About the Government Performance Lab

The Government Performance Lab at the Harvard Kennedy School conducts research on how governments can improve the results they achieve for their citizens. An important part of this research model involves providing pro bono technical assistance to state and local governments. Through this hands-on involvement, the Government Performance Lab gains insights into the barriers that governments face and the solutions that can overcome these barriers. Our technical assistance helps governments advance in three key areas:

Pay for Success and Social Impact Bonds
Our Social Impact Bond Technical Assistance Lab (SIB Lab) assists state and local governments in developing pay for success contracts using social impact bonds (SIBs). The SIB Lab has awarded assistance to twenty state and local governments to explore SIBs in areas including early education, criminal justice, behavioral health, and child welfare.

Results-Driven Contracting
As part of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ “What Works Cities” Initiative, the Government Performance Lab is providing technical assistance to cities that seek to adopt results-driven contracting strategies for their critical grants and procurements. These strategies include clearly defining performance goals, measuring outcomes, tying payments to successful outcomes, and using performance data to inform management of ongoing contracts and future procurement decisions.

Performance Innovation and Transformation
The Government Performance Lab is providing technical assistance to states seeking to improve the core operations of government agencies, so that they can achieve better results within their existing budgets. This assistance helps governments target which clients to connect with which services, supports the development of frameworks to make procurement, budget and programmatic decisions based on performance data, and enables rigorous evaluation of management and policy reforms. The Government Performance Lab also helps governments implement systematic change in certain specific policy areas such as behavioral health, child welfare, criminal justice, and workforce development.

Position Overview

The Government Performance Lab is seeking to hire several Fellows to serve as the primary advisors to state and local governments that receive our technical assistance. Fellows will be placed on-site with the government office or agency that is spearheading a project. Fellows may also need to travel to provide technical assistance to additional jurisdictions. The Government Performance Lab is currently seeking Fellows to work in Boston, NYC, Providence, Houston, and possibly other U.S. locations that are still to be determined.

Fellows function as the day-to-day project managers, shepherding projects through conceptualization, design, and implementation. Fellows will develop substantial policy-area expertise, hands-on project management experience, technical skills related to benefit-cost analysis, financing, and evaluation, and a deep familiarity with government processes. Oversight and mentoring will be provided by the government’s policy lead, by an experienced Assistant Director at the Government Performance Lab, and by Government Performance Lab Director Professor Jeffrey Liebman.

Responsibilities

- Drive interagency effort to identify and assess promising, high priority issue areas for projects.
- Conduct benefit-cost analyses, data analyses as well as review research literature to inform projects.
- Help governments access, match, and analyze administrative data to identify target populations and establish baseline performance outcomes.
• For SIBs, support the design and documentation of a rigorous evaluation methodology. Construct financial models to estimate budgetary impacts and inform government negotiations with services providers, intermediaries, and funders.
• For results-driven contracting projects, develop systems for measuring outcomes and cost-effectiveness using analytical methods and administrative data. If appropriate, design financing structures that condition a portion of payments to contractors on successful outcomes and devise strategies to incorporate contractors’ performance track records into future procurement decisions.
• Draft procurement solicitations and manage procurement processes.
• Coordinate project development and implementation planning across government agencies and external stakeholders.
• Assist with community outreach, legislative engagement, and communications, including organizing public forums, developing a communications strategy, and drafting press materials.
• Contribute to key Government Performance Lab tasks, including representing the Government Performance Lab at public events and drafting policy briefs.

Qualifications

• Demonstrated passion for improving government performance and solving social problems.
• Outstanding quantitative and analytical skills, with experience generating and using data to drive insights.
• Excellence in both written and verbal communications, including policy memos, slide decks, and public speaking.
• Exceptional project management capabilities and creativity in problem solving.
• Track record of adeptly navigating complex organizations, developing trust with senior leaders, and building relationships among diverse groups of stakeholders.
• Self-motivated with an orientation towards results over process and a track record of driving results with limited supervisory direction.
• Willingness to learn, attention to detail, and ability to multi-task are critical.
• Graduate level training in public policy, business, law, economics, or related field is highly preferred.
• At least two years of professional work experience is highly preferred.
• An understanding of program evaluation concepts is highly preferred.
• For some of the locations, a willingness to travel is required.

Additional Information

The Fellowship positions are funded for one year, with a base salary ranging from $66,000 to $70,000. Depending on project status, there may be opportunities to extend the position.

Application Instructions

To apply, please submit a brief cover letter and a current resume/CV to hks-siblab@hks.harvard.edu. Current students and recent graduates should also submit a transcript. Please include “Fellowship” in the subject line. All materials should be submitted as PDF or MS Word documents with the applicant’s name in all filenames. The cover letter should detail how the applicant’s skills and experiences meet the qualifications of the position, and should include contact information for three references. Applicants should also indicate any geographical limitations in their cover letter. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis beginning in September 2015.

For more information on the Government Performance Lab, please visit http://govlab.hks.harvard.edu.

Harvard University is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.