

# OES@100

## Celebrating 100 Collaborations Across Government

November 16, 2021

[oes.gsa.gov](http://oes.gsa.gov)

@OESat100



#OESat100

# Overview

Introduction	5 min
Session 1: What leads to a successful collaboration? Reflections on 100 collaborations	25 min
Session 2: Portfolio of evidence on equity and economic recovery	25 min
Session 3: New frontier for evidence in government: what's next?	25 min
Closing Remarks: What's Ahead at GSA?	5 min



# OES@100

Celebrating 100 Collaborations  
Across Government

# **Session 1:**

## **What leads to a successful collaboration? Reflections on 100 collaborations**

# OES BY THE NUMBERS

since 2015 OES has....



**139**  
team members



Brought in  
talent from  
**83**  
institutions



**106**  
completed  
collaborations



**90**  
completed  
evaluations



**21**  
different Federal  
Departments

# Who is OES?

Since 2015, OES has recruited over 139 interdisciplinary experts from 83 institutions into Federal government, representing a mix of Federal Employees, Fellows and Academic Affiliates



Int'l Dev..



Int'l Affairs



Behavioral Sci.



Health Policy



Statistics



Design



Human Dev.



Poli. Sci.



Public Policy



Global Health



Public Affairs



Psychology



Sociology



Economics



Poli. Sci.



Education



Int'l Dev.



Public Policy



Public Admin



Poli. Sci.



Public Admin



Marketing



Poli. Sci.



Int'l Affairs



Economics



Public Policy



Economics



Psychology



Statistics



Economics



Health Policy



Public Policy

# What does OES do?

Our portfolio has spanned areas such as retirement security, reducing the cost of government operations, improving public health outcomes, and increasing educational opportunity



## Small Business

Building evidence about how to support small business growth and success

## Retirement Savings

Interventions to improve financial preparation for retirement

## Global Health

Evidence-based insights from behavioral science applied to critical development challenges in global health

## Vaccination uptake

Low-cost interventions to increase vaccination uptake

## Health IT

Interventions to increase adoption and use of health IT features



## Payment Integrity

Interventions to reduce improper payments

## COVID-19 Pandemic

OES evaluations and insights to inform the COVID-19 response

## Higher Education

Low-cost, evidence-based program changes to improve the experience of postsecondary students

## Prescriber decision-making

Communications interventions to reduce off-guideline prescribing

## Accessing Health Benefits

Interventions to increase enrollment in health benefits programs

# OES has collaborated with 21 federal departments

The Office of Evaluation Sciences and collaborators have completed over 90 evaluations



Department of  
Agriculture



Department of  
Commerce



Department of  
Defense



Department of  
Education



Department of  
Energy



Department of  
Health and Human Services



Department of  
Homeland Security



Department of  
Housing & Urban Development



Department of  
the Interior



Department of  
Justice



Department of  
Labor



Department of  
the Treasury



Department of  
Veterans Affairs



General Services  
Administration



Small Business  
Administration



Social Security  
Administration



U.S. Agency for  
International Development



U.S. Office of Personnel  
Management

# Reflection 1: A program change and evaluation approach don't have to be ideal to be valuable.

- Working in government and at scale, we often encounter **barriers** to fielding the best possible program change and evaluation.
- **Flexibility, collaboration, and problem solving** can get us to launch and help learn about promising program changes.

# Program changes requiring limited effort can be useful when the ideal intervention is infeasible

Being flexible in the face of roadblocks can help build evidence -- and help us learn how to do the preferred change.

**Feasible:** One tip vs. many tips, no individualized data

**Help Save Energy this Fall!**



Together we can save energy and help the environment!

Follow this easy step to save energy:

① TURN OFF AC when not at home

**Help Save Energy this Fall!**



Together we can save energy and help the environment!

Follow these easy steps to save energy:

- ① TURN OFF AC when not at home
- ② USE FANS instead of AC to stay cool
- ③ OPEN WINDOWS when it's nice outside
- ④ CLOSE WINDOWS when it's hot outside
- ⑤ CLOSE DRAPE AND BLINDS on hot sunny days

**Preferred:** Individualized feedback and comparisons

**Help Save Energy This Summer!**

Your Energy Report for July 16 – 29

Category	Value
Efficient Neighbors	100
YOU	172
All Neighbors	220

\*kWh used in similar-size units. Shorter bars are better.

How you're doing:

GREAT  
GOOD ☺  
BELOW AVERAGE

Follow this easy step to save energy:



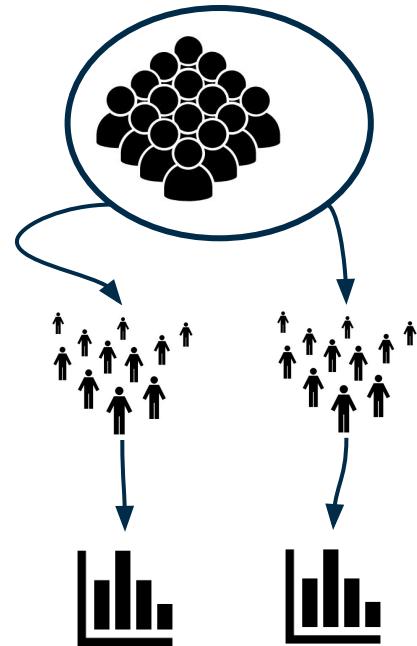
Turn off air conditioning when not at home – even on hot days!

# Learning from evaluation does not always require the ideal evaluation approach

When a randomized evaluation isn't possible, other evaluation approaches can help us learn about promising interventions.

