U.S. Department of Labor
Evaluation Plan for Fiscal Year 2026

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 Year 2026* (DOL Evaluation Plan) describes significant evaluation activities that the CEO will undertake before the end of fiscal year (FY) 2026. It does not include all of DOL's evaluation efforts; DOL has multiple studies underway and may identify additional significant evaluations during this period.

The evaluation and analytical activities outlined in this document apply the most rigorous methods possible and will generate evidence to inform decisions across DOL and among other federal decision-makers. Planned studies reflect statutory requirements for evaluations and priorities identified by DOL sub-agencies that are best addressed through program evaluation. This plan also fulfills legislative mandates outlined 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.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Mission: 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.

On behalf of the Department, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors evaluations and analyses related to the programs, policies, and enforcement activities that DOL sub-agencies oversee. The CEO directly funds and oversees evaluations and collaborates with DOL sub-agencies to design and conduct evaluations. For all evaluations, the CEO leverages protocols and practices to adhere to DOL's Evaluation Policy principles of **rigor, relevance, transparency, independence,** and **ethics**.

The *DOL Evaluation Plan* satisfies the legislative requirements of Title I of the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](https://...) (Evidence Act) and OMB Memorandums [M-19-23]() and [M-21-27]() to outline significant evaluations that the Department plans to undertake during FY 2025-2026.

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 program funds for evaluations. The studies in this plan are deemed 'significant' based on their alignment with the priorities of the agency and Administration and not based on their dollar value or timeline to completion. Not all evaluation efforts conducted at the Department are included in the *DOL Evaluation Plan*.

A Collaborative Development Process

All studies included in the *DOL Evaluation Plan* are typically 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 Performance Improvement Officer.

As the studies outlined in this document move forward, the 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 credible findings that are relevant for decision-makers.

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

- Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

- Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)

Dissemination

The CEO works to continuously improve its communication products and platforms to inform various audiences interested in labor-related research, including policymakers, program practitioners, decision-makers, researchers, and the public. The CEO also works to summarize and translate analytical findings to make results accessible for both technical and non-technical users. In the spirit of transparency, DOL posts completed evaluations and analytical reports 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

Challenges for DOL evaluations vary widely by design and methods and often include issues with accessing and linking federal and state administrative datasets, recruitment of sufficient sample sizes to allow for rigorous evaluation designs, identification of suitable counterfactual conditions and non-program participants, and attrition of participants or beneficiaries from intended DOL program investments. The CEO works closely with third-party federal contractors, DOL agency staff, state and local partners, and other federal agencies to forecast and overcome challenges to individual studies.

II.   Significant Evaluations and Analyses in FY 2025-2026

This section describes the significant evaluations and analytical projects the CEO plans to undertake during FY 2025-2026.

Table 1. Evaluations and Analyses during FY 2025-2026
Note: Projects are listed by DOL agency. Each project is associated with an identification number (ID) for reference.

ID	DOL Agency	Project	Additional Information
FY26-1	**VETS**	**Employment Navigator and Partnership Program** The DOL seeks to understand engagement, employment, and earnings outcomes for Employment Navigator and Partnership Program (ENPP) participants. The program provides one-on-one career assistance to transitioning service members (TSMs), and their spouses at select military installations worldwide. Offered outside of the formal DOL Transition Assistance Program (TAP), Employment Navigators (ENs) assist TSMs and their spouses in securing meaningful and lasting civilian employment. **Priority Research Questions:** 1. What are the rates of participant employment and earnings over time? 2. How do participant outcomes differ based on receipt of a combination of EN and/or partner services, such as resume review and mentoring? 3. How do employment and earnings outcomes vary by service branch, pay grade at separation, and other subgroups?	**Duration:** 1-2 years **Data Sources:** VETS and U.S. Department of Defense administrative data, National Directory of New Hires **Methods/Approach:** Outcomes analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics **Anticipated Challenges & Solutions:** None identified
FY26-2	**ETA**	**Apprenticeship Long-term Outcomes** The DOL seeks to understand long-term outcomes of participants of registered apprenticeship programs, specifically those funded through DOL grants. This study will provide information about the value of apprenticeships for participants, as measured by long-term employment outcomes.	**Duration:** 1-2 years **Data Sources:** National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) data on participant earnings and outcomes; administrative data for pre-program

ID	DOL Agency	Project	Additional Information
		Priority Research Questions: 1. What are the earnings and employment outcomes for DOL-grant funded apprentices and pre-apprentices 5-10 years after enrolling in training? 2. How do long-term earnings and employment outcomes vary by industry and by employer size? 3. How do long-term earnings and employment outcomes vary by apprenticeship occupation and program length?	characteristics and in-program occupations of participants **Methods/Approach:** Outcomes analysis, descriptive and inferential analysis **Anticipated Challenges & Solutions:** Missing data in baseline characteristics, which will be addressed using statistical imputation methods.