U.S. Department of Labor
EVALUATION PLAN

2024

FISCAL YEARS

2025

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, DOL's Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) develops an Evaluation Plan on an annual basis to target evaluation resources on areas of strategic importance. The *Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2025* (*DOL Evaluation Plan*) describes significant evaluation activities that CEO will undertake before the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. It does not include all of DOL's evaluation efforts; DOL may identify additional significant evaluations during this 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 2023 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 key 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's Evaluation Policy principles of **rigor, relevance, transparency, independence,** and **ethics**.

> **DOL's Mission:**
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> To foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

The *DOL Evaluation Plan* satisfies the legislative requirements of 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** to outline significant evaluations that the department plans to initiate through FY 2025.

The *DOL Evaluation Plan* communicates planned significant studies that may be funded through many sources, including the authority to set aside a portion of DOL funds for evaluations. The studies in this plan are deemed "significant" based on their alignment to 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.

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 work with partners and other collaborators to follow its **Evaluation Policy** to ensure that evaluations adhere to the most rigorous methods possible as well as produce independent and credible findings that are relevant for decision-makers.

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

- **Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA)**
- **Employment and Training Administration (ETA)**
- **Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)**
- **Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)**
- **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, newsletter, eblasts, research roundtables, webinars, and other communications support 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. Ongoing and completed studies can be found on the **CEO website**, and individuals can **subscribe** to our email list to receive CEO updates and our newsletter.

Challenges

In addition to specific evaluation information below, OMB's 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 data sets, 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 plans to initiate during FY 2024 and FY 2025. Projects identified with an "*****" will be funded, at least in part, with FY 2023 dollars transferred to CEO through the set aside process and initiated through FY 2024.

Table 1. Research and Evaluation Projects to be Initiated in FY 2024 and FY 2025

Note: Projects are listed alphabetically by DOL agency, then project title. Each project is associated with an identification number (ID) for reference.

🏛 **Project 1***	ⓘ **Additional Information**
Title: Literature Review of Successful Outreach Campaigns to Underrepresented Communities and the Tactics They Employ [EBSA] EBSA seeks to explore how to personalize the underlying message to be more culturally relevant, meaningful, and impactful for different demographic groups. **Priority Research Question(s):** Based on academic and grey literature, what are the modes of communications and presentations of standard information, and what was their success in community response? Which marketing campaigns and public service announcements (PSA) performed the best in targeting certain communities and populations?	**Estimated (Est.) Start and Duration:** FY 2024 (2 years) **Data Sources:** Academic literature and information from both government and non-government outreach programs. **Methods/Approach:** Literature review and evidence scan. **Anticipated Challenges and Solutions:** None identified.

🏛 **Project 2***	ⓘ **Additional Information**
Title: Equitable Outcomes for Career Services [ETA] ETA seeks a formative study on the landscape of career services and career counseling uses in workforce programs. This study would document the various approaches to career services and career counseling and identify promising components and strategies that are most associated with outcomes of interest. **Priority Research Question(s):** How does implementation of staff-assisted career services and career counseling vary across programs, or even within a program, and across states and local areas? Do these different approaches produce different outcomes? To what extent do factors (e.g., type of organization, coordination with other agencies, relationship with training providers, staff tenure and training) affect employment outcomes for participants? What methods/strategies of career services and guidance can produce more equitable employment and earnings outcomes?	**Est. Start and Duration:** FY 2024 (2 years) **Data Sources:** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth, adult and dislocated worker data; other relevant DOL program data; National Directory of New Hires (NDNH); qualitative data from interviews, surveys, observations, and focus groups. **Methods/Approach:** Scan of current practices, career service types, and components; descriptive study of promising approaches; outcomes analysis by participant characteristics and service strategy; evaluability assessment for an impact study. **Anticipated Challenges and Solutions:** Different programs may be implementing different career services models and thus, it may be hard to identify which models and components may be associated with particular outcomes.

Project 3*

Title: Evaluation of the Critical Sectors Job Quality Grants [ETA]
ETA seeks an evaluation of the Critical Sectors Job Quality Grants to better understand promising practices for expanding job quality in the care, climate resiliency, and hospitality sectors that can help improve employment outcomes, particularly for historically marginalized populations and communities that have experienced barriers to employment in good jobs.

Priority Research Question(s): How did grantees integrate Good Jobs Principles into their workforce strategies, such as in their training design, employer partnerships, and/or supportive services? What were the challenges and successes in the implementation of those strategies? Which strategies helped address barriers facing marginalized populations in the target sectors? How did grantees define success and identify metrics for their grants? What strategies were the most promising for improving participants' employment outcomes?

Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (5 years)

Data Sources: Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) data; NDNH; possible data-sharing agreements with states.

Methods/Approach: Implementation analysis; outcomes analysis

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Data sharing may present a challenge. CEO is working on efficiencies surrounding data sharing with ETA and HHS across several projects

Project 4*

Title: Impact Study and Cost–Benefit Analysis on Subsidized Youth Employment [ETA]
ETA seeks to better understand how subsidized employment programs funded by the WIOA Youth Program impact participants' employment-related outcomes and may include other important outcomes (such as recidivism or mortality). ETA would like to research the return on investment (ROI) of these programs.

Priority Research Question(s): What is the overall impact of youth subsidized employment programs funded in part by the WIOA Youth program? What is the impact for specific types of programs? What is the impact of these youth subsidized employment programs for key subgroups defined by youth characteristics?

Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (5 years)

Data Sources: WIOA Youth data; NDNH; potential local level participant data.

Methods/Approach: Additional evaluability assessment and evaluation design work; impact study.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Buy-in for a rigorous impact study design always presents a challenge. However, since programs are already over-subscribed, a potential solution is to randomize selection of participants in the program.

Project 5*

Title: Mental Health Needs of Job Corps Participants [ETA]
ETA seeks to understand implementation of expanded mental health support in Job Corps centers.

Priority Research Question(s): Has the expansion of mental health support at Job Corps centers been consistently implemented across Job Corps centers, and have they been provided sufficient support and met students' needs? Is Job Corps equipped to support the increase in mental health support needs? Relatedly, has the provision of mental health support by youth programs outside of Job Corps met the needs of youth participants? Are similar implementation strategies and outcomes found in other youth-serving programs?

Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (5 years)

Data Sources: WIPS data; NDNH.

Methods/Approach: Environmental scan; implementation analysis; descriptive study; outcomes analysis.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Challenges to implementation of the program may complicate evaluation efforts. Researchers will work with centers in the study to document and troubleshoot.

Project 6

Title: Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) Round 2 Evaluation [ETA]
ETA seeks an implementation, impact evaluability assessment, and impact study on the second round of PROWD grants.

Priority Research Question(s): To what extent are the grant implementation conditions favorable to conduct a randomized-control trial (RCT) impact evaluation on the grant programs? What other impact study options are available given the implementation conditions of the grant and access to data? What impact does the grant program have on the outcomes of participants (recidivism, employment, job quality, earnings/wages, etc.)? To what extent do impacts vary across selected reentry subpopulations? What key program elements are common to the successful models of comprehensive reentry programs? Based on the impacts, which program models or program components merit bringing to scale?

Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (5 years)

Data Sources: WIPS; NDNH; Bureau of Prisons (BOP) data; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data.

Methods/Approach: DOL is planning a strong impact study design.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Options for an impact study may be limited based on implementation conditions, enrollment challenges, and limitations on implementation manipulation due to BOP regulations; grantees may not be implementing the same programs or program models and thus, pooling participants across different grantees may not be possible; getting access to the criminal justice data through the FBI database is a long and onerous process that may delay data collection and analysis.

Project 7*

Title: Strengthening Community College (SCC) Grant Round 4 Evaluation [ETA]
ETA seeks to perform an implementation evaluation and impact evaluation of Round 4 of SCC grants.

Priority Research Question(s): What impact does SCC have on the outcomes of participants (employment and educational outcomes)? To what extent do impacts vary across subpopulations? What key program elements are associated with outcomes? What community college capacity-building or systems-change strategies show promise in reducing equity gaps in workforce outcomes for students? What strategies might be effective in addressing those gaps?

Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (5 years)

Data Sources: WIPS data; NDNH; possible data-sharing agreements with states.

Methods/Approach: Implementation analysis; strong impact study design (Regression Discontinuity Design [RDD] or other strong quasi-experimental design).

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Under-enrollment in the program is a challenge due to a variety of complex factors resulting from the economic shocks of the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall issues with enrollment affect the sample sizes needed to conduct a rigorous evaluation.

🏛 Project 8

Title: Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Study [ETA]
ETA seeks to better understand the WOTC program, how it is administered among state workforce agencies, and how it serves job seekers and employers.

Priority Research Question(s): What is the estimated impact of WOTC on employment, retention, and earnings of targeted populations? Do employers claiming the WOTC hire and retain the targeted populations at a greater rate than comparable employers not claiming WOTC? What is the significance of WOTC for various eligible populations, and do the employment and earnings outcomes of WOTC hires differ from employed workers who are not eligible for WOTC? What changes to program design and operations will affect employers' use of this incentive to increase hiring and retention of targeted populations?

