

# U.S. Department of Labor EVALUATION PLAN

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2023

FISCAL YEARS

2024



U.S. Department of Labor

# Summary

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is committed to making evidence-informed decisions to support America’s workers. To bolster these efforts, on an annual basis DOL’s Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) develops an evaluation plan to target evaluation resources on areas of strategic importance. The DOL Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Years 2023–2024 describes significant evaluation activities that CEO will undertake before the end of fiscal year 2024. It does not include all of DOL’s evaluation efforts, and DOL may identify additional significant evaluations during this time period.

The evaluation and research activities outlined in this document apply the most rigorous methods possible and will generate evidence to inform policymaking decisions across DOL and among other federal decision-makers. Planned research reflects the Department’s Strategic Plan priorities, statutory requirements for evaluations, and priorities identified by DOL sub-agencies in their learning agendas that are best addressed through program evaluation. This plan also fulfills legislative mandates outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 and in Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act).



# I. Introduction

As outlined in [DOL's Evaluation Policy](#), the importance of DOL's mission demands continual innovation and improvement. Evaluating the effectiveness of our programs and activities is essential to this goal. Evaluations build high-quality evidence to help make DOL's efforts as effective as possible.

On behalf of the Department, CEO sponsors evaluation research related to the programs, policies, and enforcement activities that DOL sub-agencies oversee across the United States and internationally. CEO directly funds and oversees research activities and collaborates with DOL sub-agencies to design and conduct evaluations that they sponsor. For all evaluations, CEO leverages protocols and practices to adhere to DOL Evaluation Policy principles of **rigor, relevance, transparency, independence, and ethics**.

The *DOL Evaluation Plan* includes studies related to two legislative requirements:

- As permitted by the [Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022](#), the plan includes studies that are directly sponsored by CEO using fiscal year (FY) 2022 set-aside funding that is available for evaluations of programs administered by specific DOL subagencies. These studies will be initiated by CEO prior to September 30, 2023, and DOL will notify Congress of their intent and the purpose of transferring set-aside funds to CEO at least 15 days prior the transfer; and
- As required by Title I of the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#) (Evidence Act) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandums M-19-23 and M-21-27, the plan includes significant evaluations that the Department plans to initiate through FY 2024. Since the *DOL Evaluation Plan* is issued annually and lists projects to be launched in the next two fiscal years, it should be noted that some projects included in this plan for FY 2023–2024 were also listed in the previous year's plan covering FY 2022–2023.

The *DOL Evaluation Plan* communicates planned significant studies that may be funded through many sources, such as setting aside a portion of DOL funds for evaluations. The studies in this plan are deemed 'significant' based on their alignment with the priorities of the agency and administration, including those outlined in [DOL's FY 2022–2026 Strategic Plan](#), and not on the basis of their dollar value or timeline to completion. Not all evaluation efforts conducted at DOL are included in the *DOL Evaluation Plan*, and some studies proposed may be dependent on future appropriations.

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<sup>1</sup>Division H, Title I, Section 107 of Public Law 117-103, (pg. 437) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, authorizes the Secretary of Labor to reserve not more than 0.75 percent from specific budget accounts for transfer to and use by the Office of the Chief Evaluation Officer for departmental program evaluation. It also requires Congressional notification of the intent to transfer funds and the planned projects.



## A Collaborative Development Process

All studies included in the *DOL Evaluation Plan* are developed collaboratively with sub-agency leaders and program experts, departmental leadership, and DOL's Evidence Officials, including the Chief Evaluation Officer, the Chief Data Officer, the Statistical Official, and the Director of the Performance Management Center.

As the studies outlined in this document move forward, CEO will continue to collaborate with individuals and groups within and outside of DOL that have an interest in or may be impacted by CEO's studies, such as DOL program offices, DOL grantees, program participants, members of affected communities, researchers and academics with expertise in the topic of study, industry groups, or other groups as appropriate to the study. CEO will continue to follow its Evaluation Policy to ensure that evaluations adhere to the most rigorous methods possible and produce independent and credible findings that are relevant for decision-makers.

DOL sub-agencies with projects included in this plan include:

- *Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB)*
- *Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA)*
- *Employment and Training Administration (ETA)*
- *Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA)*
- *Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)*
- *Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)*
- *Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)*
- *Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (OASAM)*
- *Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)*
- *Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP)*
- *Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)*
- *Wage and Hour Division (WHD)*
- *Women's Bureau (WB)*



## Dissemination

CEO works to continuously improve its communication products and platforms to inform diverse audiences interested in labor-related research, including policymakers, program practitioners and decision makers, researchers, and the public. CEO's website and quarterly newsletter provide various stakeholders with access to timely, relevant information to explore labor topics and the growing evidence base. CEO is also working to translate and promote findings using research summaries to make research accessible for technical and non-technical users. In the spirit of transparency, DOL posts completed evaluations and research online. To view more details about ongoing and completed studies, please visit the [CEO website](#), or to receive timely updates, please subscribe to our quarterly newsletter by emailing us at [chiefevaluationoffice@dol.gov](mailto:chiefevaluationoffice@dol.gov).

