

OES@100

Celebrating 100 Collaborations Across Government

November 16, 2021

oes.gsa.gov

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Overview

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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:

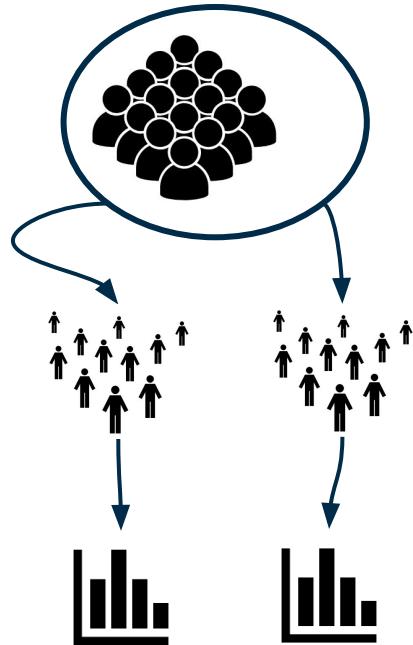


Turn off air conditioning when not at home – even on hot days!

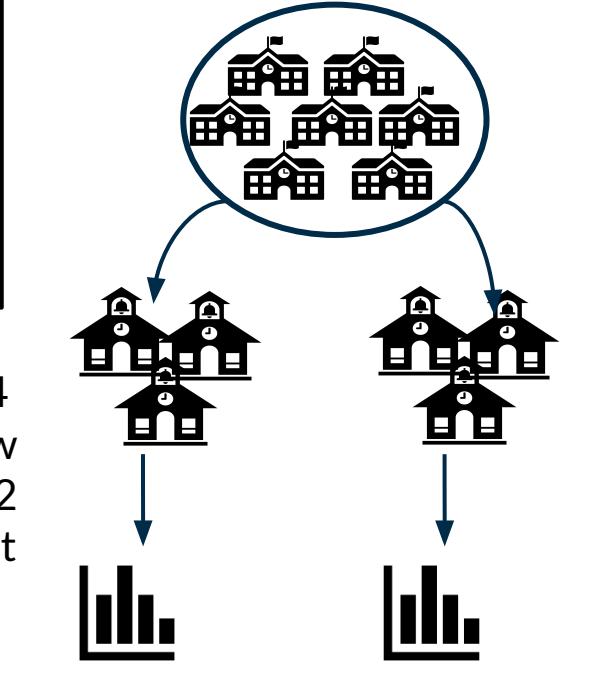
Learning from evaluation does not always require the ideal evaluation approach

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.



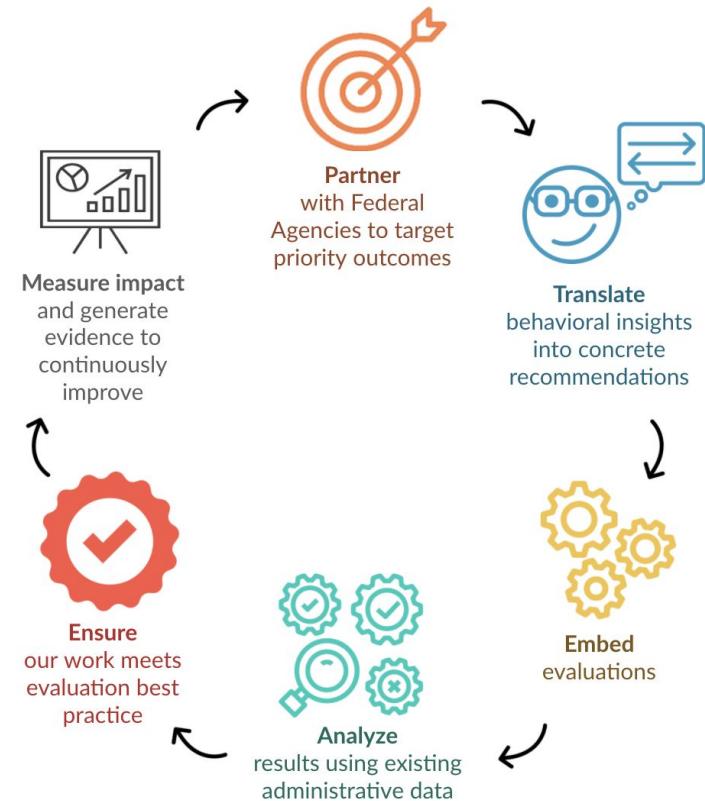
Feasible: Encourage 74 districts to use new letters, compare to 82 randomly selected that did not use new letters.

