
The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

U.S. Department of Labor 2022 Summer Data Challenge on Equity and Underserved Communities

Are you a researcher interested in exploring how labor programs and policies serve and reach disadvantaged communities? DOL invites applications to its 2022 Summer Data Challenge. Applications are due by:

APRIL 11, 2022 AT 12 PM EDT

Addressing equity disparities in labor-related policies and programs is a longstanding priority of the Department of Labor (DOL). This issue was recently highlighted in the January 2021 [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities](#), which directs federal agencies to better understand how they are reaching disadvantaged communities, and then to address gaps that may be present in order to raise standards for marginalized communities and the population as a whole.

In March 2021, the Department of Labor held its first Summer Data Challenge competition, inviting researchers to study issues of equity in federal labor policy. Awardees presented valuable new research on a range of topics, including Unemployment Insurance and Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) eligibility. The final papers can be viewed on the DOL website at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/currentstudies/Department-of-Labor-Summer-Data-Challenge>.

Following the success of this inaugural competition, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) of DOL is pleased to announce the launch of its second Summer Data Challenge for 2022.

The purpose of the Summer Data Challenge is to support rigorous research using public data, including DOL data, or other administrative data to examine how well DOL policies, protections, and programs serve traditionally underserved communities. DOL is especially interested in understanding how data can speak to barriers that underserved communities and individuals may face to enrollment or access to benefits, services, and protections, as well as agency procurement and contracting opportunities. This includes DOL programs such as unemployment insurance; workforce training programs; and enforcement protections of the Wage and Hour Division, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Employee Benefits Security Administration, among others.

Populations of interest include but are not limited to those from communities traditionally underserved due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, income, geography, immigrant status, veteran and disability status. Analyses may test new methods, test hypotheses, or analyze data to demonstrate meaningful gaps in our

knowledge and, ideally, propose practical solutions to fill those gaps. Mixed methods research proposals are welcome.

In 2022, DOL is particularly interested in proposals that address the following topics:

- Public policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying economic downturn, including the effects of those policy responses on vulnerable or marginalized workers, such as women of color.
- Understanding how policies and programs may shape opportunities for worker organizing and collective bargaining, especially for workers who have lacked access to labor representation in the past.
- Understanding labor market competition and power, their intersection with working conditions, and how policies and programs can shape those relationships.
- The impact of workplace technologies on workers and working conditions—including how automated technologies may be used for screening and hiring job candidates, assessing workers' productivity, and managing workers—and their intersection with labor protections and policies.

The 2022 Summer Data Challenge expects to fund five researchers or research teams, with individual awards of \$30,000. Awardees will complete their research between June 1, 2022 and September 5, 2022, culminating in one high-quality paper, data and replication files (as possible), and a polished powerpoint presentation. Researchers are also required to participate in a kickoff event, one feedback session, and the final briefing.

Eligibility: Both established and emerging researchers are encouraged to apply.

Application Process: The application for the Summer 2022 Data Challenge can be found on MSG's website: <https://manhattanstrategy.com/2022-summer-data-challenge/>. Submissions should also include a letter of commitment, C.V.s for all researchers in the team, and a technical proposal of no more than 2,000 words (inclusive of references, tables, and figures) that clearly identifies (1) which DOL or labor-related policies or programs will be studied, (2) which traditionally underserved communities or populations will be studied, (3) which data sources will be used and a detailed description of those sources (including DOL sources and/or other sources, if applicable), (4) which methods of analysis will be used, and (5) expected research output (e.g., description of anticipated tables, figures, or regression models). Analyses may test new methods to collect or analyze existing data, test hypotheses, or analyze data to demonstrate meaningful gaps in our knowledge and, ideally, propose practical solutions to fill those gaps. Proposals must also include a plan that clearly highlights how all analyses and final products will be completed by September 5, 2022.

See the Application PDF for instructions on submitting the required documents.

Selection: Proposals will be judged on the following criteria: (1) rigor: the technical quality of the proposal, (2) relevance: the degree to which their proposed analysis will reveal how DOL policies, protections, and programs affect traditionally underserved

communities; (3) feasibility: the likelihood of successful implementation of the proposed research design in light of described data and analysis; and (4) creativity: the degree to which the proposal is creative in choice of topic or method, and the degree to which it makes innovative use of publicly available DOL data on its own or merged with other external data. DOL will competitively select winners based on the above factors while ensuring that the balance of awards reflects a diversity in perspective and topics, including the scholars' own backgrounds, disciplines, methods, and institutions. All applicants will receive a notification on their status by May 20, 2022.

Allowable expenses: In addition to individual support (direct and indirect institutional costs) for conducting analyses, funding may also be used to purchase data access as relevant. Funds may not be used to purchase computers or other equipment.

Final products: By September 5, 2022, awardees will produce 1) a brief, high-quality working paper, 2) a dataset and replication files, as possible (see more below), and 3) a powerpoint presentation. Papers must be in .docx format. Awardees will compress their data sets into a zip file prior to submission.

If public data is used, researchers must submit a replication file with scripts (code) and data in R and/or Stata.

If new, non-confidential data are created, researchers must submit a public-use dataset, and replication file with scripts (code) and data in R and/or Stata. DOL is willing to negotiate the timing of when these data are published on the DOL website to accommodate academic publications.

Final products must comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and be accessible to people with disabilities. Researchers must include Alternate (Alt) Text conveying the meaning of non-text elements, such as charts and graphs.

Final products will be subject to an external technical review before publication by DOL. Researchers will be invited to present their work at a feedback session and a final briefing.

DOL has engaged Manhattan Strategy Group to oversee the Summer 2022 Data Challenge. For application materials and program information, visit <https://manhattanstrategy.com/2022-summer-data-challenge/>.

For additional information or questions about the program, contact MSG at datachallenge@manhattanstrategy.com.