EBITE RESOURCE GUIDE

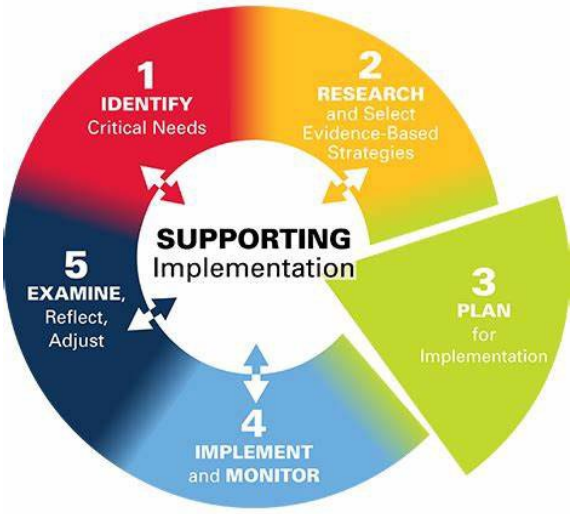
Identifying EBI Core Components: Your Context and Stakeholders

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help you consider how the core components of an EBI might (or might not) align with your context and the critical needs of your stakeholders. Also, there are some tips for searching and finding out about the core components of an EBI and tools to help conduct the fit assessment.

How to Use the Guide

The best time to use this guide is when your team has narrowed down your list of EBIs and settled on one (or maybe two) for serious consideration and are ready to determine what is needed for implementation. Read through this guide and the example presented to help you familiarize yourself with EBI core components and ways to learn about them.



It is essential that whichever EBI you choose is as aligned as possible with target needs of your stakeholders (identified during Step 1 of the Cycle of Continuous Improvement and operationalized as your SMART goal) and the parameters in your local context. Use this guide to help you remember specific issues to examine and consider as you determine the level of alignment and what would be needed for implementation of the EBI(s) you are considering.

What are Core Components of an EBI?

The core components of an EBI can be thought of as the "active ingredients" of the intervention that form the basis of how implementation of the EBI would affect the desired change. These "active ingredients" could consist of activities to be completed by target learners or others, specific directives for changing the local context, or other elements that have been determined to create change. The core components of an EBI are, in fact, how the theory of change is operationalized in practical terms.

Overall, ESSA Levels 1 and 2 EBIs might have more well-specified core components, while Levels 3 and 4 may be less specified or detailed. This distinction is important to consider because if your team has to do additional work to clarify or flesh out the EBI's core components, you will need to consider if you have the time and other resources needed to do this work.

Examples of EBI Core Components

As an example, let's examine the core components of two EBIs: Check & Connect and Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS).

Check & Connect. For many EBIs catalogued in the What Works Clearinghouse, such as Check & Connect, we find that the simplest way to learn about the core components is to find the EBIs Evidence Snapshot (see Figure 1). Upon searching the WWC, the Evidence Snapshot shows us that the EBI is rated in the WWC as ESSA Level 3 and gives us a little more detail about if this EBI is worth consideration. Let's say we determine it is and we want to learn more. To delve deeper, we download the Intervention Report.

