

A Guide to the Resource Clearinghouse's Content Review Protocol



Washington Office of Superintendent of
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A GUIDE TO THE RESOURCE CLEARINGHOUSE'S CONTENT REVIEW PROTOCOL

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to *A Guide to the Resource Clearinghouse's Content Review Protocol*! The purpose of this document is twofold. Its first purpose is to contextualize a new feature of the Clearinghouse—namely, its Content Review Protocol. Its second purpose is to both introduce and rationalize the mechanisms of the review protocol. These mechanisms include (1) a process through which content is reviewed, and (2) the standards used at each step in the process. Ultimately, we hope that this document leaves readers with a better understanding of how and why content is reviewed before it is uploaded to the Clearinghouse.

Contextualizing the Clearinghouse's Content Review Protocol

OSPI maintains a Resource Clearinghouse (also referred to as “the Clearinghouse”) of educational research, tools, and policy documents in order to comply with legislative mandates. These mandates span several decades. In 1986, the Washington State Legislature tasked OSPI with “act[ing] as the state clearinghouse for educational information” ([Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.03.510](#)). Soon after, in 1993, the Center of the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) was established to help OSPI maintain such a clearinghouse ([RCW 28A.300.130](#)). CISL’s current directive is to “develop and maintain an internet website to increase the availability of information, research, and other materials” ([RCW 28A.300.130.2d](#)).

Statute does not require the Clearinghouse to have a formal content review protocol. We have developed one as part of our larger clearinghouse redesign project, which was funded by OSPI’s Emergency and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund spending. The project seeks to improve the clearinghouse’s utilization as well as its embodiment of agency values. As discussed below, we believe that implementing a content review process can help us realize these goals.

Addressing Underutilization

As part of the redesign project, we examined the Clearinghouse’s usage. Over a six-month period (10/01/2021 – 03/29/2022), behavior tracking metrics from the clearinghouse’s landing page reported 603 visits. 75% of those visits (400 out of 603) resulted in the user’s visit or path ending, which suggests that few users subsequently downloaded clearinghouse content. Ultimately, the Clearinghouse was being utilized far less than we would like.

Several explanations exist for this underutilization. Among them is the possibility that users do not find the content they are searching for. Implementing a Content Review Protocol is not the only way to ensure that content hosted in the Clearinghouse meets users’ needs, but it may help by:

Reinforcing the clearinghouse’s scope

The redesign team spent several planning sessions articulating how the Resource Clearinghouse is meant to complement—but not overlap—other information repositories managed by OSPI. Not only did these sessions yield a firmer understanding of the types and sources of content that the Clearinghouse should be responsible for, but it also led to the discovery that much of the existing content was outside of that scope. Specifically, staff assessed all 1,791 entries in Resource Clearinghouse during the spring of 2022. They determined that only 289 (16%) were a good fit for the Clearinghouse given its newly defined scope. To prevent future bloating, we have designed a set of Fit Review standards and included them in the first step of the review process. This step is meant to ensure that only certain types of content are eventually hosted in the Clearinghouse.

Ensuring content quality

The second step in the review process is meant to ensure content quality. We recognize that judgements about quality are both contentious and contingent upon the nature of the content itself. It’s possible, though, that vetting the clarity and credibility of content will improve the Clearinghouse’s utilization. Just as users who encounter out-of-scope content are unlikely to visit

again, users who encounter unclear or unreliable content will likely go elsewhere instead. Ensuring content quality may not improve the clearinghouse's reach, but it will hopefully ensure repeat visits from users seeking high-quality content.

Identifying standout content

A third way the Content Review Protocol might increase utilization is by attracting users interested in content that centers educational equity and justice. The third step of the process—the Ethics & Equity Review—not only screens out potentially problematic content, but it also identifies equity-focused research, tools, and policy documents. This content is later featured in clearinghouse collections and publications. We hope that recognizing this standout content will encourage additional usership as well as additional equity-focused work.

Embodying Goals and Values

Underutilization of the Clearinghouse was not the only factor motivating the creation of a review process. It's important to recognize that the Clearinghouse's redesign project was concurrent with agency- and division-wide strategic planning efforts. As a result, the theories of action, strategic goals, and guiding values emerging from this strategic planning came to inform the updated Resource Clearinghouse. Examples of how the Content Review Protocol reflects our commitments to these goals and values include:

Responsivity to user needs

OSPI is committed to being a customer-focused agency. In a similar way, the clearinghouse's redesign team is committed to making it a more user-focused service. One way this commitment manifests is through the Clearinghouse's responsivity to users' information needs. Not only are users seeking information with relevance to their topics or issues of interest, but they are seeking credible information as well. We have developed two sets of Quality Review Standards—one set for educational research and another set for tools and policy documents—to review content quality before it appears in the Clearinghouse. In doing so, we hope to save our users the time and energy usually spent assessing content quality themselves.

Centering educational equity

OSPI's commitment to educational equity and the closure of opportunity gaps inspired several components of the Content Review Protocol. For example, the review process includes a step (i.e., Equity & Ethics Review) dedicated to preventing gap-affirming content from being published. This step is also designed to highlight standout work that promotes educational justice.

Evidence- and inquiry-based design

Just as OSPI pursues its goals by providing resources and supports that are data-driven, we pursued the clearinghouse redesign in a systematic and evidence-based manner. The redesign's initial phase involved an artifact analysis of existing clearinghouses, their content review processes, and the standards used as part of their review. Our process and standards were informed by this analysis. In addition, our standards were later drafted to align with best practices in research reporting, information quality, and publication ethics.

The Content Review Process

In this section, we introduce and rationalize the process underlying the Clearinghouse’s Content Review Protocol. We begin by overviewing the process itself, followed by a discussion of how it was developed and how it is implemented in practice.

Overview of the Process

The “review process” refers to the sequence of actions taken by staff when reviewing potential clearinghouse content. At its core, the process is comprised of three district reviews—a Fit Review, a Quality Review, and an Ethics & Equity Review. Each review involves two staff members deciding whether the content in question deserves inclusion in the Clearinghouse according to a predetermined set of standards. Additional details about each step, as well as the standards informing them, are to follow. First, though, are a few general points about the process:

All content goes through a review process.

Regardless of what the content addresses, who submitted it, and where it comes from, it is reviewed. Importantly, all carryover content from the original Resource Clearinghouse (i.e., content that existed in the Clearinghouse prior to the redesign) was reviewed according to new Content Review Protocol—meaning that it was held to the same standards as the content submitted after the redesign.

The process differs depending on the content’s affiliations.

The path each piece of content takes during the review process depends on its affiliation with OSPI. Content affiliated with OSPI—which includes content produced through internal research and development as well as content produced by OSPI contractors—is not subjected to the Quality Review step. All other content is subjected to those standards.

Each step of the process has both fixed and flexible components.

The Fit Review, Quality Review, and Ethics & Equity Review are all fixed components. They rely on a predetermined set of standards to help reviewers arrive at a decision. In certain cases, a supplemental review is needed. These supplemental reviews are flexible components that rely on consensus-building and/or consultation with stakeholders. The flexibility of supplemental reviews is both to accommodate changes in staff capacity as well as to allow staff to choose a review procedure most likely to yield a solution.

Developing the Process

The review process was developed through several iterations of analysis, prototyping, and testing. A diagram, along with details about each step, is presented below.



Scoping Existing Clearinghouses

The redesign team began the development process by analyzing how other information clearinghouses reviewed their content. These clearinghouses were initially identified using a [Guide to Evidence-Based Clearinghouses](#) available through the American Institutes of Research. Additional clearinghouses familiar to the redesign team but absent from the guide were analyzed as well. Team members recorded their observations and reactions independently before sharing them with the group.

Designing the Process

The ways in which other clearinghouses designed their review process informed our own design. We chose to incorporate some elements (e.g., incorporating a checklist structure at each step in the review, as is done in the [Washington OER Hub Quality Review Rubric](#)) and expand on others (e.g., expand the equity focus articulated in the [Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#)).

Piloting

Much of what was discussed during our design sessions involved observations made while piloting the Content Review Protocol. The review process was tested in tandem with the review standards (see below) to develop a protocol that could be implemented practically and with consistency.

Walkthrough of the Process

In practice, the review process proceeds as a series of decisions guided by a set of standards. Each decision determines whether the content under review proceeds to a subsequent step in the process. The various ways in which content can move through the process is shown in Figure 1; several core elements of the process are described thereafter.