## Challenges

In addition to specific evaluation information below, the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) guidance requires information about the anticipated challenges to implementing these studies. Challenges for DOL evaluation research vary widely by design and methods, but often include issues with accessing and linking federal and state administrative datasets, recruitment of sufficient sample sizes to allow for rigorous research designs, identification of suitable counterfactual conditions and non-program participants, and attrition of participants or beneficiaries from intended DOL program investments. CEO works closely with independent federal contractors, DOL agency staff, state and local partners, and other federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and U.S. Department of Education (ED), to forecast and overcome challenges to individual studies.





# II. Research and Evaluation Projects

This section describes the research and evaluation projects CEO intends to initiate during FY 2023 and FY 2024.

**Table 1. Research and Evaluation Projects to be Initiated in FY 2023 and FY 2024**

Note: Projects are listed alphabetically by DOL agency, then project title.

*\* Denotes a project that will be funded, at least in part, with FY 2022 dollars transferred to CEO through the set aside process and initiated through FY 2023.*

 Project 1*	 Additional Information
<p><b>Title:</b> <b>Identifying Impediments to Effective Access and Enforcement of Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) Rights of Underserved Communities [EBSA].</b> EBSA would like to identify obstacles to underserved groups accessing employee benefits, including: jobs that do not qualify for benefits due to hourly thresholds; individuals not vesting into benefit plans because of insufficient tenure and awareness of vesting rules; individuals not accessing vested terminated benefits because employers were unable to keep accurate records once an employee separated; participants and beneficiaries failing to access benefits due to disparate treatment for conditions impacting underserved communities, particularly those with substance use and mental health conditions; and employees failing to understand their rights, such as electronic disclosures, due to language barriers and lack of access.</p> <p><b>Priority Research Question(s):</b>            What issues are preventing underserved populations of workers from participating and receiving ERISA benefits and protections? To what extent does lack of awareness of their rights prevent vulnerable populations from gaining ERISA benefits and protections? What mechanisms could best address these issues? How can EBSA leverage its existing programs to address these issues?</p>	<p><b>Est. Start &amp; Duration:</b> FY23 (2 years)</p> <p><b>Data Sources:</b> Household data and program data identifying industries and/or geographic areas with high populations of underserved communities; EBSA program and enforcement data; Other TBD data.</p> <p><b>Methods/Approach:</b> Analysis of participation and vesting requirements of benefit plans to identify requirements that may disproportionately affect underserved communities; identification of conditions with multiple treatment plans and look at variation by demographic groups for treatment and outcomes; analysis of plans that have been identified as not keeping accurate, updated records on the location of separated workers to see if their insufficient record-keeping methods disparately impact underserved communities.</p> <p><b>Anticipated Challenges &amp; Solutions</b></p> <p>Currently, program data on benefits by demographic group is unavailable and therefore relies on survey data or proxies, which can make identifying and addressing barriers for these groups difficult.</p>



 Project 2\*

 Additional Information

**Title: Advancing Equity in Apprenticeship Programs [ETA].** ETA seeks to build evidence on identifying effective pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship strategies that help increase the participation of underrepresented populations and promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (3 years)

**Data Sources:** ETA administrative data; site visit interviews; possibly wage data, unemployment data, and surveys

**Methods/Approach:** Synthesis; meta-analysis; descriptive study, impact evaluability assessment

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What strategies have been effective in increasing the enrollment, retention, and completion of underrepresented populations, in registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs? What pre-apprenticeship strategies have been effective in increasing articulation into a registered apprenticeship, as part of a career pathway? What are promising practices that merit bringing to scale?

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

None identified.

 Project 3\*

 Additional Information

**Title: Sectoral Strategies and Career Pathways Portfolio [ETA].** ETA is interested in developing studies that will increase understanding of how the public workforce system can conduct effective employer engagement and build evidence to support the features of robust sector strategies.

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** Meta-analysis, possible surveys

**Methods/Approach:** Scan, synthesis, adding research questions and standardized data collection across existing or new studies, impact evaluability assessment, impact study

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are effective employer engagement strategies in the public workforce system? What is the prevalence and the contribution of employer-provided training to create positive outcomes for public workforce systems participants, especially for entry-level, lower-wage workers? How are employer engagement strategies incentivized, organized and implemented through the workforce system and sector partnerships, which include employers, labor organizations, educational institutions, and other community partners? To what extent are effective sector partnerships implemented through the workforce system? How can these strategies be replicated and brought to scale? What are the impacts of sector-based training on participant employment and earnings impacts? In particular, how does participation in sector-based training affect labor market outcomes for underserved groups?

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

It will take time to identify common strategies being implemented across locations. It will also be important to determine if oversubscription or course waiting lists may exist and, if not, to explore alternative approaches to determining impacts, such as including sites within the same community college system as control groups. One possible approach to examining impacts would be to stagger the implementation so that some sites would wait 1–2 years to implement, which would require that we give them some incentive to do so. The study will need to account for similar employer partnerships not included in the grant funding.



