

## **2016 HEP and CAMP Webinar on Strong Theory and Evidence of Promise FAQs**

### **February 23, 2016**

#### **Q1: What is Strong Theory?**

**A1:** According to the definitions found in 34 CFR 77.1, strong theory means a rationale for the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice that includes a logic model. A logic model (also referred to as theory of action) means a well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the relationships among the key components and outcomes, theoretically and operationally.

#### **Q2: What is Evidence of Promise?**

**Q2:** Evidence of promise means there is empirical evidence to support the theoretical linkage(s) between at least one critical component and at least one relevant outcome presented in the logic model for the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice.

According to 34 CFR 77.1, evidence of promise means that there is at least one study that is either 1) a correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; 2) a quasi-experimental study that meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Evidence Standards with reservations; or 3) randomized controlled trial that meets the WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations.

In addition to falling into one of these three categories, a study providing evidence of promise must also have found a statistically significant or substantively important (defined as a difference of 0.25 standard deviations or larger) favorable association between at least one critical component and one relevant outcome presented in the logic model for the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice.

#### **Q3: What is the difference, in terms of requirements for the application, between strong theory and evidence of promise?**

**A3:** Strong Theory appears in the “Quality of Project Design” selection criterion (2.v), which considers the extent to which the proposed project is supported by a rationale that includes a logic model. Applicants may choose how comprehensive to make this logic model, that is, whether to include all or some of the key components and activities of the proposed HEP or CAMP project in the theory of action described in the application. There is no requirement to use research in the description of the project’s theory of action.

To emphasize, Strong Theory is a concept in the selection factors for Quality of Project Design. In contrast, Evidence of Promise is a concept only in the selection factors for Quality of Project evaluation.

Evidence of Promise appears in the “Quality of Project Evaluation” selection criterion (7.iii), which considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence to support the theoretical linkages between at least one critical component and at least one relevant outcome from the project’s logic model. There are three categories of studies the applicant may consider planning to produce this evidence, as described in FAQ 2 above.

**Q4: Where should applicants include the logic model and description of evidence of promise in the application? Should applicants include this information in the appendices?**

**A4:** It is up to applicants to determine how to structure their application. However, please remember that readers are directed to only score information in the corresponding selection criteria section, and readers do not review the information in the appendices.

**Q5: What type of logic model should applicants use? Is there a particular format that is preferred?**

**A5:** The Office of Migrant Education does not recommend any particular approach for, or format of, a logic model. Applicants should describe a logic model that best fits the needs of the proposed project. Applicants may format their logic models in whatever way best describes their theory of action and comports with the requirements of the application instructions and the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA).

**Q6: Should our logic model in the Project Design section include the list of assumptions our project is based on?**

**A6:** The logic model is a description of the proposed project's theory of action. Applicants may include whatever information they feel best describes their project's theory of action in the logic model.

**Q7: Should we be focusing on providing evidence of strong theory on a single planned intervention in the project or are we expected to provide evidence for each intervention that is part of our project? Are proposed projects required to identify the research upon which the project is designed?**

**A7:** Applicants are not required to provide any evidence or research when describing Strong Theory. Applicants may choose how comprehensive to make the logic model for their project, that is, whether to include all or some of the key components and activities in the proposed HEP or CAMP project. See FAQ 3 for more detail.

**Q8: Are proposed projects required to generate research and conduct a research study that meets WWC standards? Are applicants being asked to design a QED?**

**A8:** While applicants may respond to the selection criteria however they see fit, the definition of evidence of promise describes three different categories of studies that a project can plan in order to produce this sort of evidence. Please see FAQ 2 for a description of these categories of studies. Applicants may address the selection criterion however they see fit, keeping in mind the requirements for a study to produce evidence of promise.

**Q9: Are the studies described under the Quality of Project Evaluation intended to show Evidence of Promise within the application, or do you expect that the studies will be conducted within the next funding cycle?**

**A9:** Applicants should describe, in the "Quality of Project Evaluation" selection criteria section, the plan for how their program evaluation will produce Evidence of Promise for at least one critical component and relevant outcome. There is no requirement for applicants to show evidence of effectiveness within

the project application. Successful applicants will implement their evaluation plans during the grant cycle.

**Q10: Can the Office of Migrant Education (OME) provide any examples of how applicants could control for selection bias or design a QED given that participants are being selected based on having specific criteria and not selected at random?**

A10: No, OME cannot provide examples of how applicants may address the requirement in their applications. However, please see the specific studies that meet Evidence of Promise as explained in FAQ 2.

**Q11: Do you have any WWC recommended studies for the HEP/CAMP proposals?**

A11: No. Please see FAQs 1 - 3. Note that for applicants to address Strong Theory, research is not required.

**Q12: Has the program office considered allowing qualitative studies? Even the examples given in the hand-out on research were mostly qualitative and hold great evidence?**

A12: While the program office may consider various types of studies useful, the selection criteria require the planning of studies to meet regulatory definitions of evidence of promise. Applicants are expected to write to the selection criteria.

**Q13: The application instruction packet does not list the logic model anywhere and in last week's webinar, we were told the logic model requirement has been removed. Is it optional now?**

A13: In FY 2015, the HEP and CAMP grant competition included an invitational (not required) priority for projects that demonstrated Strong Theory for their design with the use of a logic model. This invitational priority has been removed. In this year's competition, FY 2016, there is a new selection criterion regarding Strong Theory and a logic model, as described in FAQ 2 and 3 above.

**Q14: How closely should the Logic Model reflect the Evaluation section of the proposal?**

A14: The logic model is an element of the project's design, and may inform the project's evaluation.