

Early-Stage or Exploratory Research Checklist

Based on the Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development

This checklist is a distillation of key points from the *Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development* regarding **Early-Stage or Exploratory Research**. The *Guidelines*, developed by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation, explains those agencies' shared expectations for education research and development. This checklist, created by EvaluATE, is intended to support use of the *Guidelines*, enabling users to quickly reference those that specifically relate to Foundational Research. As such, it provides an overview and orientation to the *Guidelines*. **It does not replace the Guidelines nor does it expand or elaborate on that report's content.** The checklist's content has been extracted (usually verbatim) from the full report. All checklist users are strongly encouraged to read the complete *Guidelines*, available from http://bit.ly/nsf-ies_guide.

Checklists on the other five types of research outlined in the *Guidelines* are available from www.evaluate.org/resources/cg_checklist/.

TYPE 2: EARLY-STAGE OR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH to investigate approaches to education problems to establish the basis for design and development of new interventions or strategies and/or to provide evidence for whether an established intervention or strategy is ready to be tested in an efficacy study

Justification

Policy and/or Practical Significance

- Describe the practical education problem or issue on which the study is focused
- Provide a rationale for studying the problem
- Explain how the research will generate important knowledge to inform the development, improvement, or evaluation of education programs, policies, or practices

Theoretical and Empirical Basis

- Describe the theoretical or empirical rationale for the project, including citations of supporting evidence
- For research on existing interventions*, explain why it should be studied through early-stage or exploratory research rather than an efficacy study

Evidence

Project Outcomes

- Evidence regarding one or both of the following:
 - Malleable factors' association with education outcomes.
 - Whether malleable factors and conditions moderate and/or mediate the relationship between malleable factors and education outcomes.
- Explanation of relationship between factors and education outcomes in the form of one of the following:
 - Well-specified conceptual framework that supports a link between the malleable factors and education outcomes
 - Theoretical explanation for the factors' and conditions' moderation and/or mediation of the relationship between malleable factors and learner outcomes
- Determination based on empirical evidence and conceptual framework of whether there is a basis for pursuing a Design and Development project or an Efficacy study or whether further foundational/exploratory research is needed before proceeding to Efficacy or Effectiveness testing

Research Plan

- Define the study's hypotheses or research questions—derived from the study's theoretical and empirical justifications
- Describe the research design, demonstrating how it is appropriate for the hypotheses or research questions
- Justify the proposed context and sample for the study
- If secondary analyses are proposed*, describe data sources
- Describe data collection procedures and instruments, including evidence of and strategies for ensuring reliability and validity
- If applicable*, describe a plan to study the opportunities for interventions to address education challenges
- Describe data analysis procedures
- Describe reporting plan

External Feedback

- Subject the study to a series of external, critical reviews of its design and activities via one or more of the following strategies:
 - Peer review of the proposed project
 - Ongoing monitoring and review by the grant making agency's personnel
 - External review panels or advisory boards proposed by the project and/or the agency
 - Third-party evaluator
 - Peer review of publications and conference presentations resulting from the project

Ensure the external review is sufficiently independent and rigorous to influence the project's activities and improve the quality of its finding