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

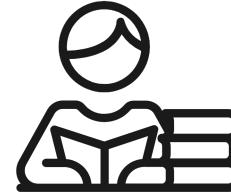
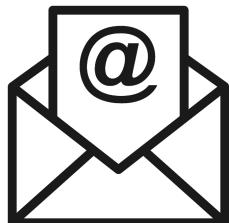
Outcome measured using administrative data...

Email opened

Take-up of financial aid

College enrollment

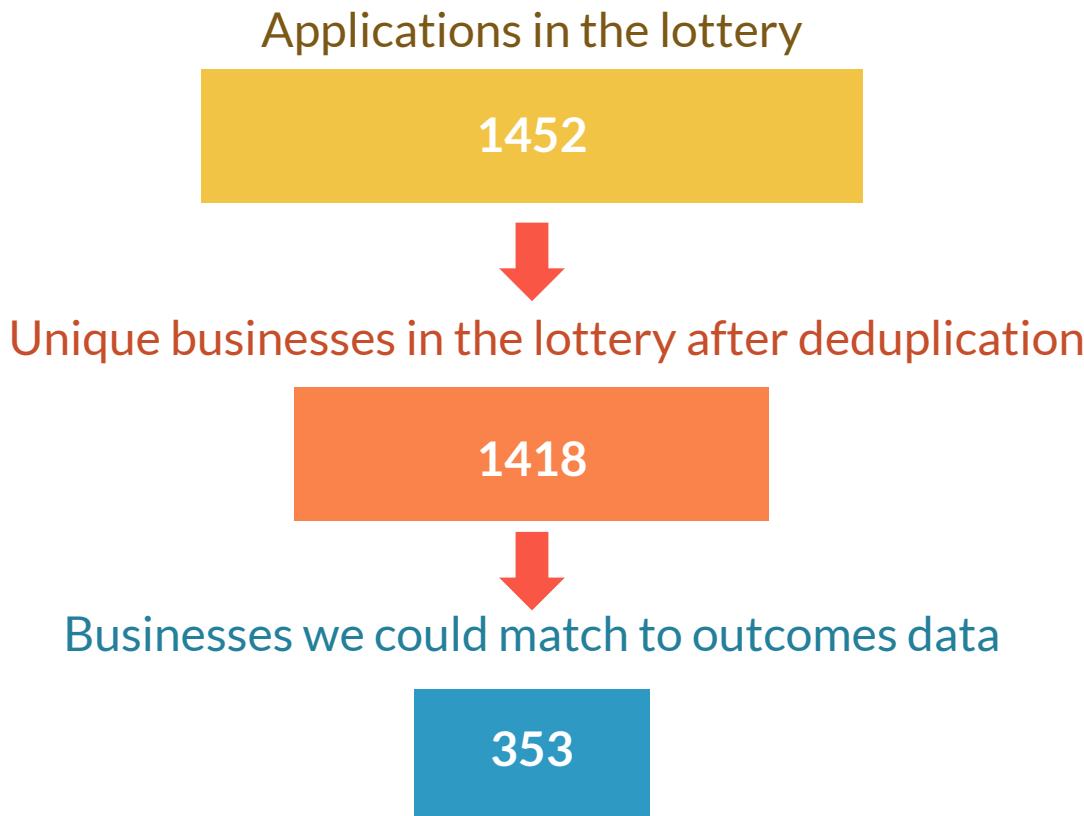
College degree



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

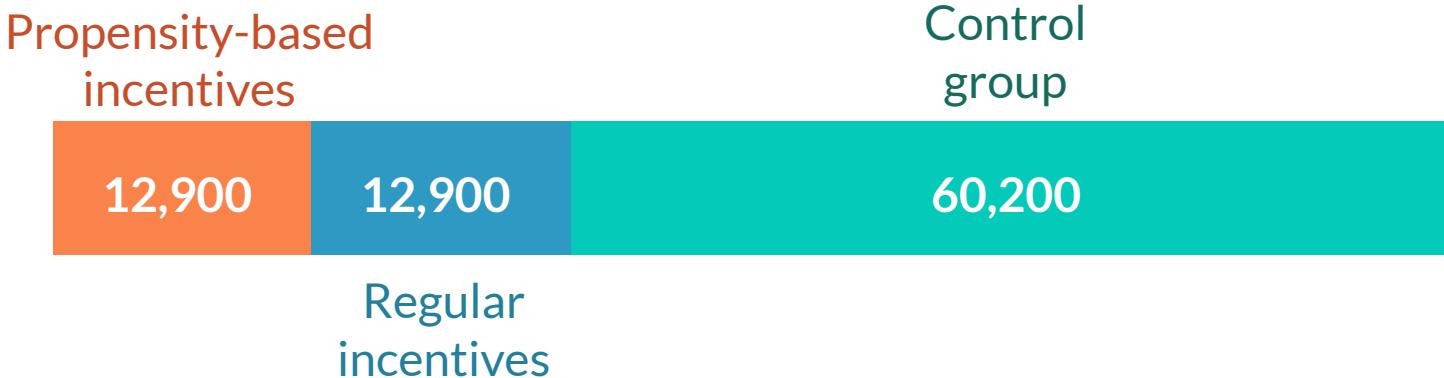
- There's more to precision than sample size
- And: there's more to sample size than counting up the number of participants in a program
- Important to anticipate how sample sizes grow and shrink and how this influences a study's precision

