

# OES Strategic Plan

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FY 2022

# INTRODUCTION

Demand for the Office of Evaluation Sciences' (OES) unique combination of skills and expertise is growing at a steady pace. With the passage of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policy Making Act of 2018, agencies' evaluation and evidence activities are increasing, and opportunities for OES to support agencies to answer priority questions and generate rigorous, reliable and rapid evidence have expanded. This document will provide direction for OES and collaborators, help prioritize efforts and set a path for greater contribution in the years ahead.

Building on OES' accomplishments, this four-year Strategic Plan outlines OES' goals, strategic objectives, performance measures, and key capabilities for fiscal years 2022–2026. The plan will guide OES' decisions over the coming years, allowing the team to make meaningful contributions to and achievements within the federal government. The plan positions OES to support federal agency leadership and policymakers in expanding their use of evidence to inform decisions and investments in priority areas.

## OES' Mission

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OES' mission is to build and use evidence to better serve the public. OES aims to deliver a better government for the public by enabling agencies to build and use evidence to continually learn what works. OES is dedicated to achieving its mission, with support from the General Services Administration's (GSA) Office of Government-wide Policy (OGP), to ensure the US federal government has the evidence it needs to inform priority decisions, policies, and investments.

## OES History

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The Office of Evaluation Sciences was established in March 2015 within the General Services Administration's Office of Government-wide Policy to translate insights from the social and behavioral sciences into concrete recommendations for how to improve Federal programs, policies, and operations, and to work closely with agency partners to empirically measure the relative effectiveness and efficiency of their programs, policies, and operations. The initial function and focus of OES was to:

- Identify and execute on opportunities where social and behavioral science, both its content and methods, can be leveraged to improve Federal programs, policies, and operations;

- Conduct rigorous field evaluations that empirically measure the impact of our work on the efficiency and effectiveness of programs, policies, and operations;
- Be a leader in the growing movement to harness evidence and evaluation, and especially social and behavioral science, to improve government functioning; and,
- Recruit, train, and support exceptional social and behavioral scientists—the team that carries out the above functions.

The Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) has grown into an established team of interdisciplinary experts that works across the federal government to help agencies build and use evidence. OES partners with federal agencies to answer priority questions with rigorous evaluation methods and administrative data. The team designs and conducts impact evaluations of programs and evidence-based program changes. Team members work alongside agency collaborators to apply evidence based insights, make concrete recommendations for how to improve government, and evaluate impact using administrative data. We also work with agencies to interpret and apply what we've learned together, as well as share leading practices, resources, and build the skills of civil servants to continue this work.

Annually OES delivers high-quality impact evaluations to understand what works, what works best, and what does not work with actionable findings for agency partners. Our portfolio has spanned areas such as retirement security, reducing the cost of government operations, improving public health outcomes, and increasing educational opportunity. Additionally, OES has expanded our set of resources and trainings to support agencies conduct evaluations and evidence-building activities.

Since 2015, OES has completed over 100 collaborations, including 85 impact evaluations, with dozens of agency partners. OES has maintained a steadfast commitment to transparency, sharing the results of every completed evaluation since the team was established, as well as pre-registering analysis plans for all evaluations as of 2018. OES has built a competitive, nationally recognized fellowship program - which receives hundreds of applications for a few annual fellowship slots. OES' innovative model has brought over 140 interdisciplinary experts into government with the purpose of building evidence hand-in-hand with agency collaborators.

Today, in 2022, OES is a team of over 40 people working on 30 varied evaluations across the federal government. Team members continue to work alongside agency collaborators to apply evidence-based insights, evaluate impact using rigorous evaluation methods and administrative data, and make concrete recommendations for how to improve government. OES also works with agencies to interpret and apply learnings, share leading

evidence practices and resources, and build the skills of civil servants to carry on this work. OES is uniquely situated in GSA, an entity that can easily deploy technical support to other agencies, provide an independent yet intragovernmental perspective, and develop resources for high-quality evidence-building activities in the federal environment. The OES mission holds constant and is more relevant today than ever.

# OES Strategic Framework

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In order to support its mission and promote sustainable growth, OES' Strategic Plan outlines the goals, strategic objectives, and key capabilities for fiscal years 2022–2025. Each goal and objective includes performance measures that OES will use to track progress toward accomplishing strategic goals.

## Strategic Goal 1

Make access to federal programs easier and more equitable.