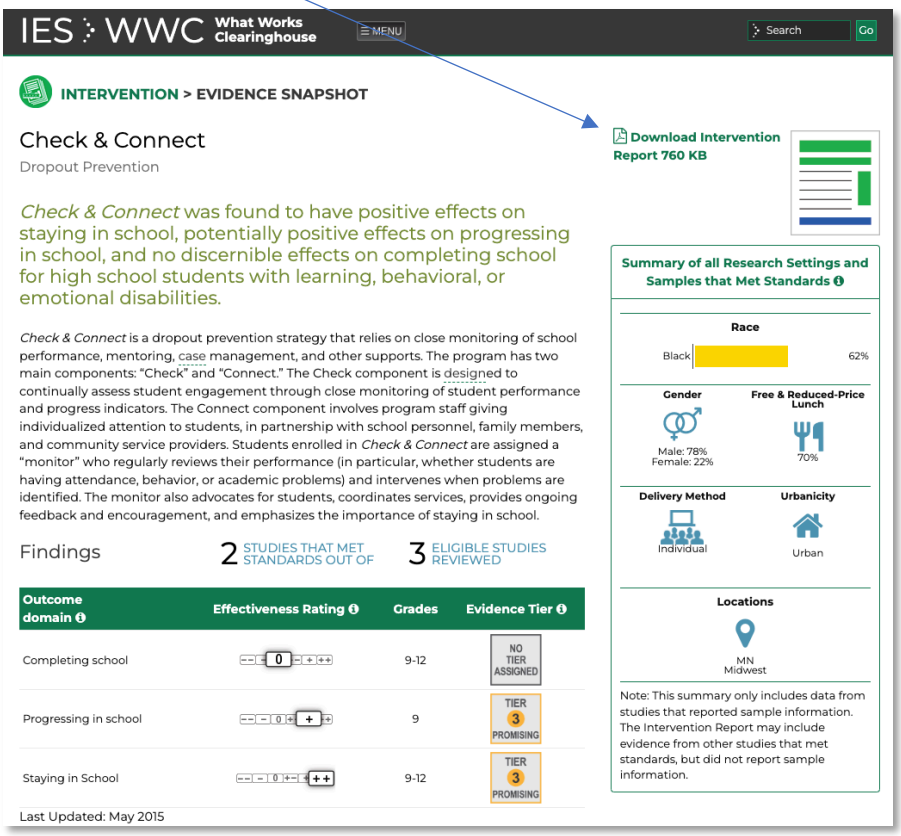
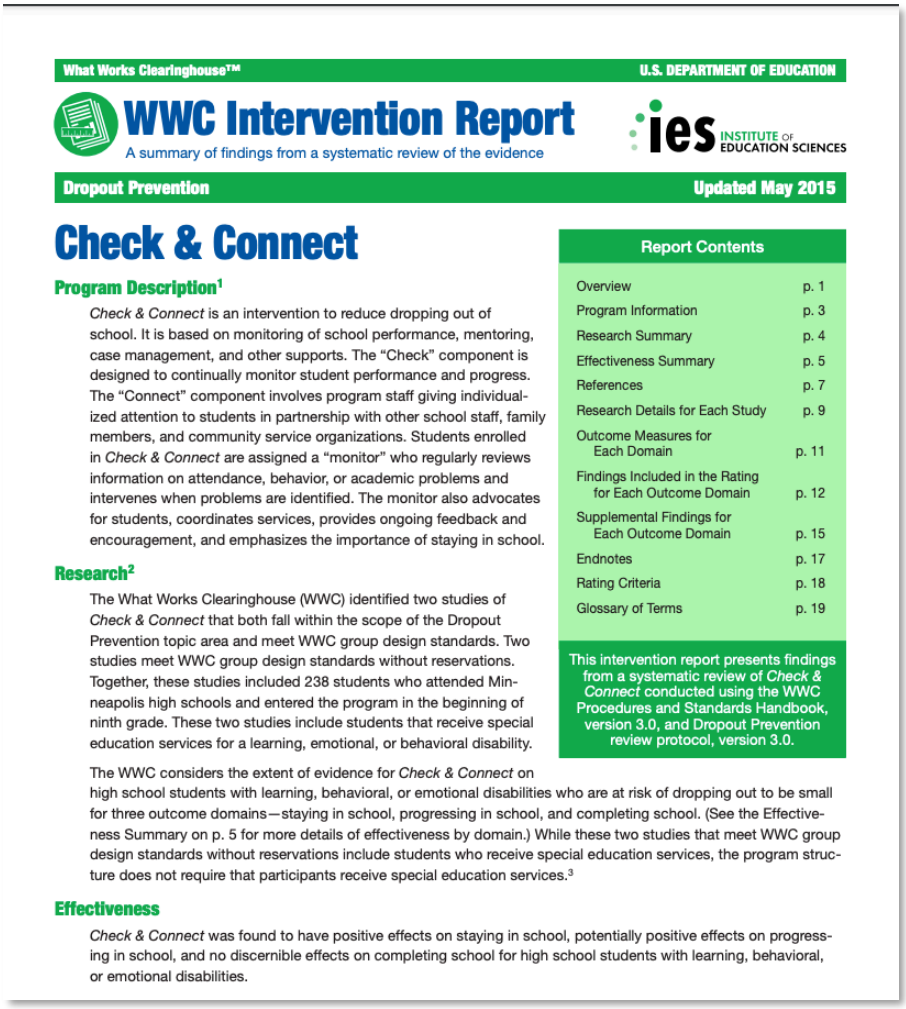


