

**Best practices in public administration:
How do we know them? How can we use them?**

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Abstract: This paper examines the growing demand for best practices in public policy and administration. It describes different approaches to the identification and development of best practices, analyzes the implications of multiple agency and policy goals for the use of best practices, and specifies factors likely to affect the use of best practices. The paper draws attention to limitations in various approaches to best practices identification and transfer. Recognizing that practices are transferred widely from one setting to another, it suggests limitations on validity and reliability of best practices identification. It suggests that best practices must be adapted to the environment in which they will be implemented and that there is continuing tension between best practices focusing on effectiveness and efficiency and those focusing on public engagement and democratic governance.