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

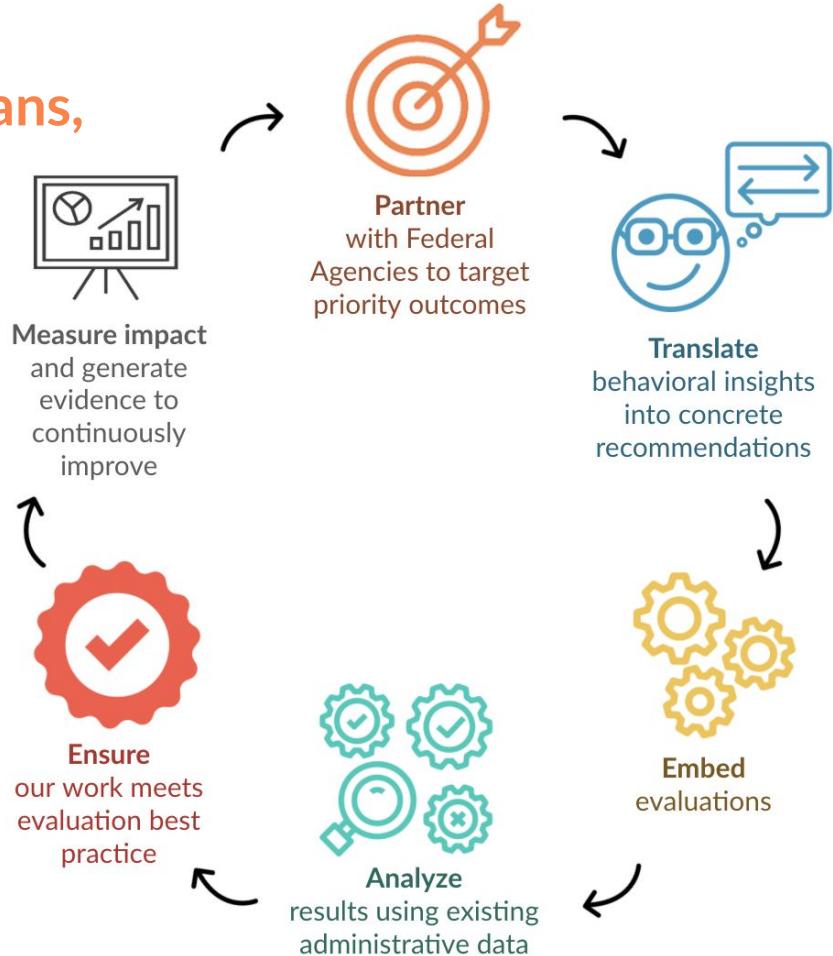


Record of Implementation

Project Name: [Title]
Project Code: [Code]

How this document is to be used:

