

Job Title: Qualitative Research Assistants (2)

Description and duties: Successful qualitative research assistants will support USDA-funded research examining nonstandard work arrangements in rural communities through the following activities:

- Recruit informal workers in rural communities for interviews in collaboration and coordination with the qualitative research team
- Conduct roughly 30 semi-structured interviews, including verbal informed consent and follow-up questions as needed
- Provide audio recordings (if agreed to by participant) and/or written interview notes to the qualitative research team
- Maintain regular communication with the qualitative research team and primary point person for designated case site, including troubleshooting, discussion of emergent themes, alteration to interview protocols as needed, and/or other issues as they arise

Primary skills and credentials:

- Master's or PhD level student
- Strong theoretical understanding of qualitative research and data collection
- Experience with primary data collection including:
 - Recruitment of potential research participants
 - Conducting semi-structured interviews with little supervision
 - Writing and maintaining field notes
- Ability to travel and regular access to transportation
- Strong English-language communication skills and comprehension
- Ability to take both initiative and direction as needed
- Intellectual curiosity and willingness to learn, especially if lacking substantive experience in rural, community, economic, or labor sociology

Duration: We anticipate this work will be completed within a 2–3-month period during 2026, with deliverables due by 10/1/2026. Specific timelines to be established in collaboration with the qualitative research team. Opportunities for future participation in this research (through analysis and publication) can be discussed, depending on performance, however, additional funding to support this participation is not available.

Location: The research team has identified potential county-level case sites in the Western and Southern Census Regions of the United States. Because local connections to community members and/or informal workers within these case sites will assist data collection efforts, specific case sites may be negotiable based on the background, connection, and preference of the research assistant, and will be determined in collaboration with the successful candidate and the larger research team. As case sites will include rural and urban areas in one county or adjacent counties, some travel is expected.

Compensation: \$5,000 (\$3,000 for data collection and \$2,000 for travel expenses associated with data collection)

If interested, please email Dr. Emily Wornell (Assistant Director of Research, Center for Business and Economic Research, Ball State University) at ejwornell@bsu.edu by March 15, 2026 Please attach a current CV, highlighting qualitative research experience.