Figure 1. Screenshot of Check & Connect entry in the WWC

Upon reading the Intervention Report, we find a description, summary of research evidence, and effectiveness information right on pages 1-2 (see Figure 2). On page 3, under Program Details, is a description of the program components. This EBI has two major components: The Check component, continuous monitoring of students, and the Connect component, providing individual attention to students. We can read further to determine the specific details of how these two components should be implemented. There is also cost information and contact information. All members of your team should read through the Intervention Report in its entirety. The first issue to examine is if the EBI would help meet the SMART goal your team has decided on. If so, then keep moving forward with determining alignment and fit.



What Works Clearinghouse™ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

WWC Intervention Report
A summary of findings from a systematic review of the evidence

ies INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

Dropout Prevention Updated May 2015

Check & Connect

Program Description[1]

Check & Connect is an intervention to reduce dropping out of school. It is based on monitoring of school performance, mentoring, case management, and other supports. The "Check" component is designed to continually monitor student performance and progress. The "Connect" component involves program staff giving individualized attention to students in partnership with other school staff, family members, and community service organizations. Students enrolled in *Check & Connect* are assigned a "monitor" who regularly reviews information on attendance, behavior, or academic problems and intervenes when problems are identified. The monitor also advocates for students, coordinates services, provides ongoing feedback and encouragement, and emphasizes the importance of staying in school.

Research[2]

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) identified two studies of *Check & Connect* that both fall within the scope of the Dropout Prevention topic area and meet WWC group design standards. Two studies meet WWC group design standards without reservations. Together, these studies included 238 students who attended Minneapolis high schools and entered the program in the beginning of ninth grade. These two studies include students that receive special education services for a learning, emotional, or behavioral disability.

The WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Check & Connect* on high school students with learning, behavioral, or emotional disabilities who are at risk of dropping out to be small for three outcome domains—staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school. (See the Effectiveness Summary on p. 5 for more details of effectiveness by domain.) While these two studies that meet WWC group design standards without reservations include students who receive special education services, the program structure does not require that participants receive special education services.[3]

Effectiveness

Check & Connect was found to have positive effects on staying in school, potentially positive effects on progressing in school, and no discernible effects on completing school for high school students with learning, behavioral, or emotional disabilities.

Report Contents

This intervention report presents findings from a systematic review of *Check & Connect* conducted using the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, version 3.0, and Dropout Prevention review protocol, version 3.0.

Figure 2. Screenshot of Check & Connect Intervention Report

Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS). This example was chosen to show that not every EBI we may want to learn about will have an easily accessible WWC intervention report that makes it easy for us. Upon searching the WWC, we find that the EWIMS does not seem to have an Evidence Snapshot page or any Intervention Report (see Figure 3). It only has Reviews of Individual Studies, from which you can examine the research evidence summaries and learn more about the EBI via that information. It may be a little more difficult to get to its core components using this approach, so we move to a different database, Evidence for ESSA. Upon searching, we found this information from the Program Description (see Figure 4):

> *The Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS) is a systematic approach used by dedicated teams of school staff to identify students at risk of not graduating on time, assign students to interventions, and monitor their progress. The indicators used to identify students at risk are engagement (attendance), behavior (suspension), and course performance (grades and credits). The EWIMS model is intended to help schools efficiently use data to both identify the at-risk population and provide targeted support, strengthening student persistence and progress in school and ultimately improving on-time graduation rates.*