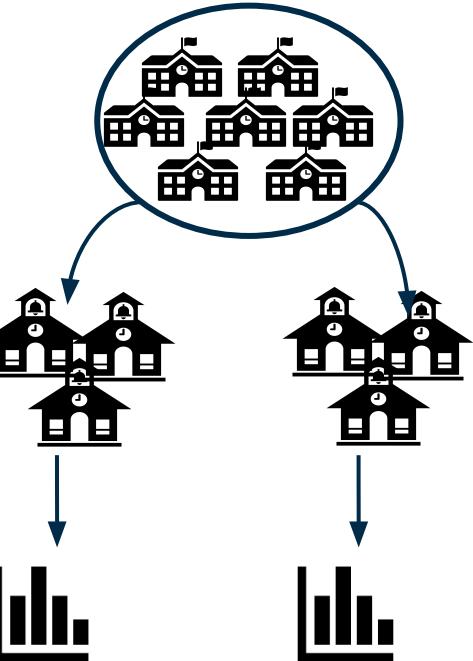
Selection Population

Outcomes



**Preferred:** Randomly select from participating families to receive new vs. old version of letters.

**Feasible:** Encourage 74 districts to use new letters, compare to 82 randomly selected that did not use new letters.

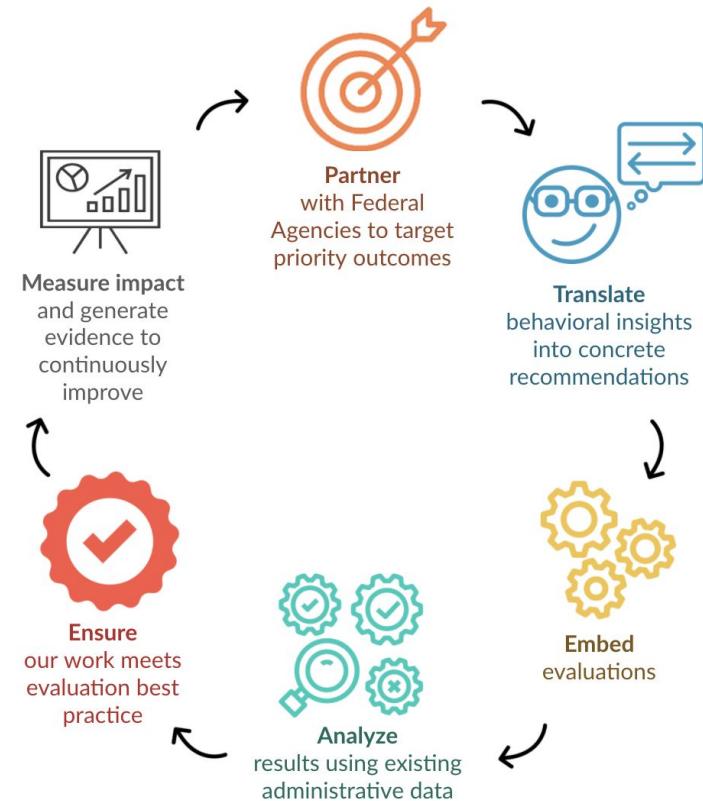


# Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

Administrative data makes it possible to

quickly, rigorously, and at low-cost

build and use evidence to improve government programs.



# Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

## How many individuals **HAVE WE REACHED?**

Our evaluations had a total sample size of



OVER  
**44** million individuals TO DATE

Informed more than half a million Americans about the benefits of



GETTING VACCINATED with HHS and VA

Informed 1.6 million people about the benefits of



RETIREMENT SAVINGS OPTIONS with SSA and DOD

Worked to improve higher education access and success for



**5.3** million individuals with ED, HUD, the IRS and VA

# Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

## A few results from **RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS**

Increased clinic visits by women by



**2.26**  
Percentage  
**POINTS**  
with USAID

Increased requests for on-site



WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

**6.9**  
Percentage  
**POINTS**  
with USDA

Designed outreach which



REDUCED OVERPAYMENTS of **\$ 5.91**  
per **\$ 1** spent  
with SSA



# Reflection 2: Administrative data makes impact evaluation of program changes possible

Time since evaluation launch...

Days

Weeks

Months

Years

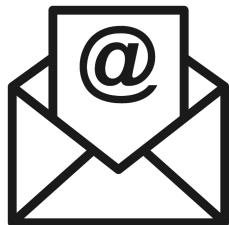
Outcome measured using administrative data...

