

The Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab Project Leader Positions in Child Welfare—Michigan and Washington State

About the Government Performance Lab

The mission of the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (GPL) is to accelerate U.S. progress on difficult social problems by improving how state and local governments function. We hire and train full-time team members, embedding them in government agencies to collaborate closely with government innovators in leading intensive reform projects. GPL staff advance key initiatives through technical assistance, including carrying out rigorous data analysis, identifying high-impact areas for systems re-engineering, implementing pilot projects to demonstrate innovative methods, and building government capacity for sustained change. Two of the GPL's active engagements are with the governments of Michigan and Washington State.

Michigan—The GPL is assisting the state child welfare agency on a suite of strategies that use data to improve agency operations and outcomes. Specific projects will be determined in collaboration with the recently appointed agency director. This is a new project we are launching with a team of two: one Project Leader and one Fellow. The GPL team is based in Lansing, MI.

Washington State—The GPL is working with the state child welfare agency to help connect families at-risk for abuse or neglect with the right prevention services. This work will include leading efforts to pilot and scale solutions across the state. This would be continuing a project that was launched in 2018. The GPL team is based in Olympia, WA.

Project Leader Position Description

The GPL is seeking to hire Project Leaders in Michigan and Washington State with a passion for improving government performance and solving social problems. Successful GPL team members are typically:

- Creative problem solvers
- Strong project managers
- Thoughtful relationship builders
- Strong analytical thinkers
- Capable of navigating complex organizations and stakeholders

GPL Project Leaders function as day-to-day project managers, shepherding projects through conceptualization, design, and implementation. Project Leaders are typically placed on site with the government office or agency that is spearheading a project; oversight is provided by a manager at the Government Performance Lab as well as by the government policy lead. Typical tasks for a GPL Project Leader may include designing and carrying out quantitative and qualitative analysis, driving organizational change initiatives, briefing senior government leaders, coaching and managing a GPL Fellow, or workshopping project challenges with GPL colleagues.

Learning is a key part of the experience. GPL team members are part of a coast-to-coast community of GPL team members dedicated to sharing lessons learned; building organizational expertise; and refining GPL tools, models, and frameworks. Through project work and regular engagement with the broader GPL community, GPL team members will develop substantial policy area expertise, hands-on project management experience, and a deep familiarity with government and NGO processes.

Project Leader responsibilities vary from project to project but generally include:

Project Management

- Managing and executing state and local government reform projects from conceptualization to implementation. Taking significant ownership over driving project work forward; independently structuring and executing high-impact work.
- Ensuring projects meet key milestones; navigating barriers and unforeseen shifts in project circumstances while navigating complex organizational structures.
- Serving as the on-the-ground point of contact with senior government leaders.
- Developing, introducing, and overseeing performance management systems to enable government and service providers to better collaborate on service delivery.

Fellow Management

- Often, supervising and supporting one or more GPL Fellows in generating high-quality work product, serving as initial source of guidance and review on key deliverables, facilitating clear communication with senior GPL managers, and coaching & supporting Fellows' professional development.

Communications and Relationship Building

- Conducting interviews and site visits with government officials and community stakeholders.
- Facilitating meetings, trainings, and workshops to advance project work and build capacity; providing coaching to permanent government staff.
- Briefing agency leaders and soliciting decisions from them at key project milestones.
- Writing memos, presentations, training documents, and procurement solicitations with the aim of making complex information easy to understand.

Research and Data Analysis

- Helping governments match and analyze administrative data to measure population outcomes, understand cost-effectiveness, and form insights that can improve service delivery.
- Using continuous improvement tools to analyze existing processes and design new processes that enable agencies to better serve constituents.
- Thinking “counterfactually”—understanding program evaluation principles and using them to improve government operations.
- Reviewing research literature, government documents, and best practices to inform project work.

Community of Practice

- Sharing insights with colleagues, helping to spread lessons and best practices across the GPL.
- Drafting blog posts, project features, and policy briefs to help the GPL share its work broadly.

Preferred Qualifications

- Passion for improving government performance and solving social problems.
- Self-motivated with an orientation towards results.
- Excellent written and verbal communications, including memos, slide decks, and public speaking.
- Strong project management capabilities.
- Sound quantitative and analytical skills, with experience generating and using data to drive insights and communicating those insights to others.
- Ability to navigate complex organizations, develop trust with senior leaders, and build relationships among diverse groups of stakeholders.
- Strong demonstrated track record of independently structuring work, driving significant project progress, managing multiple workstreams, and engaging with clients.
- Graduate-level training in public policy, business, law, economics, social work, or related fields is preferred.

- At least four years of professional work experience is preferred, including post-graduate school work experience and at least one year working in a management capacity.
- For some locations, a willingness to travel is required.

Additional Information and Application Instructions

Compensation: GPL Project Leaders are funded for one year at a salary commensurate with experience. Depending on project status, there are sometimes opportunities to extend the position.

Application instructions: To apply, please submit a brief cover letter and a current resume/CV via the [GPL's online application form](#). Current students and recent graduates should also submit a transcript. If you have a geographic area of interest, please indicate this in your cover letter. All materials submitted via the application form should be formatted as PDF or MS Word documents with the applicant's name in all filenames. Please note that successful candidates may be asked to complete a background check and/or drug test. **Applications are considered on a rolling basis.**

Additional information about the GPL

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. For more information on the GPL, please visit <http://govlab.hks.harvard.edu>.

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