

FISCAL YEAR	AGENCY NAME	AGENCY ACRONYM
2027	U.S. Department of Labor	DOL



EVIDENCE PLAN

LETTER FROM SECRETARY

Please see <https://www.dol.gov/evidence/building-plans-and-assessments> for a letter from Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer.

SECTION I | EVIDENCE PLAN SUMMARY

This section provides a snapshot of the agency’s Priority Questions, evidence activities to answer them, and the alignment of each Priority Question to relevant Administration priorities.

PRIORITY QUESTION	KEY EVIDENCE ACTIVITY(IES)	RELATED ADMINISTRATION PRIORITY(IES)
<p>1 How are Pay-for-Performance or Incentive Funding Models designed to engage employer partners in the adoption of Registered Apprenticeship programs as a premier workforce development strategy? What is the appropriate incentive funding model as it relates to retention time, incentive size, and incentive recipient sponsor?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe and evaluate the design and implementation of incentive funding models to promote Registered Apprenticeship with employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Executive Order 14278 – Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future ▪ Executive Order 14277 – Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth, and ▪ DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 1.2 – Support apprenticeship as a pathway to employment that meets the needs of the American economy
<p>2 What are the outcomes of training programs (funded by public workforce development programs or other sources) that closely align with the needs of employers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summarize existing research, evaluate program outcomes using available data sources, and develop options to evaluate the effectiveness of training services provided by public workforce development programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 1.1 – Strengthen the American workforce by expanding skilled trade jobs and propelling workers into secure, high-need jobs to support the next Golden Age ▪ U.S. Dept. of Labor (2025) – America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age ▪ Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agency (90 FR 8245) – Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis
<p>3 What are the existing estimates of the direct and indirect costs of serious injuries or fatalities at mines or industrial work sites, including immediate, short-term, and long-term economic impacts beyond direct penalties? What gaps in the research base exist, and how can these cost estimates be updated? How can DOL agencies use updated cost estimates to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of worker safety measures and compliance activities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summarize existing research on costs associated with serious injuries and fatalities at mines and industrial work sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Executive Order 14261 – Reinvigorating America's Beautiful Clean Coal Industry and Amending Executive Order 14241 ▪ DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 2.3 – Utilize enforcement as necessary, and promote compliance with federal safety, health, labor, and employment protection standards to secure a safe and strong American workforce

PRIORITY QUESTION	KEY EVIDENCE ACTIVITY(IES)	RELATED ADMINISTRATION PRIORITY(IES)
<p>4 What are the barriers that small businesses face in offering retirement plans and what are strategies to enhance outreach to promote retirement plans among small business owners?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research the barriers small businesses face in offering retirement plans and strategies to enhance outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 2.4 – Ensure access to secure retirement, health and other work-related benefits for American workers and their families ▪ Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agency (90 FR 8245) – Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis
<p>5 How much time do labor organizations spend on recordkeeping and reporting for Forms LM-2, LM-3, and LM-4?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research and update the burden estimates for three labor organization annual report forms (LM-2, LM-3, and LM-4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 2.5 – Promote labor union transparency and financial integrity in American workplaces ▪ President’s Management Agenda Goal 8, Objective 3 – Ensure Secure, Digital-First Services that Are Built for Real People, Not Bureaucracy

SECTION II | EVIDENCE ACTIVITIES

This section details the key evidence activities being undertaken to answer the agency’s Priority Questions, including evaluations. Evaluation, as defined under requirements of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, is an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.

