

Observing Evidence that DEMONSTRATES A RATIONALE

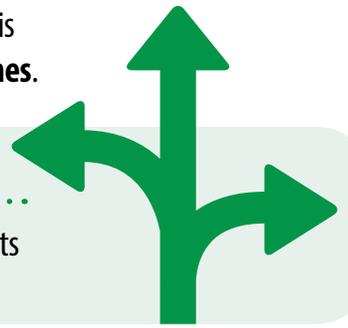
Part of an infographic series on research study design for educators

What does it mean for a program or policy to demonstrate a rationale?

“Demonstrates a rationale” means a key component of the program or policy's **theory of action** is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest it is **likely** to improve **relevant outcomes**.

Theory of action

A theory of action describes the logical relationships between the program or policy components and the desired outcomes.



There are three common ways a study can demonstrate a rationale.



The findings are not statistically significant.

Example: A reading intervention may appear to improve the outcome of interest, but shows a small effect size due to a small sample or other factor.



The findings focus on different, but related outcomes.

Example: You wish to improve absenteeism, but the program you find increases student engagement. Because engagement and absenteeism are theoretically related, increasing one, may help increase the other.



The study examined only one aspect of the intervention or treatment.

Example: You want to increase reading comprehension, but the program you are interested in focuses on word recognition. Because word recognition is a component of the comprehension, you theorize the program may benefit your students.

Other considerations



Logic models

Logic models can help you think through your theory of action to ensure you have a strong rationale. A well-designed logic model will identify short-, medium-, and long-term goals related to the success of your project implementation. The REL Northeast and Islands has developed a logic model toolkit and REL Pacific has created an Education Logic Model (ELM) Application. Both can help you construct a logic model.

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=401>

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/elm.asp>



Collect and report

Educators conducting projects that demonstrate a rationale are encouraged to collect their data and report their findings in an effort to increase practitioner knowledge.

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Explore evidence-based practice guides, individual studies, and intervention reports at **The What Works Clearinghouse**.



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