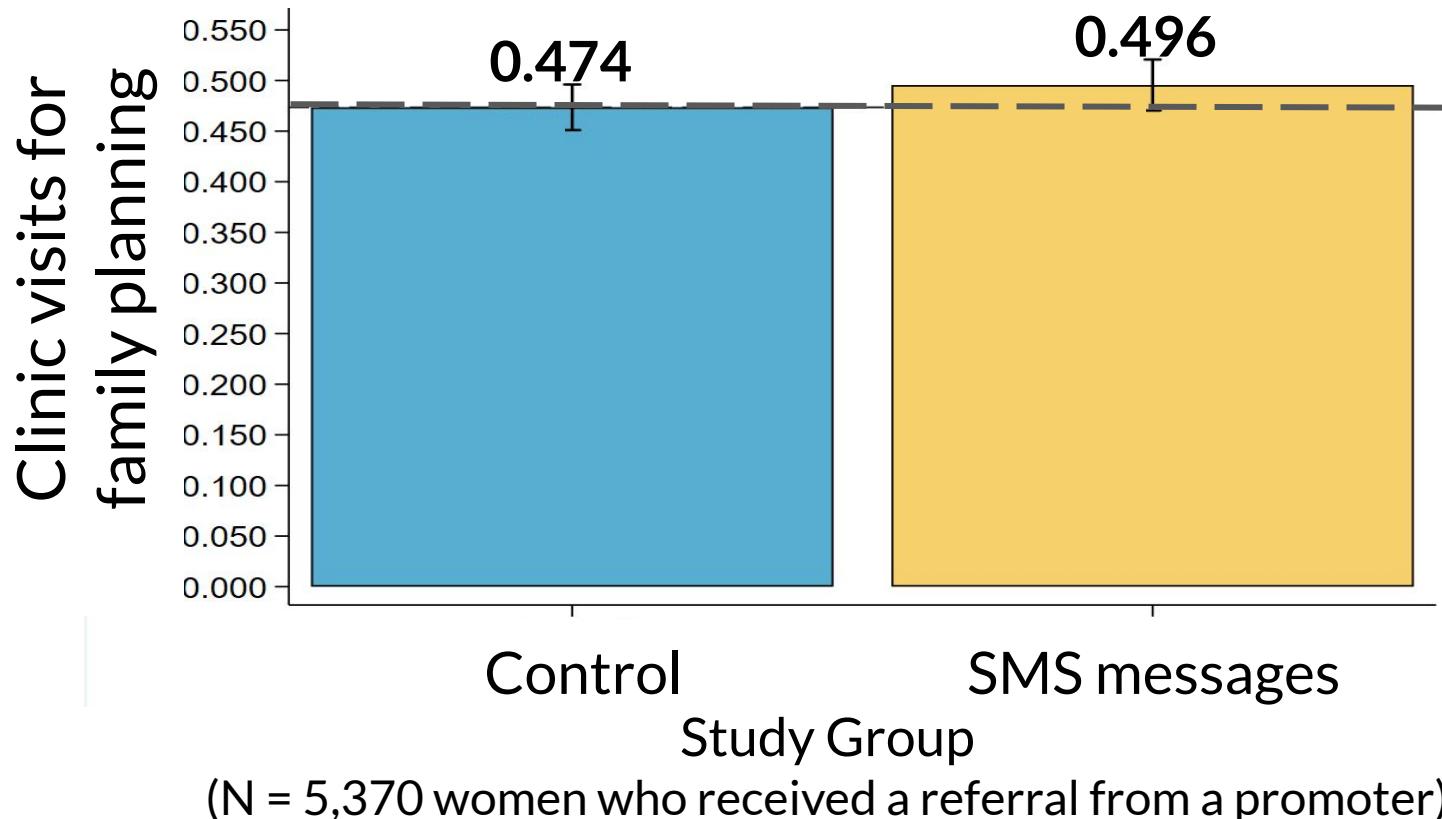
Use this document to record notes on the implementation of the project – in particular, anything that did not go according to the plan laid out in the Project Design Document. This template contains prompts for information on specific aspects of implementation that may not go as planned, but these are 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