Other Consulted Clearinghouses

Analyzing the designs and processes of existing clearinghouses helped inform our redesign. Specifically, we examined:

[ArtsEdSearch](#)

[Attendance Works](#)

[Best Evidence Encyclopedia](#)

[Blueprints for Health Youth Development](#)

[The Community Guide](#)

[CrimeSolutions.gov](#)

[Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center](#)

[Evidence for ESSA](#)

[Health Center Resource Clearinghouse](#)

[National Mentoring Resource Center](#)

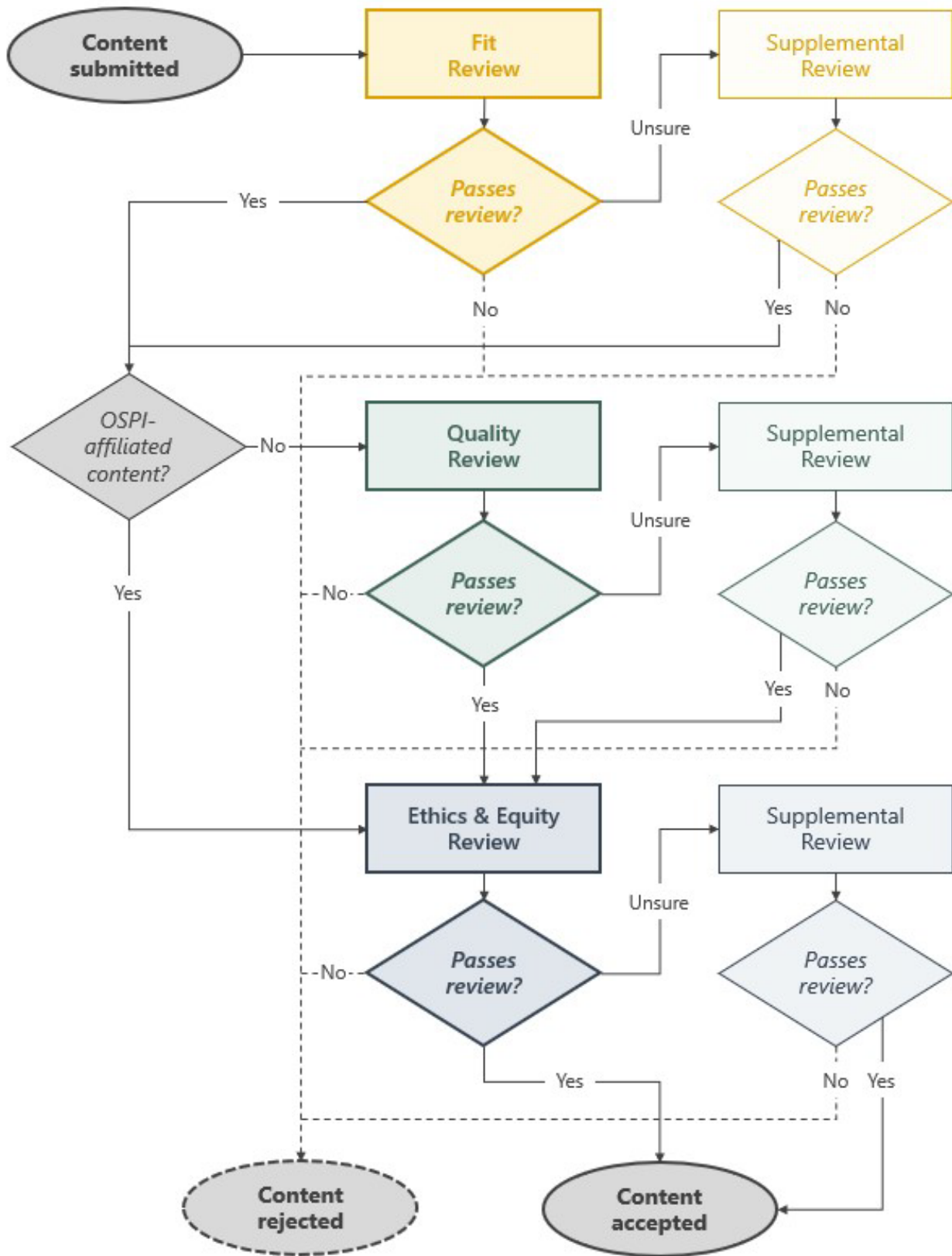
[Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse](#)

[Social Program That Work](#)

[Washington OER Hub](#)

[What Works Clearinghouse](#)

Figure 1 - Diagram of the Clearinghouse's Review Process



Content Submission

Anyone can submit content to the clearinghouse by completing a [brief electronic form](#). The form asks submitters to answer some questions about their content as well as provide their contact information. When staff encounter content that they believe would be a valuable addition to the Clearinghouse, they can submit the content via an electronic form as well. Once submitted, the content is assigned two reviewers—a primary reviewer and a secondary reviewer.

Fit Review

First, reviewers conduct a Fit Review. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the content's type, topic area(s), and permissions for use warrant its inclusion in the clearinghouse. It does this by having reviewers verify the information entered in the content submission form. For example, the Clearinghouse hosts three types of content: research, tools, and policy documents. Double-checking that the submitted content is, in fact, one of these three types is critical for two reasons. The first is that research is subjected to different quality standards (see below) later in the review process; a mischaracterization could route the content through the wrong path in the review process. Second, and more importantly, a piece of content that is not one of these three content types (e.g., curriculum materials) is not a good fit for the Clearinghouse.

Decisions

At the end of the Fit Review—as is the case in other steps of the review process—reviewers are asked whether the content should pass that step in the review. They can respond in three ways. The first is “Yes”, which means that the content should proceed to the next step (or be accepted into the case of the final step). The second is “No”, which means that the content should be rejected given observations made during the review. The third is “Unsure”, which indicates that the reviewer would like additional assistance in making their decision.

If the content is deemed to meet the standards or criteria by both reviewers (i.e., both select “Yes”), it proceeds to the next step in the review. If both decide the content does not meet standards or criteria (i.e., both select “No”), the content is rejected. If there is disagreement between reviewers (i.e., one selects “Yes” and the other selects “No”), or if either reviewer selects “Unsure”, the content moves on to a supplemental review.

Supplemental Reviews

Supplemental reviews occur when there is indecision or disagreement among reviewers. They can occur after each of the primary reviews. As noted earlier, supplemental reviews are designed to be less prescriptive than the primary reviews. Possible actions that might be taken as part of a supplemental review include, but are not limited to, the following:

Discussion and consensus-building among reviewers. Most often, the supplemental review consists of both reviewers convening and each explaining their decision to the other. The goal of the discussion is for both reviewers to reach consensus about whether the content should pass the review. This type of supplemental review is best suited for instances of disagreement (i.e., one reviewer selected “Yes” and the other reviewer selected “No”); if one or both reviewers are “Unsure”, one of the other supplemental review methods is likely

a better choice.

Consultation with supervisors. Reviewers may choose to consult their supervisor if (a) consensus cannot be reached during their discussion or (b) there was an “Unsure” response in the primary review. This process may involve a group discussion between both reviewers and the supervisor; it may also involve the supervisor coming to their own, independent decision.

Input from OSPI subject matter experts. In some cases, reviewers may seek out the perspectives of other OSPI staff. This type of supplemental review is particularly useful when the content in question features a topic area that both reviewers are unfamiliar with.

OSPI-Affiliated Content

As noted earlier, the path that content takes through the review process depends on its affiliation. The content’s affiliation is indicated by the submitter and later checked by reviewers during the Fit Review. If it is not affiliated with OSPI, it proceeds to the Quality Review; if it is affiliated with OSPI, it skips the Quality Review and proceeds to the Ethics & Equity Review. There are two reasons why OSPI-affiliated content is not subjected to the Quality Review. The first is that much of the content produced by OSPI goes through its own, agency-mandated review prior to publication. The second stems from OSPI’s position as a state agency with a commitment to transparency. Ultimately, OSPI has a responsibility to make much of its content accessible to the public—regardless of its quality.

Quality Review

All content unaffiliated with OSPI goes through a Quality Review. The purpose of this review is to ensure that the content is clear and credible enough for inclusion in the clearinghouse. It does this by comparing each piece of content to a checklist of predetermined standards (detailed below). Each Quality Review concludes with both reviewers making a decision about whether the content passes. Instances of disagreement or indecision move on to a supplemental review. The standards used during this step differ depending on the type of content being reviewed (i.e., whether the content is considered research or a tool/policy document).

Ethics & Equity Review

Content that has passed previous review steps then receives an Ethics & Equity Review. The main purpose of this review is to screen out content that could jeopardize efforts to close educational opportunity gaps. A secondary purpose is to identify content that deserves special recognition because it embodies OSPI’s commitment to educational equity. Like the Quality Review, it does this by comparing each piece of content to a checklist of predetermined standards. All content in this step is subjected to standards meant to screen out potentially harmful content. A decision is made to pass or reject content based on these standards, and when a decision cannot be reached, a supplemental review is conducted. If these standards are met, the content is effectively accepted into the Clearinghouse. All accepted content is then subjected to a second step of standards to determine if it should receive special recognition.