**Project 4\***

**Additional Information**

**Title: Unemployment Insurance (UI) Labor Research [ETA].** Through a competitive research grant to a public academic institution(s), DOL will launch UI-related research project(s). This project's mission is to build rigorous UI research with policy relevance. The project will engage in data-sharing partnerships with at least one state UI agency, but will also explore the potential for additional state partnerships.

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (4 years)

**Data Sources:** TBD depending on research awards, administrative data

**Methods/Approach:** Academic grants

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

Establishing data-sharing agreements between the researchers and state(s) may be complex; DOL will facilitate discussions to support the partnerships and data sharing.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the indicators of access and use of UI benefits, especially for underserved populations? How can the long-term impact of UI benefits on workers, local communities, and the economy be measured? What measures could be used to assess the impact on workers and communities of policy differences in UI systems across states and/or over time, particularly for underserved populations?

**Project 5**

**Additional Information**

**Title: Examining Case Management and Youth Services [ETA].** ETA seeks to understand the landscape of professional development opportunities for youth-serving staff and examine the key elements of effective case management/career coaching for youth, which can form the basis of professional development opportunities.

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY24 (4 years)

**Data Sources:** Interviews, site visits, literature scan, administrative data

**Methods/Approach:** Data analytics; implementation study; impact evaluability assessment. Potential impact study

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

It may be difficult to determine the effectiveness of specific service strategies or program components. We would first need to identify a model or strategy to study, which might be difficult since sites are implementing different models. It may be hard to conduct a rigorous impact study since it would require some sites to withhold their implementation. We may want to consider studying the offering of professional development or rigorous curriculum to case managers/career coaches to determine if we can identify a strong professional development program.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the key competencies, skills, and most effective practices required to conduct strong case management/career coaching for youth service delivery? How can ETA best support the professional development of youth service providers to help youth meet their educational/employment goals?





 Project 6

 Additional Information

**Title: Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) Grants Evaluation [ETA].** ETA is collaborating with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to deploy an evidence-informed workforce development initiative to advance First Step Act (FSA) implementation and reduce recidivism risk in the reentering federal prisoner population. This initiative will deliver workforce development services to prisoners, continuing with an intensive transition model and ending with a transition to local service providers as prisoners are released.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

To what extent are prisoner outcomes (recidivism, employment, quality jobs, earnings/wages, etc.) impacted by the type, intensity, and duration of workforce development service provision?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY22 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** Interviews, site visits, administrative data

**Methods/Approach:** Implementation study; impact study

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

There are challenges to conducting an impact study in this setting and with this population. One challenge is making sure grantees are implementing a similar model across the various sites. One potential solution is to develop a menu of strategies that grantees would be required to implement in subsequent rounds of this grant program. Another challenge is getting Department of Justice (DOJ)/ Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) criminal justice data, which is a long and tedious process. DOL is working to build relationships with the DOJ/BOP and has contractor expertise in getting this data.

 Project 7

 Additional Information

**Title: Job Corps Study [ETA].** ETA is interested in understanding the implementation of Job Corps services as well as outcomes for Job Corps participants. The study will explore partnerships, models, and components of Job Corps services, such as career pathways with businesses, local workforce boards, and community colleges; and associated student outcomes such as employment, credential attainment, earnings, and other outcomes of interest. This study will result in an evaluation design for estimating impacts of the Job Corps program.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the target populations for which the Job Corps program—a residential training program with a high dosage of services—is the most effective strategy to improve educational and employment outcomes? What recruitment strategies could be tested to increase uptake of the program for these groups? What partnerships show promise in promoting and advancing equity in enrollment, training, and employment? What effective strategies and support methods with employers and local partners exist to increase job placement and the employment retention rate of Job Corps participants? What are participants' employment, earnings, and education outcomes? How do these results compare to the cost-benefit analysis or cost per participant of other high dosage training programs with a similar mix of participants, and what may account for any differences?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY 2024 (4 years)

**Data Sources:** Interviews, site visits, administrative data, and survey data

**Methods/Approach:** Implementation study, data analytics, impact study feasibility analysis and impact evaluation design planning

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

None identified.



**Title: Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) Profiling and Participant Selection Models [ETA].** DOL continues to support RESEA program evaluations and the provision of technical assistance (TA) to help states meet RESEA program requirements and to better understand effective models and program components that work, under what conditions they work, and for whom they work. For example, DOL is building capacity within states for high quality evaluation activities with technical assistance to states who are conducting impact evaluations.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

Is the delivery of RESEA services using remote methods as effective as delivering RESEA services in-person? Does the provision of more intensive RESEA services improve outcomes? Since some participants in the RESEA program are selected for participation based on models used by states to determine which workers are most likely to exhaust unemployment insurance benefits, like the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WPRS) model, what are the evidence-based and most promising models that states can use for selecting participants? Which variables and data structures best identify participants that benefit from participation in these programs? For state-led evaluations, are these implemented based on widely accepted evaluation standards? How can findings from one state’s evaluation be reviewed for rigor and quality, and shared with other states for broader applicability?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** Interviews, focus groups, administrative data

**Methods/Approach:** Data analytics; evaluation TA to state agencies conducting impact studies; impact evaluability assessment. Potential impact study, paired with an implementation study. Evidence review with additional approaches to be developed for dissemination of promising strategies with states and practitioners. Additionally, models will be developed that estimate the likelihood of exhaustion and/or related outcomes account for market conditions, demographics, and subgroups.