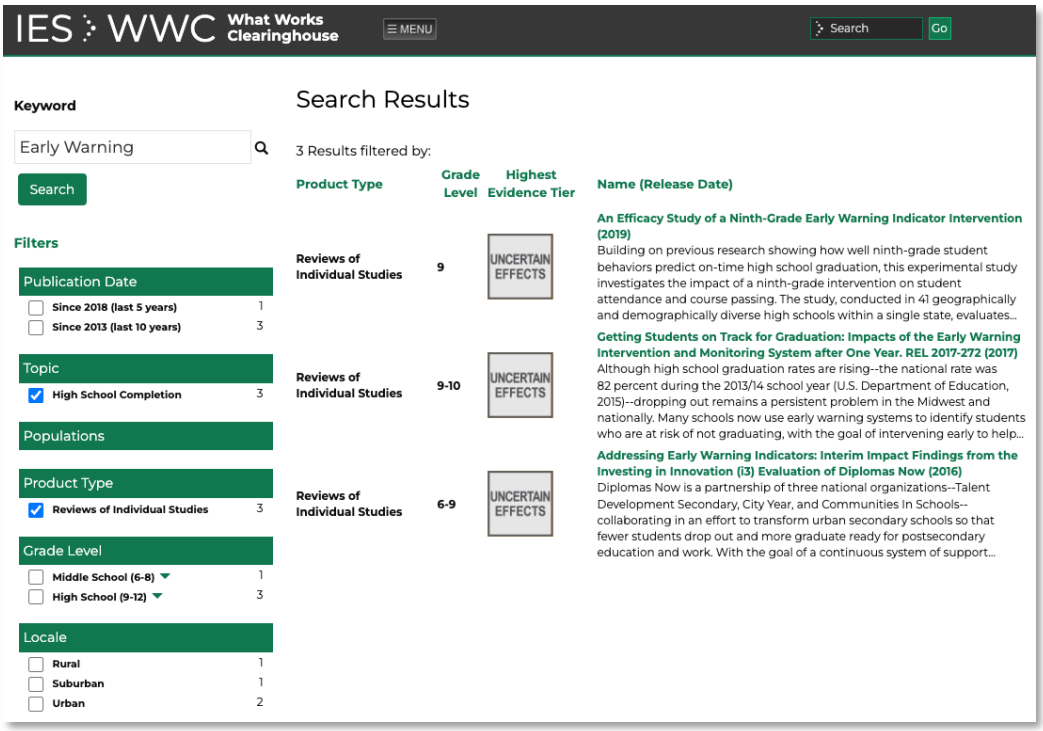


Figure 3. Screenshot of WWC search results for Early Warning Systems

We then click on the weblink under "Provider" in the shaded box (upper right corner) to investigate further. There we find contact information for the researchers at the American Institutes for Research as well as links to additional resources about how the providers help with implementation. This is helpful, but we still need more information on the core components for Early Warning Systems, so we will go back to the WWC's general search mechanism (see Figure 5) to see what is available. In the search box, we type "EWIMS core components" and click "Go" to search. *NOTE: When using a general search box, it can help to try using different queries to search, such as "Early Warning System core components" to see if you get different results.*