Content Rejection

Content is rejected when both reviewers (or, in the case of supplemental reviews, a supervisor or

OSPI subject matter experts) determine that it should not pass a step in the review process. Submitters are notified via email of the review decision along with a short explanation of the rejection. A rejection does not bar content from being resubmitted in the future. In fact, depending on their availability, staff are open to working with submitters wishing to revise and resubmit their content.

Content Acceptance

Content is accepted when it passes all applicable steps of the review process. OPSI-unaffiliated content must pass all three steps, whereas OSPI-affiliated content only needs to pass the Fit Review and Ethics & Equity Review. Submitters are notified via email of their content's acceptance. If reviewers identified their content for special recognition, they may also be asked if recognition is desired. Accepted content is then assigned metadata by the primary reviewer before being published online.

The Content Review Standards

In this section, we introduce and rationalize the standards utilized at each step in the review process. We begin with an overview of standards themselves, followed by a discussion of how they were developed. We then walkthrough the five sets of standards used during the review process.

Overview of the Standards

The “review standards” refer to the criteria used by reviewers to assess content submitted to the clearinghouse. Five sets of standards are used—Fit Standards, Research Quality Standards, Resource Quality Standards, Standards of Harm, and Standards for Recognition. Additional details about the standards are to follow. First, though, are a few points about the standards overall:

Some steps in the review process utilize multiple sets of standards.

We recognize the potential confusion about there being three steps in the review process but five sets of standards. To clarify, there are two steps in the review process that utilize two sets of standards. Sometimes the set of standards used depends on the type of content being reviewed. For example, when conducting a Quality Review, reviewers use Research Quality Standards for content identified as research and Resource Quality Standards for content identified as a tool or policy document. Other times the set of standards used is contingent on the purpose of the review itself. For example, during the Ethics & Equity Review, content is first screened for its potential to perpetuate educational inequities—a screening that utilizes the Standards of Harm. If those are standards are met, reviewers then screen the content for focus areas, approaches to content development, and methods of communication that center equity and inclusion. That screening utilizes the Standards for Recognition. A visual depicting how the process and standards fit together is included in Figure 2.

Our standards echo existing ones.

Not only were the standards developed to align with agency values, but they were designed to align with developments in the fields of research reporting, information quality, and publication ethics. The ways in which our standards build from existing work will be clarified in the walkthrough.

Standards guide the review process; they do not restrict it.

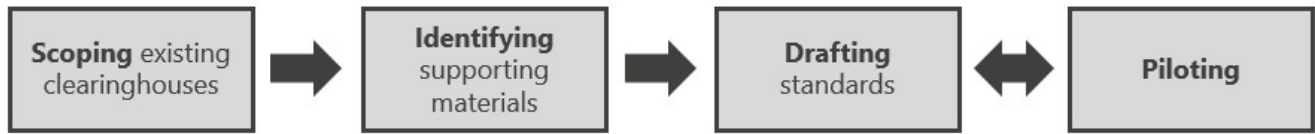
Content does not need to meet all standards for it to pass review; likewise, a reviewer may exercise their professional judgement and reject content even when it meets all standards. The standards are best understood as a guide for reviewers as they arrive at a final decision about the content’s place in the Clearinghouse.

Standards may change as the Resource Clearinghouse matures.

The review standards embody our current priorities as a team and agency. We realize that these priorities may change as the Clearinghouse matures. Therefore, we plan to continuously update our standards in ways that keep them fair and relevant.

Developing the Standards

The review standards initially arose from the study of existing standards. They were later refined through a piloting process. A diagram, along with details about each step, is presented below.



Scoping Existing Clearinghouses

The same clearinghouses examined when developing the review process were consulted when developing the standards. While scoping, special attention was paid to clearinghouses that described the origins and development of their standards. For example, [ArtsEdSearch review criteria](#) were developed “...in consultation with the American Educational Research Association and the American Evaluation Association”, and they reference the [Standards for Reporting on Humanities-Oriented Research](#) published by the American Educational Research Association.

Identifying Supporting Materials

Given how clearinghouses like ArtsEdSearch developed their review criteria in accordance with existing materials, we sought to do the same. Specifically, the standards guiding both our Quality Review and Ethics & Equity Review steps were developed in accordance with existing materials in the areas of research reporting, information quality, and publication ethics. We also consulted materials produced by OSPI to further rationalize our standards.

Drafting Standards

Standards emerged from commonalities across supporting materials. For example, we identified commonalities in the research reporting guidelines proposed by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the EQUATOR Network; standards were then drafted to reflect those commonalities. Crosswalks demonstrating the alignment between our standards and their supporting materials are included below.

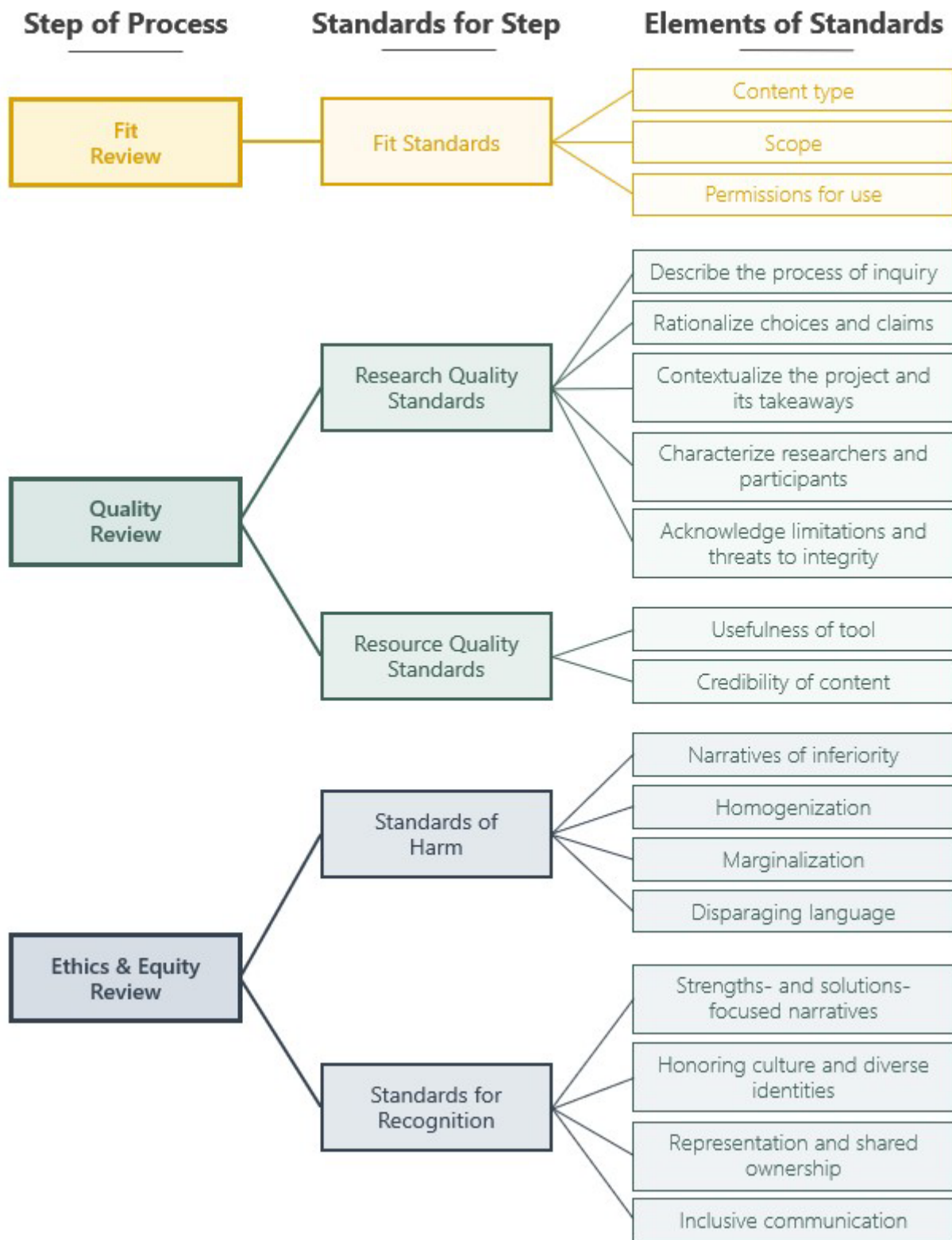
Piloting

Draft standards were piloted along with the review process. Issues revealed during the piloting process were addressed in subsequent drafts of the standards.