Activity	A	Evaluation	Evaluate different funding models to promote Registered Apprenticeship with employers				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Evaluation Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are Pay-for-Performance or Incentive Funding Models designed to engage employer partners in the adoption of Registered Apprenticeship programs as a premier workforce development strategy? What is the appropriate incentive funding model as it relates to retention time, incentive size, and incentive recipient sponsor? 						
Description	<p>The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), in partnership with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), seeks to evaluate the application of a pay-for-performance or incentive funding model to promote Registered Apprenticeship with employers. This study will be coordinated with multiple recently awarded cooperative agreements to support the expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs across the country. The Federal Program Inventory listing associated with this study is 17.285.</p> <p>During an initial 12-month phase, DOL will conduct a systematic evidence review of previous studies of pay-for-performance and incentive-based funding programs and identify key features and design choices of previous models, as well as the extent to which any models have been evaluated for effectiveness. DOL will also describe the initial design and operation of the ETA model that is structured to grow registered apprenticeship programs in selected industry sectors, including advanced manufacturing (pending agreement from grantees).</p> <p>Findings from this initial analysis will be included in a report and will inform whether DOL would like to proceed with additional analysis that could include: an outcomes study; a feasibility assessment and design options report for an impact study, such as randomized controlled trials, or a longer-term analysis of the model. In subsequent phases, CEO will examine longer-term follow-up questions, such as: Is Pay for Performance an effective strategy to engage employer partners in the adoption and expansion of Registered Apprenticeships programs? What are the short and long-term outcomes of Pay for Performance that can be used to promote Registered Apprenticeship with employers? What are the appropriate intermediate outcomes to measure? Does this model work as part of a sector-based strategy? And are there sectors where this model is less or more effective?</p>						
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>The pay-for-performance funding model is a promising approach to expand employer participation and the number of Registered Apprenticeship programs. The Department seeks to build and use evidence on the design and potential effectiveness of this model as one of the key strategies to reach the goals set out in Executive Order 14278 – Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future, Executive Order 14277 – Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth, and Objective 1.2 of the DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.</p>						
Collection / Acquisition	<p>The Department may conduct interviews with grantees and collect information on the design and implementation of these funding models (pending agreement from grantees). Additionally, the Department may obtain data collected by previous studies, where available, as part of a systematic evidence review.</p>						
Topics	<p>Funding models, Registered Apprenticeships, workforce development training programs</p>						

Activity	B	Evaluation	Summarize existing research, evaluate program outcomes using available administrative and previously collected data, and prepare research options to evaluate the effectiveness of training services provided by state and local workforce programs				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Evaluation Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the characteristics and outcomes of training programs (funded by public workforce development programs or other sources) that closely align with the needs of employers? 						
Description	<p>The CEO, in partnership with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), seeks to increase understanding about the effectiveness of training services provided by state and local workforce programs, especially services developed in close collaboration with employers, and examine what works in non-degree occupational training more generally. The Federal Program Inventory listing associated with this study is 17.278.</p> <p>During an initial 12-month phase, DOL will conduct a systematic evidence review of impact studies of non-degree occupational training programs and synthesize results to identify the types of training interventions studied, research gaps, and implications. DOL will conduct further analysis of the outcomes of training services provided by public workforce development programs, using available administrative data, or the outcomes of employer-focused training programs that have been collected and reported through DOL's research clearinghouse. DOL will also conduct additional analysis of the medium- or long-term impacts of a proven occupational training grant program that demonstrated extensive employer involvement.</p> <p>Findings from these initial analyses will be included in a report and will inform whether DOL would like to proceed with additional analysis that could include: new evaluations, such as randomized controlled trials or other types of impact studies of WIOA training services or discretionary grant programs, development of design options including options for medium-or longer-term analysis, or a meta-analysis, to generate estimates of the contribution of key features or characteristics of training programs that closely align with the needs of employers. In subsequent phases, CEO will examine longer-term follow-up questions, such as: What are the characteristics and effectiveness of employer-aligned training programs? What is the effect of an increased focus on employer-based training and, more generally, closer alignment with local labor market needs on enrollment and completion of training as well as employment and earnings?</p>						
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>The Administration's workforce development plan of action, America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age, describes the importance of industry-driven strategies to the growth and advancement of the American workforce and economy. The Department seeks to build and use evidence on employer-focused training programs as a key strategy to reach the goals laid out in the Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agency (90 FR 8245) and Objective 1.1 of the DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.</p>						
Collection / Acquisition	<p>The Department will collect and analyze outcome data on employer-focused training programs and may collect information from selected grantees that operate employer-focused and industry-driven training programs (pending agreement with grantees).</p>						
Topics	<p>Workforce development training programs, industry-driven strategies, employer engagement</p>						

