



Best Practices in Administrative Data Collection that Facilitate Research: Lessons Learned from the NCSP Exploratory Data Analytics Study

SUMMARY

In 2023, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) and commissioned Westat to examine the feasibility of using administrative data to conduct an implementation study of the National Construction Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) Pilot (NCSP). NCSP allows OSHA On-Site Consultation programs to work with small- and medium-sized businesses in the construction industry to develop and implement comprehensive and effective safety and health management programs for all workers on-site. The study team reviewed NCSP administrative data, developed a process to turn the data into machine-readable data files that can be processed by a computer, and completed a preliminary implementation study.

This Department of Labor-funded study contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [data, methods, and tools](#) and [worker protection, labor standards, and workplace-related benefits](#) programs and policies as well as addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

This brief provides recommendations for implementing administrative data collection practices that support the research needs of federal departments and agencies. The brief describes the process and feasibility of using administrative data to conduct an implementation study of NCSP. Using the NCSP Exploratory Data Analytics Study to provide examples of lessons learned and best practices, it presents recommendations for enhancing administrative data collection practices to better advance evidence-building and expand evaluation capacity.

The brief details seven recommendations in two stages:

Stage 1: Determine the data elements to collect as administrative data.

1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the program under study.
2. Develop the research questions.
3. Determine what data elements are most important to include in the administrative data and their sources.

Stage 2: Efficiently collect and store the required data elements.

1. Use data collection strategies that yield machine-readable data.
2. Use data collection forms with consistent file layouts.
3. Use data collection strategies that yield high-quality data.
4. Define the required recordkeeping procedures.

Using these recommended practices can enhance federal departments' and agencies' existing administrative data collection practices and may serve as a cost-effective way for departments and agencies to comply with the Evidence Act and strengthen the evaluation capabilities of federal staff.



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[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

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