Walkthrough of the Standards

We now present a walkthrough of each standards set, which describes the standards, their elements, and the materials supporting them. Tables showing how each individual standard is rationalized by the supporting materials are included as well. As a reminder, each step in the review process has one or more sets of standards associated with it. Each set of standards is composed of one or more elements. A depiction of how the process, standards, and elements fit together is available in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Relationship Between Review Process, Standards, and Elements



Fit Standards

Overview

The Fit Standards guide the Fit Review step of the review process. Judgements of fit are made according to the content's type, scope, and permissions for use. Ultimately, all content meeting these standards should have characteristics that make it a better fit for the Resource Clearinghouse than other information repositories managed by OSPI.

Elements

This set of standards is made up of three elements. They address the following characteristics:

Content type. Content well-suited for the Clearinghouse should be representative of one of the following three content types:

- *Research*, which is defined as content that documents the creation of knowledge through a process of systematic inquiry. Often this involves pursuing an answer to a question of interest by collecting and analyzing evidence;
- *Tool*, which is defined as content that facilitates the implementation of knowledge by including one or more interactive features, such as rubrics or best practice guides;
- *Policy Document*, which is defined as content that organizes and/or simplifies information about policies, programs, statutes, rules, or education-related issues in ways that aid comprehension.

Scope. Content well-suited for the Clearinghouse should feature information that, if published, would help (1) grow the impact of OSPI-sponsored research and development, and/or (2) support evidence-based policymaking and practice within education.

Permissions for use. Content well-suited for the Clearinghouse must be permitted for public consumption. This permission might come from the content's author(s), its licensing, and/or its existence in the public domain.

Precedent & Supporting Materials

Several existing clearinghouses have standards about what makes content eligible for inclusion. In many cases, these eligibility standards occur prior to any judgements about the content's quality. For instance, Phase 1 in the *What Works Clearinghouse's* study review process is to "screen studies for eligibility" (p. 10).¹ Likewise, in Stage One the process utilized by *ArtsEdSearch*, submitted content is reviewed "...against the Absolute Criteria to determine eligibility for inclusion in the ArtsEdSearch".²

¹What Works Clearinghouse. (2022). *What Works Clearinghouse procedures and standards handbook, version 5.0*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE). https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/Final_WWC-HandbookVer5_0-0-508.pdf

²ArtsEdSearch. (n.d.). *Submit a study*. <https://www.artsedsearch.org/submit-a-study/>

Although our Fit Standards are specific to the scope and goals of the Resource Clearinghouse, they function in similar ways to those found elsewhere. For example, just as the What Works Clearinghouse requires that “studies and findings be publicly available” (p. 22)³, our standards feature an element related to content’s “permissions for use.” Likewise, just as the ArtsEdSearch criteria require content to examine outcomes related to arts education, we ask that content align with the scope of our clearinghouse.

³What Works Clearinghouse. (2022). What Works Clearinghouse procedures and standards handbook, version 5.0.

Research Quality Standards

Overview

The Research Quality Standards are used during the Quality Review to assess OSPI-unaffiliated content categorized as research. Judgements of quality are made according to the transparency and thoroughness in which the research is reported. Ultimately, all content meeting these standards should be detailed enough to allow users to make their own judgements about the research's methodology, data quality, analytical decision, and generalizability.

Elements

This set of quality standards is made up of five elements, and each element consists of three items. The elements expect research submitted for publication in the clearinghouse to:

Describe the process of inquiry. To allow readers to both scrutinize and utilize a project's findings, its process of inquiry—that is, the activities leading from the development of a research question to the articulation of an answer—should be transparent.

Rationalize choices and claims. Choices made over the course of a research project—including choices about what is being studied, how it is being investigated, and why certain conclusions are warranted—should be justified and defensible.

Contextualize the project and its takeaways. To help ensure that any generalizations made by researchers or readers are warranted, contextual factors influencing a study's development, evidence sources, and/or findings should be detailed.

Characterize researchers and participants. To bolster a project's trustworthiness, the identities and perspectives of researchers—as well as the identities and perspectives of participants—should be characterized.

Acknowledge limitations and threats to integrity. Being forthright about a project's limitations and threats to its integrity is, itself, an indicator of quality. As such, limitations and threats should be acknowledged.

Precedent

Most research-specific clearinghouses employ their own quality standards. What differs across these clearinghouses, however, is their understanding of quality and how that understanding is reflected in their standards. Some clearinghouses, such as *Evidence for ESSA*, place "...a strong reliance on determination of statistical significance when rating a study's quality" (p. 2).⁴ Others, such as *CrimeSolutions.gov*, assess "...the quality of the research design".⁵ Still others, like

⁴Evidence for ESSA. (2020). *Evidence for ESSA: Standards and procedures*. Center for Research and Reform in Education, John Hopkins University. <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/page/frequently-asked-questions>

⁵CrimeSolutions.gov. (2021). *How we review and rate a program from start to finish*. Office of Justice Programs. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/about/how-we-review-and-rate-program-start-finish#q3rh8q>

ArtsEdSearch, focus their attention on the reporting of the research itself—namely, the extent to which the report “...fully and explicitly describes methods used and population(s) observed in the research.”⁶

Our Research Quality Standards were again inspired by the efforts of *ArtsEdSearch*. As opposed to equating certain research characteristics with quality, we have chosen to equate clear and comprehensive reporting with quality.

Supporting Materials

Given our concerns about clear and comprehensive reporting, the Research Quality Standards were informed by research reporting guidelines in the fields of educational research, psychology, and health. Specifically, they draw from the following sources:

American Educational Research Association’s (AERA) Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications.

Published in 2006, these standards were released alongside standards specific to humanities-oriented research. *ArtsEdSearch* alludes to the humanities-oriented standards in their quality criteria. We focused on aligning our standards with the AERA’s social science standards given the types of research previously hosted in the Clearinghouse. Two aspects of the AERA social science standards were especially resonant with our vision for the redesigned clearinghouse. The first was that transparency is listed as one of “[t]wo overarching principles” (p. 33)⁷ underlying the standards; given that transparency was also central to our vision, the AERA standards seemed like a good fit. A second way the AERA standards aligned with our vision is by recognizing the following:

“...the acceptability of a research report does not rest on evidence of literal satisfaction of every standard in this document, and acceptability cannot be determined by using a checklist...the purpose in specifying these standards is to *provide guidance* about the kinds of information essential to understanding both the nature of the research and the importance of the results” (emphasis added, p. 33).

Our standards are meant to be used in much the same way—a guide for decision-making rather than a strict checklist.

Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research (EQUATOR) Network’s Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research.

Published in 2014, these standards are part of the EQUATOR Network’s larger goal of improving the accuracy and transparency of reporting across various types of health research. We sought out the EQUATOR Network’s qualitative research standards for three reasons. The first reason was to complement the somewhat dated AERA standards with more recent guidance. A second reason was to include standards that

⁶ArtsEdSearch. (n.d.). *Submit a study*. <https://www.artsedsearch.org/submit-a-study/>

⁷American Educational Research Association. (2006). Standards for reporting on empirical social science research in AERA publications. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 33-40.

more explicitly accommodated qualitative research designs. A third reason was to incorporate standards that were, themselves, evidence-based. They were developed by triangulating 40 other sets of guidelines published across the health sciences.

American Psychological Association's (APA) Reporting Standards for Qualitative Primary, Qualitative Meta-Analytic, and Mixed Methods Research in Psychology. Published in 2018, these standards provided a guidance that was even more up-to-date. They also allowed us to incorporate perspectives from a third academic discipline.

