

Using the New Pay for Success Project Assessment Tool

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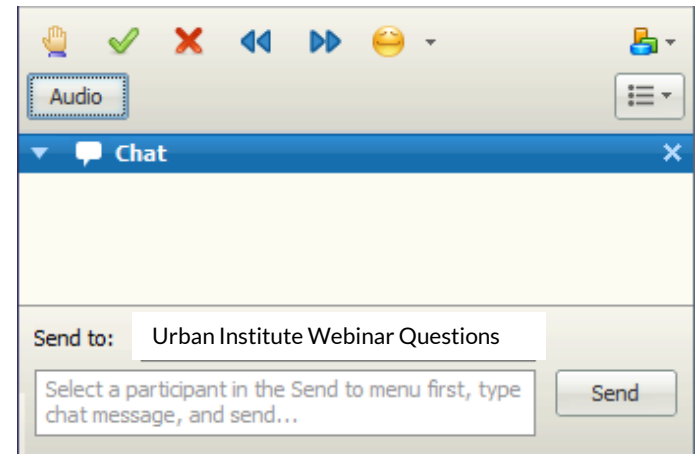
Pay for Success Initiative at the Urban Institute
pfs.urban.org

We'll get started shortly!



Webinar Housekeeping


- ❑ All participants are muted
- ❑ Type your **questions** into the chat box to Webinar Questions



- ❑ Webinar is being recorded.
- ❑ Slides will be sent out after the webcast.



Urban Institute's Pay for Success Initiative

- Collaborate to improve transactions based on **rigorous research**
 - Help ensure programs are **evaluated accurately**
 - Develop **toolkits and templates** for others to follow
 - Provide **training and technical assistance**
 - Share **lessons learned**
 - Leverage the **breadth and depth of the Urban Institute**
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**Project
Assessment
Tool**

What is the Project Assessment Tool?





Designed to help users answer a fundamental question:

What makes a strong PFS project?

Who is the Project Assessment Tool for?





Government officials and advisors, public agency leadership, program managers, service providers, and others who are interested in learning whether PFS might work for their community.



When should I use the Project Assessment Tool?





The Project Assessment Tool can be used at different stages of project development:







-  **Early stages**
-  **Mid-project development**
-  **Late stage projects**



How do I use the project assessment tool?



Structure of the Project Assessment Tool

	SECTION ONE	PROBLEM DEFINITION
	SECTION TWO	PROGRAM STRENGTH
	SECTION THREE	PROVIDER STRENGTH
	SECTION FOUR	PUBLIC SYSTEM PARTNERS AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE
	SECTION FIVE	PROJECT ALIGNMENT
	SECTION SIX	PROJECT EVALUATION

Scoring the Project Assessment Tool

- The complete assessment has a total score of **70 possible points**,
- Answers that **receive negative points** indicate areas of **extreme importance**.
- Even a very strong score on the assessment **does not guarantee success** in PFS.



SECTION ONE

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Section One: Problem Definition

- At the start of a project, it is important to clearly **define the nature of the problem, the target population, and the intended outcomes.**



Section One: Problem Definition

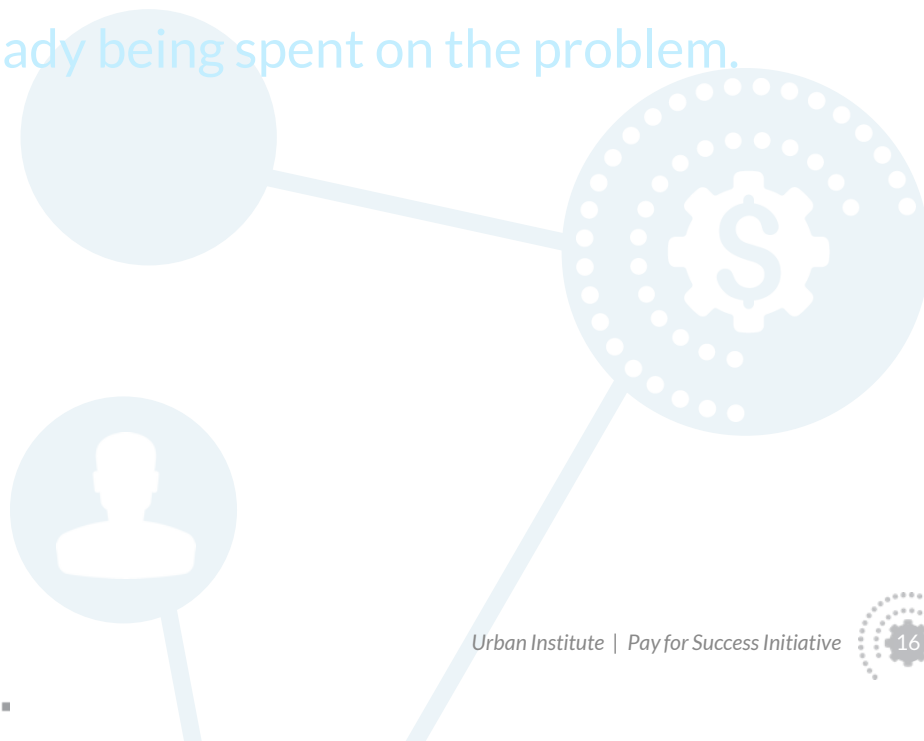
1. Using data to identify an issue
2. Using data to identify a target population
3. Setting preliminary target outcomes
4. Assessing how much is already being spent on the problem.





