



Research Director

With its reputation for actionable research and award-winning innovative solutions, Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO) is a growing and dynamic organization. AEO is the leading voice of innovation for microfinance and microbusiness. Our mission is to create economic opportunity for underserved entrepreneurs throughout the United States. We engineer transformational change through research, convening, incubation, and advocacy to foster a robust and inclusive marketplace. For more than 25 years, AEO and our 1,700+ member organizations have helped millions of entrepreneurs support themselves and their families while contributing to their communities through business ownership.

AEO is seeking a seasoned researcher with superior skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods, data science, and management to lead and conduct microbusiness industry research. The Research Director will possess the ability to quickly develop deep knowledge of sector specific issues and priorities, and produce compelling applied research initiatives that will drive engagement and add value to AEO's research, program, and policy priorities. He or she will collaborate with senior management to provide strategic input and guidance on all research projects, and manage or directly contribute to research goals, planning, design, analysis, publication, and distribution.

The ideal candidate will drive impact by leveraging trends and data to scope new and existing research while being part of a fast-paced collaborative team. Furthermore, the candidate will serve as an ambassador and expert on behalf of AEO's research to relevant decision makers—policymakers, funders, and non-profit leaders—as well as communities of influence, including academia, the tech sector, and the media.

Key Responsibilities:

Research

- Lead execution of applied research strategy, ensuring the integrity and quality of research is maintained and projects meet deadlines and budgets.
- Conduct ground research in the broader academic and policy literature and articulate implications of findings to public, private, and nonprofit decision-makers.
- Lead research projects from inception and ideation through completion.
- Write and edit drafts of original research as well as synthesize existing research.
- Drive the ideation of research projects that enable or inform strategy.

- Translate key policy, marketing, and business questions into qualitative and quantitative research plans.
- Communicate research plans in a compelling manner during the business development and advocacy process.
- Identify and select appropriate data sources and qualitative or quantitative research partners. Utilize creativity and networks to create datasets and to access data to use for AEO's purposes where no comprehensive database for the industry exists.
- Develop insights and implications from the research; share and interpret those learnings; and, make recommendations in a high-impact and "client-ready" fashion.
- Prepare reports of findings for various stakeholders that illustrate data graphically and translate complex findings into written text, in limited windows of time.
- Develop and prepare reports, diagrams, charts, documents, and presentations for other AEO staff as requested.
- Perform ad hoc and exploratory analysis, propose solutions to data and reporting needs, and ensure compliance to organizational data security requirements for the storage and retention of data.
- Assist in managing the development, set-up, and integrity of surveys.
- Analyze survey data to evaluate trends and emerging themes, and summarizing relevant findings.

Leadership and Project Management

- Work with senior management to set the strategic direction for the applied research work at AEO and ensure that it advances the mission of the organization.
- Manage the research production process by working with the Communications team to design final reports and downstream collateral (e.g. press release, social media content, and data visualizations).
- Establish, maintain, and manage external research partners responsible for executing research activities, in a timely and accurate fashion, including: developing screeners and final discussion guides; proposing sampling plans and questionnaires; executing fieldwork; data collection; and data processing.
- Lead efforts to strengthen AEO as a research organization, including developing and refining processes, and identifying strategic partnerships.

Outreach and External Affairs

- Represent and communicate AEO findings to both technical and non-technical, and internal and external stakeholders.
- Prepare and lead presentations to other research organizations and thought leaders at conferences and events.
- Engage with press as required.

Professional Experience/Qualifications

- Advanced degree (MA, MPP, PhD) in economics, public policy, or social science fields.
- 7+ years of work experience demonstrating quantitative and qualitative research methods and ability to understand how research affects programmatic outcomes, along with ability to articulate the impact of research.
- 3+ years of leadership and project management experience.
- Experience analyzing big data (e.g., 1,000,000+ data points).
- Proficiency in statistical analysis and analyzing data using one or more of analytical tools: SPSS, Microsoft Excel, R, and Python.
- Experience or familiarity with Tableau strongly preferred.
- Demonstrated proficiency in writing, editing and data visualization, and ability to synthesize and present key messages for lay audiences.
- Familiarity with entrepreneurship and microbusiness ecosystem preferred

Core Competencies

- Strong analytical and critical thinker, capable of breaking down and working with broad research hypotheses.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills.
- A self-starter with high performance expectations.
- Ability to lead and work in a collaborative, high-performance, professional environment, with quick turnaround times and rapidly shifting priorities.
- Experience managing projects, ideally within a research setting.
- Time management skills with ability to: develop work plans; set and meet deadlines; effectively prioritize and delegate work; and manage scope as required.
- Attention to detail, with a collaborative approach to proposing new ideas and solutions to advance research at AEO.

We Offer

- Competitive compensation based on experience including retirement matching.
- Fully paid medical, dental, and vision coverage.
- A collaborative and high-performing work environment.
- A convenient location in downtown Washington, D.C.
- An onsite gym and rooftop patio.

TO APPLY

Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume to careers@aeoworks.org. Include a brief writing sample and salary requirements.

AEO is clear of its vision to be a place where a diverse mix of talented people want to come, to stay, and do their best work. We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, age, or veteran status.