No cost	No new change to delivery medium
Very low cost	Added email
Low cost	Added printing; Added printing and mailing; Added phone carrier
Moderate cost	Added staffing costs as part of intervention delivery
Multiple or unknown	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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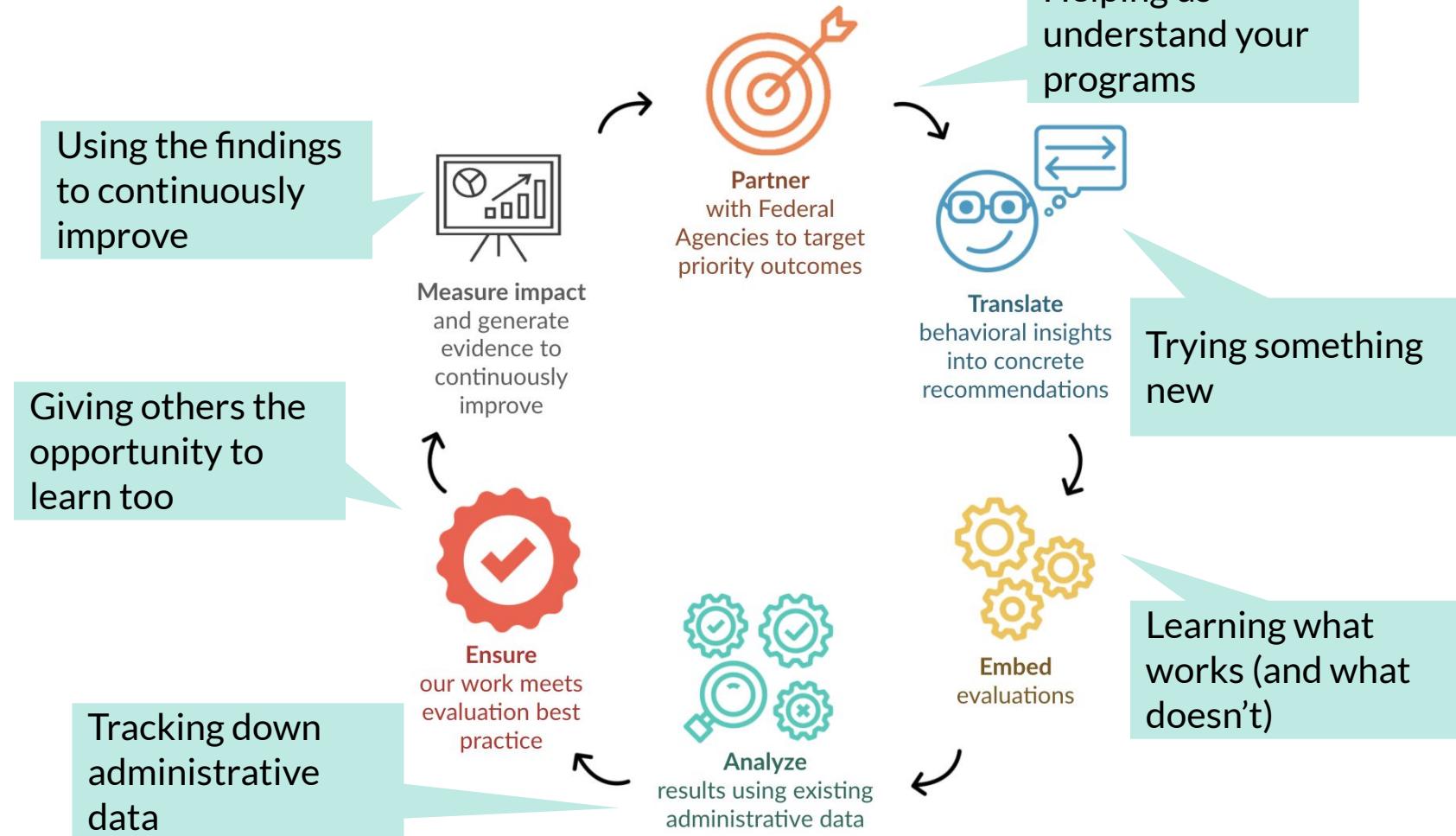