Section One: Problem Definition

1. Using data to identify an issue
- 2. Using data to identify a target population**
3. Setting preliminary target outcomes
4. Assessing how much is already being spent on the problem.



Example: Denver Social Impact Bond Program

KEY AREA	QUESTION	SCORING GUIDE
2 Using data to identify a target population	Have stakeholders strategically reviewed local data to identify a clear target population?	3 – Yes, a target population has been identified after a strategic review of local data. 1 – Yes, a target population has been identified but not based on local data. 0 – No, a target population has not been identified yet.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Although some problems affect the entire populace equally, many do not. Subpopulations may be at greater risk for poor outcomes. Focusing on a specific population for the purposes of the PFS project, and identifying this population after consulting local data, is important for reaching those most in need and for designing a program tailored to their unique characteristics. Note that data-sharing agreements are extremely important to ensure that you are able to access confidential data that is necessary for the project.



SECTION TWO

PROGRAM STRENGTH

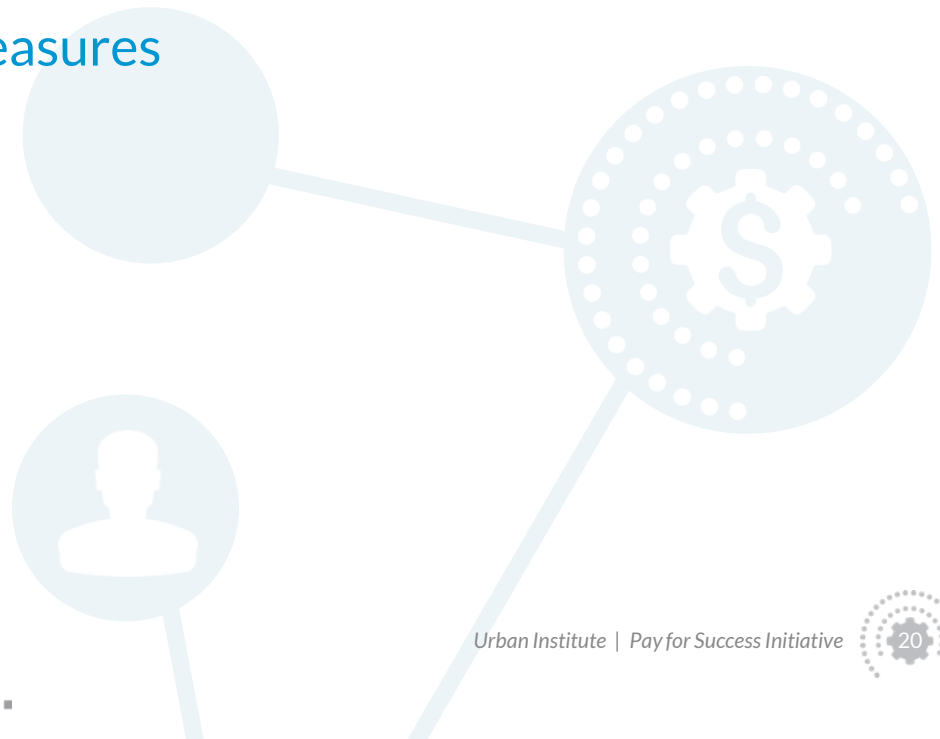
Section Two: Program Strength

- PFS projects implement a **program designed to measurably improve outcomes for a specific population** using evidence-based approaches.



