

**U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office:
FY2017 Evaluation Plan
and Plan for Use of Set Aside**

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U.S. Department of Labor, Chief Evaluation Office FY Year 2017 Evaluation Plan

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) directly funds and sponsors program evaluations and also collaborates with other DOL agencies and programs to design and conduct evaluations that those agencies sponsor. The Department’s annual evaluation plan is based mainly on agencies’ Five-Year Learning Agendas updated annually, the Department’s Strategic Plan priorities, statutory requirements for evaluations, and continuing discussions with agency leadership and program staff.

In addition to funds appropriated for Departmental Program Evaluations (DPE), Division H, Title I, Section 107 of Public Law 115-31, the “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017” (the Act) 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. Evaluation set-aside funds are transferred to CEO and are available for evaluations of programs administered by the agencies specifically listed in the statute fifteen days after notifying Congress of the intent to transfer funds and the planned projects.¹

Evaluation funding (core and set aside) must be obligated within two years. The following sections present a summary of the evaluation projects projected to be funded with FY 2017 dollars and initiated in FY 2017 or FY 2018. Additionally, evaluations currently underway and continuing into FY 2017 and beyond are described.

The potential studies listed below reflect current priorities and resources, as communicated to CEO by agency leadership. Agency Learning Agendas will be reviewed in the coming months and may be revised as priorities are developed. Study designs will also be finalized based on data availability and priorities.

¹ “The accounts referred to in Section 107, subsection (a) are: “Training and Employment Services”, “Job Corps”, “Community Service Employment for Older Americans”, “State Unemployment Insurance and Employment Service Operations”, “Employee Benefits Security Administration”, “Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs”, “Wage and Hour Division”, “Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs”, “Office of Labor Management Standards”, “Occupational Safety and Health Administration”, “Mine Safety and Health Administration”, “Office of Disability Employment Policy”, funding made available to the “Bureau of International Affairs” and “Women’s Bureau” within the “Departmental Management, Salaries and Expenses” account, and “Veterans Employment and Training.”

Evaluation Plan Guiding Principles

Three principles guide the Department's overall evaluation plan and all studies initiated by the CEO:

1. Prioritize studies that focus on measuring the effectiveness of key program outputs and outcomes consistent with Departmental priorities, Agency Learning Agendas, and Congressional requirements.
2. Encourage the most rigorous evaluation designs possible to address the evaluation question of interest (often experimental designs), in a manner that is realistic given the programmatic missions/goals, programmatic maturity, programmatic context, data availability, and analytic capability.
3. Expand the use of data, evidence, and evaluation findings in DOL by supporting studies that build knowledge about and capacity to use rigorous evaluation designs and methods, and supporting the development and use of high-quality data in evaluations and other sources across the department.

Agencies' 5-year Learning Agendas identify priorities for evaluations to measure program effectiveness and progress towards goals and outcomes, use data and evidence for continuous improvement, and, in some cases, meet Congressional requirements for reports and evaluations. These evaluations focus on building evidence about program performance, outcomes, and impacts using the most rigorous methodologies possible.

Evaluation Activities Planned and Use of Set Aside*

The CEO plans to initiate or expand approximately 30 evaluation studies, many of which relate to multiple agencies within the Department. The plan reflects investments in a diverse mix of evaluations and topics and related activities designed to build evidence about what works and factors that influence or are related to Departmental programs.

***Note:** Those marked with an asterisk * will be funded partially or totally with DOL Evaluation set-aside funds.*

Skill Development Strategies

- *Multi-Site Evaluation of Career Pathways Programs in Healthcare and/or IT. This project will build on the evaluation design contract currently under way and meet the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) statutory requirement.
- *Reentry Employment Opportunities Grant Portfolio Evaluation. This study will advance the evidence on reentry employment strategies and practices used to guide training and service provision for justice-involved individuals. The study will focus on evaluating the Department's Reentry Projects.
- *H-1B Grants Evaluation. This study will evaluate innovative approaches to connect individuals to good jobs in high-demand fields under new H-1B Grants.
- *Apprenticeship Evaluation. This study will further develop the knowledge being built under the current apprenticeship study by identifying and examining innovative and promising models, practices, and partnerships to expand apprenticeship opportunities in existing and new high-growth occupations and industries.

Employment and Reemployment

- *Trade Adjustment Assistance Study. This study will continue to build evidence about TAA implementation and effectiveness.
- *Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program Evaluation. This study will continue to build evidence about RESEA implementation and effectiveness.

Employment Strategies for Targeted Groups

- *Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) Evaluation. This study will assess the effectiveness of the HVRP program on improving homeless Veterans' employment outcomes and build knowledge about program models and variation that influence these outcomes.
- *Stay and Work/Return to Work. This project will build evidence about SAW/RTW strategies, document current promising programmatic directions and characteristics of target populations, including those who may apply for or enter SSDI.
- *VETS Longitudinal Study. This project will explore options and build evidence to meet the legislative requirements of H.R. 6416 (Sec 502) - *Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016*.
- *Equal Pay Study. This study will examine extent of the gap and factors associated with it, and identify future directions for advancing the research in this area.