ℹ Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (2 years)

Data Sources: Qualitative data collected from participants; administrative data from federal agencies (ETA, Internal Revenue Service [IRS]).

Methods/Approach: Implementation analysis; descriptive data analysis.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Data sharing may present a challenge. CEO is working on efficiencies surrounding data sharing with ETA and HHS across several projects.

🏛 Project 9

Title: Equitable Transition Models Portfolio [ODEP]
ODEP seeks to identify strategies and program models from the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration Grants that improve the employment outcomes of marginalized youth and young adults with disabilities, as well as increase states' capacity to develop innovative employment strategies for underserved youth and young adults and their families.

Priority Research Question(s): Are there disparities in access to programs targeting underserved youth and young adults with disabilities by race and ethnicity, age, gender, or among vocational rehabilitation (VR)-eligible youth at the national and state levels? How do barriers to employment for youth vary across subpopulations? What services and coordination strategies for youth and young adults with disabilities are effective in improving their transitions to the workforce? What interagency collaboration occurs among agencies serving transitioning youth and young adults with disabilities? What are common characteristics of states and/or localities exhibiting success in coordinating services across VR, workforce, education, juvenile justice, foster care, Social Security, developmental disability, mental health, Medicaid, and other systems? What are the impacts of ETM services on education and employment of transitioning youth with disabilities?

ℹ Additional Information

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2023 (5 years)

Data Sources: Grantee admin data; Rehabilitation Services Administration data; U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) data and NDNH; surveys of participants.

Methods/Approach: Implementation evaluation; outcomes evaluation; impact evaluability assessment; customer experience; impact and cost–benefit analyses (as feasible).

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Data sharing may present a challenge. CEO is working on efficiencies surrounding data sharing with ETA and HHS across several projects.

Title: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Study [VETS]
VETS seeks strategies to expand and improve awareness of USERRA protections available to its customer base (veterans, transitioning service members, members of the National Guard and Reserve, and military spouses) and improve USERRA case quality, compliance assistance, outreach, and performance reporting for all customer groups.

Priority Research Question(s): What education, engagement, and outreach strategies can VETS implement to better educate employers and VETS customers about USERRA protections? Are some strategies more promising than others for subpopulations, such as by gender or race and ethnicity? How can VETS reduce USERRA violations for occupations/industries with high violation claims/rates? What best practices related to raising awareness can be applied from other relevant employment protections to USERRA? What is the prevalence of underreporting violations across demographic groups, and what are the primary causes of underreporting?

Est. Start and Duration: FY 2024 (5 years)

Data Sources: Administrative data; program data; qualitative data.

Methods/Approach: Descriptive data analysis; implementation analysis; feasibility of an impact evaluation that tests behavioral interventions for expanding and increasing awareness; may include journey mapping or customer experience.

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions: Availability and quality of administrative data may prove challenging. Obtaining appropriate sample sizes to detect impacts may also be a challenge.

III. Projects in the FY 2023–2024 Evaluation Plan to be Initiated in FY 2024

This section describes the research and evaluation projects previously included in the **FY 2023-FY 2024 Evaluation Plan** that are planned for FY 2024.

Table 2. Projects from the FY 2023–2024 Evaluation Plan to be Initiated in FY 2024

FY 2023–2024 Plan ID	DOL Agency	Project Title
Pre-evaluation	ETA/Multiple DOL Agencies	Measuring and Assessing Equity in Grant Making and the Delivery of Program Services*
2	ETA	Advancing Equity in Apprenticeship Programs*
4	ETA	Unemployment Insurance (UI) Labor Research*
5	ETA	Examining Case Management and Youth Services
7	ETA	Job Corps Study
10	ETA	Strengthening Community College Grant Program Evaluation
11	ETA	Strengthening Employer Partnerships and Reducing Barriers to Employment for Underrepresented Populations*
12	ETA	Studying Longer-Term Outcomes in H-1B-Funded and Other Employment and Training Initiatives
13	Federal Initiative with U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)	Improving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Within the Federal Workforce
15	Multiple DOL Agencies	Worker Protection Research Center*
17	OCFO	Identifying Areas for Financial Data to Assist Agencies in Evidence Building
22	VETS	Study on Veteran Participation in American Job Centers
25	WB	Federal Employee Paid Leave Act (FEPLA) Evaluation
26	WHD	Effective Targeting Strategies

* Denotes a project that will be funded, at least in part, with FY 2023 dollars transferred to CEO through the set-aside process and initiated through FY 2024.