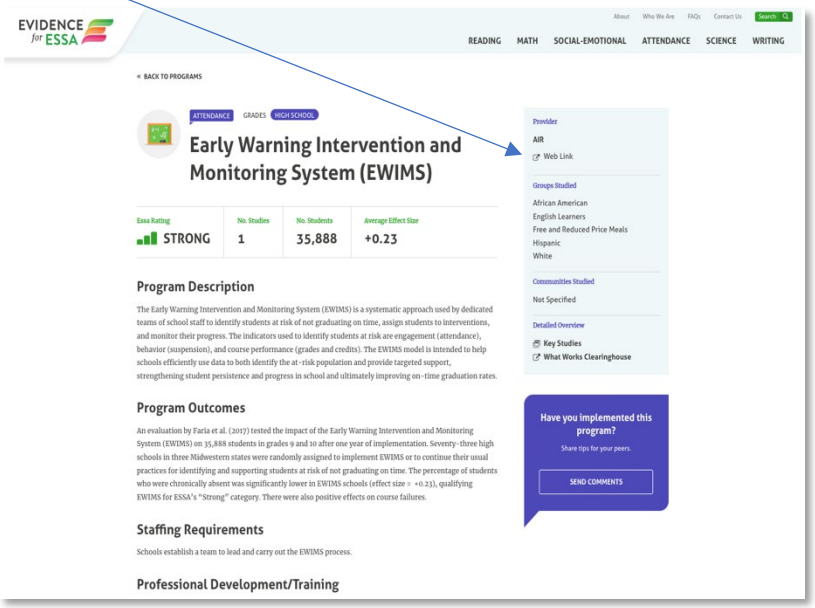


Figure 4. Screenshot of EWIS entry in Evidence for ESSA database

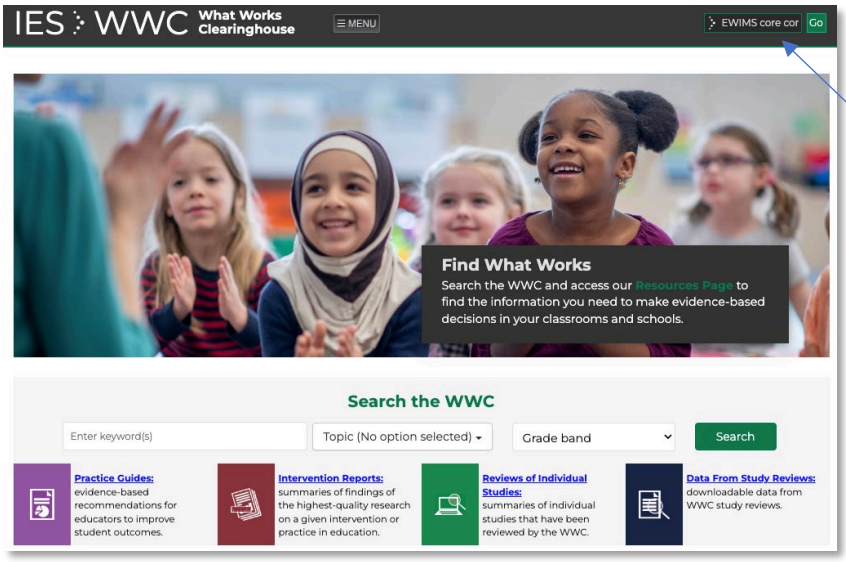


Figure 5. Screenshot of WWC webpage to show general search mechanism

Results from these searches (see Figure 6) are mixed, but there are relevant hits in the lists. There is one that has "core components" in the title—a great place to start! The link takes us to as summary guide, A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Early Warning Systems—which lists five components and links to additional info. If this EBI aligns to our SMART goal, then our team can read further, discuss, and start to determine alignment and fit to our local context.