Table 1 - Crosswalk of Research Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

1) Describe the process of Inquiry.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		AERA, 2006	EQUATOR, 2014	APA, 2018
1a	The project's general aims, purpose, and/or guiding questions are clear.	"The problem formulation should provide <i>a clear statement of the purpose and scope of the study</i> . It should describe the question, problem, or issue the study addresses..." (p. 34)	"S4 – Purpose of research question – Purpose of the study and <i>specific objectives or questions</i> ." (p. 1247)	"State the <i>purpose(s)/goal(s)/aim(s)</i> of the study." (p. 35)
1b	Elements of the research process—such as how evidence sources were selected/recruited, how data were collected, and how analyses were conducted—are understandable.	<p>"The units of study and the means through which they were selected should be <i>adequately described</i>." (p. 35)</p> <p>"The collection of data or empirical materials should be <i>clearly described</i>." (p. 35)</p> <p>"Analytic techniques should be <i>described in sufficient detail</i>..." (p. 37)</p>	<p>"S8 – Sampling strategy – <i>How and why</i> research participants, documents, or events were selected" (p. 1247)</p> <p>"S10 – <i>Data collection methods</i> – Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures..." (p. 1247)</p> <p>"S13 – <i>Data processing</i> – Methods for processing data prior to and during analysis..." (p. 1247)</p>	<p>"Describe the participants / data sources selection process." (p. 35)</p> <p>"Describe the form of data collected..." (p. 36)</p> <p>"<i>Explicate</i> in detail the process of analysis, including some discussion of the procedures." (p. 36)</p>
1c	The project's findings and their implications are explicit.	"The presentation of conclusions should (a) <i>provide a statement</i> of how claims and interpretations address the research problem, questions, or issue underlying the research..." (p. 37)	"S16 – Synthesis and interpretation – <i>Main findings</i> ..." (p. 1247)	"Describe <i>research findings</i> and the meaning and understandings that the research has derived from the data analysis." (p. 37)

Table 1 (continued) - Crosswalk of Research Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

2) Rationalize choices and claims.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		AERA, 2006	EQUATOR, 2014	APA, 2018
2a	The project's significance is demonstrated by scholarly literature, data trends, and/or sociohistorical events.	"The problem formulation should...explain <i>why it is important to address</i> ." (p. 34)	"S3 – Problem formulation – Description and <i>significance</i> of the problem/phenomenon studied" (p. 1247)	"...identify key issues/debates/theoretical frameworks in the relevant literature to <i>clarify barriers, knowledge gaps, or practical needs</i> ." (p. 34)
2b	The project's methodological and analytical strategies are justified.	<p>"Thus, reporting on sources of evidence includes...the processes and judgements through which they were selected; and <i>a rationale for those choices</i>." (p. 35)</p> <p>"Reporting should make clear <i>how</i> the analysis procedures address the research question or problem....the <i>relevance</i> of the analysis procedures to the problem formulation should be made clear" (p. 37)</p>	<p>"S10 – Data collection methods – Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures including...<i>rationale</i>." (p. 1247)</p> <p>"S14 – Data analysis – Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures including...<i>rationale</i>." (p. 1247)</p>	<p>"Provide a <i>rationale</i> for the design selected." (p. 34)</p> <p>"Provide <i>rationales</i> to illuminate analytic choices in relation to the study goals." (p. 36)</p>
2c	Each of the project's findings, conclusions, and/or generalizations is warranted given the evidence presented.	<p>"The evidence that <i>serves as a warrant</i> for each claim should be presented...[s]peculations that go beyond the available evidence should be clearly represented as such" (p. 38)</p> <p>"It is also incumbent on the author to provide a <i>justification</i> for the generalizations" (p. 38)</p>		"Demonstrate that the claims made from the analysis <i>are warranted and have produced findings with methodological integrity</i> " (p. 36)

Table 1 (continued) - Crosswalk of Research Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

3) Contextualize the project and its takeaways.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		AERA, 2006	EQUATOR, 2014	APA, 2018
3a	The project is situated within a historical, political, social, and/or scholarly context.	<p>"[The problem formulation] should describe the question, problem, or issue the study addresses, <i>situate it in context...</i>" (p. 34)</p> <p>"The <i>social, historical, or cultural context</i> of the phenomena studies should also be described" (p. 35)</p>	<p>"S3 – Problem formulation – Description and significance of the problem/phenomenon studies; <i>review of relevant theory and empirical work</i>"</p>	<p>"Frame the problem or question and <i>its context</i>" (p. 34)</p>
3b	Relevant characteristics of the setting in which the project was conducted are shared.	<p>"Descriptions should include <i>relevant characteristics of the site, group, participants, events or other units of study</i> that bear directly on reporting and interpreting outcomes" (p. 35)</p>	<p>"S7 – Context – <i>Setting/site and salient contextual factors...</i>" (p. 1247)</p>	<p>"Provide the <i>general context for study</i> (when data were collected, sites of data collection)..." (p. 35)</p>
3c	Interpretations of the study's findings—especially propositions about their generalizability—respect the context in which they emerged.	<p>"Whether generalization is intended by the author or not, <i>it is critical to make clear the specifics of the participants contexts, activities data collections, and manipulation involved in the study...</i>to permit readers to draw the necessary comparisons to their own contexts of interest." (p. 39)</p> <p>"When generalizations are intended, the author should <i>make clear the intended scope</i> of the generalization..." (p. 39)</p>	<p>"S18 – Integration with prior work, implications, <i>transferability</i>, and contribution(s) to the field – Short summary of main findings....<i>discussion of scope of application/ generalizability...</i>" (p. 1247)</p>	<p>"Describe the limits of the scope of <i>transferability</i> (e.g., what should readers bear in mind <i>when using findings across contexts.</i>" (p. 37)</p>

Table 1 (continued) - Crosswalk of Research Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

4) Characterize researchers and participants.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		AERA, 2006	EQUATOR, 2014	APA, 2018
4a	Characteristics of the researcher(s) that may have influenced their approach to the project—such as their values, previous experiences, and/or group identities—are acknowledged.	"Critical examination of the <i>preexisting perspective, point of view, or standpoint of the researcher(s)</i> , of how these might have influenced the collection and analysis of evidence, and of how they were challenged during the course of data collection and analysis, is important in enhancing the warrant of any claim" (p. 38)	"S6 – Researcher characteristics and reflexivity – researchers' characteristics that may have influenced the research...potential or actual interaction between researchers' characteristics and the research questions, approach, methods, results, and/or transferability" (p. 1247)	"Describe the researchers' <i>backgrounds</i> in approaching the study, emphasizing their prior understandings of the phenomena under study..." (p. 35)
4b	The researcher(s)' credibility is evidenced by their affiliations, credentials, identities, and/or lived experiences.		"S6 – Researcher characteristics and reflexivity – researchers' characteristics that may have influenced the research, including personal attributes, <i>qualifications/experiences</i> , relationship with participants, assumptions, and/or presuppositions." (p. 1247)	"Prior understanding relevant to the analysis could include, but are not limited to, descriptions of the researchers' demographic/cultural characteristics, <i>credentials</i> , experience with phenomena, training, values, decisions in selecting archives or material to analyze." (p. 35)
4c	All relevant demographic characteristics and identities of participants are considered.	"Descriptions should include <i>relevant characteristics of the site, group, participants, events, or other units of study</i> that bear directly on the reporting and interpreting outcomes." (p. 35)	"S17 – Units of study – Number and <i>relevant characteristics</i> of participants, documents, or events included in the study." (p. 1247)	"Describe the <i>demographic/cultural information, perspectives of participants</i> or characteristics of data sources that might influence the data collected." (p. 35)

Table 1 (continued) - Crosswalk of Research Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

5) Acknowledge limitations and threats to integrity.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		AERA, 2006	EQUATOR, 2014	APA, 2018
5a	Limitations due to feasibility issues, elements of research design, and/or uncontrollable external factors are discussed.	" <i>Significant limitations</i> due, for instance, to insufficient or conflicting evidence, should be described." (p. 38)	"S19 – <i>Limitations</i> – Trustworthiness and limitations of findings." (p. 1247)	"Identify the study's strengths and <i>limitations</i> (e.g., consider how the quality, source, or types of the data or the analytic processes might support or weaken its methodological integrity" (p. 37).
5b	Potential conflicts of interest and instigating factors—such as project affiliations and funding sources—are addressed.	"Reporting should include a description of any potential <i>conflicts of interest</i> of bias of the researcher that may have influenced or could have the appearance of influencing the research" (p. 40)	"S20 – <i>Conflicts of interest</i> – Potential sources of influence or perceived influence on study conduct and conclusions; how they were managed." (p. 1248)	"Acknowledge <i>conflicts of interest</i> ." (p. 38)
5c	A commitment to protecting the privacy and dignity of participants is evident.	"Not all ethical issues in the conduct of the study or about <i>human research protection</i> need to be addressed in and article, but those relevant to understanding the study, analyses, and results should be set forth." (p. 39)	S9 – <i>Ethical issues pertaining to human subjects</i> – Documentation of approvable by an appropriate ethics review board and participant consent, or explanation for lack thereof; other confidentiality and data security issues." (p. 1247)	"...provide assurance of relevant ethical processes of data collection and <i>consent process as relevant</i> (may include institutional review board approval, particular adaptations for vulnerable populations, safety monitoring." (p. 35)

Resource Quality Standards

Overview

The Resource Quality Standards are used during the Quality Review to assess OSPI-unaffiliated content categorized as a tool or policy document. Judgements of quality are made according to the resource's potential usefulness to the Clearinghouse's target audiences. Additionally, judgements are made according to its perceived credibility given who created it and how it was developed.

Elements

This set of quality standards is made up of two elements, and each element consists of four items. They ask reviewer to assess the:

Usefulness of the resource. A resource's usefulness—that is, its ability to enhance the comprehension and/or implementation of knowledge—is contingent on the clarity of its audience, purpose, and presentation.