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

For WPRS model specifications, local market information may or may not have explanatory value. The model(s) will need to appropriately account for local market conditions and correlations with other covariates.



**Title: Strengthening America’s Safety Net for Workers: Lessons Learned from Unemployment Insurance (UI) Programs During the Pandemic [ETA].** One of ETA’s priorities is to strengthen and protect unemployment insurance benefits available to jobless workers. This study will focus on lessons learned from the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, which provided temporary income support to individuals not covered by the regular UI program, such as self-employed or gig economy workers or individuals in covered employment who had not achieved sufficient earnings to qualify for regular UI.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What is the feasibility and what are the considerations associated with establishing a permanent program that provides temporary income support to self-employed and other workers who do not qualify for coverage under the regular UI program? What are the lessons learned and outcomes of temporary UI programs, especially the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation programs, which were created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? What changes are needed to the Extended Benefits program to ensure an effective and timely response to downturns in the economic cycle?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (3 years)

**Data Sources:** Administrative data, secondary research, other data collection TBD

**Methods/Approach:** Feasibility assessment, scan, descriptive analysis; quantitative analysis

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

None identified.

**Title: Strengthening Community College Grant Program Evaluation [ETA].** ETA is interested in rigorously evaluating the Strengthening Community College (SCC) grants to identify capacity-building and/or systems change strategies that help reduce equity gaps in employment outcomes. ETA also seeks to build evidence on identifying effective strategies with employers and within workforce programs that have effectively reduced barriers to employment and advancement for underrepresented populations.

**Priority Research Questions:**

What employer partnership strategies and other practices are proving effective for community colleges to identify short-term credentials or short-term training curriculum that lead to job placement? What short-term credentials or training for in-demand jobs are being offered as a result of SCC funding, and what programs are not eligible to be covered with Pell grants? How and to what extent are community colleges developing or changing curriculum to meet the needs of employers? What community college capacity-building or systems-change strategies show promise in reducing equity gaps in workforce outcomes for students? Specifically, what strategies from the SCC grants show promise in reducing equity gaps? What strategies might be effective? What impact do SCC components or strategies have on participant outcomes related to employment, education, and other outcomes?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** ETA administrative data, third-party evaluator (TPE) data; site visit interviews; grantee surveys; secondary data

**Methods/Approach:** Synthesis/meta-analysis, implementation, impact study feasibility assessment, evaluability of an impact study examining the impact of SCC grants on training participant outcomes (and in particular on reducing equity gaps in workforce outcomes), impact study (if feasible), descriptive/journey mapping, customer experience, synthesis of 3rd party evaluations, evaluation TA

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

Working with TPEs for access to their evaluation data may be difficult. An impact study may require studying investments made by DOL in FY24, which is contingent on future appropriations.



**Title: Strengthening Employer Partnerships and Reducing Barriers to Employment for Underrepresented Populations [ETA].** ETA seeks to build evidence to identify effective strategies with employers and within workforce programs that have effectively reduced barriers to employment and advancement for underrepresented populations. Similarly, ETA is interested in understanding state and local strategies for addressing the priority of service requirements for adult participants in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What strategies are being used by workforce programs to reduce barriers to employment and advancement for those from underrepresented populations and populations with significant barriers to employment? In particular, what specific supportive services are most promising and/or impactful in reducing barriers to employment and advancement for those from underrepresented populations and populations with significant barriers to employment? What strategies are being used in partnership with employers to address barriers to employment, training, and advancement? How are states and local areas implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) priority of service requirements to provide services to those most in need, including individuals with barriers to employment? Are there promising policies or practices in this area?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (3 years)

**Data Sources:** ETA administrative data; site visit interviews

**Methods/Approach:** Synthesis/meta-analysis, roundtables, qualitative data collection

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

It may be difficult to obtain employer and partner engagement in the data collection and to identify causal impacts.

**Title: Studying Longer Term Outcomes in H-1B-Funded and Other Employment and Training Initiatives [ETA].** ETA is interested in building the evidence base on the longer-term employment outcomes of participants in ETA initiatives.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the long-term labor market outcomes of apprentices that have received services through the H-1B-funded initiatives, including the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) and participants from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program? How do earnings outcomes and trajectories vary by occupation and participant characteristics? How, if at all, do the long-term labor market outcomes differ for those who complete apprenticeships and those who do not?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** Administrative program data, wage data, and unemployment data to estimate employment outcomes

**Methods/Approach:** Outcomes analysis

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

It may be difficult to conduct extensive sub-group analysis.



**Project 13\***

**Additional Information**

**Title: Improving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) within the Federal Workforce [federal initiative with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)].** In partnership with OPM, DOL will support a rigorous evaluation of strategies aimed at improving DEIA within the Federal workforce. DOL will lead this evaluation in close collaboration with OPM and possibly other agencies.

