The Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab

Fellow Position: What Works Cities Team

The Government Performance Lab (GPL) at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) conducts research on how governments can improve the results they achieve for their residents. An important part of this research model involves providing technical assistance to state and local governments—we hire and train full-time fellows, embedding them in government agencies to collaborate closely with government innovators in leading intensive reform projects. The GPL’s Strategic Procurement practice collaborates with city and state governments to improve the results achieved through contracted goods and services. The GPL believes that procurement is an underused strategic tool, with the power to create outcomes-oriented relationships with the vendor community to help governments improve the lives of the residents they serve. Since the launch of this program in 2015, GPL’s procurement practice has affected more than $2.3 billion in spending by state and local governments.

GPL is seeking Fellows to lead technical assistance projects as part of the national What Works Cities (WWC) initiative. Launched by Bloomberg Philanthropies in April 2015, What Works Cities is one of the largest-ever philanthropic efforts to enhance cities’ use of data and evidence. Cities across the country are more effectively driving change and delivering results for residents by participating in the What Works Cities Certification program, the national standard of excellence for data-driven, well-managed local government. The program is open to any city with a population of 30,000 or more. GPL provides technical assistance to cities through WWC, and Fellows will have an opportunity to provide support and thought leadership on procurement-focused projects around diverse issue areas, such as designing centers to prevent homelessness, the development of last-mile wi-fi to low-income communities, or increasing the diversity of vendors bidding on road construction contracts. Fellows will focus on building the capacity of government staff to apply results-driven contracting strategies and helping governments adopt a portfolio approach to results-driven contracting that engages providers and emphasizes outcomes across all major procurement and contracts. To date the GPL has worked with 35 cities on 43 projects to improve outcomes for their residents.

A GPL Fellowship is a one-year appointment. The length of a typical WWC project is around 6-9 months; Fellows are expected to manage more than one project at a time. Fellows work remotely and can be based in any major city. Required travel to project locations is funded by the GPL.

Position Overview

The GPL is seeking to hire a cohort of Fellows with a passion for improving government performance and solving social problems. Fellows function as day-to-day project managers, shepherding important reform projects from conceptualization through design and implementation. Successful Fellows come from a variety of backgrounds and are typically:

- Creative problem solvers
- Strong project managers
- Thoughtful relationship builders
- Strong analytical thinkers
- Capable of navigating complex organizations and stakeholders
- Comfortable driving work forward independently and working on a geographically dispersed team
WWC fellows typically provide remote technical assistance via phone and/or video conference complemented by site visits at the beginning, middle, and end of each project. Depending on the scope of a project, fellows may be co-assigned to a project with another Fellow or project lead. Oversight is provided by a manager at the Government Performance Lab as well as by a government lead. Fellow responsibilities vary from project to project and frequently include:

1. Diagnosing challenges in city government functions and service delivery
2. Crafting operationally feasible, high impact solutions to those challenges
3. Helping city governments implement solutions to produce meaningful changes in client outcomes and make frequent adjustments to implementation based on results
4. Building buy-in for reforms and government capacity to sustain them
5. Contributing to spreading demonstrated solutions nationwide

In undertaking these responsibilities, Fellows’ day-to-day work often involves:

**Project Management**
- Manage and coordinate reform projects while navigating complex organizational structures.
- Develop, introduce, and oversee performance management systems to enable government and service providers to better collaborate on service delivery.

**Communications and Relationship Building**
- Conduct interviews and site visits with government officials, community stakeholders, and people with lived experience to uncover service delivery barriers and inform solutions.
- Facilitate meetings, trainings, and workshops to advance project work and build capacity; provide coaching to permanent government staff.
- Brief government leaders and solicit decisions from them at key project milestones.
- Write memos, presentations, training documents, and procurement solicitations with the aim of making complex information easy to understand.

**Research and Data Analysis**
- Help governments match and analyze administrative data to measure population outcomes, understand cost-effectiveness, and form insights that can improve service delivery.
- Use continuous improvement tools to analyze existing processes and design new processes that enable agencies to better serve constituents.
- Apply a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to government service delivery challenges.
- Understand program evaluation principles and use them to improve government operations.
- Review research literature, government documents, and best practices to inform project work.

**Community of Practice**
- Share insights with colleagues, helping to spread lessons and best practices across the GPL.
Draft blog posts, project features, and policy briefs to help the GPL share its work broadly.

Learning is a key part of the experience. Fellows 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, Fellows will develop substantial policy area expertise, hands-on project management experience, and a deep familiarity with government and nonprofit organization processes.

**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.
- Awareness and sensitivity to the needs and concerns of individuals from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and orientations, and ability to apply that to their work.
- 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.
- Graduate-level training in public policy, business, law, economics, social work, or related fields is preferred.
- Willingness to travel is required. WWC fellows manage multiple engagements in different cities throughout the year, and generally travel for 2-3 day site visits around twice a month.
- At least two years of professional work experience is preferred.

**Additional Information and Application Instructions**

**Compensation:** GPL Fellows will be funded for one year at a salary of $80,000 plus benefits. Depending on project status, there are sometimes opportunities to extend the position.

**Locations:** Fellows may be based in any major U.S. city. Additionally, there are specific opportunities for Fellows to be located in Tulsa, OK and Memphis, TN. More information on project sites will be available during the interview process.

**Start date:** We are seeking candidates to start one-year positions immediately, as well as in June or July 2020. If you have different timeline preferences or constraints, please note this in your cover letter.

**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.
**Application deadline:** Applications will be reviewed beginning immediately on a rolling basis; the final deadline for applications is **February 9, 2020**.

**Please note:** Candidates who have already submitted an application for the 2020 GPL Fellowship and indicated an interest in the What Works Cities opportunity need not reapply.

**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 residents. An important part of this research model involves providing technical assistance to state and local governments—we hire and train full-time Fellows to collaborate closely with government innovators in leading intensive reform projects. Most of these projects are focused on difficult social problems such as homelessness, the opioid crisis, child wellbeing, joblessness, criminal recidivism, among many others. By supporting government agencies in this important work, we improve how governments function and how services are delivered, speed up progress on difficult social problems, and ultimately make a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable people across the United States. To date, the GPL has engaged in 96 projects with 67 jurisdictions spread across 31 states. We are a team of 40—the majority of whom are embedded in governments around the country providing technical assistance. For more information on the GPL, please visit [http://govlab.hks.harvard.edu](http://govlab.hks.harvard.edu).

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