90
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evaluations



21
different Federal
Departments

Thank you for working alongside us!



Learn more about building and using evidence to improve government programs



Session 2:

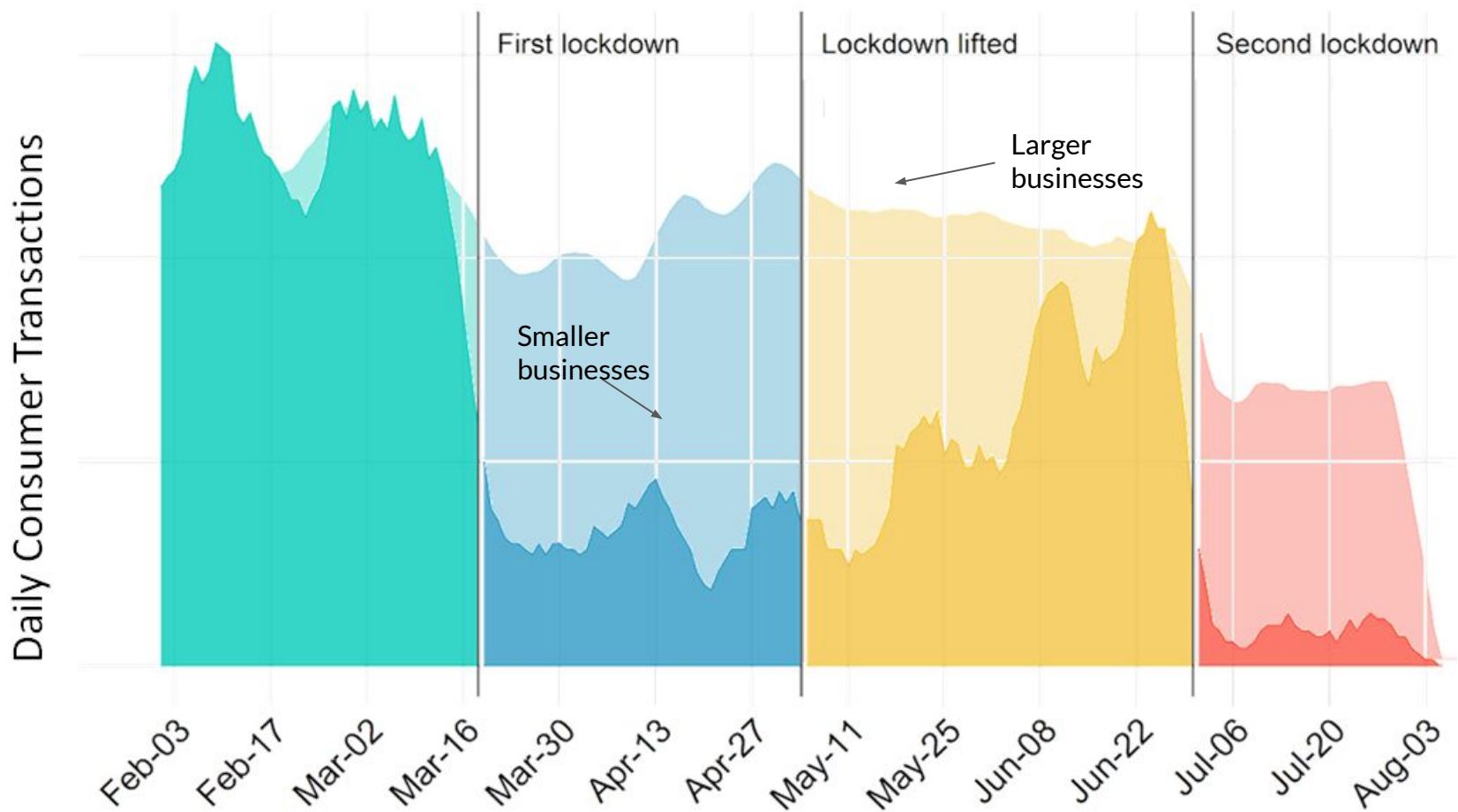
Portfolio of evidence on equity and economic recovery



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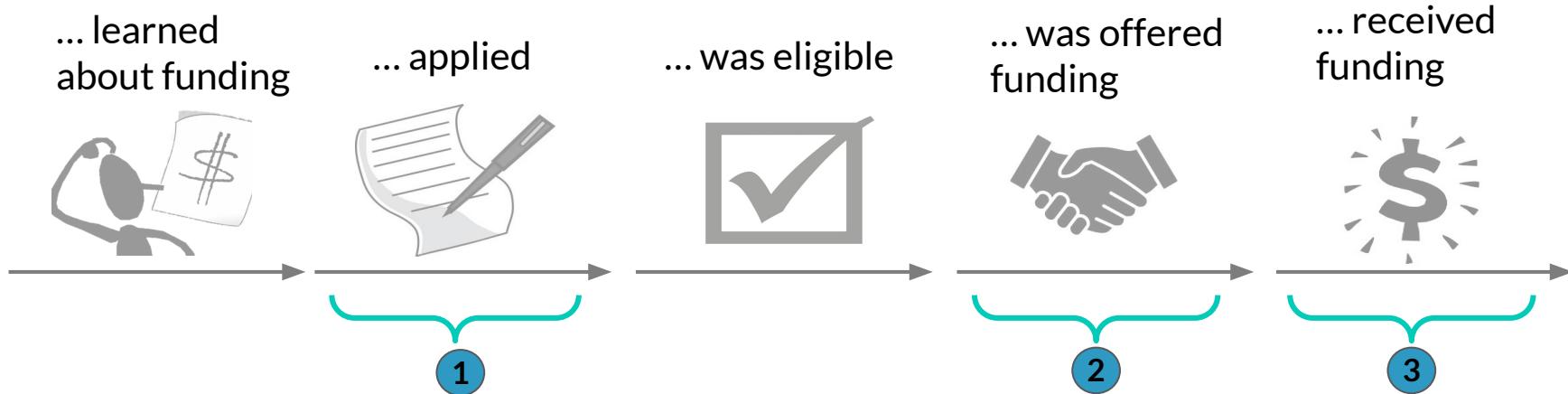
Celebrating 100 Collaborations
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Small businesses were hit hard by the pandemic and sought relief