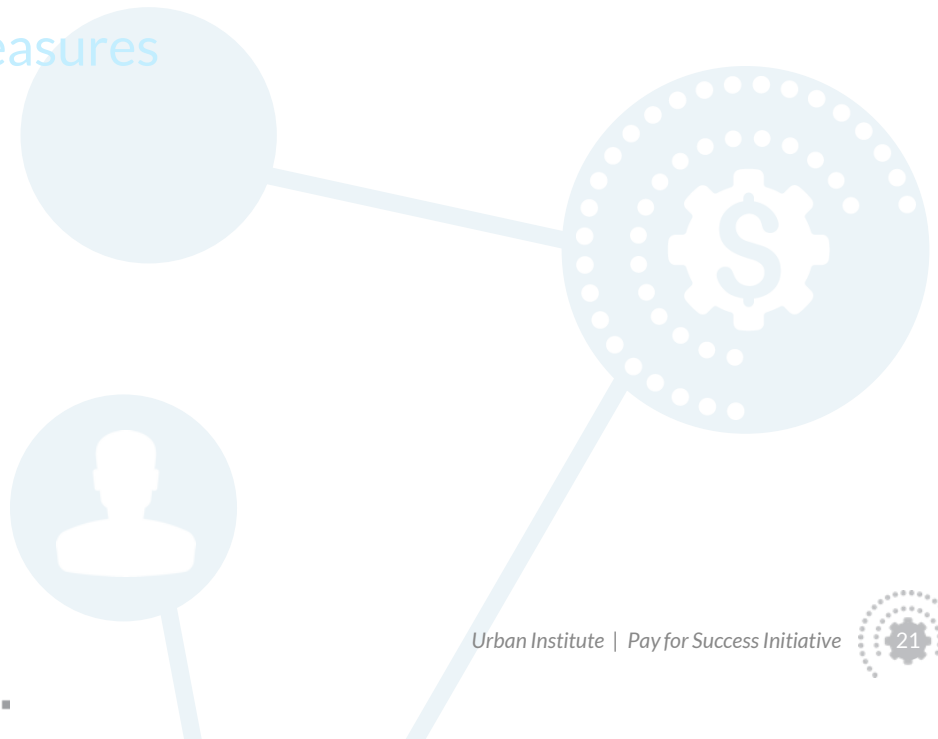
Section Two: Program Strength

1. Clear theory of change
2. History of rigorous evaluation and positive impact
3. Program cost-benefit analysis
4. Implementation fidelity measures



Section Two: Program Strength

1. Clear theory of change
2. **History of rigorous evaluation and positive impact**
3. Program cost-benefit analysis
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Example: South Carolina Nurse-Family Partnership

KEY AREA	QUESTION	SCORING GUIDE
<p>2</p> <p>History of rigorous evaluation and positive impact</p>	<p>Has the intervention undergone at least one independent, rigorous impact or outcome evaluation?</p>	<p>3 - Multiple rigorous independent evaluations have been conducted on the intervention with, on balance, significant positive intended outcomes.</p> <p>2 - One prior rigorous independent evaluation of the program has been conducted with, on balance, statistically significant positive intended outcomes.</p> <p>0 - No past high-quality independent evaluations have been conducted of the program's outcomes.</p> <p>-2 - Existing evidence suggests the program has, on balance, null outcomes (i.e., no impact either way).</p> <p>-8 - Existing evidence suggests the program has generally negative outcomes.</p>

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

A history of rigorous past research evaluating a program's outcomes is known as its evidence base. This provides important information about the program's strength and effectiveness (see [From Evidence to Outcomes: Using Evidence to Inform Pay for Success Project Design](#), by Milner and Eldridge). A rigorous/strong evaluation is determined by a number of factors, including the type of research design, the size of the sample, the selection of an appropriate comparison group, the use of suitable outcome measures, etc. For more details on what is meant by a rigorous evaluation, see [An Introduction to Evaluation Designs in Pay for Success Projects](#), by Walsh and colleagues. Evidence of positive impact shows a plausibly causal and statistically significant link between the program and intended outcomes.



