

Research Associate Health Care Coverage and Access & Tracking Health System Performance



The Organization

The Commonwealth Fund — among the first private foundations started by a woman philanthropist, Anna M. Harkness — was established in 1918 with the broad charge to enhance the common good. Today, the mission of The Commonwealth Fund is to promote a high-performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society’s most vulnerable, including low-income people, the uninsured, and people of color. The Fund carries out this mandate by supporting independent research on health care issues and making grants to improve health care practice and policy.

Our Values and Commitment to Equity

The Commonwealth Fund envisions a health care system that values and benefits all people equally — one that combats racism and pursues equity, in treatment and outcomes as well as in leadership and decision-making. We believe this requires an alliance of people and institutions across society working together to recognize and value the lived experience of all individuals; ensure the delivery of compassionate, affordable, quality health care; and strive for equitable outcomes for all.

We aspire to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in how we work. We place great value on the varied backgrounds and experiences our staff bring to our organization and encourage employees to bring their full selves to the workplace. We look for talented, nimble, empathetic, and supportive team players who are ready to roll up their sleeves, create impactful change, and celebrate accomplishments.

Program Summary

The U.S. health system is characterized by considerable geographic variation on insurance coverage, access to care, health status, quality of care, and the cost of care. It also lags other economically advanced countries by varying degrees in most of these areas. This means that some regions of the U.S. not only lag behind other regions on health performance indicators, they lag even further behind other economically advanced countries than national averages suggest.

In the area of insurance coverage, the Affordable Care Act improved overall U.S. performance relative to other countries and narrowed differences between some states. It also narrowed historical race and income inequities in coverage and reduced state differences in people’s access to care and consumer financial problems stemming from uncovered health care encounters. In addition, there is consistent evidence that the coverage expansions led to improved reported health status in some states, a key indicator of mortality. The law’s provisions in the area of health care quality and cost were less sweeping than those in coverage but resulted in important improvements.

Despite these ACA-related gains, the U.S. still lags significantly behind other countries on health care indicators and large differences remain between states. More than 25 million people remain uninsured, nearly a quarter of working age adults have insurance plans that are leaving them underinsured, the country has a growing consumer medical debt crisis, and health care costs are

growing faster than median income in most states. In addition, over the last decade, the U.S has experienced an unprecedented decline in life expectancy driven in large part by the COVID-19 pandemic and the opioid use epidemic. With the end of the federal protections implemented during the pandemic, millions of people are expected to lose insurance coverage with a large number projected to become uninsured.

In order to help meet these challenges, the Health Care Coverage and Access Program & Tracking Health System Performance research initiative conduct extramural and intramural research on the extent and quality of insurance, health care access and financial problems stemming from inadequate coverage and health system performance at the national and state, including examining and developing policy options aimed at improving performance.

The program and research initiative seek to educate and inform policy makers, the media, health system leaders and practitioners, community leaders, and the public. We accomplish this by tracking and assessing health system performance in the areas of coverage and access, costs, quality of care, health outcomes, and equity at the national, state, and local levels. This includes developing and monitoring policies aimed at improving performance. The team also collaborates with other Fund programs on publications and products that support the Funds priorities.

General Position Description

This position is an important member of the Fund's Health Care Coverage and Access Program & Tracking Health System Performance research initiative which reports to the Senior Scholar and Vice President. The Research Associate is an integral member of the five-person team. The team maintains a state data center on the Fund's website, conducts an ongoing population-based survey on coverage and access. These databases inform the Fund's annual and biennial State Scorecard of state performance rankings and policy relevant reports, issue briefs, and blog posts. The publications are geared to produce a quantitative and qualitative evidence base to inform policy making at both the state and federal levels on timely issues.

The primary responsibilities of the Research Associate are the day to day management of the team's Tracking Health System Performance state scorecard research product portfolio, maintenance of the state data center, and quantitative and qualitative research associated with those products. The Research Associate works closely with the Senior Scientist responsible for executing this portfolio. The Research Associate also participates in writing and editing the Fund's state scorecard and other publications including reports, issue briefs, blog posts, web-interactive tools, and journal articles based on the state data center, Fund surveys, and other data sets. Responsibilities will include making presentations at public and professional meetings.