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (3 years)

**Data Sources:** Federal administrative records, potentially original data collection

**Methods/Approach:** Qualitative and quantitative methods

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

Funding for an expanded study covering possibly multiple federal agencies was not included in FY23 appropriations, so DOL may not be able to pursue an expanded study.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What strategies can be used to better recruit, retain, and engage a diverse federal workforce, drawing from existing efforts as well as relevant models from other sectors? How can DOL, and potentially other federal agencies, best assess the impact of these strategies on workers and agencies?

**Project 14**

**Additional Information**

**Title: Analysis of Changing Conditions for Vulnerable Populations [multiple DOL agencies].** This is a feasibility study/foundational fact-finding effort which examines how data and statistical analysis might be used to better understand the changing conditions for different worker populations that vary based on demographics, geography, and wages. Initial analysis has been illustrative but not comprehensive. This work will analyze a broader set of vulnerable populations and characteristics for specific agencies or programs.

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (2 years)

**Data Sources:** American Community Survey data, other administrative data

**Methods/Approach:** Descriptive statistics

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

None identified.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What types of datasets are readily available to better understand the changing conditions for vulnerable/at-risk populations? What types of considerations should be made when identifying datasets (such as whether survey design issues might affect interpretation of results for small subgroups)? What types of trend analyses might be most useful for specific agencies and/or programs?



 Project 15\*

 Additional Information

**Title: Worker Protection Research Center [multiple DOL agencies].** Through a research grant to one or more academic institutions, DOL will launch a worker protection research center, which will produce data and research that can support common themes and goals across different DOL worker protection agencies in addition to research focused on individual agencies. The research center will foster more rigorous scientific analyses, training, and partnerships with community organizations and state and local governments in support of DOL's worker protection agencies.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

Potential research questions include: What strategies and approaches can be used to ensure workers understand their rights and can assert them with less fear of retaliation? What strategies and approaches can be used to identify, investigate, and refer potential workplace violations to appropriate partner agencies, including state agencies, and ensure that employers are aware of the law and equipped with tools for compliance? What are emerging economic and workforce trends that affect worker protection issues? How do we effectively measure these trends, and what are emerging strategies to address them? What is the relative effectiveness of different compliance assistance and enforcement approaches?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (4 years)

**Data Sources:** Existing administrative data from DOL worker protection agencies and data collected in potential prospective studies.

**Methods/Approach:** Mixed methods, including original descriptive statistics and causal analysis.

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

Resistance to data sharing, which can be addressed by offering secure data sharing environments through CEO's restricted use program.

 Project 16

 Additional Information

**Title: Advancing Equity in Hiring and Retaining Federal Staff [OASAM].** The Department is engaging in a hiring surge. This is an opportunity to study how to advance equity in hiring, accommodating, and retaining federal staff and apply these practices moving forward. OASAM is working with CEO to analyze its data to identify what barriers the Department has to retaining underrepresented groups.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

Which types (by skill set, GS grade, demographics, job series) of employees are exiting DOL? Are certain types exiting at different rates?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (1 years)

**Data Sources:** Administrative HR Connect data

**Methods/Approach:** Survival analysis (quantitative methods) for exploratory data analysis

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

None identified.



 Project 17

 Additional Information

**Title: Identifying Areas for Financial Data to Assist Agencies in Evidence Building [OCFO].** OCFO is interested in exploring how to use financial data to assist evidence building around the department. OCFO is interested in learning about how other CFO Act agencies use of financial data and non-financial data interact to optimize operations as well as how they can assist agencies around DOL better utilize their data systems.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

How can DOL agencies use financial data to make better decisions? Can predictive models be established to identify areas at risk and notify staff when action is needed? How do other CFO Act agencies manage and monitor their financial processes?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY24 (2 years)

**Data Sources:** OCFO administrative data

**Methods/Approach:** Linking OCFO administrative data with other DOL agency data

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

OCFO and other agencies use different formats, names, etc. Data will have to be processed and merged.

 Project 18

 Additional Information

**Title: Evaluation of the Equitable Transition Models (ETM) [ODEP].** The Equitable Transition Models (ETM) will target low-income youth with disabilities who face challenges transitioning to employment and economic security. They are more likely to be unemployed or have low earnings as adults, be people of color, live in underserved areas, be disconnected from services and supports, and be involved in the justice system. To address this challenge, ETM will provide comprehensive, coordinated services to help low-income youth with disabilities transition to employment. If funds become available to conduct the demonstration, ODEP seeks to partner with CEO to procure and implement a rigorous evaluation of the demonstration.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the different ETM models and how are they operationalized? Are there variations in the model across sites or target populations? What types of youth are served, what services do they receive, and for how long? What outcomes occur and at what point in time? What potentially promising or innovative services or management tools are developed by the service providers?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** ETM administrative data and survey data

**Methods/Approach:** Feasibility assessment, implementation or formative evaluation, outcome evaluation

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

Data quality of administrative data may be a challenge, which can be monitored closely and remedied. Starting the evaluation in FY23 will be contingent on securing funds for the demonstration through FY23 appropriations.