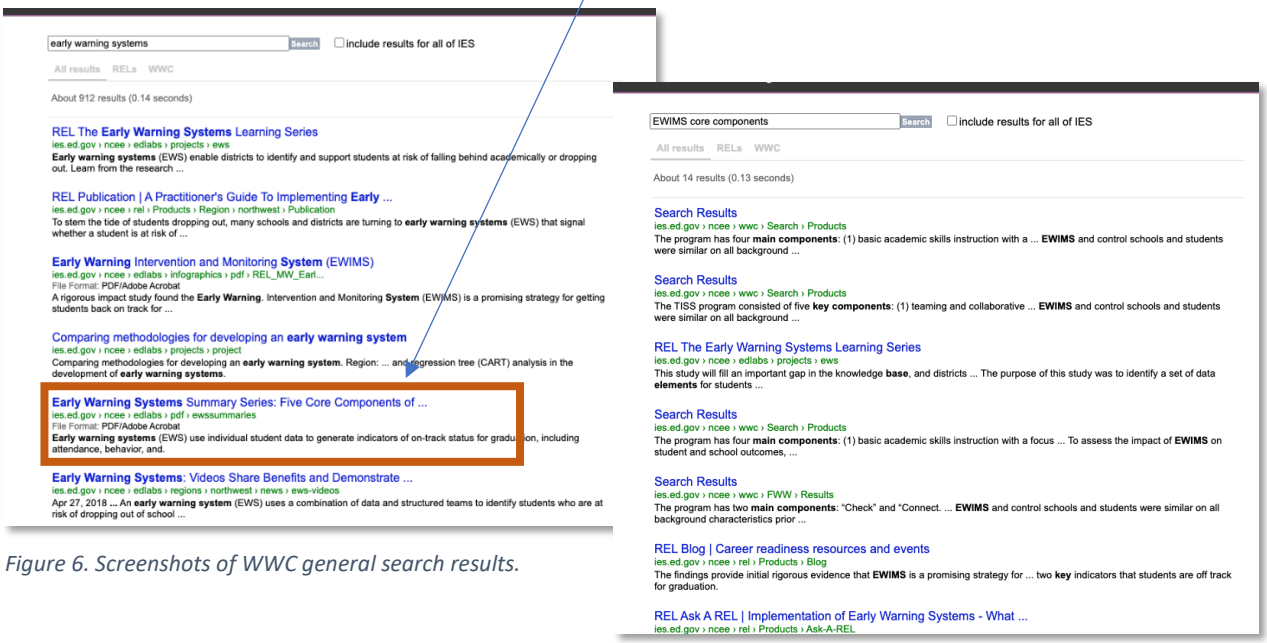


Figure 6. Screenshots of WWC general search results.

Considering Stakeholder Needs and Local Context

To fully consider an EBI's core components and determine its fit, your team must have in-depth understanding of what is required by each EBI under consideration (expected elements of the context, stakeholder traits, time, funding, etc). You will also need a deep understanding the elements of your local context and traits of stakeholders involved.

It is quite a bit to consider when comparing two or more EBIs, so it can help to have a tool to guide you through the process. Fortunately, WestEd has an excellent collection of tools to help teams with EBI selection and implementation. For this part of the process, Tool 6, Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions (opens in a fillable MS Word document), is especially helpful. This tool has step-by-step instructions that are simply explained and presented, so just download the tool, have all members of your team read through it, and then start following the steps.

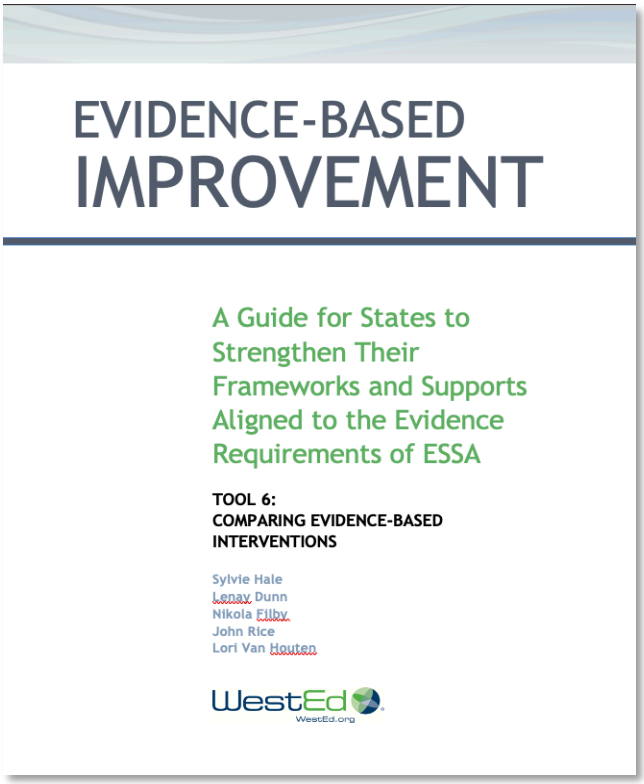


Figure 7. Screenshot of WestEd Tool 6.

