about 10 percent of the studies reviewed by the clearinghouse are usable. The core of the clearinghouse's effort is sifting and sorting through information.)
- To define questions (in regard to the review/validation process), understand the answers you seek.
- Use experts, but don't give them the authority to design your framework. (Instead of its initial five-year contract approach, the clearinghouse recommends a phased approach with specific steps, perhaps including a feasibility study.)
- Practitioners don't want minutia. They want quick answers.
- Highlight the information that is most important. (Initially, the Doing What Works site provided a level of evidence for each practice that was easy to identify. But if people saw low evidence, they would discount that practice. The level of evidence is now presented in a less obvious way.)
- Don't ignore the question of how to present information. A 10-minute video does not help if no one wants to watch it.

- Be careful what you publicize. It is better to have a Web site that is ready for prime time than to drive people to a site that doesn't have anything of immediate use to them.

Recommendations

The clearinghouse team recommends ensuring that content is validated as evidence-based. Also, leveraging what others have done in terms of evidence will save time and effort. Hence, ensuring that the evidence is relevant in the right context is key.

The clearinghouse team also suggests keeping the end goal in mind when developing a best practices framework. Understanding the intended objective will help to effectively develop something that is useful for the customer.

HUD'S INNOVATION OF THE DAY

The Innovation of the Day team recommends leveraging existing resources. The team shares that, oftentimes, the infrastructure, people, and ideas are readily available and primed to be leveraged. Leveraging existing resources addresses the need for cost-efficiency and creates buy-in and a sense of purpose in those involved in the project.

THE EFFECTIVE PRACTICES COLLECTION

- It takes a dedicated resource—whether a government staffer or a contractor—to create such a collection. A dedicated person can provide a consistent look and feel, as well as act as a knowledgeable resource about the collection. (The Educational Training Resources Associates staffer was able to direct individuals to specific practices when they requested specific content.)
- Employing intuitive and user-friendly technology is also important. When the technology enables fast access to easily retrievable content, more people are apt to use it.
- Be consistent in mining for content and building it out. If you build it and leave it, then it will not grow and people will not flock to it. Content has to be promoted.
- Consider word choice. Initially, the collection provided *best practices*. The term *best practices* introduced many issues that were resolved by changing the collection to *effective practices*.
- Vetting is not a big issue when focusing on program practices as compared to policy guidelines.

Recommendations

Based on this research and APQC’s experience with designing and implementing a transfer of best practices approach, the following recommendations (Table 6) are offered for consideration.

Scope	Recommendation
Strategy	Agree on the scope and intent of the best practices framework.
	Engage a set of constituents to gather their feedback on what may be most useful for them.
	Clearly define and document the criteria aligned to level of rigor for the practices offered.
Governance, Roles, and Responsibilities	Identify the level of resource support required based on the type of best practices framework that will be implemented.
	Investigate potential contractors who can support the framework’s operation.
	Establish an incentive to submit and reuse practices that promotes professional recognition.
	Prepare a communications plan that identifies and employs existing communication vehicles to promote the framework.
Process	Develop the process according to the scope of the framework. The process for identifying and/or collecting, validating, and reviewing will largely be dictated by the scope of the framework and the associated level of rigor behind a practice. Numerous reviews may be necessary to accept a practice into the framework.
	Identify and document the suppliers and their inputs into the process (suppliers are those who have the practices, and their inputs are ideas, practices, approaches, tools, etc.), as well as the outputs of the process (guides, individual practices, useful materials, etc.). This detail will help those responsible for executing the process to effectively perform it.
Technology	Leverage existing technology, if possible.
	Identify potential technology service providers and the level of funding necessary for engaging with each of them.
	Align technical requirements to process work flow to identify the best fit in terms of technology enablement.
Measurement	Develop performance measures that will provide meaningful information for gauging performance of the framework as well as improving its effect

Scope	Recommendation
	on the user community or constituents. Although activity measures may provide some value, identifying and establishing as few as three key performance indicators will elevate the value of the framework and cement it in the user community as valuable.

Table 6

Appendix A
The Benchmarking Code of Conduct

BENCHMARKING CODE OF CONDUCT

Benchmarking—the process of identifying and learning from global best practices—is a powerful tool in the quest for continuous improvement and breakthroughs.

APQC developed and adheres to this code of conduct to:

- guide benchmarking efforts,
- advance the professionalism and effectiveness of benchmarking, and
- help protect its members from harm.

Adherence to this Code will contribute to efficient, effective, and ethical benchmarking.

Guidelines and Ethics for Benchmarkers

Consortium Benchmarking

APQC conducts a variety of collaborative benchmarking studies each year that span industries, topics, and functional areas. APQC leads the process, facilitates meetings, arranges site visits, conducts findings events, and produces a detailed report.

For current and upcoming studies, please visit us online at www.apqc.org/studies.



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1.0 Legality

1.1 If there is any potential question on the legality of an activity, then consult with your corporate counsel.

1.2 Avoid discussions or actions that could lead to or imply an interest in restraint of trade, market, and/or customer allocation schemes; price fixing; dealing arrangements; bid rigging; or bribery. Don't discuss costs with competitors if costs are an element of pricing.

