The Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab
Fellowship Position

About the Government Performance Lab

The Government Performance Lab (GPL) at the Harvard Kennedy School conducts research on how governments can improve the results they achieve for their citizens and make more rapid progress in addressing challenging social problems. An important part of this research model involves providing pro bono technical assistance to state and local governments. Through this hands-on involvement, the GPL 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:

Performance Improvement
The GPL is providing technical assistance to states and cities seeking to improve the core operations of government agencies so that they can achieve better results. 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 GPL also helps governments implement systematic change in specific policy areas such as homelessness, early childhood, behavioral health, child welfare, criminal justice, and workforce development.

Results-Driven Contracting
The GPL was selected by Bloomberg Philanthropies to join its "What Works Cities" Initiative, through which the GPL is providing technical assistance to 20 cities that seek to adopt results-driven contracting strategies for their critical contracts, 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.

Pay for Success
The GPL assists state and local governments in developing pay for success (PFS) contracts—often involving "social impact bonds" (SIBs)—to address important social challenges. Policy areas include early education, criminal justice, behavioral health, and child welfare, among others. To date the GPL has awarded technical assistance to over 20 jurisdictions and has helped launch 10 of the 14 existing PFS projects in the US.

Position Overview

The Government Performance Lab is seeking to hire multiple Fellows to serve as the primary advisors to state and local governments that receive our technical assistance. Fellows are typically 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. These positions are expected to be located in a wide range of locations in the U.S., including Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York (including NYC), Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington State; other sites are possible as well.

Fellows function as 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 and NGO processes. Oversight and mentoring will be provided by the government policy lead, by a manager at the Government Performance Lab, and by Government Performance Lab Director Professor Jeffrey Liebman.

Responsibilities

- Drive interdepartmental effort to identify and assess promising, high-priority issue areas for projects. Coordinate project development and implementation planning across government agencies and community stakeholders.
- Help governments and community stakeholders access, match, and analyze administrative data to identify target populations and establish baseline performance outcomes.

- Conduct benefit-cost analyses and data analyses, and review research literature to inform projects.
- Develop and implement 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.
- Support the design and documentation of a rigorous project evaluation methodology. Construct financial models to estimate budgetary impacts and inform government negotiations with services providers, intermediaries, and funders.
- Draft procurement solicitations and manage procurement processes.
- Assist with community outreach, legislative engagement, and communications, including organizing public forums, developing a communications strategy, and drafting press materials.
- Contribute to key GPL tasks, including representing the GPL at public events and drafting policy briefs.

Qualifications

- Demonstrated passion for improving government performance and solving social problems.
- Excellence in both written and verbal communications, including policy memos, slide decks, and public speaking.
- Exceptional project management capabilities and creativity in problem solving.
- Outstanding quantitative and analytical skills, with experience generating and using data to drive insights.
- 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 fields 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 locations, a willingness to travel is required.

Additional Information

GPL fellows are typically funded for one year at a salary of $74,000. Depending on project status, there are typically substantial opportunities to extend the position. Additionally, opportunities exist for outstanding performers to transition to leadership positions within the GPL.

Application Instructions

To apply, please submit a brief cover letter, a writing sample (up to 7 pages), and a current resume/CV to govlab@hks.harvard.edu. Current students and recent graduates should also submit a transcript. Please include "Government Performance Lab Employment" in the subject line along with the geographic area of interest, if applicable. 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. Please note that successful candidates may be asked to complete a background check and/or drug test.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis; applicants are encouraged to submit their materials as soon as possible. Applicants who submitted materials to the winter 2017 application round—which had a January 31 deadline—do not need to resubmit an application.

For more information on the GPL, 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.