Credibility of its content. A resource's usefulness is counterproductive if it enhances the comprehension and/or implementation of inaccurate information. Therefore, the credibility of its content must be reviewed.

Precedent

Just like research clearinghouses, clearinghouses hosting other types of content also specify standards of quality that they expect their content to meet. Nevertheless, these indicators of quality often differ, which is why a separate set of standards was developed for our purposes. Consider, for example, the quality criteria used by the Washington OER Hub. One of the criteria's central priorities is the content's clarity, as evidenced by "clear learning objectives and goals" as well as a "user-friendly design". Other clearinghouses, such as *the Health Center Resource Clearinghouse*, consider indicators of credibility (e.g., the content's authorship).

One notable aspect of the *Health Center Resource Clearinghouse* is that it is supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As a federal agency, HHS is required to develop and maintain its own agency-specific Information Quality Guidelines. These guidelines are meant to ensure the quality of information products disseminated by the federal government. They are also meant to align with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) three principles of information quality, which are summarized in the following quotation:

"'Utility' refers to the usefulness of the information to the intended users. 'Objectivity' focuses on whether the disseminated information is being presented in an accurate, clear, complete, and unbiased manner, and as a matter of substance, is accurate, reliable, and unbiased. 'Integrity' refers to security -- the protection of information

from unauthorized access or revision" (p. 8453).⁸

We built our standards to consist of two elements aligned with two of the OMB's principles of quality—namely, utility (which we refer to as "usefulness") and objectivity (which we refer to as "credibility"). What's more, we built our standards to align with three sets of agency-specific guidelines.

Supporting Materials

Specifically, our standards draw from the following sources:

U.S. Department of Education Information Quality Guidelines. We consulted the Department's 2019 Interim Guidelines when developing our own. Their set of guidelines served as our primary contributing source for two reasons. First, the U.S. Department of Education is the federal agency nearest in scope to our own. Second, their guidelines give examples of how the principles of utility and objectivity were ensured across various types of information (i.e., general information, research and evaluation information, administrative and program data, and statistical data). This inclusion of examples from multiple information types was particularly useful when developing our own set of standards.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Information Quality Guidelines. The HHS had yet to update their guidelines in response to the OMB's 2019 memorandum, so their original version from 2002 was consulted. In addition, only Part I of the guidelines were consulted given that Part II included sub-agency guidelines for eleven of HHS's operating divisions.

U.S. Census Bureau Information Quality Guidelines. We also consulted the guidelines established by the U.S. Census Bureau. Although no publication date was available, webpage updates were reported in 2021. Along with the same three principles of information quality recognized by the other agencies, the guidelines also included a section on *Transparency and Reproducibility*.

⁸Office of Management and Bureau. (2002). *Guidelines for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information dissemination by federal agencies.* <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2002-02-22/pdf/R2-59.pdf>

Table 2 - Crosswalk of Resource Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

1) Usefulness of resource.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		U.S. Department of Education	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	U.S. Census Bureau
1a	The resource's target audience is clear; it is either stated explicitly or—as determined by the reviewer—easily inferred.	"The target audience should be clearly identified, and the product should be understandable to that audience."		
1b	The resource has a well-articulated purpose or set of goals.	"Each product should...clearly state the goals or purpose of the information product."		
1c	The resource presents information in a way that aids comprehension and/or usability by intended users.	"All information products should be grammatically correct and clearly written in plain English...and the product should be <i>understandable to that audience.</i> "	"Utility is achieved by staying informed of information needs and developing and information products which are <i>appropriate</i> to these needs."	"The Census Bureau disseminates statistical information products to the public in a manner that allows them to be accessible to a broad range of data users with different requirements for data availability and <i>understandability.</i> "
1d	The resource includes contact information to enable users to direct comments or questions to its creator(s).	"When appropriate, Department products should include contact information for users who seek clarification or further information, or who want to provide feedback."	"The Census Bureau <i>maintains ongoing contact</i> with a broad spectrum of users to ensure that its information continues to remain relevant."	

Table 2 (continued) - Crosswalk of Resource Quality Standards with Contributing Sources

2) Credibility of resource.				
#	Item Text	Contributing Sources		
		U.S. Department of Education	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	U.S. Census Bureau
2a	The sources(s) responsible for developing the resource are clearly identified.	"...the Department does not have full control over the quality of the reported data; the Department intends to, however, <i>identify the source of the information...</i> "	"Also, the agency needs to <i>identify the sources of the disseminated information...</i> "	
2b	The source(s) of the resource's content are reliable given reviewers' existing knowledge or their reconnaissance as part of the review process.	"The source of research information or data should be <i>reliable...</i> "	"Objectivity is achieved by using reliable data sources and sound analytical techniques, and carefully reviewing information products prepared by <i>qualified people</i> using proven methods."	"Although third-party sources may not be directly subject to Section 515, information from such sources, when used by the Census Bureau to develop information products, <i>must be of known quality...</i> "
2c	The resource's development process is documented to the extent that potential users can reasonably judge its quality.	"Department of Education research and evaluation information products should, at a minimum...have a research study approach or data collection technique that is... <i>clearly described in the study documentation.</i> "	"Where appropriate, data should have full, accurate, <i>transparent documentation</i> , and error sources affecting data quality should be identified and disclosed to users."	"Census Bureau quality guidelines require that our statistical products be accompanied by <i>descriptions of or references to descriptions of the methods and procedures used in their development...</i> "
2d	The resource's content is evidence-based—either through evidence collected as part of the development process or through references to external sources.	"Each product should...[i]f applicable, draw upon peer-reviewed, scientific <i>evidence-based research</i> that is appropriately documented."	"Guidelines or authoritative health information...[are] issued <i>after careful review and deliberation of available scientific evidence.</i> "	"The Census Bureau bases its information products on <i>reliable, accurate data</i> that have been validated."

Standards of Harm

Overview

The Standards of Harm are used during the Ethics & Equity Review. They assist reviewers with identifying content that, if published, could perpetuate educational inequities; this can occur regardless of the authors' original intentions. Judgements about the content's potential harm consider the language used in the content as well as the messages it conveys. The Standards of Harm also represent the final mandatory step of the review process. If content is found to meet these standards, it is accepted into the Clearinghouse.

Elements

This set of standards is made up of four elements, and each element is comprised of three items. The elements call out the following characteristics of potentially harmful content:

Narratives of inferiority. The Clearinghouse refuses to publish content that could—regardless of intent—reinforce degrading, stereotypic, and/or decontextualized narratives about the causes of educational inequities.

Homogenization. The Clearinghouse refuses to publish content that threatens the dignity of those furthest from educational justice by homogenizing their identities and experiences.

Marginalization. The Clearinghouse refuses to publish work that excludes, marginalizes, or exploits communities furthest from educational justice—both during the content development process as well as in the content itself.

Disparaging language. The Clearinghouse refuses to publish content that employs hurtful language and/or inaccurate language with harmful implications.

Precedent

None of the existing clearinghouses scoped as part of the redesign process included standards of harm. Our standards are not necessarily unprecedented, though. Academic and governmental actors have begun formalizing standards related to the types of content they will and will not publish—irrespective of its quality. The idea is to extend ethical responsibilities when conducting human subjects research (e.g., a responsibility to minimize potential harms) to the publishing of research. For example, editors associated with academic publisher *Springer Nature* note that:

"There are now several well-established ethics frameworks that govern studies involving human participants...[b]ut these are generally silent about the benefits and harms of academic research whose conclusions could affect groups of people that haven't directly participated. Examples include research that could lead to people being stigmatized, discriminated against or subjected to racism, sexism or homophobia,

among other things" (p. 434).⁹

In response, they have developed guidance to address the potential harms of academic publishing. Our standards stem from a similar purpose—namely, to prevent potentially harmful content from being published in the Resource Clearinghouse.

Supporting Materials

Our standards were aligned to *Springer Nature's* work as well as guidance provided by others:

Guidance developed by Springer Nature. As suggested earlier, this guidance was the primary source informing our own standards. It was integrated into a larger set of editorial policies in the summer of 2022, and editorials were published in *Nature* and *Nature Human Behavior* to further contextualize their work. At the same time, several scholars of color were invited by *Nature* to "...advise on the production of a series of special issues on racism in science..." (p. 226).¹⁰ Recognizing that the guidance's release coincided with efforts to acknowledge and overcome science's "racist legacy" is important; it helps rationalize why many of our standards pay particular attention to traditionally underrepresented groups and perspectives.