SECTION THREE

PROVIDER STRENGTH

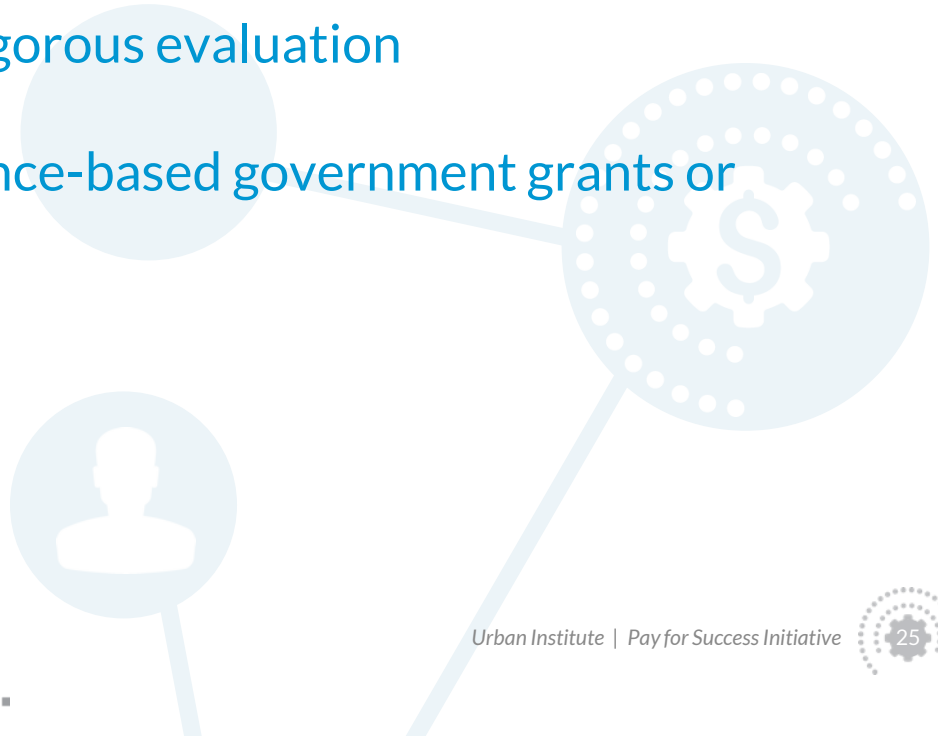
Section Three: Provider Strength

- Every PFS project includes a contract with a service provider, **responsible for implementing the PFS-funded program.**
- Providers should be involved at key stages of PFS project design, negotiation, implementation, and evaluation.



Section Three: Provider Strength

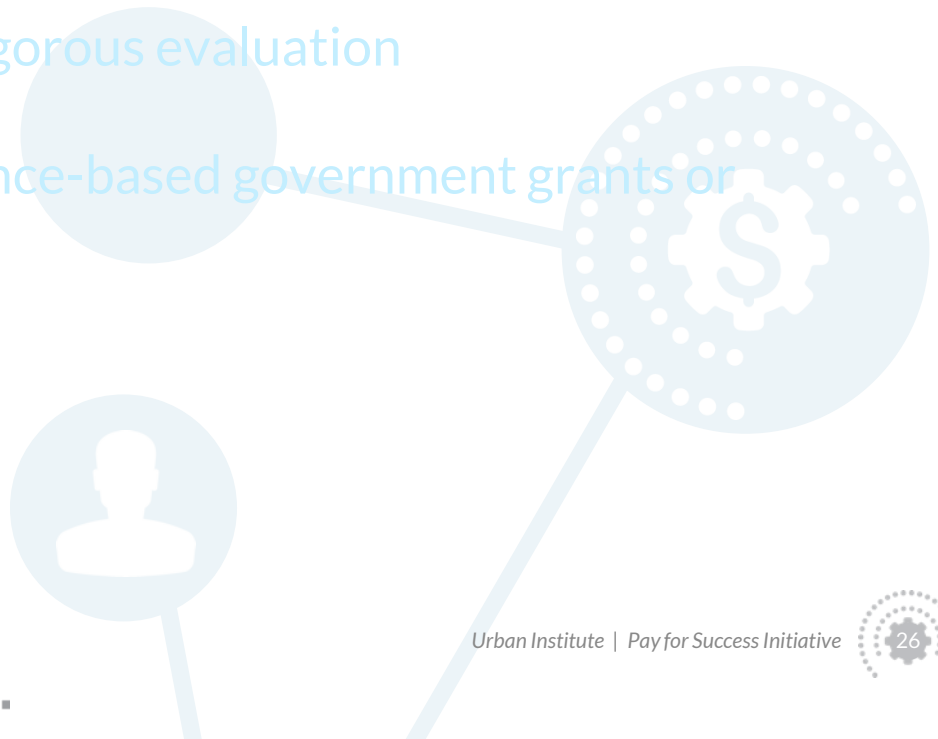
1. Leadership commitment
2. Strong program delivery
3. Performance management of outputs
4. Willingness to engage in rigorous evaluation
5. Experience with performance-based government grants or contracts