1.3 Refrain from the acquisition of trade secrets from another by any means that could be interpreted as improper, including the breach or inducement of a breach of any duty to maintain secrecy. Do not disclose or use any trade secret that may have been obtained through improper means or that was disclosed by another in violation of duty to maintain its secrecy or limit its use.

1.4 Do not, as a consultant or client, extend benchmarking study findings to another company without first ensuring that the data is appropriately blinded and anonymous so that the participants' identities are protected.

2.0 Exchange

2.1 Be willing to provide to your benchmarking partner the same type and level of information that you request from your benchmarking partner.

2.2 Fully communicate early in the relationship to clarify expectations, avoid misunderstanding, and establish mutual interest in the benchmarking exchange.

2.3 Be honest and complete with the information submitted.

2.4 Provide information in a timely manner, as outlined by the stated benchmarking schedule.

3.0 Confidentiality

3.1 Treat benchmarking interchange as confidential to the individuals and companies involved. Information must not be communicated outside the partnering organizations without the prior consent of the benchmarking partner who shared the information.

3.2 A company's participation is confidential and should not be communicated externally without their prior permission.

4.0 Use

4.1 Use information obtained through benchmarking only for purposes stated to the benchmarking partner.

4.2 The use or communication of a benchmarking partner's name with the data obtained or practices observed requires the prior permission of the benchmarking partner.

4.3 Contact lists or other contact information provided in any form may not be used for purposes other than benchmarking and networking.

5.0 Contact

5.1 Respect the corporate culture of partner companies, and work within mutually agreed procedures.

5.2 Use benchmarking contacts designated by the partner company if that is its preferred procedure.

5.3 Obtain mutual agreement with the designated benchmarking contact on any hand-off of communication or responsibility to other parties.

5.4 Obtain an individual's permission before providing his or her name in response to a contact request.

5.5 Avoid communicating a contact's name in an open forum without the contact's prior permission.

6.0 Preparation

6.1 Demonstrate commitment to the efficiency and effectiveness of benchmarking by being prepared prior to making an initial benchmarking contact.

6.2 Make the most of your benchmarking partner's time by being fully prepared for each exchange.

6.3 Help your benchmarking partners prepare by providing them with a questionnaire and agenda prior to benchmarking visits.

7.0 Completion

7.1 Follow through with each commitment made to your benchmarking partner in a timely manner.

7.2 Complete a benchmarking effort to the satisfaction of all benchmarking partners as mutually agreed.

8.0 Understanding and Action

8.1 Understand how your benchmarking partner would like to be treated.

8.2 Treat your benchmarking partner in the way that your benchmarking partner would want to be treated.

8.3 Understand how your benchmarking partner would like to have the information he or she provides handled and used. Handle and use it in that manner.

Benchmarkers:

- Know and abide by the Benchmarking Code of Conduct.
- Have basic knowledge of benchmarking and follow a benchmarking process.
- Prior to initiating contact with potential benchmarking partners, determine what to benchmark, identify key performance variables to study, recognize superior-performing companies, and complete a rigorous self-assessment.
- Have a questionnaire and interview guide developed, and share these in advance, if requested.
- Possess the authority to share and be willing to share information with benchmarking partners.
- Work through a specified host and mutually agreed upon scheduling and meeting arrangements. If it involves a face-to-face site visit, the following behaviors are encouraged:
 - Provide a meeting agenda in advance.
 - Be professional, honest, courteous, and prompt.
 - Introduce all attendees and explain why they are present.
 - Adhere to the agenda.
 - Use language that is universal, not one's own jargon.
 - Be sure that neither party is sharing proprietary information unless prior approval has been obtained by both parties, from the proper authority.
 - Share information about your own process, and, if asked, consider sharing results.
 - Offer to facilitate a future reciprocal visit.
 - Conclude meetings and visits on schedule.

- Thank your benchmarking partner for sharing its process.

BENCHMARKING PROTOCOL

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APQC'S BENCHMARKING CODE OF CONDUCT

BENCHMARKING WITH COMPETITORS

The following guidelines apply to both partners in a benchmarking encounter with competitors or potential competitors:

- In benchmarking with competitors, establish specific ground rules up front. For example, “We don’t want to talk about things that will give either of us a competitive advantage, but rather we want to see where we either can mutually improve or gain benefit.”
- Benchmarkers should check with legal counsel if any information-gathering procedure is in doubt (e.g., before contacting a direct competitor). If uncomfortable, do not proceed. Alternatively, negotiate and sign a specific non-disclosure agreement that will satisfy the attorneys representing each partner.
- Do not ask competitors for sensitive data or cause the benchmarking partner to feel it must provide data to continue the process.
- Use an ethical third party to assemble and “blind” competitive data, with inputs from legal counsel in direct competitor sharing. (Note: When cost is closely linked to price, sharing cost data can be considered to be the same as sharing price data.)
- Any information obtained from a benchmarking partner should be treated as internal, privileged communications. If “confidential” or proprietary material is to be exchanged, then a specific agreement should be executed to specify the content of the material that needs to be protected, the duration of the period of protection, the conditions for permitting access to the material, and the specific handling requirements necessary for that material.

