



HARVARD
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dear Colleague,

I am writing as the instructor of a Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) course, "Introduction to Qualitative Program and Policy Evaluation," which is being offered from **January through May, 2021**. Over the semester, graduate students in this class will learn how to design and conduct qualitative evaluation research. In order to connect this academic learning with real-world questions and challenges, it is my goal to engage all my students with real organizations or programs to conduct a complete research project. We would love your participation in this virtual opportunity. Examples of final reports from prior years are attached.

[Register for a webinar here to learn more.](#) More info below.

Collaborating with us involves having someone in your organization identify 1) one or more potential research topics and 2) people within your organization—or connected with it—to participate in interviews and/or focus groups. At the end of the semester, the graduate student team will present their work orally at a session you would be invited to attend. Additionally, the team will share the final written paper with you at the end of the project.

This could be a great opportunity if you or your organization is interested in gaining insight into a defined program or policy question. Some examples of questions that could be appropriate for this collaboration include:

- How do new teachers and their mentors experience a mentorship program your organization oversees?
- What are the barriers to improving representation of minority students and English learners in a specific charter school or set of schools?
- Why are families not taking advantage of health screenings offered through their child's school?
- How can a state college finance organization improve its parent information sessions?

Below are more specific details of the commitment that I am asking of our course collaborators:

1. We will connect you with a team of 2-4 graduate students in the course in early February 2021. You will be asked to have an introductory phone or Zoom conversation with the students by mid-February to explain your program or organization. During the initial conversation, you and the student team will clarify the research question, the audience for whom they are conducting the research, the organization's goals in having this question explored, and how this question can be answered primarily through a combination of individual interviews, focus groups, and program observation. One student will be the designated contact person to facilitate communication.

2. You will be asked to identify potential research participants who are either colleagues or recipients of services, and the graduate student team will contact them to arrange focus groups or interviews. Research participants will need to commit no more than one hour of their time. It is important that the data collection occur by the end of March.

3. During March and April, the graduate student team will analyze the data and write a report of their findings and recommendations. During this time, they will meet with you again by Zoom or phone to discuss their progress, get clarification, and refine the research direction if needed. They will present their findings at the end of the semester at an event that you are invited to attend. The team will send you a copy of the final report when it is completed. (Sample evaluation projects: [Sample 1](#), [Sample 2](#))

Please note that the final arrangement with the graduate student team will be subject to course enrollment. I will make every effort to make mutually beneficial matches.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating (and share your proposed topic with me) by **Thursday, December 18th 2020** at lynne_sacks@gse.harvard.edu.



HARVARD
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, I will be holding a brief webinar on **Monday, December 14th, from 12-12:30pm** to share more information and answer questions – or you may contact me directly.

[Register for the webinar here to learn more.](#)

For additional information, please contact:

- Rachel Gakenheimer at rachel_gakenheimer@gse.harvard.edu with any questions about the webinar, or
- Me directly at lynne_sacks@gse.harvard.edu if you are unable to attend the webinar and/or wish to discuss this project.

Sincerely,

Lynne Sacks, Ed.D.

Lecturer, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Associate Director for Programs and Research, Education Redesign Lab