

Frequently Asked Questions

FY28 Evidence-Based Budgeting

To best support the state in meeting state fiscal policy objectives, Tennessee uses evidence-based budgeting (EBB), which facilitates the use of data and evidence to inform funding decisions in a way that improves outcomes. The goal is to identify and prioritize the most effective, evidence-based programs to inform decision making, and to increase transparency during the budgeting process using a common language and procedure across the enterprise.

The FY28 cost increase request and reduction forms were emailed to fiscal officers along with instructions from the State Budget Office. OEI has additional resources available on their [evidence-based budgeting page](#).

All forms are due Friday, Sept. 18, 2026.

Have an idea of what you're looking for? Use these quick links to jump to the section you need:

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[New/Pilot Program Requests](#) | [Contact Info](#)

General

1. Will there be exceptions to any form requirements?

No. To ensure the budget team and governor's office have all the information they need to make informed decisions, the requirements outlined in the EBB forms and in the trainings are expected for FY28.

2. Do I need to submit a reduction form for all reductions this year?

Yes. Just like cost increase proposals, all reduction proposals entered into Sherpa **must** have a corresponding reduction form. This includes both operational reductions and programmatic reductions.

3. Have changes been made to the form since last year?

Yes. A few minor changes have been made:

- The **previous base funding** table has been replaced with the question: "Is there funding in your base budget for this item? If so, how much? (Expenditures & Revenue Source)".
- A new row in the positions table asks for: "Number of current vacancies for the same job titles being requested".
- The needs assessment question has been split (3a & 3b), with an opportunity to provide supporting data for your request (e.g. tables, charts, graphs). For requests related to inventoried programs, there's no need to duplicate data you already report for programs. If there is additional data that might help justify an increase request, please provide it here.

Identifying Programs

4. How do I decide whether a request or reduction is “programmatic”?

If a **systematic activity has participants or recipients** and has its own name, it is likely a program. A program might be a *service, intervention, or practice*. We consider most other requests operational.

Programmatic	Operational
• Program, service, intervention, or support • Disbursed grant, fund, or scholarship • Direct benefit to individual or family who meet qualifications at a set frequency (e.g., SNAP, WIC) • Education, communication, or marketing campaign overseen by the agency (e.g., training, class, awareness campaign) • <i>Requests/reductions for positions that manage or are directly tied to a program</i>	• Provider rate increases • Regulatory functions • Most internal operations • IT functions/projects • Advisory committees • Facility or building establishment, maintenance, or security • Requests/reductions for positions that serve general department management or operations
Examples • Tennessee Early Intervention System • Safe Baby Court • Tennessee Promise • Tobacco Quit Line • Launch TN • SNAP • ACES grants • Lottery scholarship • Major tourism or safety awareness campaign	Examples • Rate increase for direct support individuals • Professional licensure, permits • Legal, budget, purchasing, procurement • Warehousing/logistics • Accreditation • Oversight • General communications • IT improvement • Boards, advisory councils, committees, task forces • Internal staff training • Building safety

5. What type of program do you mean? Is it primarily social service programs?

There are **several types** of programs, not just social services. If a group of Tennesseans is being served, where some impact is expected as a result of that service, this should be considered a program. In some cases, state employees or future employees might be that group, such as statewide efforts led by DOHR. In other cases, counties or other localities might be that group, for programs related to economic & community development, for example. There may also be programs in a non-social service department that are social service programs, such as educational efforts related to the department’s work (this would be specific training efforts or classes, not general engagement strategies of the department). **Please contact the OEI team if you are unsure whether a request is programmatic.**

Evidence & Impact Information

6. We are requesting an increase (or proposing a reduction) for a program that is already in OEI's [program inventory](#). Since OEI has our if/then statement, program data, and evaluations, do I still have to provide that information?

No. EBB forms do not require this information **for inventoried programs**. In the first section of the form, please mark “Yes,” the request is programmatic, “Yes” the program is listed in the inventory, and provide the “Program Name” from the inventory.

Fiscal officers should **consult with program teams** to answer key questions—in particular, questions 3 and 4. You're welcome to include additional data not in the inventory in response to question 3b.

7. We have a request or reduction that is for an *existing* program that is *not* in OEI's program inventory. Do we need to provide additional information?

Please provide relevant data and research to support the request in questions 3b and 4. OEI may follow up with fiscal officers for additional information. If this is necessary, someone from OEI will reach out promptly.

New Pilot/Program Requests

8. We are proposing a new/pilot program, so it is not in the program inventory. Do we need to provide additional evidence information?

Make sure all questions in the EBB form are answered thoroughly. Pay close attention to the response in question 4, which should include metrics the department plans to track, a **logic model** statement (if/then statement), and any existing **rigorous evidence** related to the proposed program. If there is a detailed evaluation plan, please describe that in question 4. Guidance on logic models and rigorous evidence is available on [OEI's Evidence Framework & Clearinghouses](#) webpage. If more information is needed related to your submission, someone from OEI will reach out promptly.

9. How can I find rigorous evaluations or evidence for a program?

We suggest starting with the [Results First](#) clearinghouse database. This database combines evidence from several clearinghouses in the social service areas. The [Washington State Institute for Public Policy \(WSIPP\)](#) also compiles research in various social and human service areas and contains added benefit-cost analyses and meta-analyses. Because many states offer similar services, consulting other states' inventories like [Minnesota's](#) can also be useful. See the [Evidence-Based Clearinghouses](#) document for a list of other clearinghouses to try.

Some subject areas may not have these resources, such as emergency management, military, revenue, financial services, etc. These are areas where, if the department is proposing a new program, we don't necessarily expect to see rigorous evidence. However, if you are aware of research that applies to the program, please include it. If you would like a tutorial on how to use the resources above, please reach out to the OEI team.

Contact Information & Additional Resources

10. I still have questions or need more support. Who can I contact?

OEI's [evidence-based budgeting page](#) contains additional resources like more information on the evidence framework and the slide deck from the live training.

You can contact the OEI team at OEI.Questions@tn.gov, or email OEI's evidence coordinators directly at Ayron.Hall@tn.gov or Amanda.K.Armstrong@tn.gov. To contact the appropriate budget team member, search for your area on the [budget agency assignments](#) page.