Developments in other academic publications. It's also important to realize that *Springer Nature* is not alone in this work. Our standards also align with updated guidance released by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.¹¹ In addition, commentaries in other scientific publications—such as in the journal *Genetics in Medicine*, which is also distributed by *Springer Nature*—urge publishers to adopt a deliberate anti-racist posture.¹² The principles outlined in that commentary went on to inform our own standards as well.

Publications produced by the American Psychological Association (APA). The American Psychological Association is the largest professional organization of psychologists in the United States. As such, it frequently produces content with guidelines, best practices, and recommendations for the psychology discipline writ large. Many of its recent publications

⁹Nature. (2022). Research must do no harm: New guidance for addresses all studies relating to people. *Nature*, 606. <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-022-01607-0/d41586-022-01607-0.pdf>

¹⁰Nobles, M., Womack, C., Wonkam, A., & Wathuti, E. (2022). Science must overcome its racist legacy: Nature's guest editors speak. *Nature*, 606. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-01527-z>

¹¹Flanagin, A., Frey, T., & Christiansen, S.L. (2021). Updated guidance on the reporting of race and ethnicity in medical and science journals. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 326(7), 621–627. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2783090>

¹²Brothers, K.B., Bennett, R.L. & Cho, M.K. (2021). Taking an antiracist posture in scientific publications in human genetics and genomics. *Genetics in Medicine*, 23, 1004–1007. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41436-021-01109-w#citeas>

offer instructions relevant to our standards of harm. For instance, APA released an *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Toolkit for Journal Editors*, which, among other things, suggests training journal reviewers to identify research that “has the potential to be misused or cause harm” (p. 19).¹³ Another example is the APA’s resolution on [*Dismantling Systematic Racism Against People of Color in the United States*](#), which charts a path for dismantling racism in science. These documents, as well as [guidelines](#) from the *APA Style Guide* regarding inclusive and bias-free language, were consulted when developing our standards.

Publications produced by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Finally, we incorporated guidance from several OSPI-produced publications into our standards. One particularly useful source was OSPI’s [*Screening for Biased Content in Instructional Materials*](#) tool, which shares potential indicators of bias and/or harm that are applicable to non-research content. Additionally, we consulted OSPI’s [*Culturally Responsive Style Guide*](#) to inform are standards about potentially harmful language.

¹³American Psychological Association. (2021). *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Toolkit for Journal Editors*. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/authors/equity-diversity-inclusin-toolkit-journal-editors.pdf>

Table 3 – Crosswalk of Standards of Harm with Contributing Sources and Examples

1) Narratives of Inferiority: Publishing this content could cause harm by advancing narratives of inferiority. Indications that the content may be harmful in this way include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
1a	The content equates privileged identities with what is default or desirable.	“Convenience sampling has maintained a “White-default” approach to the reporting of findings in psychological science, which also reproduces Whiteness as the standard against which outcomes for marginalized populations are measured.” (APA, 2021)	Claiming that Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander students are “underachieving” because they are not performing as well as White students.
1b	The content ignores pertinent social or historical factors.	“The reporting of race and ethnicity should not be considered in isolation but should be accompanied by reporting other sociodemographic factors and social determinants, including concerns about racism, disparities and inequities, and the intersectionality of race and ethnicity with these other factors.” (JAMA, 2022)	Referencing an “achievement gap” without acknowledging inequities in opportunity.
1c	The content emphasizes deficits or harm to the extent that positive attributes are overshadowed.	“When present in the instructional material, character traits such as courage, leadership, intelligence, integrity, etc., are distributed among diverse groups...” (OSPI, 2021)	Characterizing American Indian / Alaskan Native students by “the hardships they endure” without recognizing resilience or cultural assets.

Table 3 (continued) – Crosswalk of the Standards of Harm with Contributing Sources and Examples

2) Homogenization: Publishing this content could cause harm by homogenizing identities and experiences. Indications that the content may be harmful in this way include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
2a	The content underappreciates within-group differences.	“Terms like ‘Asian’ that combine numerous self-identified groups under a single umbrella risk not only conflating sociopolitical race and genetic ancestry, but also obscuring disparities in specific subgroups. Disaggregating such categories by self-identified ethnicity or national origin can help address this challenge” (Genetics, 2021)	Failing to meaningfully disaggregate across racial subgroups, and in turn, concluding that all “Asian students are performing well.”
2b	The content reduces a person or group to a singular identity—rather than a collection of intersecting identities.	“The resolution also warns that a monolithic approach to understanding ethnically and racially categorized people without appreciating the diversity-within factors and intersectional identities in itself is a form of systemic racism that denies various unique challenges and strengths that exist within each ethnic and racial group.” (APA, 2021)	Ignoring how gender and race intersect when examining student discipline rates.
2c	The content conflates an individual or group identity with situational characteristics—often in a stereotypical manner.	“Characters of color [in fiction] are not assumed to have low income or education.” (OSPI, 2021)	Using race as a proxy for socioeconomic status.

Table 3 (continued) – Crosswalk of the Standards of Harm with Contributing Sources and Examples

3) Marginalization: Publishing this content could cause harm by marginalizing historically underrepresented perspectives. Indications that the content may be harmful in this way include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
3a	The content attempts to make a generalization when historically underrepresented perspectives were absent or tokenized.	"[Editors reserve the right to refuse publication to]...[s]ubmissions that embody singular, privileged perspectives, which are exclusionary of a diversity of voices in relation to socially constructed or socially relevant human groupings, and which purport such perspectives to be generalizable and/or assumed." (Nature, 2022)	Claiming that a program is efficacious despite only collecting data from White students.
3b	The content relies on procedures that are insensitive or irresponsible to historically underrepresented perspectives.	"Family assignment are envisioned and explained in a sensitive manner. A seemingly harmless activity, such as creating a family tree, can marginalize students who biological relations are distant or unknown." (OSPI, 2021)	Using "number of possessions in a home" as a way of measuring socioeconomic status.
3c	The content exploited historically underrepresented perspectives during its development.		Promising—but not awarding—compensation to students experiencing homelessness when collecting their data and using it in a report.

Table 3 (continued) – Crosswalk of the Standards of Harm with Contributing Sources and Examples

4) Disparaging language: Publishing this content could cause harm by using pejorative or dehumanizing language. Indications that the content may be harmful in this way include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
4a	The content uses terminology historically associated with negative stereotypes.	"Person-first language is ideal when the characteristic described has historically been associated with negative stereotypes. The most common example of this terminology is <i>people with disabilities</i> or <i>students with disabilities</i> rather than <i>disabled people</i> or <i>disabled students</i> . Describing someone as a <i>disabled person</i> emphasizes their disability as their primary or only relevant characteristic." (OSPI Culturally Responsive Style Guide, 2021)	Referring to "disabled students" instead of "students with disabilities."
4b	The content makes unnecessarily imprecise or collective references.	"...avoid collective reference to racial and ethnic minority groups as 'non-White.' If comparing racial and ethnic groups, indicate the specific groups." (JAMA)	Using an umbrella category like "non-White" when specific racial/ethnic groups can be identified.
4c	The content implies false hierarchies.	"Bias occurs when authors use one group (often their own group) as the standard against which others are judged (e.g., using citizens of the United States as the standard without specifying why that group was chosen). For example, usage of 'normal' may prompt readers to make the comparison with 'abnormal,' thus stigmatizing individuals with differences." (APA Style Guide, 2020)	Comparing transgender students to "the general student population" or "normal students".

Standards for Recognition

Overview

The Standards of Recognition are also used during the Ethics & Equity Review. In effect, they are supplemental standards that are only applied to content that has first met the Standards of Harm; in other words, these standards are applied to content that has already been accepted into the Clearinghouse. The Standards of Recognition specify certain focus areas, approaches to content development, and methods of communication that center equity and inclusion. Their purpose is to identify content that embodies OSPI's commitment to educational equity, and in doing so, deserves to be spotlighted in collections and publications. Spotting this content is one way the Clearinghouse hopes to encourage the production of additional equity-focused content—both within and outside of the agency.

Elements

This set of quality standards is made up of four elements comprised of 11 total items. Taken together, these standards seek to recognize:

Strengths- and solutions-focused narratives. Communities furthest from education justice are too often characterized by narratives of inferiority. To counteract these narratives, the Clearinghouse seeks to recognize content that instead highlights the strengths and solutions to injustice that already exist in these communities.

Honoring culture and diverse identities. Content attempting to spotlight educational injustices faced by certain communities sometimes homogenizes unique aspects of identity and culture. In response, the Clearinghouse seeks to recognize content that instead honors nuance and practices cultural responsiveness.

Representation and shared ownership. Content for and/or about those furthest from educational justice is often created without them. Because of this, the Clearinghouse seeks to recognize content that prioritizes the participation and input of these communities.