Specific Responsibilities

- Actively participates in the selection/development, research, and analysis of national, state, local, and special-population-level health system performance measures for the state scorecards and state data center.
- Serves as co-author with other team members on the program's written products. Depending on the publication, this can involve collaborating closely with other Fund program staff, in addition to team members.
- Co-author roles entail drafting and editing text; creating charts, graphs and appendix tables; participating in the Fund's publication review process and making revisions requested by internal and external reviewers and Fund Communications staff; and proofreading and checking for data

accuracy.

- Maintain and build knowledge base on emerging trends in health policy, major health care legislation, federal programs and regulation including the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and Medicare. Build knowledge base in emerging health care trends with significant policy implications including the opioid drug overdose crisis and life expectancy. This will help inform data center measure selection, data analysis and presentation, focus of publications, and public releases.
- Maintain and build knowledge-base and conduct research on the literature, policy environment, and industry trends related to health system performance on the key measures of state scorecards focus. Monitor journals, working papers, legislative developments, survey reports, and other information related to the state scorecards.
- Actively collaborates with co-authors and the Fund's internal and external communications staff on activities related to the public release of the program's publications. These typically include helping to: review state scorecard reports, appendices, state data profiles, shape and review the press release and e-alert and create presentations of key findings for the media. May be asked to present the key findings to the media and participate in interviews with journalists.
- Participates in the development of online versions of reports, data visualizations, and related interactives, with the Fund's Vice President for Digital Information and Strategy and other members of the communications team.
- Working closely with the Senior Scientist assists with complex data analysis using Excel spreadsheets, STATA, and other data analytic software.
- Works with the Senior Program Assistant on grant related matters as needed including the development of small grants/contracts related to data acquisition and measure development, and completed grant memoranda regarding grant achievements, issues in implementation, and lessons learned for Fund grantmaking.
- Provides research support to the Senior Scholar and VP in the development and writing of research and policy briefs and To the Point blog posts and journal articles for Fund or outside publication.
- Develops slides and handouts for internal and external team presentations. Presents material as appropriate.
- Helps to organize and support meetings and collaboration among advisory and affinity groups.

The Fund's philosophy on successful performance in the job includes the willingness on the part of all staff members to handle any assignment necessary to further the goals of the institution. This may include taking on responsibility in other program areas or departments if the need arises.

Qualifications

- Master's degree preferred with 3-5 years relevant work experience.
- Preference will be given to applicants with prior research experience and/or formal education in economics or health policy. Demonstrated interest in health policy a plus.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with record of policy publication and/or presentation of research for policy or public audiences. An ability to convey complex technical issues to a lay policy audience.
- Detail oriented with strong data analytic skills. Demonstrated ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize data from various sources and produce graphics and tabular data presentations.
- Highly organized and able to manage multiple tasks and production of deliverables in a fast-paced environment.
- Dedicated team player with flexibility to work with and without supervision.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite of products. Familiarity with spreadsheet analysis and STATA, SAS, or similar statistical software a plus. Candidates must be willing to learn new computer

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skills as necessary.

The Fund has a relatively small staff so judgment, integrity, and the ability to listen with sensitivity to others are traits that are particularly important in an organization of the Fund's size where teamwork is essential to effectiveness. The ability to work collegially with a variety of Fund staff and interest in and strong commitment to the Fund's mission and grants programs are key qualifications.

What We Offer (For external postings)

Commonwealth Fund employees receive competitive salaries and a generous benefit package designed to support their overall well-being. We also strive to create a diverse and inclusive workplace in line with our values and goals. The Fund conducts annual benchmarking studies to ensure we continue to meet these goals. Employee benefits include:

- Best-in-class health care plan with comprehensive medical, hospital, and prescription drug coverage, along with a health reimbursement account, provided at no cost to employees and their dependents; vision coverage provided at nominal cost
- 403(b) retirement plan featuring generous employer contributions that range from 11 percent to 20 percent of annual salary
- Retiree health benefits
- Tuition reimbursement and professional development support
- Generous time off to support employee work–life balance
- Flexible hybrid work policy
- Half-day summer Fridays
- Comprehensive parental leave policies, with up to 12 weeks' salary continuance
- Generous matching gifts program for charitable donations
- Disability and life insurance coverage at no cost

Location

Position is based in our NYC location.

Salary and How to Apply

Salary Range: \$63,200-\$79,000

Apply using this link: [Research Associate](#)

Employment at The Commonwealth Fund is based upon personal capabilities and qualifications without discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual preference, gender identity or expression, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, medical condition, disability, or any other protected characteristic as established by law.