Once you have decided on the EBI you want to implement, it can help to use a deep analysis tool to comprehensively assess fit and alignment to context. This is such as important step; we suggest that teams should conduct this deep assessment of fit once a single EBI has been selected and before implementation of it begins.

A helpful tool for the team to use for this process is the NIRN Hexagon Discussion Analysis Tool (see Figure 8). Notice the level of detail provided in the Hexagon Analysis model—it covers all the bases necessary for a comprehensive assessment of fit and alignment to local context. The NIRN Hexagon tool has guiding questions for each category to help your team assess all the key issues to examine fit to local context.

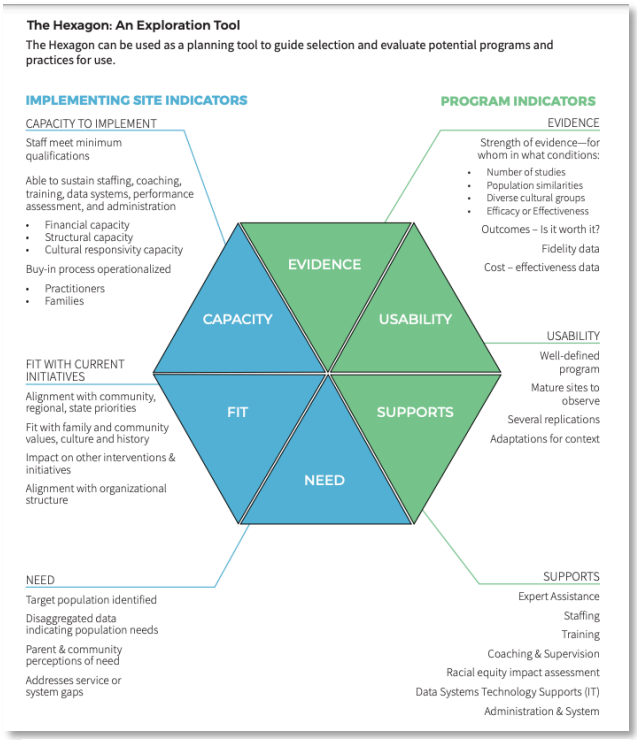


Figure 8. Screenshot of p. 2 of the NIRN Hexagon Discussion Analysis Tool.

Summary

Convening a dedicated and diverse team and using a strategy and tools such as those presented in this guide should set you on an effective path to identifying EBI components and assessing the appropriateness of the EBI to your local context and stakeholder needs. Please peruse the resources below for additional guidance.

Resources

In addition to the link referenced in this guide, feel free to peruse these additional resources that may help you understand more about exploring EBIs and assessing fit to local context.

Frazelle, S. & Nagel, A (2015). *A practitioner's guide to implementing early warning systems*. REL Northwest. Accessible: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2015056.pdf - *Sample resource based on an example EBI referenced in this guide.*

REL Network (2016). *EWS 101: Introduction to the five core components of early warning systems.* REL Network Learning Series on Early Warning Systems. Accessible: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/pdf/EWSWebinar101.pdf - *Sample resource based on an example EBI referenced in this guide.*

WestEd (2020). Spotlight: Evidence and Research Use in Education Policy and Practice. Accessible: https://www.wested.org/wested-bulletin/news/evidence-research-education-policy-practice/ - *A WestEd brief that contains a discussion of the role of evidence in education practice and links to additional resources (i.e., a video on implementing ESSA standards, a REL tool with consideration for assessing EBI fit to local contexts, and a link to the full set of WestEd tools for evidence-based improvement.*

Ganimian, A.J., Vegas, E. & Hess, F.M. (2020). *Realizing the promise: How can technology improve learning for all?* Brookings Report. Accessible: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/realizing-the-promise-how-can-education-technology-improve-learning-for-all/ - *A web-based report created by Brookings for the Center for Universal Education that focuses on the use of technology to help improve learning. Pay particular attention to the pages, "Framework" and "Diagnosis" for tips on how to assess the fit of technology tools and digital interventions for a local context.*