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

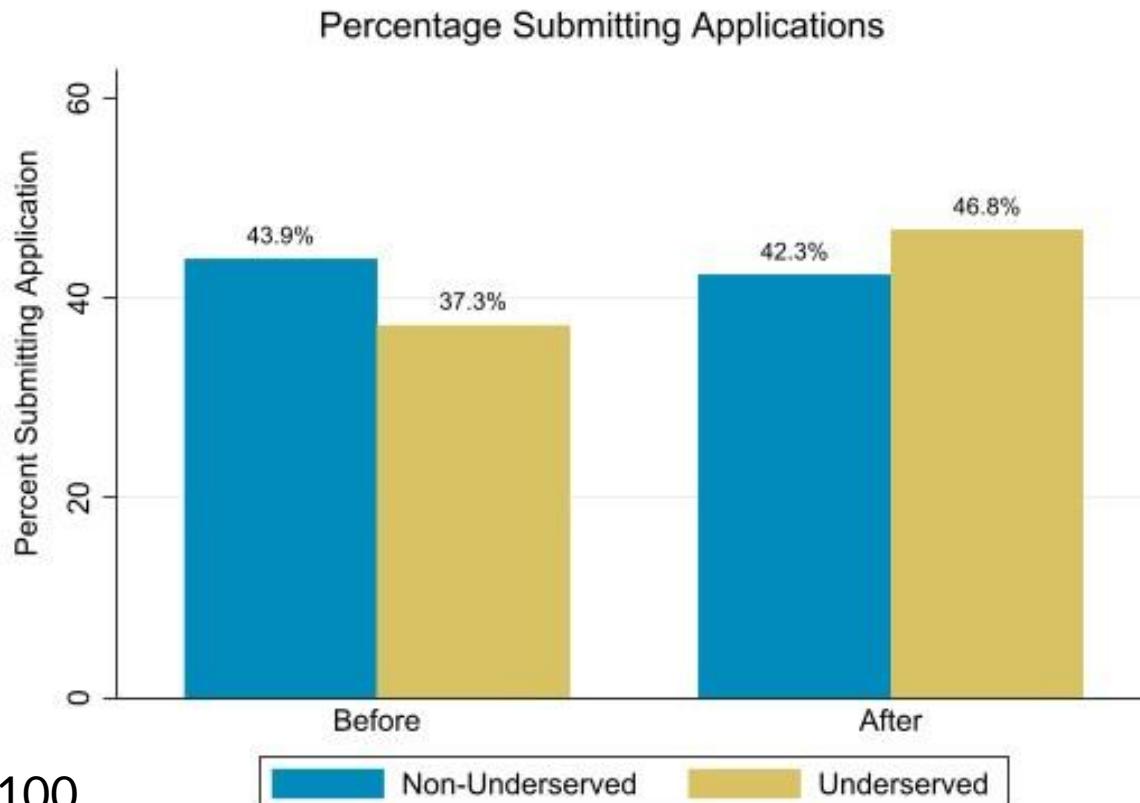
Study 2

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.