Email opened

Take-up of financial aid

College enrollment

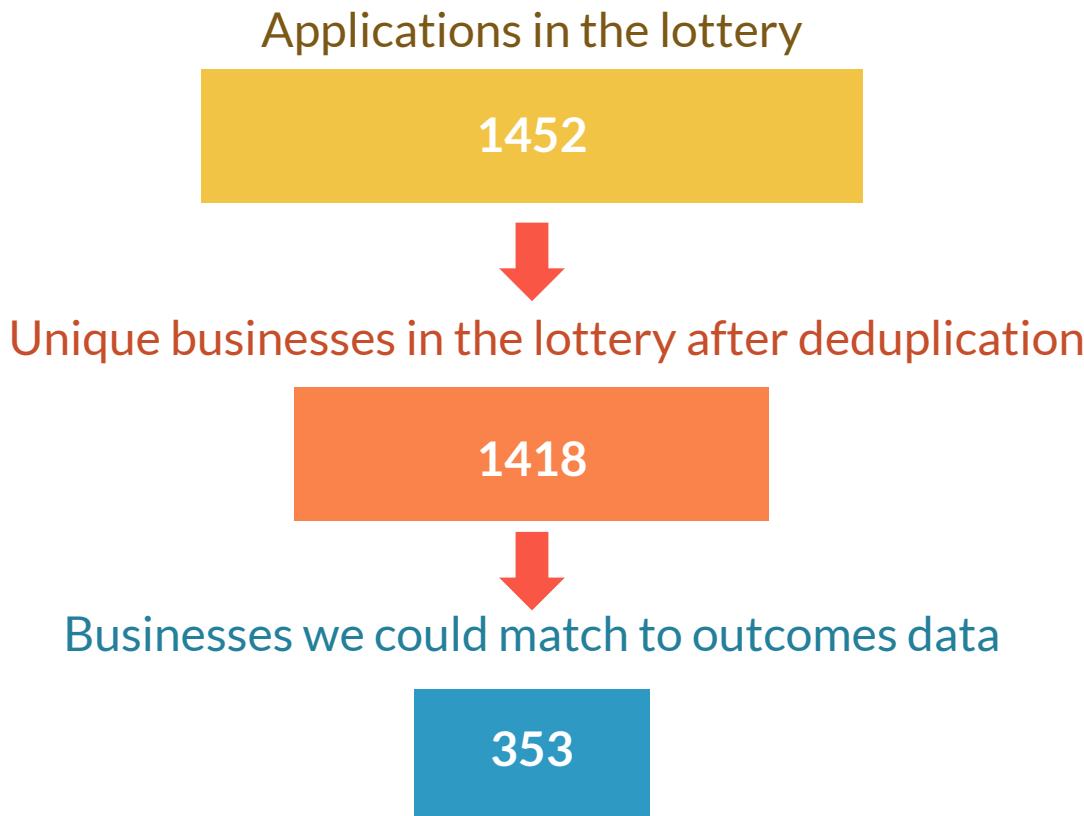
College degree



## Reflection 3: There's more to sample size than counting the number of participants in a program

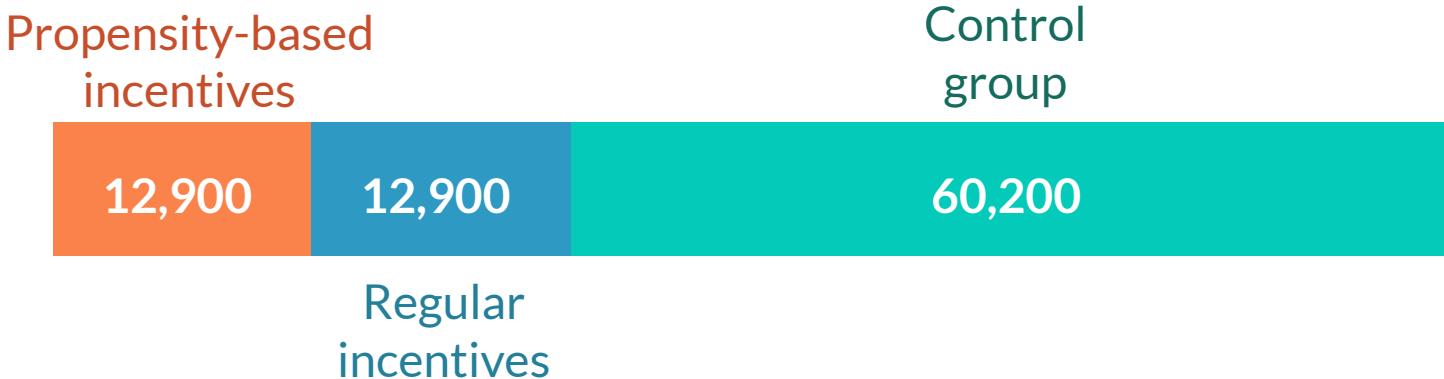
- There's more to precision than sample size
- And: there's more to sample size than counting up the number of participants in a program
- Important to anticipate how sample sizes grow and shrink and how this influences a study's precision

# Reflection 3: There's more to sample size than counting the number of people in your evaluation



## Reflection 3: There's more to sample size than counting the number of people in your evaluation

- But, especially with administrative data, it's not always bad news!
- Things that **grow** your sample size
  - Multiple time points
  - Larger control groups



## Reflection 4: Being transparent about implementation – as well as results – has enormous value.

**OES Evaluation Policy: Core principles that guide how we design and conduct evaluations**

- Rigor
- Relevance
- Transparency
- Independence
- Ethical practice

**Our full Evaluation Policy is available on our website.**

# Reflection 4: Being transparent about implementation – as well as results – has enormous value.

**Increasing Utilization of Family Planning Services in Mozambique through an SMS Intervention: A collaboration between OES and USAID**



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# Intervention Pack: Sample text messages

## Days since Message referral

5 days:

Go to the hospital today for your family planning appointment.

8 days:

Present your referral at the hospital and receive a health / family planning appointment.

33 days:

Talk to [ promoter ] if you have questions about your health.

Multiple, frequent reminders

Prioritize key information

Provide simple instructions

Make it personal

# Record of Implementation: Template

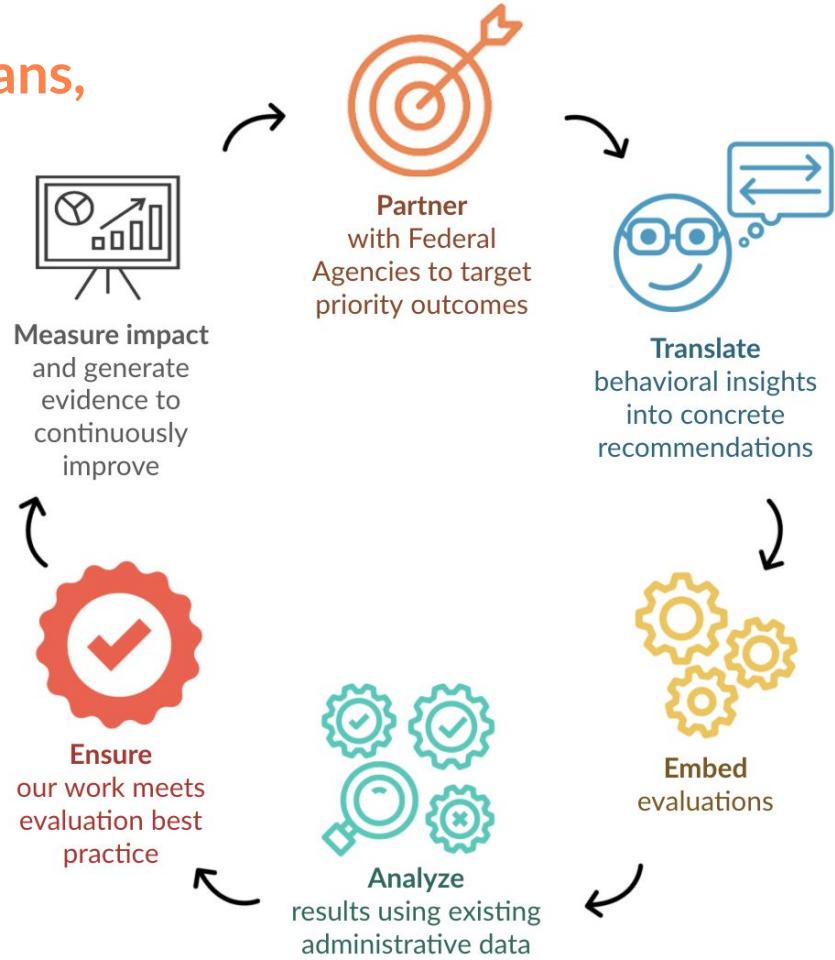
Captures departures from project plans,  
and unanticipated events