**Title: Assessing Technology-Driven Employment Systems [OFCCP].** Technology is transforming how employers hire and make employment decisions. Employers are increasingly reliant upon machine learning and algorithms to recruit, hire, and assess workers. OFCCP is well positioned to promote safeguards when technology is used in hiring and in other employment decisions. Workers are often unable to file a complaint about these technologies due to substantial asymmetries in workers' ability to access information on how employment decisions are made.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

How can government contractors promote equal opportunity when they use algorithmic selection and decision-making systems? How can DOL ensure meaningful supervision and accountability to promote non-discrimination in the use of these systems? What types of technology-driven/artificial intelligence (AI) employment systems are different employers and industries using and for what positions? What information related to artificial intelligence systems should employers retain and have available for inspection? To what extent do existing AI models manage bias, and to what extent are they explainable, interpretable, and safe?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (3 years)

**Data Sources:** Existing frameworks within the federal government (such as the National Institute of Standards and Technologies (NIST) AI Risk Management Framework, existing tools and models in the private sector or academia.

**Methods/Approach:** This will be an exploratory or descriptive study, ideally resulting in the development of an assessment tool.

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

It may be difficult to obtain training data for the design, development and testing of a high-quality assessment tool tailored to meet OFCCP's needs.

**Title: National Construction Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) Pilot Program (NCSP) Evaluation [OSHA].** SHARP is an achievement recognition program administered by OSHA On-Site Consultation Program. SHARP recognizes the employers that operate exemplary safety and health practices and programs. Historically, participation in SHARP was only available to single, fixed worksites. NCSP allows the On-Site Consultation Program to work with small businesses in the construction industry that were previously not eligible for SHARP participation. OSHA will use NCSP data to determine if the pilot program should be included in the general criteria for SHARP participation.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

How effective is NCSP in promoting safe and healthful work practices by small businesses in the construction industry, resulting in lower incident rates compared to the national and state averages?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (2 years)

**Data Sources:** OSHA Information System (OIS) and On-Site Consultation Program

**Methods/Approach:** Data analysis

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

The limited number of NCSP participants and availability of appropriate data.



 Project 21

 Additional Information

**Title: VETS Data Analytical Framework [VETS].**  
The goal of this effort is to advance racial equity and additional supports for underserved veteran communities by maximizing the use of internal and external data. This study will strengthen the VETS' data analytical framework by identifying data-related needs, which is intended to derive more sophisticated data analysis. It will also examine existing data processes and data quality to identify areas for improvement. The resulting data analyses may also inform partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and other institutions serving underserved communities when possible.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the available internal and external data sources that can be used to answer priority DEIA questions to improve veterans' outcomes? What are the tools and training needed to process and maximize use of that data? Do existing forms/data collection (such as e-forms) capture data consistent with non-Transition Assistance Program services administered by VETS? What types of data can be linked to better understand the TSMs experience and access to services?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY24 (3 years)

**Data Sources:** VETS data, DOL data, external federal and private sector data

**Methods/Approach:** Environmental and literature scan, data linking and data analysis

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

None identified.

 Project 22\*

 Additional Information

**Title: Study on Veteran Participation in American Job Centers (AJC) [VETS].** The goal of this study is to improve VETS programs by collecting and using more customer experience data and employment outcomes from veterans who access services from AJC.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the participation rates of veteran jobseekers in workforce programs offered by AJCs, and how do they compare with other subpopulations? Do some AJCs have higher rates of veteran participation than other AJCs that are located in areas of similar demographics? If so, how can these differences be explained? Do other employment outcomes differ across different demographic characteristics? Are there ways to improve services to target populations by updating policies or standard operating procedures (SOP), or applying behavioral science to existing forms, communications, or procedures?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** Administrative data, qualitative data, potentially survey data

**Methods/Approach:** Customer experience, qualitative and quantitative methods

 Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

None identified.



**Title: Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Impact Study [VETS].** This impact study will examine the longer-term outcomes of transitioning service members (TSMs) after TAP completion and military separation. It will also provide additional exploratory analysis of employment trends by TSM characteristics, which may include underserved populations throughout VETS studies wherever possible, including but not limited to Black, Hispanic, and justice-involved veterans. The resulting data analyses can also inform partnerships with HBCUs and other institutions serving underserved communities when possible.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are the longer-term impacts of TAP on transitioning service members' earnings and employment outcomes? What demographic and military characteristics are associated with better reintegration and employment outcomes for veterans? What are the earnings and labor force participation patterns of military veterans over time? What are the unemployment receipt patterns of military veterans over time?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (5 years)

**Data Sources:** DOD/Army, wage data, and unemployment data to estimate earnings and employment outcomes

**Methods/Approach:** Quasi-experimental analysis; exploratory analysis. Longitudinal data analysis to follow TSMs after TAP/separation.

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

Will explore the feasibility and challenges of using other data sources, such as Longitudinal Employer-Household Data, with the study.