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### Strategic Objective 1

OES will work with federal agencies to identify and design program changes that aim to increase access to federal programs, reduce burden for underserved populations, and better serve the public. Alongside our agency partners, OES will identify barriers to access, translate evidence-based insights into concrete changes, design proposed solutions, and rigorously evaluate the causal impact of changes using administrative data. OES will prioritize evaluations in service of this goal.

OES will contribute to a government-wide understanding of how to identify and address barriers that prevent underserved populations from accessing government programs. OES commits to publicly share results and lessons learned from all evaluations and collaborations.

#### **Performance Measures:**

- 1-1: OES evaluations lead to reduced barriers to federal programs for 4 million people from underserved populations by 2026
- 1-2: OES shares evidence on reducing barriers to access for underserved populations through 20 evaluation results by 2026

## Strategic Goal 2

Build actionable evidence relevant to federal programs and policies.

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### Strategic Objective 2

Once evaluations are complete, additional effort is required to ensure evaluation findings and lessons are applied to inform policy decisions and resource allocation. OES will support agencies in applying results and lessons learned from OES evaluations to strengthen federal programs. To help facilitate this work, OES commits to sharing rigorous evaluation results and actionable operational and methodological recommendations with relevant audiences in a timely manner, including programmatic decision-makers, senior agency leadership, Evaluation Officers, state and local partners, the Office of Management and Budget, academic networks, and the broader public. OES will clearly and accurately share evaluation findings using a variety of dissemination and communication tools. OES will support partners' applications of evaluations findings, as well as operational and methodological lessons, through continued engagement after an evaluation is complete, supporting dissemination, discussions and implementation of findings in the partner agency and decision makers. The team will also support efforts to scale high impact effective interventions designed and evaluated by OES.

#### **Performance Measures:**

- 2-1: Learnings (methodological, operational or results) are applied from a majority of completed OES evaluations by 2026
- 2-2: OES evaluations positively impact 10 million individuals by 2026

## Strategic Goal 3

Promote and support excellence in federal evaluation.

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### Strategic Objective 3

OES will continue to develop and maintain strong relationships with federal agencies across government. Agency partners will be involved in each step of the OES project process (evaluation initiation, design, implementation, analysis, interpretation, and

dissemination), building or strengthening varied technical skills throughout. OES will provide guidance and resources on rigorous evaluation, quantitative methods, and using administrative data that support long-term capacity building within the federal workforce.

### **Performance Measures:**

- 3-1: 200 federal employees increase their evaluation expertise through agency partnerships on OES evaluations by 2026
- 3-2: 1000 federal employees increase their evaluation expertise through evaluation trainings by 2026
- 3-3: OES evaluation resources and materials used 350,000 times by 2026

## Key Capabilities

In addition to the strategic objectives set above, OES must continue to focus on key organizational components; namely our team, partnerships, and services.

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### Our Team

OES achievements to date are due to the caliber of the OES team. OES team members are focused on supporting agencies and improving government. OES will continue to maintain and support a high quality team in order to meet increasing demand for evidence and evaluations across government. OES will maintain its reputation among academic and external audiences, serving as a bridge between academia and the government through contributions to academic publications and participation in academic conferences. OES will recruit top and diverse talent able to collaborate with and reliably respond to federal partners' priorities. A diverse, equitable, and inclusive team is essential in order to meet a wide range of agency needs. OES must establish long-term partnerships with academic networks with diverse representation, and focus recruitment efforts to continue expanding its network. OES will continue to explore varied mechanisms to bring on diverse talent to support and strengthen agency partners.

### Our Partnerships

OES' work is highly collaborative and depends on trusted and effective partnerships. All OES evaluations are done in collaboration with other federal agencies. To meet our strategic objectives OES will maintain strong agency partnerships and be responsive to agency needs. OES will explore multi-year, multi-project partnerships with local

governments and non-governmental collaborators who are interested in filling priority federal evidence gaps and addressing barriers to access for underserved populations. OES will maintain its reputation inside and outside of government as a strong, committed, and effective collaborator.

## Our Services

OES must ensure our services and methods are responsive to agency needs and reflective of our mission and expertise. OES will continue to focus primarily on conducting impact evaluations, applying rigorous quantitative methods, and using administrative data. OES focuses on low-cost evaluations by offering an internal-to-government team and relying on existing administrative data. OES will continue to pilot new methods and expand our services in order to meet the needs of agency partners where our skills can appropriately meet those needs.

## CONCLUSION

In the years ahead OES will focus on building evidence to make federal programs more equitable, on supporting evidence application and use, and strengthening the federal evaluation ecosystem. By investing in these priorities, OES will concentrate its impact in priority areas where we have comparative advantage, a proven track record of success and the opportunity to create meaningful change.