



# Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Colorado: A 5-Year Vision

## Why a 5-year Vision is Needed

Evidence-Based Decision-Making is critical to driving smart state investments, continuous quality improvement, innovation, and outcomes. By making explicit Colorado’s shared understanding of evidence-based decision-making and our approach to it, we can align roles and responsibilities, accelerate progress, and build on the good work that has come before.

## What is Evidence-Based Decision-Making?

Evidence-Based Decision-Making (EBDM) is the intersection of the best available research evidence, decision-makers’ expertise, and community needs and context. EBDM recognizes that research evidence is not the only contributing factor to policy and budget decisions. Other equally important contextual factors include resourcing, cultural values, community voice, and feasibility of implementation.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making is not the same thing as evidence-based practice (EBP). EBDM is a more comprehensive, flexible approach to building and using research evidence across a wide variety of decision-making use cases, from operational to strategic. In contrast, EBP designations are given as a result of a rigorous review of existing literature on a replicable program or intervention. EBPs are a use case within EBDM. EBDM is about the larger culture and structure — it is the waters we swim in to drive sustained change.



## What Does a Successful EBDM Culture Look Like?

It is important to articulate how we will know when we have achieved a successful EBDM culture. By defining key features of a successful EBDM culture, we can build capacity for effective implementation, measure progress over time, invest resources in areas that are proving difficult, and provide the support necessary for every partner to meaningfully contribute.

### Five Defining Features of an EBDM Culture

- 1 Decision-makers, agency leadership, and staff have a **common understanding** of what EBDM is and how to achieve it.
- 2 Decision-makers, agency leadership, and staff commit to and **consistently participate in** agreed-upon EBDM strategies, including evidence-building, consistent with their role.
- 3 Decision-makers, agency leadership, and staff have the **resources, skills, and time** necessary to acquire the best available evidence, make meaning of it, and apply it to the decision-making context.
- 4 Use of research evidence in decision-making is **systemic and robust** enough to withstand changes in decision-makers, agency leadership, and staff.
- 5 Decision-makers, agency leadership, and staff **engage in an iterative process of using existing research evidence and generating new research evidence**, including ongoing measurement of outcomes and revisiting decisions periodically in light of new evidence.

## Why Using the *Best Available Evidence* is Critical to Success

When making decisions, it is critical that the best available evidence be applied. Using the *best available evidence* can help address challenges to successful evidence-based decision-making. For example, cherry picking data to back up an already made decision can introduce bias and limit the potential for data to drive outcomes. Using a best available evidence approach also helps inform priorities for evidence-building. For example, synthesizing the best available evidence can help identify where a practice or policy is at in the [Steps to Building Evidence](#). Once known, more intentional decisions around future evidence use and evaluation can be made.

## Defining “Best Available Evidence”

“Best available evidence” refers to the weight of the research evidence from the most rigorous studies available about a practice or policy. “Research evidence” refers to empirical findings generated from the systematic and rigorous application of methods and analyses to help answer a question, hypothesis, or topical investigation. The best available evidence includes both number-based (quantitative) and narrative-based (qualitative) data.

## How a Collaborative Approach will help Colorado Achieve an EBDM Culture

Government and non-governmental partners alike have a unique role to play in creating—and sustaining—a successful EBDM culture. By aligning roles and responsibilities, we can better answer the question “what does my piece of the puzzle look like?” and together, drive collective action that benefits the lives of Coloradans.



## Learn More! Become Involved!

To learn more about this vision or find out how you and your agency can be part of co-developing an EBDM culture, contact [Courtney@coloradolab.org](mailto:Courtney@coloradolab.org)

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