Continuous Improvement

- *Evaluations Using Behavioral Insights/Behavioral Economics to Improve Program Outcomes. This project will include multiple tests of behavioral strategies designed to improve program operations or outcomes in such areas as guidance, customer service, compliance assistance, and service delivery.
- *Exploratory Study on Employer Measures. This study will examine employer services and potential associated measures that support One-Stop Centers' focus on continuous improvement in serving employers. It supports the WIOA requirement for DOL to examine and establish an employer measure as an indicator for effectiveness in serving employers.

Compliance Assistance and Worker Benefits

- Stakeholder Engagement and Compliance Assistance Evaluations. Multiple studies will be conducted to examine various compliance assistance strategies and their relevance and potential application to DOL agencies in providing employers with resources for voluntary compliance. This will include tests of strategies such as stakeholder engagement, messaging campaigns, and training.

Grants and Field Capacity Building

- Labor Research and Evaluation Center Grants. This project will support research and evaluations grants to post-secondary universities to increase the capacity of universities and researchers to rigorously examine and conduct research, evaluation, and analysis related to DOL programs and priorities.
- DOL Scholars Research Program. Multiple studies will be funded to build the capacity of researchers, primarily junior academics, to conduct empirical studies and evaluations related to DOL programs.
- Advancements in Economic Modeling. This study will help to better analyze the U.S. labor market impacts of trade liberalizing policies. This project will explore and test alternate models of analyzing the labor market impacts of trade liberalization including examining how the impacts vary by worker characteristics, geographic region, and initial industry.

Evidence and Literature Reviews

- *CLEAR Reviews. Structured literature and evidence reviews will be conducted using the review standards and guidelines established for the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR). Studies identified in the reviews will be added to CLEAR. The focus of this project is on reviewing and synthesizing evidence that is useful to agencies and programs and that may help to inform decision-making and determine the feasibility of conducting additional rigorous evaluations that add to the existing body of research.

Cross Project DOL Capacity Building

- *Administrative Data and Research Analysis. Under this project, multiple studies and statistical analyses using administrative data for selected programs and target populations of the DOL will be conducted.
- Wage Record Data Exchanges for Evaluations. Under this effort we will obtain employment and earnings data to evaluate employment and training outcomes for multiple studies. Both the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH), administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Survey, administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, collect the information required.

Continuing Projects

Below are evaluations and research activities already funded and continuing into FY 2017 and beyond:

- National Evaluation of TAACCCT Rounds 1-4 and Rigorous Outcomes Evaluations of Select Round 4 Sites. This mixed-method evaluation includes a cross-site implementation analysis of all colleges participating in TAACCCT as well as a more rigorous outcomes analysis of promising and testable models in select Round 4 sites. Some Round 1 grants are conducting their own evaluations of their work, and all Round 2-4 grantees are required to procure a third-party evaluator and may use up to 10 percent of their budget to do so. This work will be resulting in 200 evaluations of TAACCCT, and DOL will be synthesizing these third-party evaluations as they become final. A small employer study is also being conducted to better understand employer involvement and the nature of the grantee/employer relationship.
- Impact Evaluation of the Reemployment Assistance (REA) Initiative. This project is expanding upon the analysis of reemployment strategies found effective in the earlier REA Demonstration in Nevada.
- Short-Time Compensation (STC) Demonstration and Evaluation. This project is rigorously testing various outreach strategies used in two states to increase awareness and take-up of the Unemployment Insurance STC program.
- Institutional Analysis of the Structure, Reach and Operations of American Job Centers. This formal field-based implementation evaluation, combined with program administrative data, is assessing a range of operational and structural issues in local AJCs, including program data reporting systems; funding/financing; center partnership arrangements; services to women, veterans, UI claimants and other special populations; and performance management.
- Technical Evaluation Working Groups – Special Topics in Unemployment Insurance. This project is to conduct special Technical Working Groups and analysis in special topics on Unemployment Insurance.
- DOL Research and Evaluation Clearinghouse CLEAR. This project is developing the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR), to provide practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and others in the general public with a central and trusted source of evidence on labor topics relevant to DOL.
- Evaluation of the Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release Program (LEAP). This study is conducting a cross-site implementation and formative evaluation of 20 LEAP grantees.
- Evaluation of Urban Youth Programs. This study involves cross-site implementation analysis of the seven city recipients of ETA's urban youth employment demonstration grants. Each city is focused on implementing at least one federal place-based initiative to improve employment and education outcomes for disconnected youth.