Appendix B

Additional Framework Examples

Additional Best-Practice Framework Examples

The table below details a number of other agencies that did not participate in this benchmarking project but may be additional sources of related information.

Agency	Site Link	Overview
Crime Solutions under the Department of Justice	www.CrimeSolutions.gov	<p>The Office of Justice Program’s (OJP’s) Evidence Integration Initiative (E2I) is focused on promoting evidence-based and data-driven practices to improve the effectiveness of criminal justice, juvenile justice, and victim services in the United States. The anticipated launch date is June 2011.</p> <p>The anticipated launch date is June 2011.</p>
HHS—ACF—Child Welfare Jane Morgan Brian Deakin		<p>Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/ (Similar to W30—wide variety of resources, not restricted to evidence-based.)</p> <p>For evidence-based info: http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/practice_improvement/evidence/identifying.cfm</p> <p>Definitions of terms related to “evidence-based”: http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/practice_improvement/evidence/definitions.cfm</p> <p>The terms “evidence-based” and “evidence-informed” are defined differently in different contexts.</p> <p>Evidence-based <i>practices</i> are approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated by some form of documented scientific evidence. This includes findings established through controlled clinical studies, but other methods of establishing evidence are valid as well.</p>

Agency	Site Link	Overview
		<p>Evidence-based programs use a defined curriculum or set of services that, when implemented with fidelity as a whole, has been validated by some form of scientific evidence. Evidence-based practices and programs may be described as “supported” or “well-supported,” depending on the strength of the research design.</p> <p>Evidence-informed practices use the best available research and practice knowledge to guide program design and implementation. This informed practice allows for innovation while incorporating the lessons learned from the existing research literature. Ideally, evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices should be responsive to families’ cultural backgrounds, community values, and individual preferences.</p>
<p>FindYouthInfo under the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP)</p>	<p>http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/index.shtml</p>	<p>The FindYouthInfo Program Directory features evidence-based programs whose purpose is to prevent and/or reduce delinquency or other problem behaviors in young people (under age 18). Included programs are assessed by an external review panel, and reviews are completed by Development Services Group, Inc. In addition, new programs are added to the Program Directory through literature searches of relevant journals, electronic databases, and other evidence-based repositories.</p>
<p>International Mentoring Organization</p> <p>Best practices for organizations and individuals</p>	<p>http://mentoring-association.org/</p>	<p>Provide practices that are “proven by research and expert practitioners to be most effective, especially for programs with clear challenging goals.”</p> <p>Best-practice framework includes the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core principles on which to base mentoring practice and programs. • The best-practice questions every mentoring

Agency	Site Link	Overview
		<p>program must ask and answer in order to excel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual, foundational structures for mentoring and mentor programs. Use these to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ design the new program, ○ assess an existing program and find improvement areas, ○ plan improvements, ○ treat individuals individually, ○ make mentoring mirror the field’s key processes, and ○ do your due diligence in mentoring too—“buyer beware.”
Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE) under HHS	http://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/	HHS launched HomVEE to conduct a thorough and transparent review of the home visiting research literature and provide an assessment of the evidence of effectiveness for home visiting program models that target families with pregnant women and children from birth to age 5.
Research Connections under HHS	http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/about.jsp	Research Connections promotes high-quality research in child care and early education and the use of that research in policy making. Its vision is that children are well cared for and have rich learning experiences, and their families are supported and able to work. This Web site offers research and data resources for researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and others.
National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) under the Department of Education	http://www.nrccte.org/	NRCCTE is the primary agent for generating scientifically based knowledge, dissemination, professional development, and technical assistance to improve career and technical education (CTE) in the United States.

Agency	Site Link	Overview
Model Programs Guide (MPG) under Department of Justice	http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg	MPG is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities. The MPG database of over 200 evidence-based programs covers the entire continuum of youth services from prevention through sanctions to reentry.
ITEST Resource Center under National Science Foundation		The resource center promotes data-based decision making; is a primary resource for learning about, experiencing, and using IT in STEM initiatives (K–post–secondary school and work force development); supports ITEST Projects as they build the capacity of their participants to use technology as a tool for learning; and synthesizes, designs, and conducts research to leverage lessons learned.
Promising Practices under the Rand Corporation	http://www.promisingpractices.net/	PPN provides information on Programs that Work ; PPN also links to additional research information in all areas related to child well-being, including their physical and mental health, academic success, and economic security.
The Harvard Family Research Project	http://www.hfrp.org/about-hfrp	The project distills information learned through research and evaluation projects, and by synthesizing the work of others. It has one overarching goal: to provide practical information that will stimulate innovation and continuous improvement in policy, practice, and evaluation.
What Works—LINKS under Child Trends	http://www.childtrends.org	What Works offers a Web-based guide to effective programs that provides comprehensive information on what works and what does not work in programs for children and teens. The LINKS (Lifecourse Interventions to Nurture Kids Successfully) guide is continually updated and presents extensive knowledge about experimentally evaluated programs found to “work” to enhance children’s development in a user-friendly format.

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