**Record of Implementation**  
Project Name: [Title]  
Project Code: [Code]

---

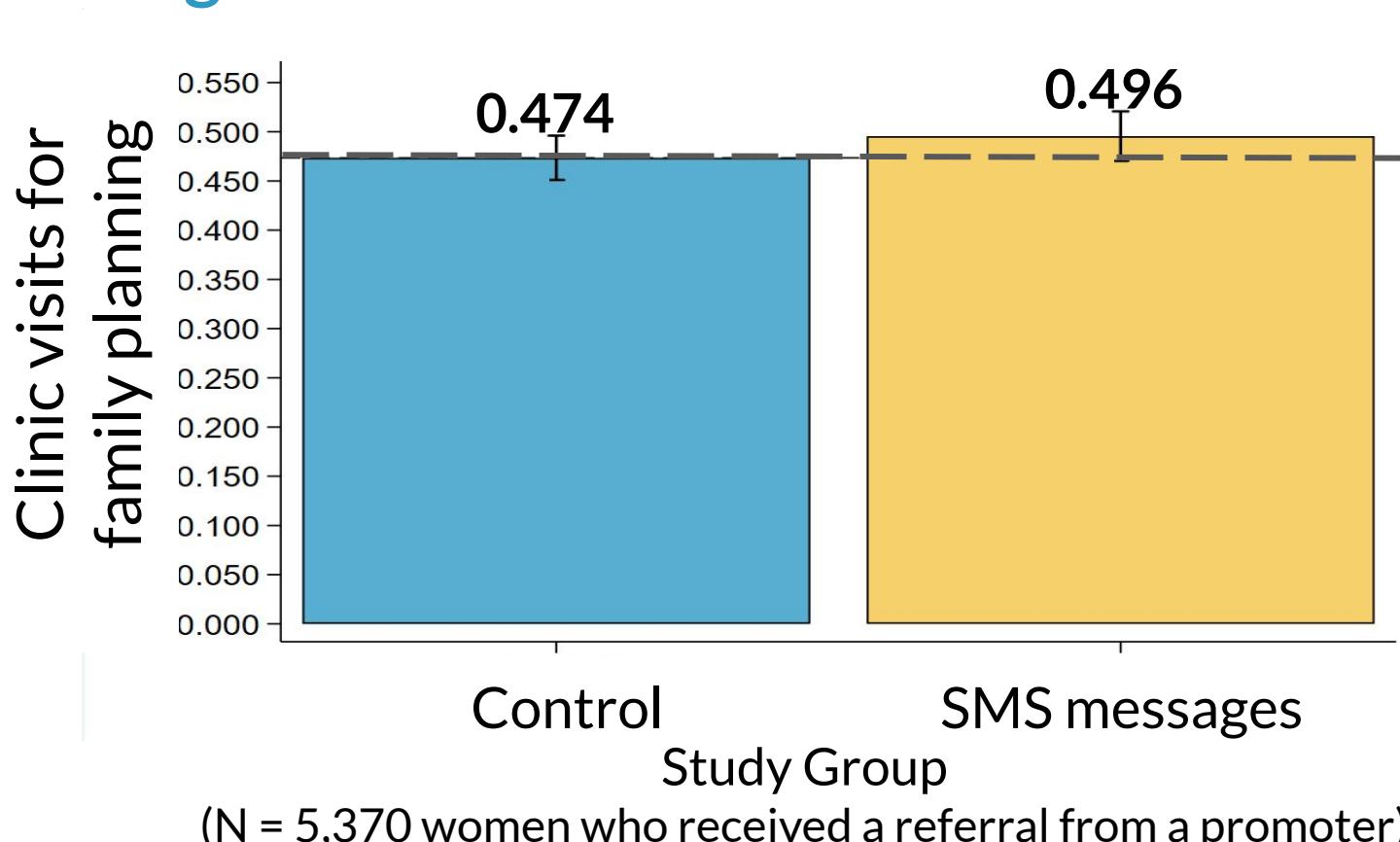
**How this document is to be used:**  
Use this document to record notes on the implementation of the project – in particular, anything that did not go according to the plan laid out in the Project Design Document. This template contains prompts for information on specific aspects of implementation that may not go as planned, but these are not meant to be exhaustive. Any details about implementation that may be important for later analysis and interpretation of the results should be recorded – and can be recorded in the final section of the template if they do not fit elsewhere. Before OES takes possession of outcome data, the Analysis Plan should be reviewed in light of this Record of Implementation for any required revisions (i.e., while it is possible to revise the Analysis Plan and still report results as coming from planned/confirmatory analyses).



