
The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Summer Data Challenge

Frequently Asked Questions

Apply here: www.manhattanstrategy.com/DOLdatachallenge.aspx

About the program

Would my research project be a good fit for funding under the program?

The purpose of the Summer Data Challenge is to support rigorous research using data, in order to generate insights and implications for how federal 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, protections, as well as in accessing agency procurement and contracting opportunities. DOL anticipates that funded projects will focus on a wide variety of issues that relate to DOL policies and programs. 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 must 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.

How does the program work?

Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG) is administering the program on behalf of the DOL Chief Evaluation Office (CEO). Applicants will submit proposals to MSG by the deadline of 12:00 p.m. Eastern on April 19, 2021, and MSG will make awards to winning applicants. The program runs from June 1, 2021 through September 15, 2021, with up to two final briefings after the final paper is submitted.

Scholars will be responsible for periodically submitting progress reports and drafts of their papers; participating in two briefings (in-person or remotely); and providing a final working paper and, if applicable, public-use data file for posting on the DOL CEO website. All communication related to the program will be between the awardees and MSG.

Can my research be on topics in the context of other countries?

The Summer Data Challenge was created to explore how the Department's programs and policies serve traditionally underserved communities in the U.S., including those of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, income, geography, immigrant status, and veteran and disability status, among others. Generally, research must be focused on the U.S. context. However, there may be research on immigration or other topics that are related to DOL-implemented policies or programs and to equity and underserved communities in the United States.

What are the required deliverables?

Scholars will be responsible for periodically submitting updates via e-mail; presenting in up to two in-person briefings at DOL (pending COVID restrictions); and providing a final working paper, presentation slides, and if applicable, public-use data file for posting on the DOL CEO website. Drafts may be shared internally among the MSG and DOL staff, and independent experts will review the draft working paper and data files. Specifically:

- By **September 1st, 2021**, awardees will submit 1) a brief, high-quality draft working paper, 2) a dataset and replication files, as possible (see more below), and 3) a draft PowerPoint presentation on their study.
- By **September 15th, 2021**, awardees will produce 1) a brief, high-quality working paper, 2) a dataset and replication files, as possible (see more below), and 3) a final PowerPoint presentation on their study.
- Additionally, awardees will participate in two DOL and/or public briefings to present their findings sometime between September and December 2021.

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 will be subject to an external technical review before publication by DOL. Researchers will be invited to present their work at up to two briefings.

Can I include some qualitative research to supplement my quantitative research?

Yes, complementing quantitative research with additional qualitative research is allowable under the program. In your application, please describe the qualitative research plan and how you will systematically capture qualitative data. Please also

include how that data could be included in a public-use data file (e.g., the transcripts could be stripped of PII-DI (Personally Identifiable Information and Direct Identifiers) and posted).

Do I have to submit a public-use data file?

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.

My study is based on data that cannot be made publicly available. Will I be ineligible if I cannot submit a public-use data file?

You are still eligible to apply. If some (or all) elements of the data cannot be made publicly available (e.g., due to state or federal regulations), please describe the restrictions in your application. Elements of the data that are not prohibited from public release will be submitted as a public-use data file.

Can I present my research at conferences or publish in journals?

Throughout the period of the award, the Department of Labor maintains joint rights to the results and findings produced by the project. Prior to the end of the award, any dissemination, posting, presenting, or publication of the results and findings produced by the project requires explicit approval of the Department of Labor. At the end of the award, you hold full rights and sole ownership of the results and findings produced by the project (with the exception that the Department of Labor retains the right to post the final deliverables to its website).

What is the process for requesting approval for disseminating my research prior to the end of the award, and under what circumstances would the request be denied?

To request approval, please submit whatever product is going to be disseminated (e.g., slides, article) and the venue in which it is going to be disseminated (e.g., conference name, journal name) as far in advance as possible. Approval would likely not be granted in situations in which dissemination would prevent the awardee from fulfilling the terms of the award; for example, if acceptance of a paper by a journal or conference meant that a version of the paper could then not be posted to DOL's website (which is one of the terms of the award), then approval would likely not be granted. However, any request

for dissemination prior to the end of the award period will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

About eligibility

Do applicants have to be U.S. citizens?

No, you may apply if you are a U.S. citizen or legally eligible to work and/or study in the U.S.

Is this program only for emerging researchers?

No. Both established (received Ph.D. more than five years prior) and emerging researchers (current Ph.D. candidates and researchers who completed their Ph.D. no more than five years prior) are encouraged to apply, but established researchers' proposals must include emerging researchers as co-authors. We welcome proposal submissions from a diverse set of scholars, considering diversity in scholars' own backgrounds, disciplines, methods, and institutions.

Is there a limit on the number of applications an applicant can submit?

No, there is not a restriction on the number of applications with which an applicant could be affiliated.

What documents do I need to submit?

Submissions should include C.V.s for all researchers and a proposal of no more than 2,000 words (inclusive of references, tables, and figures) that clearly identify (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 15, 2021.

How will the proposals be assessed?

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria: (1) the technical quality of the proposal, (2) degree to which the proposed analysis will reveal how DOL policies, protections, and programs affect traditionally underserved communities; (3) the likelihood of successful implementation of the proposed research design in light of

described data and analysis; and (4) the degree to which the proposal makes creative 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 reflect a diversity in perspective and topics, including the scholars' own backgrounds, disciplines, methods, and institutions.

About the budget

Can I use program money to fund a research assistant or team? If yes, how should we report this in the budget estimate?

Hiring research assistants or funding summer salaries are eligible uses of the award budget; however, all expenditures must be justified in the budget of the application and will be evaluated as part of the overall application package.

Can applicants include indirect costs in their budget proposals?

Any indirect costs must be shown and justified in the budget. Any applicable indirect costs will be included in the overall funding range of \$10,000–\$30,000. If you are using your institution's federally negotiated indirect rate, please provide a copy of the negotiated indirect rate agreement. If there is no federally negotiated rate, please provide some other form of justification for the proposed indirect rate. Applicants' use of funds will be reviewed and judged on the reasonableness of budgeted items as part of the overall application package.

What is not covered by the award?

Expenditures in equipment (i.e. computers), software, and conferences are not allowable costs.

Do travel costs need to be included in the budget?

Any travel to Washington D.C. (pending COVID restrictions) for the purpose of presenting at DOL or other program events will be reimbursed at the Federal Per Diem rate. Up to two final briefings are required, but applicants need budget for only one trip to Washington, D.C. All other research travel must be specified in the budget of the application and will be evaluated as part of the overall application package.

For additional information or questions regarding the application process or the program in general, please contact Manhattan Strategy Group at datachallenge@manhattanstrategy.com.