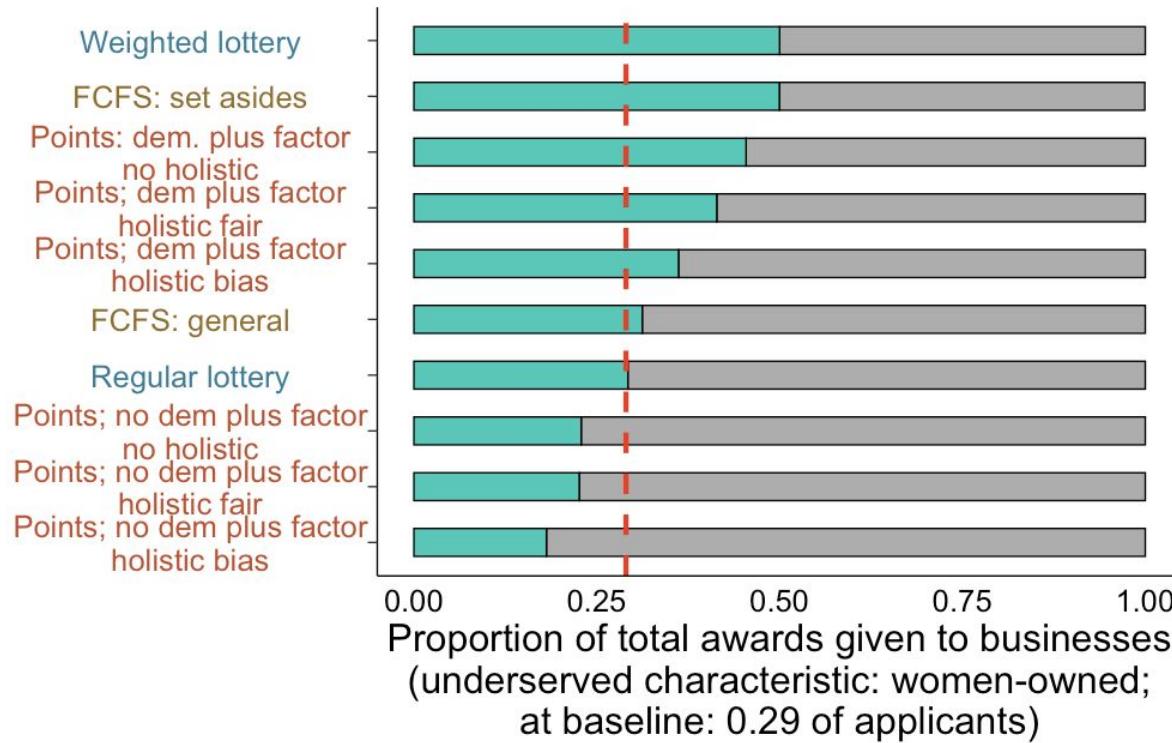
Selection: How do different selection methods change who is offered funds?

2. Selection: Which businesses are offered funds?

Allocation method	General method among businesses screened in as eligible
 Lottery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Put businesses in a lottery pool/lottery pools<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some gave higher odds to underserved businesses
 First come, first served	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assign businesses a number(s) based on submission time<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some created a fast-track for underserved businesses
 Points system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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">Some gave extra points to underserved businesses

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

Illustration: women-owned businesses in City A



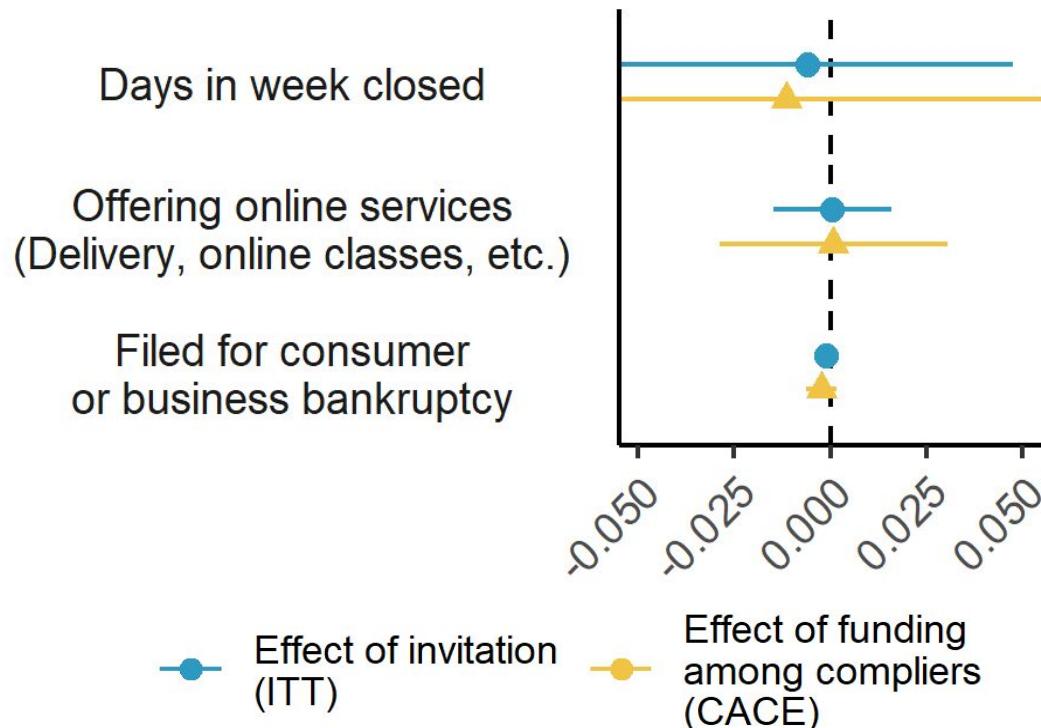
Impact: How does receiving funding impact business outcomes?

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) 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.

For further information on working with us
to improve federal programs and policies:
oes@gsa.gov

oes.gsa.gov
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