# Categories of Delivery Cost

Intervention delivery cost	Definition
<b>No cost</b>	No new change to delivery medium
<b>Very low cost</b>	Added email
<b>Low cost</b>	Added printing; Added printing and mailing; Added phone carrier
<b>Moderate cost</b>	Added staffing costs as part of intervention delivery
<b>Multiple or unknown</b>	Multiple of the above changes Intervention not in a designated category

# Effects of Text Message Reminders on Family Planning Clinic Visits



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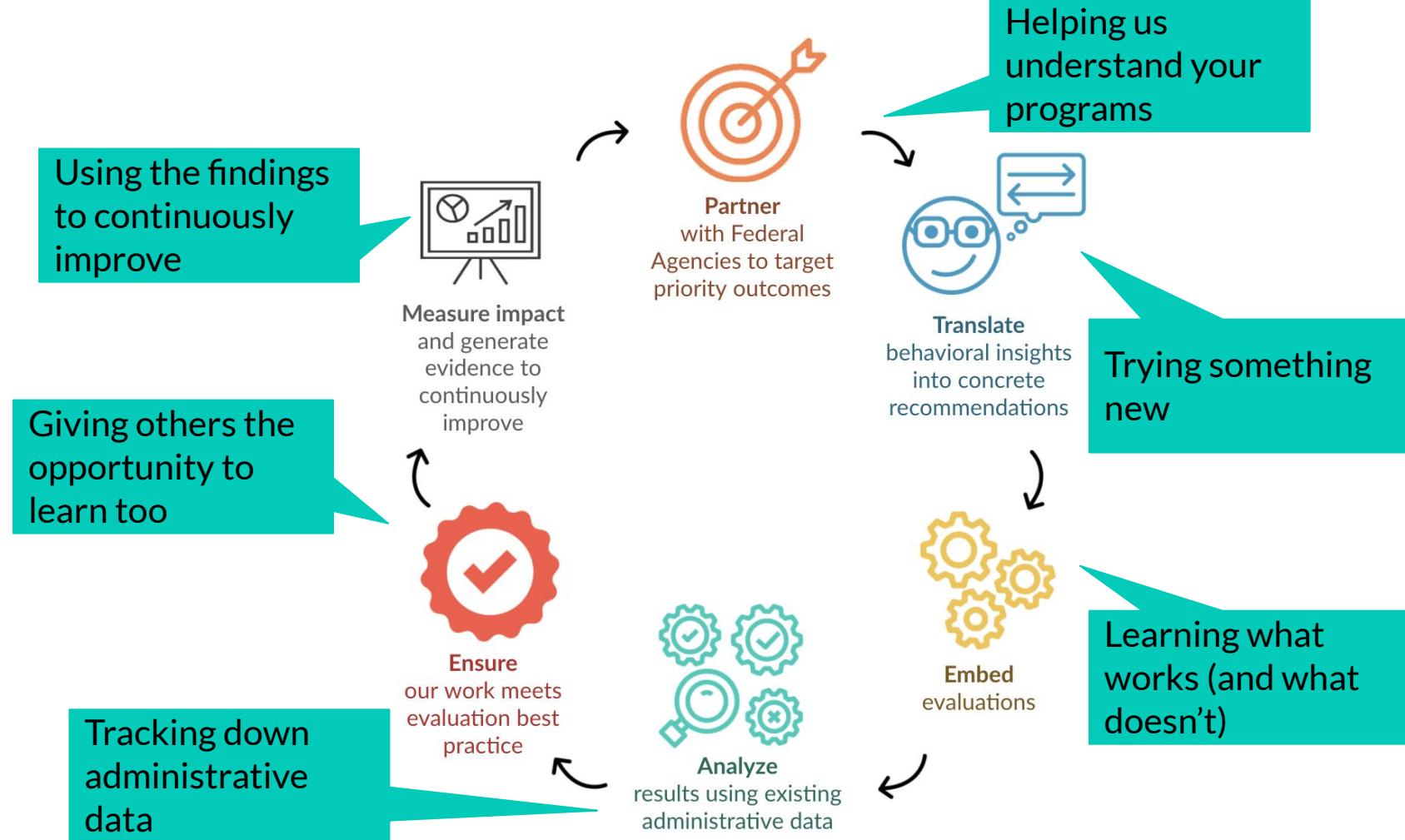


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# Thank you for working alongside us!



# Learn more about building and using evidence to improve government programs

The image shows the front cover of a booklet titled "A BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS GUIDE for Improving Payment Integrity". The cover features the logos of GSA (General Services Administration), OES (Office of Evaluation Sciences), and CFO (United States Chief Financial Officers Council). The title is centered above a graphic illustration. The illustration depicts a teal-colored smartphone with a white checkmark icon on its screen. A light blue circular arrow surrounds the phone, and a yellow circle with three small dots is positioned to the right of the phone. Below the phone is a horizontal bar composed of teal and orange segments.

GSA OES CFO  
UNITED STATES  
CHIEF FINANCIAL  
OFFICERS COUNCIL

Office of Evaluation Sciences  
U.S. General Services Administration

A BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS GUIDE  
for  
Improving Payment  
Integrity