Activity	C	Evaluation	Summarize existing research on costs associated with serious injuries and fatalities at mines and industrial work sites				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5		
Evaluation Question(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the existing estimates of the direct and indirect costs of serious injuries or fatalities at mines or industrial work sites, including immediate, short-term, and long-term economic impacts beyond direct penalties? ▪ How do fatality costs vary by industry type, size, and commodity? ▪ What proportion of total cost comes from indirect and long-term impacts? ▪ Over what time horizon do fatality-related costs continue to affect operations? ▪ What gaps in the research base exist, and how can these cost estimates be updated? ▪ How can CEO and MSHA use updated cost estimates to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of worker safety measures and compliance activities? <p>The CEO, in partnership with the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), seeks to summarize existing research on the latest estimates available for direct and indirect costs associated with serious injuries and fatalities at mines and industrial work sites over the course of this 12-month study.</p> <p>Accurate estimates of the costs associated with workplace injuries and fatalities are essential for understanding the true impact of workplace hazards on workers and their communities, as well as demonstrating the long-term savings of safety measures that help prevent injuries and fatalities. MSHA will use this information to promote the value of safety measures in its compliance materials and to evaluate existing and proposed safety measures and compliance activities. MSHA will also make this information available to the public, which will be of interest to industry partners and health researchers.</p> <p>If the literature review demonstrates a gap or a need to update key estimates, CEO and MSHA will develop a plan to generate new estimates based on administrative data or other sources. CEO and MSHA will use that data to inform the development of a cost-benefit analysis of worker safety measures and compliance activities that addresses the following questions: What is the difference (or cost/benefit ratio) between the cost of preventive safety measures that reduce accidents or fatalities and the costs avoided by the reduced accidents or fatalities from those safety measures? How do post-fatality interventions influence recovery and future risk?</p>						
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>A safe and healthy workforce is the foundation of the mining industry. These workers will be key in reinvigorating America's beautiful clean coal industry, as laid out in Executive Order 14261. The Department further seeks to build and use evidence on the costs associated with serious injuries and fatalities to promote miners' safety and fulfill Objective 2.3 of the DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.</p>						
Collection / Acquisition	N/A						
Topics	Mining, worker safety, cost estimates						

Activity	D Research and describe the barriers small businesses face in offering retirement plans and strategies to enhance outreach				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Description	<p>The CEO, in partnership with the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA), seeks to understand the barriers small businesses face in offering retirement plans and how to enhance outreach to promote retirement plans among small business owners. The Federal Program Inventory listing associated with this study is 17.150.</p> <p>Over the course of 12 months, this study will answer questions such as what are the unique barriers affecting the uptake of retirement plans for employees of small businesses? What prevents small businesses from offering retirement plans? How can outreach from EBSA to small business owners effectively address their reasons for not providing retirement plans? How can outreach from EBSA to small business owners be enhanced to increase the percentage of small businesses offering retirement plans? What are effective ways to reach small businesses?</p> <p>The study will include qualitative data analysis of in-depth interviews with small business owners whose firms offer retirement plans; small business owners whose firms do not offer retirement plans; and certified public accountants, individuals from human resources firms, payroll service providers, and small business support organizations. These additional entities play a critical role in advising or assisting small business owners by providing technical assistance, connecting them with resources, or directly delivering relevant services. Their perspectives will provide valuable insight into the types of support available to small business owners and the potential pathways for expanding access to retirement benefits.</p> <p>The findings from this study will provide EBSA with data on the extent to which existing programs and enforcement efforts intersect with the challenges small businesses face. EBSA will also use the findings to enhance the retirement-related resources it creates for small businesses.</p>				
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>This activity aligns with two priorities: 1) DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 2.4 – Ensure access to secure retirement, health and other work-related benefits for American workers and their families, and 2) Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agency (90 FR 8245) – Delivering Emergency Price Relief for American Families and Defeating the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The agency has elected to build and use evidence to address these priorities to help facilitate the establishment of retirement plans in small business, which will enhance Americans’ access to retirement benefits and their long-term economic security.</p>				
Topics	Small business, retirement benefits, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA)				