Inclusive communication. Regardless of intention, educational research and resources can be communicated in ways that are not accessible to their target audiences. Even so, language and design practices can also be utilized in ways that create particularly inclusive content. The Clearinghouse seeks to recognize work that does exactly that.

Precedent

Our Standards of Recognition seem to be unique—at least among the clearinghouses reviewed during our redesign process. One clearinghouse, the *Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse*, does host a webpage dedicated to resources that “specifically address equity,” but the standards by which they identify these resources are unclear. As such, we aligned our standards with existing guidelines for ensuring equity throughout the research process.

Supporting Materials

The specific sources that inspired our standards are described below:

Child Trends' Guide to Incorporating a Racial and Ethnic Equity Perspective Throughout the Research Process.

Child Trends is a nongovernmental research organization dedicated to improving the lives of young people. In the late 2010s, they received funding to systematically develop guidance for conducting research from a racial and ethnic equity perspective. That guidance was later made publicly available, and it went on to serve as the primary source informing our Standards of Recognition.

Ultimately, the rationale given by Child Trends for why incorporating such a perspective is important is the same rationale driving our standards:

"Conducting research with a racial and ethnic equity perspective produces findings that more accurately reflect or incorporate the life experiences of children and youth of color. This research, in turn, provides policy and decision makers with information that helps them understand and address the underlying structural factors that perpetuate inequity" (p. 6).¹⁴

Given our values as a clearinghouse and an agency more generally, we wanted to recognize content aligned with this guidance. Guidance is provided for how research—and, by extension, other types of content we host in the clearinghouse—can be conceived, conducted, and shared in ways that maximize its equity potential. In turn, our Standards of Recognition not only address features of the content itself, but also features of the processes leading to its development and dissemination.

Publications produced by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). As with our Standards of Harm, we incorporated guidance from several OSPI-produced publications into our Standards of Recognition. For example, we again referenced the [OSPI Style Guide](#) to inform our recognition standards regarding inclusive language.

¹⁴Andrews, K., Parekh, J., & Peckoo, S. (2019). How to embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective in research: Practical guidance for the research process. *Child Trends*. <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/a-guide-to-incorporating-a-racial-and-ethnic-equity-perspective-throughout-the-research-process>

Table 4 - Crosswalk of the Standards for Recognition with Contributing Sources and Examples

1) Strengths- and Solutions-Focused Narratives: This content centers the strengths of communities and/or identifies solutions to the opportunity gaps faced by those communities. Indications could include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
1a	The content highlights the resilience and/or assets of communities facing educational opportunity gaps.	"Efforts to highlight strengths and assets, without presuming deficits, are especially important in research that focuses on children and youth and involves a positive youth development framework that emphasizes such strengths and assets." (Child Trends, p. 11)	Research investigating the effects of an indigenous language immersion program on Native youth's sense of self-efficacy.
1b	The content describes an evidence-based strategy aimed at closing opportunity gaps.	"The goal of working toward equitable outcomes (outcomes for all children and families regardless of race/ethnicity) should guide researchers in developing their research questions. Questions should intentionally focus on advancing racial and ethnic equity and/or minimizing harmful effects for communities of color" (Child Trends, p. 15)	A tool describing research-based practices for addressing student food insecurity during summer break.

Table 4 (continued) - Crosswalk of the Standards for Recognition with Contributing Sources and Examples

2) Honoring Culture and Diverse Identities: This content honors the nuances of identities that are often homogenized and/or the distinctiveness of cultural traditions that often go unacknowledged. Indications could include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
2a	The content disaggregates information beyond high-level racial and ethnic categories.	“Whenever possible, researchers should disaggregate by subgroups (by nativity, country of origin, citizenship status, etc.) to uncover the heterogeneity of experiences between and within racial and ethnic groups.” (p. 20, Child Trends, 2019)	Research findings are presented separately for students identifying as African American and those identifying as Afro-Caribbean.
2b	The content—either during its development or in its published form—integrates culturally responsive practices.	“It is important for researchers to maintain the cultural rigor of the design by ensuring that the community respects and trusts the design and type(s) of data collected. For example, well-designed and well-executed randomized control trials (RCTs) are effective in determining the impacts of a program...[and] this design makes sense unless the community suffers disproportionately from social, health, and/or psychological issues. This issue explains why some community organizations and schools can be wary about participating in RCTs” (p. 16, Child Trends, 2019)	Allowing participants to give verbal—rather than written—consent when conducting a program evaluation in a community where oral traditions are common and valued.
2c	The content analyzes intersecting identities resulting in differentiated guidance or conclusions.	“[R]esearchers cannot assume that all people of the same race/ethnicity have the same experience. Thus, it is important to examine subgroups by additional factors, such as immigration or refugee status, gender, neighborhood...” (p. 20, Child Trends, 2019)	A tool presenting attendance percentages for students with IEPs recognizes how these percentages differ when considering their race/ethnicity as well as their socioeconomic status.

Table 4 (continued) - Crosswalk of the Standards for Recognition with Contributing Sources and Examples

3) Representation and Shared Ownership: This content includes those affected by its topic area as authors, cocreators, or active participants. Indications could include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
3a	Authors share characteristics and/or lived experiences with the communities addressed in the content.	"...a racially diverse team of researchers, whose members differ in their lived experiences and cultural beliefs, can contribute multiple perspectives to the study design, process, and findings. To function well, a diverse team needs an environment in which staff are encouraged to apply their own life experiences and share their unique perspectives." (p. 17, Child Trends, 2019)	A qualitative study on the experiences of transgender high schoolers of color is conducted by a researcher who themselves identifies as a transgender person of color.
3b	Those affected by the content's topic area were included in the design process—such as when developing research questions.	"Before establishing a study design, researchers should seek community input on the purposes, goals, and impacts that are relevant to them, and compare those to the research project goals." (p. 16, Child Trends, 2019)	A group of teachers conduct action research projects on innovative practices to improving student engagement. They share their findings in an end-of-year report.
3c	The content was subjected to feedback from members of target communities prior to publishing.	"Community members, stakeholders, and research participants should feel that they are the authors of their story and be empowered to share their stories through mediums that are most beneficial to them. These individuals should review findings before they are widely released so they can make recommendations about the language that should be used in reports, presentations for community members, and other mediums." (p. 24, Child Trends, 2019)	A tool addressing how districts can better accommodate students observing Muslim holidays is vetted by members of the Muslim community.

Table 4 (continued) - Crosswalk of the Standards for Recognition with Contributing Sources and Examples

4) Inclusive Communication. This content communicates in ways that promote inclusion and belonging. Indications could include, but are not limited to, the following:			
	Indicator	Contributing Sources	Example
4a	The content adheres to accessibility conventions and elements of universal design.	"Take audience accessibility into consideration. E.g., if your audience needs larger font for visual impairment, continue to use Segoe UI in a larger size consistently." (p. 71, OSPI Culturally Responsive Style Guide)	Utilizing colors distinguishable by individuals with colorblindness or integration of alt text captions with images.
4b	The content is offered in multiple languages.		A research paper with an associated abstract provided in English, Spanish, and Tagalog.
4c	The content uses terminology to describe communities and individuals which has been chosen by the community or individual for themselves.	"Questions to ask yourself: What language does the community use to discuss the issue or concern?" (p. 11, Child Trends, 2019)	Intentionally using identity-first language—such as the phrase "disabled student"—based on input and preferences of disabled students.

Conclusion and Additional Information

Thank you for consulting *A Guide to the Resource Clearinghouse's Content Review Protocol*! We hope that this document has helped clarify the review process and the standards used throughout it.

This guide is one of several materials accompanying the Resource Clearinghouse's redesign. To learn more, please consider consulting the following:

FAQ One-Pagers. These one-pagers address fundamental questions about the Clearinghouse in a brief, visually appealing way. Some of the one-pagers offer simplified answers to questions addressed in this document (e.g., how is the Clearinghouse's content reviewed?). Others feature information beyond the scope of this document but relevant to the clearinghouse overall, such as examples of how the clearinghouse could be used by OSPI staff, researchers, and practitioners.

Theory of Change. The Clearinghouse's theory of change is a visual articulation of how it seeks to make an impact. It engages in certain activities, produces certain outputs, and elicits certain outcomes—all in an effort to realize its two primary goals. The theory of change also recognizes various assumption that must be met for the Clearinghouse to function as planned.

Collections & Recognition Catalog. This document is designed to (1) briefly introduce the Clearinghouse's new "collections" feature, and (2) act as a catalog of all content featured in these collections. Our goal is for readers to come away with a better understanding of why we have developed collections as well as why certain pieces of content have been featured in them.

Still have questions? Feel free to send them to RCCteam@k12.wa.us.

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