# **Session 2:**

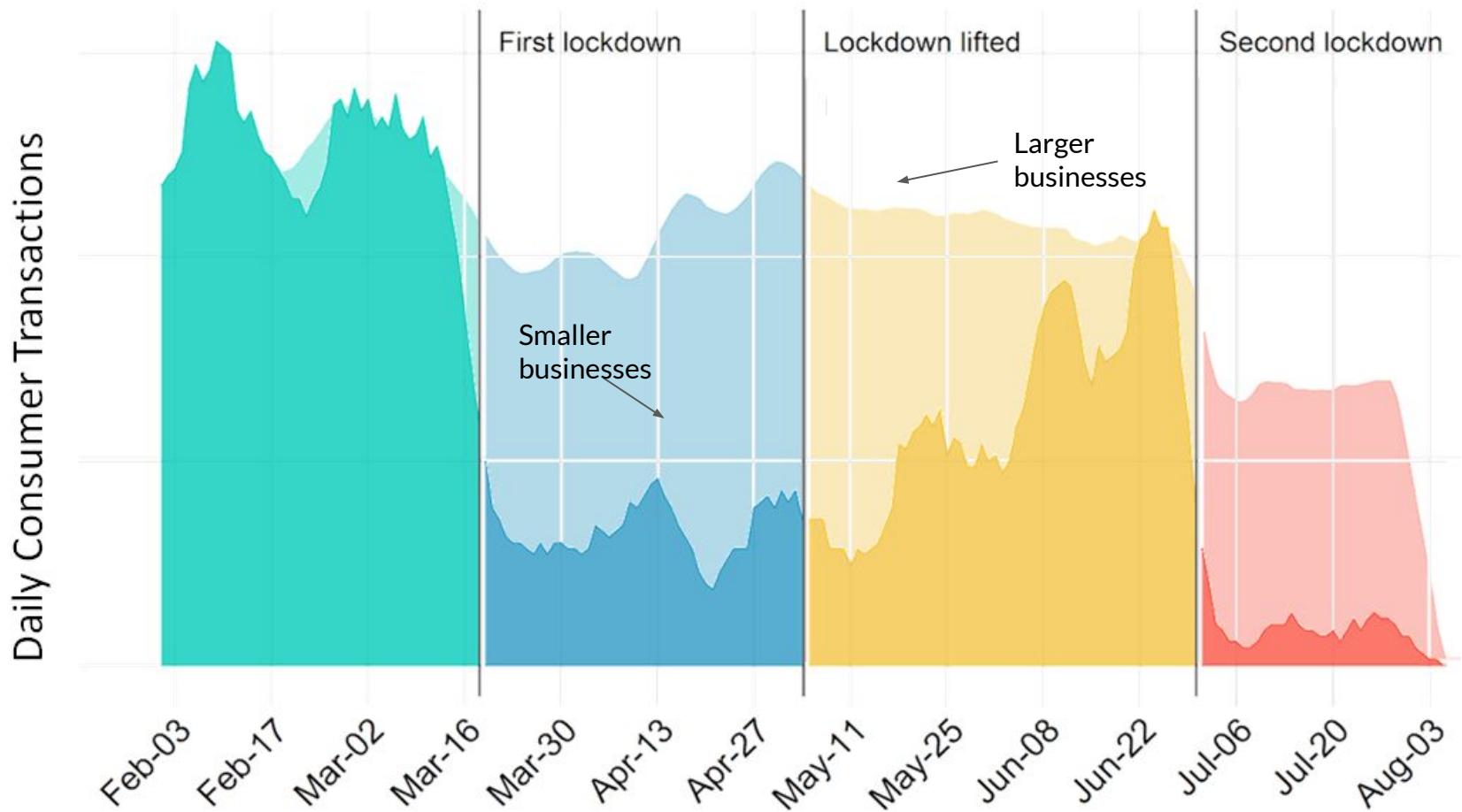
## **Portfolio of evidence on equity and economic recovery**



# OES@100

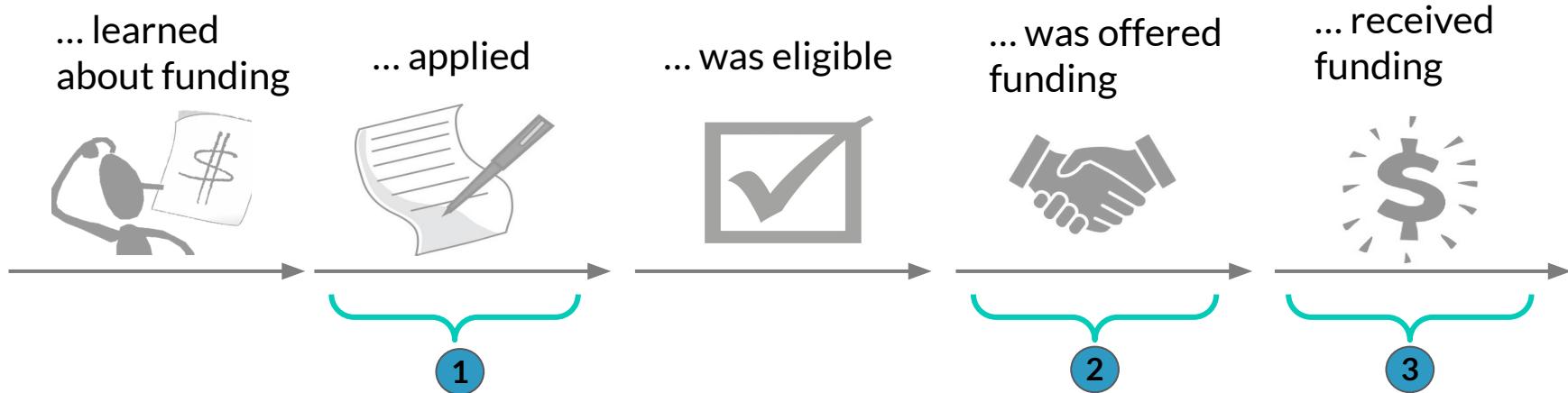
Celebrating 100 Collaborations  
Across Government

# Small businesses were hit hard by the pandemic and sought relief



# Equity concerns affect all steps in a small business' path to receiving funds

Business...



OES developed **three research themes**:

- 1 Access:** How do documentation requirements affect who applies?
- 2 Selection:** How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?
- 3 Impact:** How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?