Section Three: Provider Strength

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2. Strong program delivery
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KEY AREA	QUESTION	SCORING GUIDE
3 Performance management of outputs	Does the provider have the systems and capacity to collect and analyze data on the delivery of programs and services? Do they have a history of using data to resolve program issues?	2 – The provider has systems and capacity to collect and analyze data on program delivery. 0 – The provider does not have systems or capacity to collect or analyze data on program delivery.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Data are extremely important to PFS programs at multiple stages, including performance management and program evaluation. Collecting and analyzing program data helps providers deliver quality services and ensure implementation fidelity.



SECTION FOUR

PUBLIC SYSTEM PARTNERS AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Section Four: Public System Partners and Political Landscape

- Both political leadership and agency leadership have been important to moving PFS projects forward in different ways.



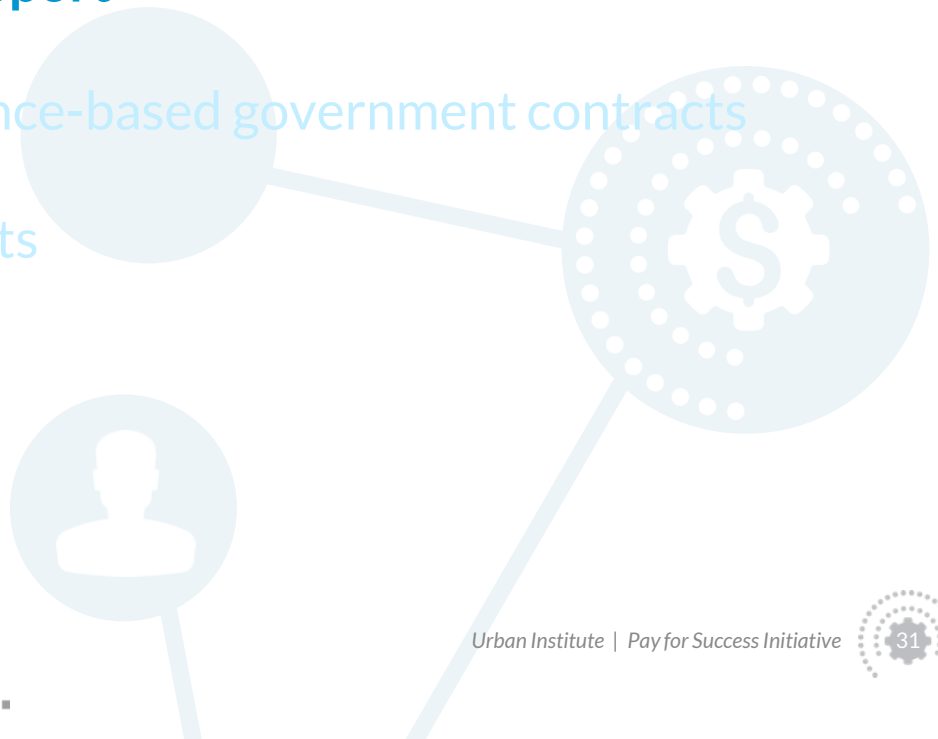
Section Four: Public System Partners and Political Landscape

1. Commitment from political and departmental leadership in the project
2. Staff capacity and commitment
3. Sustained government support
4. Experience with performance-based government contracts
5. Ensuring outcome payments



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KEY AREA	QUESTION	SCORING GUIDE
3 Sustained government support	Is there reason to expect sustained government leadership and support for the project?	1 – There are indications that the primary political champion for the project (typically the executive) will retain their office and political priorities for the medium term (2+ years). 0 – No, it's either unclear or there is reason to believe that the current executive support may waver in the short to medium term (e.g., incumbent is term limited and there is a new election the following year).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Commitments made by one administration may not be honored by a future administration or even the same one, if political priorities change. Providing reasonable assurance that support will not decrease is important to secure investors.