**Title: Childcare Prices and Maternal Employment in Local Areas [WB].** This study will use the National Database of Childcare Prices (NDCP), a new, comprehensive federal source of childcare prices at the county level in the United States, to evaluate how county-level childcare prices are associated with county-level maternal employment rates. Initially, the study will rely on publicly available American Community Survey (ACS) data. A potential second phase of the study could explore the relationship between childcare prices and mothers' employment using individual-level employment records.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What is the relationship between childcare prices in local areas and mothers' employment?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY23 (1 years)

**Data Sources:** National Database of Childcare Prices (NDCP) and American Community Survey (ACS) data

**Methods/Approach:** The study will use descriptive statistics and regression modeling. Regression models will control for county-level variables associated with women's employment and childcare prices, including median income, men's employment, occupational distribution, and county population size.

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

At this time, we only have access to publicly available ACS data. Access to restricted county-level microdata is required to analyze individual-level employment records. This would entail securing access from the U.S. Census Bureau through an interagency agreement, which could take several years. Additionally, the NDCP has not yet been published so this could result in additional delays to the study's completion.



**Title: Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA) Evaluation [WB].** FEPLA provides 12 weeks of paid parental leave to certain federal employees in connection with the birth of an employee’s child or placement of a child with an employee for adoption or foster care. The law went into effect on October 1, 2020. Anticipated benefits of the law include increased time for bonding between parent and child, improved health of the birth mother and child, preservation of annual and sick leave balances for future family needs, increased retention and engagement of the federal workforce, and a positive impact to the U.S. economy by addressing women’s declining labor force participation. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that implementing FEPLA would cost \$3.3 billion from 2021 to 2024. OPM and DOL will collaborate to answer questions surrounding the effects of FEPLA. For FY 2023, the questions will focus on short-term uptake and effects of the law and will be dependent on data availability. Future evaluation questions may be proposed in the ongoing partnership.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What are FEPLA leave taking patterns, and do those vary by employee demographics? Are leave taking patterns equitable across demographic groups? What is the effect of FEPLA on the number of days of leave taken, by leave type (e.g., FEPLA, Family and Medical Leave Act, sick leave, annual leave)? What is the effect of FEPLA on short-term retention of employees following paid parental leave? What is the effect of FEPLA on employees’ career advancement, including promotions, salary, and performance ratings? How have needs/access to paid leave changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (since our data is pre-COVID)? How can we ensure that paid leave policies take into account income, race, and gender disparities?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY22, with additional funds to be added in FY23 (2 years)

**Data Sources:** OPM and DOL will leverage existing data, including payroll data (use of paid and unpaid leaves), employee personnel status data (e.g., retention status, grade and step level, and pay rate), employee performance data (e.g., award hours or pay and performance ratings), and employee demographic data (e.g., gender, race and ethnicity, age, work schedule, agency).

**Methods/Approach:** OPM and DOL will analyze secondary administrative personnel data that OPM maintains in its Enterprise Human Resources Integration (EHRI) and Electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) databases, conducting descriptive analyses and comparisons of outcomes prior to and following implementation of FEPLA.

**Anticipated Challenges & Solutions**

(1.) Data quality and completeness. At the time that FEPLA was implemented, there were no existing payroll codes for those using this leave; this data only started being reported with routine codes more than 6 months after implementation. There are also data quality issues within the payroll data, as agencies use differing payroll systems and approaches and do not have a consistent data cleaning procedure. To address this, we are proactively reviewing and cleaning FEPLA and leave data, while also working to improve the overall quality of payroll data. (2.) Selecting the appropriate time period for comparison. For comparisons of before and after implementation of FEPLA, there are complicating factors regarding time periods for comparison, including the lack of payroll codes and the COVID-19 pandemic, which is anticipated to influence childbearing and leave taking patterns. As such, we will carefully consider the appropriate time periods for both before and after comparison and will interpret findings with caution.



**Title: Effective Targeting Strategies [WHD].** WHD seeks support in carrying out a study that will capture the range of approaches to identifying employers with certain types of violations, the results of those cases, and how they were developed. The study would provide a systematic assessment of promising practices and challenges and establish an understanding of the variety of available approaches. Depending on the timeframe for the study, investigations could collect additional data on employer and worker characteristics, which would strengthen the analysis. The study could support improved strategies within initiatives, the development of training, and field guidance.

**Priority Research Question(s):**

What business characteristics suggest a likelihood of egregious violations requiring WHD intervention? What role do employee and/or employer demographics play in the prevalence or egregiousness of violations? What are the root causes of violations? For example, are violations largely caused by a lack of knowledge of what is required by the law or by greater labor market concerns? Which practices appear most effective at detecting certain violations? Under what conditions or circumstances do they work best? Do the answers to these questions affect the type of interventions that the agency should leverage in future efforts?

**Est. Start & Duration:** FY24 (3-5 years)

**Data Sources:** Potential employer survey, potential new data collection by WHD enforcement staff during investigations, potential external/third party data sources

**Methods/Approach:** Begin with literature review to identify existing data sources; Collect additional data during WHD investigations if necessary.