- Performance Partnership Pilots (P3). This study involves an implementation evaluation of P3 pilots across the nine, round one grantees, as well as evaluation technical assistance to the nine independent evaluators assessing program impacts and outcomes at each of the sites. Further, the national evaluation will synthesize findings across the nine individual evaluations. The P3 program provides communities greater flexibility in using the federal dollars they already have more effectively to support low-income disconnected youth. In turn, the pilots agree to be more accountable for concrete outcomes.
- Ready to Work Evaluation. The goal of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the H-1B grant-funded programs in improving the labor market outcomes of program participants. The evaluation will employ a random-assignment impact study and an implementation study.
- The State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) Evaluation. This formative evaluation includes a needs assessment and an implementation-focused analysis of SEED's collaborative efforts around advancing federal disability employment policies at the state level.
- Evaluation of Youth Career Connect (YCC). This study will rigorously evaluate how the YCC programs, which aim to build youths' skills and workplace competencies by combining aspects of career academies and sector-based initiatives, strengthen students' college and career readiness. The evaluation will examine student education and employment outcomes, and has three components: a randomized controlled trial impact evaluation, a large-scale quasi-experimental design impact study, and an implementation study.
- National Guard Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe Evaluation. This program seeks to improve the life and employment prospects of high school dropouts — age 16 to 18 — absent from the labor market. This evaluation will include an outcomes and implementation study to understand the experiences of court-involved youth in Youth ChalleNGe and Job ChalleNGe.
- Paycheck Plus. This study is a collaboration between DOL and HHS/Administration on Children and Families to evaluate the impact of a demonstration testing an enhanced EITC for low-income individuals without dependent children in the Atlanta metropolitan area.
- Career Pathways. This project will document what is currently known about Career Pathways models and practices, and will design a study to advance the evidence (as required under the WIOA) used to guide training and service provision for individuals employed in the areas low-wage health care or early education and child care.
- Cascades Job Corps College and Career Academy Pilot Evaluation. This is an evaluation to assess the impact of the Job Corps pilot program, the Cascades Job Corps College and Career Academy. The goal of this project is to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the program by conducting an impact and implementation evaluation using rigorous experimental methods.

- Family and Medical Leave Act Wave 4 National Survey. This study involves two surveys, one of employees and the other of private-sector businesses, to update and expand the evidence about FMLA use and leave-taking that has been generated by three prior ‘waves’ of surveys (1995, 2000, and 2012).
- Evaluation of Community College Interventions for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities. This evaluation consists of an implementation study and a descriptive outcomes study to examine innovative models for providing integrated education and career development services to youth and young adults with disabilities developed in the Pathways to Careers grants.
- A Study of Customer Satisfaction with the Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) Technical Assistance (TA) Centers. This study examines the extent to which customers are satisfied with the technical assistance provided by the TA Centers. It also documents the processes used by the TA Centers to encourage the adoption and implementation of ODEPs policies and practices by targeted and untargeted customers.
- Review and Assessment of Job Corps Services to Youth, Evidence-based Strategies, and Program Structure. The purpose of this review is to identify opportunities that could lead to a more effective and efficient Job Corps program through designing and conducting a study that uses existing evidence and builds on this evidence and knowledge.
- Evaluation of Strategies Used in the TechHire and Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) Grants Programs. This study is examining the implementation and effectiveness of approaches to connect individuals with barriers to good jobs in technology and other in-demand fields.
- Analysis of Unemployment Insurance Claims Rates. This project is a supplement to the Current Population Survey on individuals’ decisions for not filing for UI benefits.
- Analysis of the Implementation of WIOA. This study examines the implementation of WIOA as it pertains to the core programs in titles I and III.
- Evaluation of the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI). This evaluation examines the implementation of the AAI grants, the outcomes of the grant participants, and includes a separate return-on-investment study to estimate the benefits and costs of apprenticeship to employers.
- Survey of Employer Policies on the Employment of People with Disabilities. To purpose of this project is to design and administer a survey to collect information from employers about organizational policies, practices, successes and challenges as well as attitudes and beliefs in the recruitment, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities.
- Nonexperimental Evaluations of the Outcomes and Effectiveness of Employment and Training Services for Adults, Dislocated Workers, Out of School Youth, and Foster Youth. This ongoing study examines outcomes for various populations.

- Evaluation of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and TAP Enhancement Pilots. This study evaluates the impacts of the VETS' TAP program on employment outcomes of participants, and evaluates interventions to better connect TAP participants to the workforce system.
- Administrative Data and Research Analysis (multiple projects). This project is applying statistical analysis of administrative data for selected programs and target populations of the DOL.
- Labor Research and Evaluation Grants (multiple projects). Research and evaluation grants were awarded to nine academic researchers in post-secondary universities to conduct labor-related research, evaluation, and analysis related to DOL programs, particularly using administrative data.
- ILAB Evaluation of EMPOWER: Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment. This study will evaluate the outcomes of ILAB's EMPOWER grant which aims to combat serious child labor issues in Zambia, particularly for vulnerable girls and their families working in agriculture.
- America's Promise Study of Job-Driven Training. This study will examine the effectiveness and implementation of strategies used in the America's Promise Grant Program.

Recently Completed Projects

See CEO's website for a list of reports of finding from recently completed evaluations:
<https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/CompletedStudies.htm>