# **Access:** How do documentation requirements affect who applies?

# 1. Access: Which businesses apply for relief?

## Study 1

**Qualitative interviews** in summer 2020

- **Findings:** documentation like Profit and Loss statements can pose particular burdens on underserved businesses

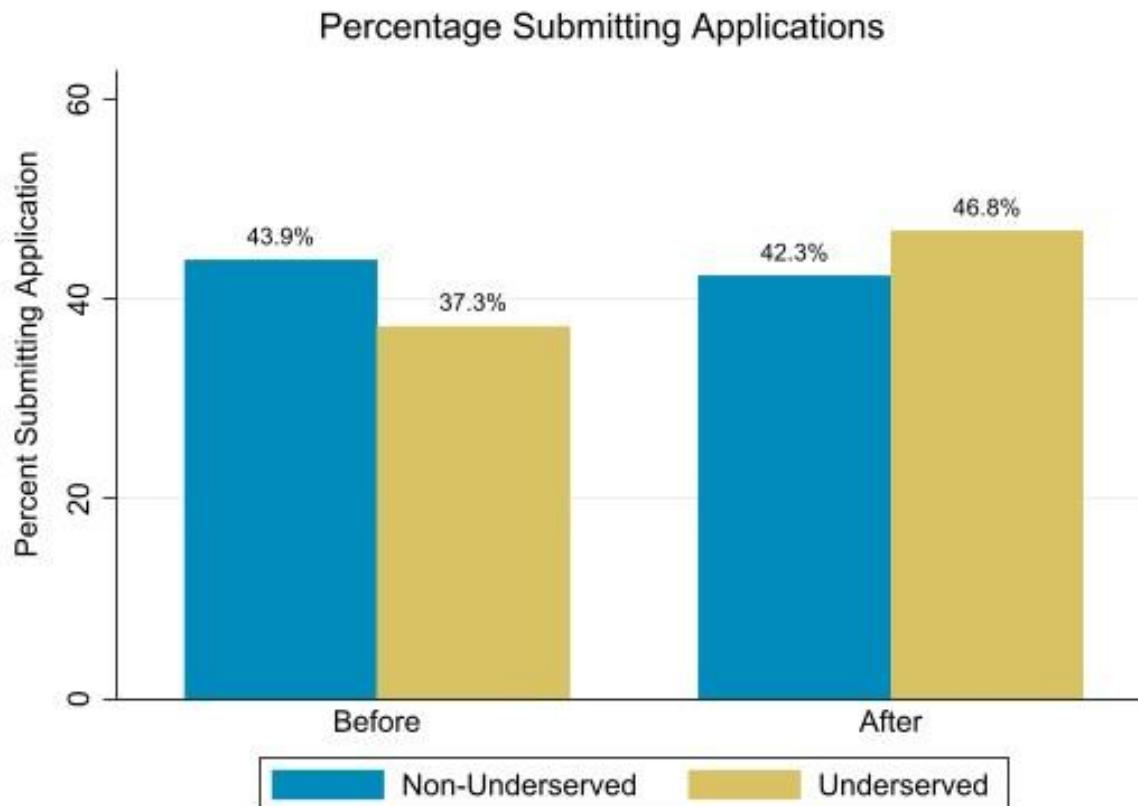
## Study 2

**Quantitative study** of impacts of a change in documentation requirements

**Documents Required:**

Before Change	After Change
Registration certificate; Budget; Tax returns if available; Bank statements; Profit and Loss statement; Business plan; 3-5 year projections; Lease agreement; Liability insurance; Resumes	Registration certificate; Budget; Tax returns if available; Bank statements

# Reduction in documentation burdens is associated with increased likelihood of submitting application among underserved businesses



Note: We use “underserved” to refer to minority, women, Veteran, and disabled-owned businesses. The city focused on other aspects of being underserved, such as neighborhood the business was located in and its industry.

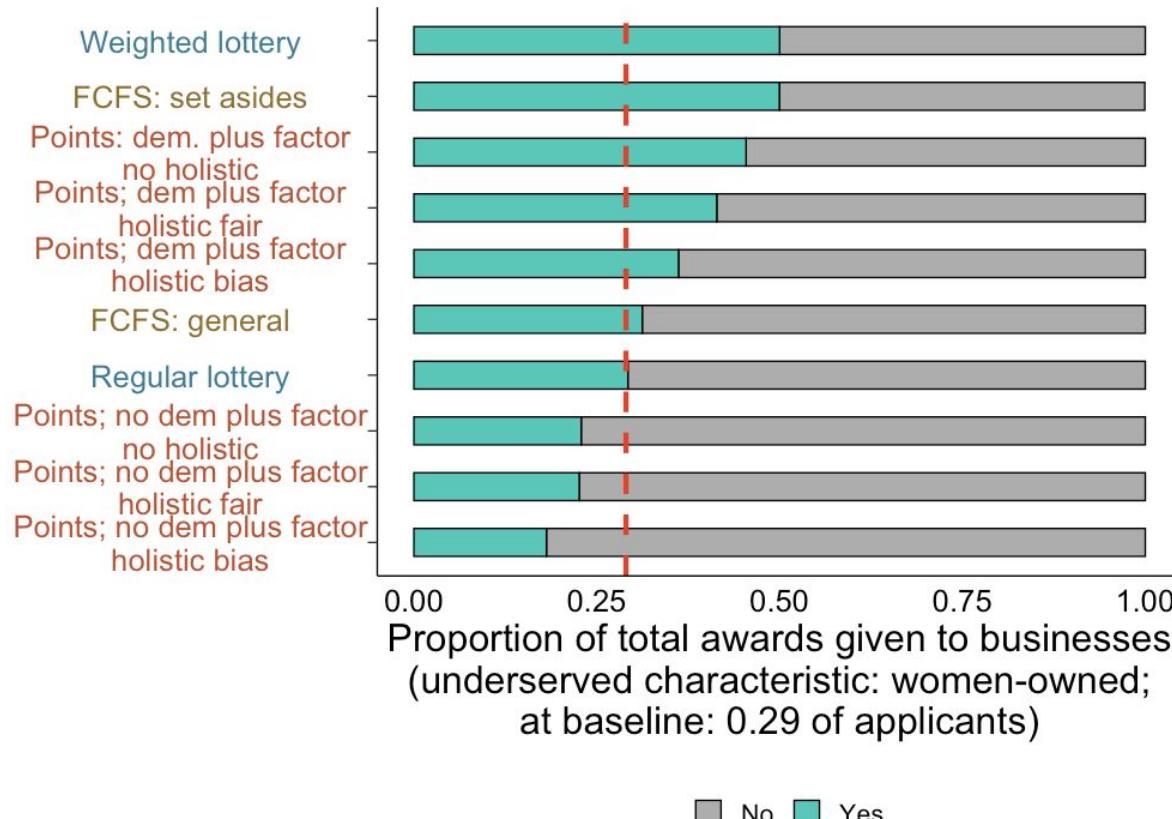
**Selection:** How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?

