



Types of Research Methods

Evidence of effectiveness	Research Method	This is ...	This works best for these kinds of questions...	This doesn't work well for these kinds of questions...	Additional Things to Note
<p>LOW</p> 	Descriptive-Qualitative (Ethnography/ Case Study)	Detailed descriptions of specific situation(s) using interviews, observations, document review You describe things as they are.	How do people implement this program? What challenges do people face? What are people's perceptions?	Did the program cause any changes in participants' outcomes?	
	Descriptive-Quantitative	Numerical descriptions (frequency, average) You measure things as they are.	How many people are participating in this program? What are the characteristics of people in this program? How well did participants in this program do?	Did the program cause any changes in participants' outcomes? Why did the program work this way?	
	Correlational/Regression Analyses	Quantitative analyses of the strength of relationships between two or more variables (e.g., are teacher qualifications correlated with student achievement?)	What is the relationship between various school or classroom context factors and student achievement? Is the extent of implementation of a program across sites correlated with better outcomes?	Did the program cause any changes in participants' outcomes?	Look for words such as, "more likely than," "less likely than," "associated with," "related to," and "correlated with."
	Quasi-experimental	Comparing a group that gets a particular intervention with another group that is similar in characteristics but did not receive the intervention— no random assignment used	Did the program cause any significant differences in participants' outcomes as compared to non-participants with similar characteristics who did not receive the intervention?	How are people implementing the program? Why did the program get the results it did?	Look for the phrase "compared with." Look for results that are both statistically significant and meaningful. NOTE: Did the study test the equivalence of treatment and control groups prior to the intervention?

Adapted from Edvantia SBR Rating for Technical Assistance Programs and Services form (2007) and Carter McNamara Overview of Methods to Collect Information handout (1998)

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 HIGH	Experimental	Using random assignment to assign participants to an experimental or treatment group and a control or comparison group (e.g., one receives the intervention and one does not)	Did the program cause any significant differences in participants' outcomes as compared to the control group's outcomes?	How are people implementing the program?	Look for words such as, "causes" or "leads to." Look for results that are both statistically significant and meaningful. NOTE: The intervention should be clearly defined so that you know what it was designed to entail, and to what extent it was implemented in the study. Also look for information on the experience of the control group.
	Meta-analysis	Synthesis of results from multiple studies to determine the average impact of a similar intervention across the studies	Over all studies conducted on a particular intervention or strategy, what can be said about the direction or strengths of the impacts? What does the totality of research studies say about the effectiveness of a program?	How are people implementing the program? What are people's perceptions?	Look for selection criteria used to include studies and look for measures of effect size. Look for differences in results among the studies. Do some studies show positive results while others show negative or do all studies show positive results?

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