SECTION FIVE

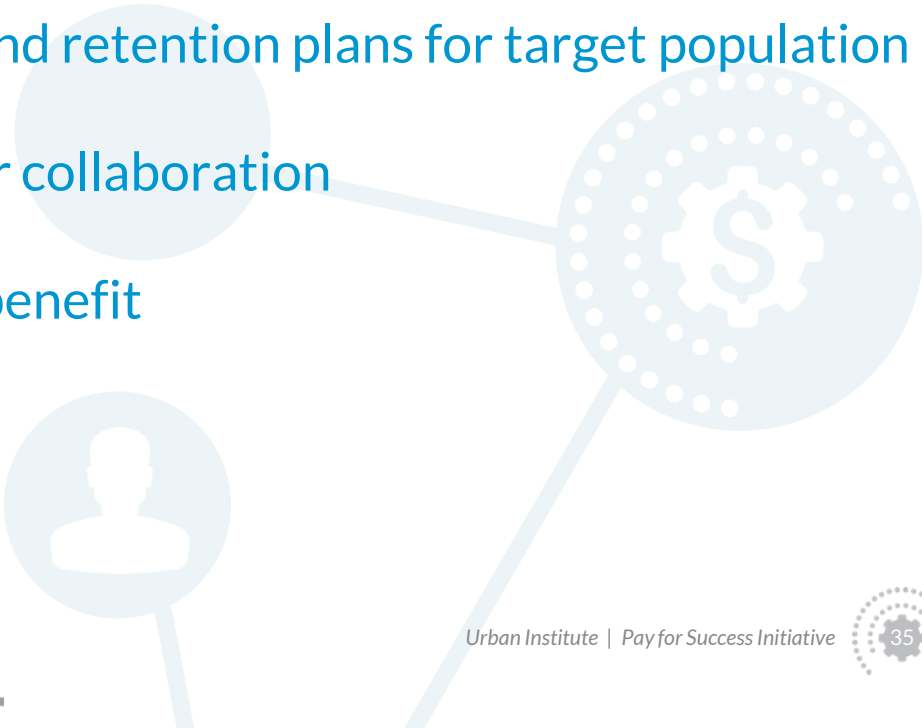
PROJECT ALIGNMENT

Section Five: Project Alignment

- What matters most for project success is how core components function in relation to each other.
- This section is critical to understanding whether all the project's pieces can fit together to form a solid project.



Section Five: Project Alignment

1. Strong fit between problem and proposed program
 2. Strong fit between proposed program and target population
 3. Alignment between provider and program
 4. Engagement, enrollment, and retention plans for target population
 5. Public partner and provider collaboration
 6. Estimate of project's cost-benefit
- 

Section Five: Project Alignment

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2. Strong fit between proposed program and target population
- 3. Alignment between provider and program**
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KEY AREA	QUESTION	SCORING GUIDE
3 Alignment between provider and program	Does the chosen provider have experience, capacity, and skill sufficient to implement the specific proposed program at this scale and in this place or a willingness to link to a regional or national training and technical assistance (TTA) provider?	4 – The provider has experience or demonstrated capacity to implement this program or a similar program in this context. 2 – The provider does not have clear capacity or experience to implement the program but has indicated a willingness to work with a national or regional TTA provider to implement the program in this context. -4 – No, the provider cannot demonstrate the capacity to successfully implement the program at the scale, with the target population, or in the location selected, nor has it indicated a willingness to work with a TTA provider.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Even if providers have general experience and capacity, experience implementing the specific program identified for the PFS project can improve the likelihood that they will implement it successfully. If they do not have personal experience, indicating a willingness to work with a regional or national TTA assistance provider to implement it can substitute this experience.



SECTION SIX

PROJECT EVALUATION

Section Six: Project Evaluation

- **Building a strong evaluation into the project design is critical** and helps set the tone for accountable and evidence-based governing.