Activity	E	Update the burden estimates for three labor organization annual report forms (LM-2, LM-3, and LM-4)				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Description	<p>CEO, in collaboration with the Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS), seeks to update the burden estimates for three annual report forms completed by labor organizations: LM-2, LM-3, and LM-4. This 12-month project will answer the following research questions: How much time do labor organizations spend on record-keeping and reporting for Forms LM-2, LM-3, and LM-4? What, if any, additional compliance costs are associated with these reporting requirements? How are labor organizations using accounting software or LM preparation software to adhere to the requirements of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA)? Project outcomes are expected to improve OLMS operations in two ways: 1) it will provide better data for making decisions about data collection requirements, and 2) it will enhance the quality of the data collected.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Data collection requirements: The current burden estimates are over 20 years old and from an era of paper records, manual data entry, and lagging data. The updated estimates will take technological advances into account and help OLMS accurately balance burdens and benefits while making decisions about the categories of information the agency seeks to collect, particularly regarding international unions, and the estimated burden for a union to provide such information. 2) Data quality: OLMS can use information about how unions complete the forms to improve the quality of the data. For example, OLMS can provide technical specifications for accounting system plug-ins into the electronic filing system to reduce data-entry errors, offer expanded compliance assistance, and identify alternate measures for data points that are difficult for unions to accurately collect or report. <p>Using interviews, surveys, observation studies, and other methods, CEO will collect information from LM form filers to understand the time and cost burden of completing the forms. The various methods will be used to triangulate estimates of burden given the challenges in estimating time and money spent collecting and compiling data by multiple union members and accounting staff. Project steps include knowledge development, instrument design, data collection, and data analysis, among others.</p>					
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>This activity aligns with two priorities: 1) DOL FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Objective 2.5 – Promote labor union transparency and financial integrity in American workplaces; and 2) President’s Management Agenda Goal 8, Objective 3 – Ensure Secure, Digital-First Services that Are Built for Real People, Not Bureaucracy. The agency has elected to build and use evidence to address these priorities to help fulfill its mission of enforcing the requirements of the LMRDA while reducing the reporting burden on unions.</p>					
Topics	Labor organizations, unions, burden estimates					

SECTION III | CHALLENGES

This section details any challenges to developing evidence as part of answering the Priority Questions, including any statutory or other restrictions to accessing relevant data.

- **Overall:** Challenges for DOL evaluation research vary depending on the type of study, but they often include issues with accessing and linking federal and state administrative datasets, recruitment of sufficient sample sizes to allow for complex research designs, and identification of suitable counterfactual conditions and non-program participants.
- **Paperwork Reduction Act:** For projects that require collecting data from ten or more individuals (Question 5), complying with Paperwork Reduction Act requirements will consume a substantial portion of the 12-month project window (approximately 6-8 months). Delays in that process are outside of the CEO's control, and they could lead to projects not being completed on time.
- **Administrative Data:** Projects that rely on administrative data (Questions 3 and 5) may encounter issues with data quality, particularly if any paper-based forms have been converted to PDFs, which could introduce data errors. The CEO will not know the extent of any data issues until the projects are underway.
- **Memoranda of Understanding (MOU):** DOL frequently needs to enter into MOUs or data use agreements with other federal agencies, DOL agencies or DOL grantees to obtain datasets needed for evaluations (Question 2). DOL may encounter resistance to data sharing and negotiating these agreements can take 3-9 months depending on the study and type of data being used. These delays inevitably affect the project timeline and ability to conduct analysis and generate results in a timely manner.
- **Cooperative Data Agreements:** Some projects use cooperative data agreements (Questions 1 and 2) but delays in establishing the agreements can also delay project completion. DOL may also experience challenges in securing the participation and contribution of grantees for evaluation research.