## 2. Selection: Which businesses are offered funds?

Allocation method	General method among businesses screened in as eligible
 Lottery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Put businesses in a lottery pool/lottery pools<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Some gave higher odds to underserved businesses</li></ul></li></ul>
 First come, first served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assign businesses a number(s) based on submission time<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Some created a fast-track for underserved businesses</li></ul></li></ul>
 Points system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Score businesses along various quantitative (e.g., COVID-19 revenue loss) and qualitative (e.g., reviewer-assessed survival probability) metrics<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Some gave extra points to underserved businesses</li></ul></li></ul>

# Distribution methods that directly target underserved populations more reliably increase reward rates

## Illustration: women-owned businesses in City A



**Impact:** How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?

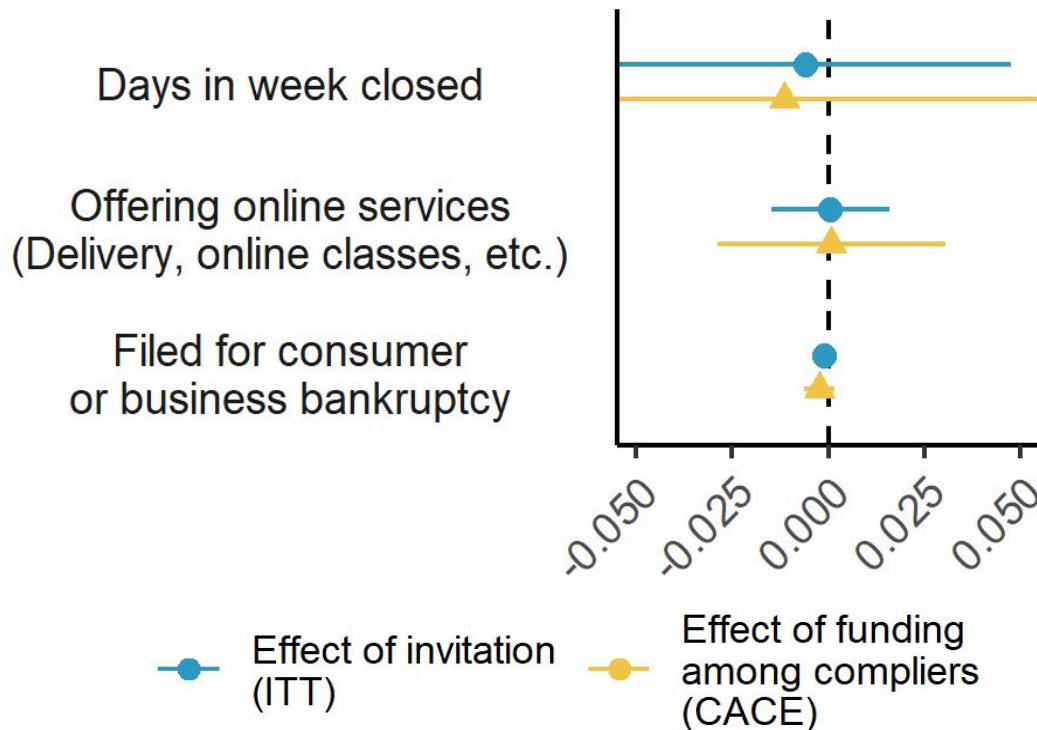
### 3. Impact: What is the impact of funding offers?

- Study two programs and use **retrospective, quasi-experimental designs** to estimate impact of funding on business outcomes in 2020
- Compare treatment and control businesses using micro-data:
  - Daily data on **closures** and **online services**
  - **Business activity** from credit card transaction data
  - Data on **bankruptcies** from the federal bankruptcy court

# Quasi-experimental designs can help in rapid evaluation, but also face challenges

## Impact of Funding Invitation and Receipt

(Point estimate with 95% CI)



# Takeaways

- ① **Access:** How do documentation requirements affect who applies?
  - Documentation burdens can fall more heavily on disadvantaged businesses
- ② **Selection:** How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?
  - Methods that target underserved populations increase award rates
- ③ **Impact:** How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?
  - No evidence of impact, due to data challenges

## Next Steps

- Balance documentation burden against need to verify eligibility
- What supports do small businesses need in navigating the path to funding



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# **Session 3:**

## **New frontier for evidence in government: what's next?**



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# Are you interested in working with OES?

## Annual Fellowship Program

**Apply Now!** All fellowship positions will be remote and location flexible within the United States. Fellows will serve at least a one year term, with interest and availability to serve additional years preferred. Fellows are often on loan from a variety of home institutions such as a university or another Federal agency.

- [Design Fellow Solicitation](#) - open until Friday, December 10, 2021
- [Fellowship Solicitation](#) - open until Monday, January 3, 2022
- [Federal Detail Solicitation](#) - open until Monday, January 3, 2022

**Not on the market this year?** Full-time OES team members are selected annually, with applications often opening in early Fall.

- Join our mailing list at the bottom of our homepage ([oes.gsa.gov](http://oes.gsa.gov)) to be notified of our next recruitment cycle.
- You can also learn more about the position and what we look for at [oes.gsa.gov/ops](http://oes.gsa.gov/ops).

For further information on working with us  
to improve federal programs and policies:  
[oes@gsa.gov](mailto:oes@gsa.gov)

[oes.gsa.gov](http://oes.gsa.gov)  
@OESatGSA and #OESatGSA