Anticipated Challenges & Solutions

Unknown or nonexistent sources for this type of data. Potential need to collect data ourselves (resource constraints).



# III. Additional Data Collection and Scoping Activities

This section describes additional data collection and research scoping activities CEO will conduct during FY 2023 and FY 2024, which may result in the identification of study topics to be included in future evaluation plans.

## Improving Customer Experiences

In FY 2023 and FY 2024, CEO and OWCP will continue collaborating on Customer Experience (CX) as a focus area that has a high potential for improving operations and perceptions of OWCP among claimants, their authorized representatives, medical providers, and others. The goal is to: (1) improve how the divisions communicate with external individuals and groups, and assist in gathering, analyzing, and then operationalizing information and data from external individuals and groups to assure that their customer experience is as effective as possible and (2) support OWCP's efforts to advance equity and better engage traditionally disenfranchised communities, including those in poverty and in particular among communities of color. This activity began in FY22 and over the next two years, DOL will continue to scope out and examine data from claimant information, inbound correspondence, and survey responses to answer the following types of research questions: What data can we cull from existing sources to better inform the division about the experience of external individuals and groups? What new data sources and tools can we develop to maximize the value of input from external individuals and groups? Once we have actionable data, what tools and methods can, and should we employ to best analyze and use that data for program improvement? What systems, tools, or changes in process should we implement once we have completed our data collection and analysis activities? How can we use the responses/feedback to engage traditionally disenfranchised communities?

## Current Population Survey (CPS) Disability Supplement

In FY 2023 and FY 2024, CEO, ODEP, and BLS will continue collaborating to revise the CPS Disability Supplement for fielding in July 2024. This supplement has previously been fielded in FY 2012, FY 2019, FY2021. The process of revising the supplement began in FY 2022 with DOL-convened listening sessions and working groups with internal and external parties interested in disability measurement issues. Over the next two years, DOL will continue finalizing the survey questions to more accurately capture the characteristics and labor market challenges of people with disabilities.



## **Additional Pre-evaluation Activities**

Throughout the year, CEO helps DOL agencies identify knowledge gaps and refine their research questions, with the goal of gathering sufficient initial information to eventually propose a discrete research study that will contribute to the labor evidence base. These pre-evaluation activities explore emerging research topics and departmental priorities as they arise. Pre-evaluation activities can include commissioning white papers, literature reviews, or convening events that bring together independent, technical and subject matter experts from outside DOL to share the most up-to-date research and resources on key topics of interest.

During FY 2023 and FY 2024, CEO (alongside the respective partnering agencies listed below in brackets) intends to conduct pre-evaluation activities to explore the following topics:

### **Measuring and Assessing Equity in Grant-Making and the Delivery of Program Services [ETA and ILAB]**

DOL agencies are interested in understanding how to assess equity in their grant-making and service-delivery processes, including the extent that grant programs are reaching underserved populations and communities. Key questions include:

- How can DOL measure the extent that its grant-making and program-service delivery processes effectively reach underserved populations and communities? What metrics should DOL consider using to assess equity in grant-making and delivery of program services, and how can DOL minimize downside risks to collecting potentially sensitive personal data, particularly in international contexts?
- What are effective tools and approaches for assessing equity, and how can these be leveraged in the diverse contexts in which DOL operates, including internationally?

### **Approaches to Measuring Worker Skills and Competencies [ETA]**

ETA is interested in learning from expert researchers about methods and approaches to measuring skills and competency changes over time, including the benefits and drawbacks of each approach/method. Key questions include:

- How can DOL best identify changes in labor market skill and competency demand over time, particularly due to the effects of automation and artificial intelligence, or economic shocks? What approaches can be used to estimate the available supply of workers with in-demand skills?
- What are promising methods or approaches to identify changes in skill and competency demand over time—particularly due to the impacts of automation and artificial intelligence, or other economic shocks?



## **Opioid Use in West Virginia and New Mexico Mining Communities [MSHA]**

Miners are at high risk of experiencing a prescription opioid-related overdose and are more likely to receive an opioid prescription for pain medication than workers in other industries. MSHA would like to explore methods to reduce opioid use and identify workplace strategies that promote and support awareness efforts. The objective is to identify gaps in existing research on the impacts of workplace hazards on workplace injury and opioid use in mining. Key questions include:

- What strategies can be used to implement opioid prevention and awareness training in the mining industry? How can DOL evaluate the effectiveness of opioid prevention and awareness training in the mining industry? What are the leading practices to transfer research knowledge to the mining industry?
- What are workplace strategies that promote and support awareness efforts? What are the underlying epidemiology problems and unique challenges regarding opioids use disorder (OUD) in rural and underserved communities?

## **Topics in Whistleblower Research [OSHA]**

Not all workers covered by section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act know about their protected rights under this section. OSHA seeks to convene various interested groups, including those representing vulnerable populations, to learn more about the barriers workers face when accessing and learning about their rights. Key questions include:

- How can OSHA expand the number of workers that understand their rights under section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act?
- What barriers prevent workers from accessing their rights under section 11(c), and how might they be addressed?
- Do workers from underserved communities face additional or different barriers?





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