Section Six: Project Evaluation

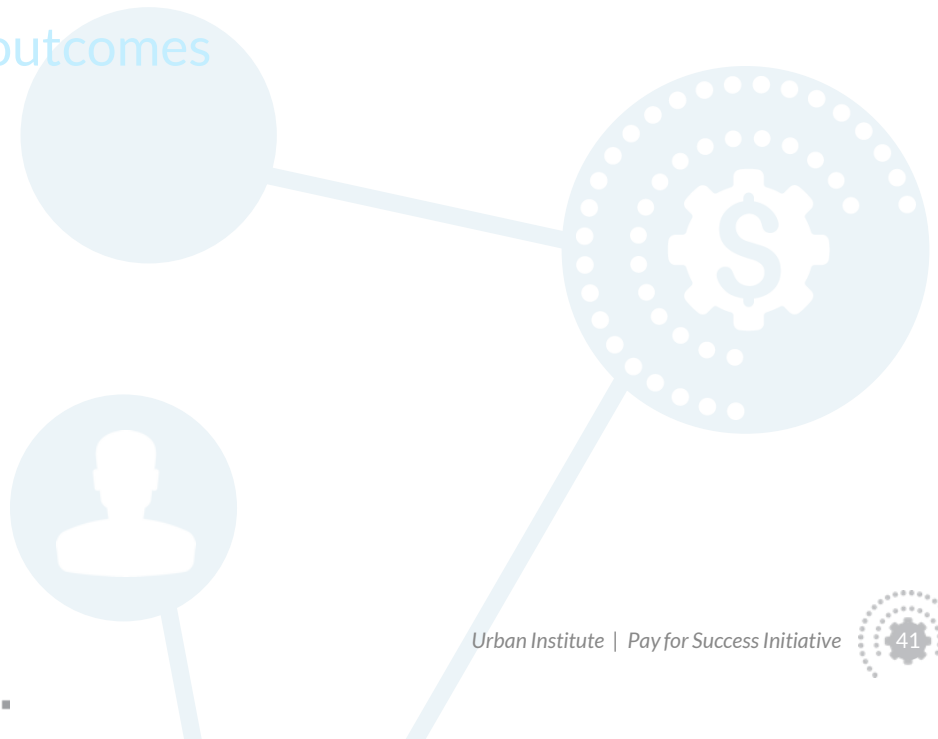
1. Commitment to evaluation
2. Evaluator
3. Clear target outcomes
4. Data systems for tracking outcomes
5. Data-sharing agreements





Section Six: Project Evaluation

1. Commitment to evaluation
2. Evaluator
- 3. Clear target outcomes**
4. Data systems for tracking outcomes
5. Data-sharing agreements





KEY AREA	QUESTION	SCORING GUIDE
3 Clear target outcomes	Does the proposed PFS project include clearly defined target outcomes relevant to the problem and target population?	2 – Yes, the proposed project has identified strong or measurable outcome metrics. 1 – Yes, the project has identified outcome metrics, but they lack one or more of the following qualities: measurable, meaningful (to the community), and clear. 0 – No, the project has not yet identified outcome metrics.







WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The ability to evaluate the program's success relies in large part on the outcome metric or metrics chosen during the project's design phase. If a metric is unclear or incorrect, it may create confusion or disagreement during evaluation. Good outcome metrics are clear, measurable, meaningful, and realistic. Most projects should also focus on few metrics to minimize confusion or dilution of project focus.

Next Steps

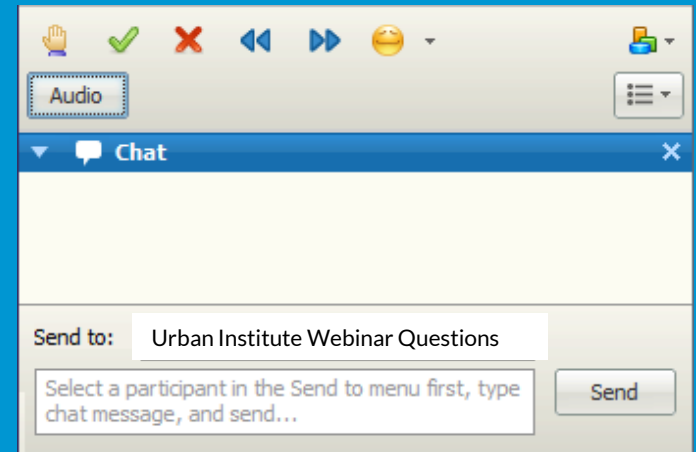




	SECTION ONE	PROBLEM DEFINITION	SCORE: /10
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Audience Q&A

Type your questions into
the chat box.



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*Have a Pay for Success question? Ask our experts
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