THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKFORCE AND LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

QUALITY LABOR MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Workforce and labor market information is essential to the nation's economy, providing for the efficient operation of labor markets by supplying quality labor market intelligence. ***Accurate, Objective, Relevant, Timely, and Accessible*** workforce and labor market information is critical for:

- Building a skilled workforce that spurs business competitiveness and economic growth;
- Strengthening career pathways and guiding skill attainment for good jobs, economic opportunity, and career growth;
- Understanding the rapidly changing nature of work and how it impacts the workforce and U.S. economy; and
- Spending workforce training and education funds effectively.

The nation's labor markets cannot function efficiently and effectively without quality information to support the investment decisions of the workforce development system—Federal and State policymakers; State and local Workforce Development Boards; Federal, State, and local government agencies; and frontline staff—and the investment decisions of business managers, workers, students, jobseekers and educators.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

In the coming months, the Workforce Information Advisory Council will identify and examine key opportunities for improvement to the workforce and labor market information system and develop recommendations for improving the system for the Secretary of Labor. Based on the Council's initial review, six opportunities for improvement have been identified for further evaluation, each of which is described in the following segments. Additional opportunities may surface as the Council's work moves forward.

USERS	QUESTIONS WLMI* CAN ANSWER
Jobseekers, Students, Workers	• What industries and occupations are growing in my area? • How much do different occupations pay? • Which careers match my skills? • What are the job openings in my area? What are the hot jobs? • What education, training, and credentials do I need for specific careers?
Businesses	• What is the size and what are the skills of the workforce in places where I am looking to expand or locate? • What is the outlook for employment growth in my state and industry? • What is the average pay for positions like those I employ? • How many jobseekers are available in my area? What are their skills?
Educators, Counselors, Training Providers	• What is the outlook for job opportunities in my area? What's growing? Declining? • What training should I offer to prepare students for current and future jobs? • What training programs do others offer in my area? • What careers offer the best prospects for youth? For adults who are retraining?
Government Policymakers, Planners	• Which industries and occupations need trained workers? • Who make up the unemployed/underemployed? • How do rural and urban economies and workforces differ? • Are persons served by the nation's workforce system finding and maintaining employment?

*Workforce and Labor Market Information

OPPORTUNITY #1: ALIGNING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY NEEDS

- Enhance information on the current and future demand for job skills in relation to the supply of skilled workers

- Leverage Internet-sourced information as a supplement to data developed using recognized statistical standards

In a rapidly changing economy, the skill requirements of employers are constantly evolving. Our workforce training and education programs must keep pace with the changing requirements in order to prepare students and workers for jobs in the short term and careers in the long term. To meet business workforce needs, programs must help close skill gaps and address mismatches that exist between the supply of and demand for workers.

OPPORTUNITY #2: INFORMING CAREER DECISIONS OF STUDENTS AND WORKERS

- Produce more current updates of information about required job skills

- Improve information on occupational licenses required for specific jobs

- Improve information on the success of participants in workforce training and education programs

Students, jobseekers and workers of all ages are constantly making decisions about their careers—identifying career interests and goals, planning an education and training pathway to achieve those goals, and re-evaluating career paths and engaging in re-training as industry skill needs evolve in our rapidly changing economy. Uninformed decisions have great costs to individuals, businesses, government, the economy, and society at large.

OPPORTUNITY #3: DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Expand information about workforce training and education program completers

- Provide more detailed information on the qualitative characteristics of jobs, including wages, benefits, job security and work-life balance

- Determine why program completers do not enter jobs or career paths for which they were trained

Each year, Federal and State governments spend significant funds on workforce training and education programs to assist individuals in obtaining employment and launching careers. The employment outcomes of workforce program participants are currently not available beyond one year following program exit. Further, these systems identify how many program completers are placed in jobs and at what wage, but they do not provide information on whether the jobs matched their education or training preparation, how long they held employment, and the extent to which their wages rose over time, all of which are important to determining program effectiveness.

OPPORTUNITY #4: UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKFORCE

- Provide more detailed, localized information on the workforce for workforce development planning

- Improve information on local workforce characteristics important to businesses

- Produce information on the changing structure of work in the economy

Information on the characteristics of the workforce can help employers make location and hiring decisions. Likewise, such information can help federal, state, and local government agencies more effectively direct new workforce development programs. However, the data available do not provide sufficient local occupational demand and supply information to identify locally relevant skill surpluses and shortages. In addition, there is a "new economy workforce" emerging, with alternative work arrangements involving less than full-time employment, for which there is very little accurate and reliable data to gauge the full impact.

OPPORTUNITY #5: MAKING WORKFORCE AND LABOR MARKET INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE AND RELEVANT TO END USERS

- Create an integrated set of information resources that addresses local workforce needs nationwide

- Use technology to improve data access and the user experience

There are a myriad of workforce and labor market information resources available for public use—so much so that it is often confusing to end users what sources to use. Over the years, much has been done to improve the end user experience. However, technology advancements are continuously changing how people access and use information. Continuous efforts need to be made by statistical agencies to make workforce and labor market information easier to access, understand, and use by implementing these new and evolving technologies and tools.

OPPORTUNITY #6: ENHANCING GOVERNMENT DATA SHARING, COLLABORATION, AND FUNDING AMONG STATISTICAL AGENCIES

- Improve coordination and collaboration among statistical agencies

- Eliminate laws or regulations that impede information sharing

- Ensure funding to maintain and improve workforce and labor market information

Federal and state statistical agencies focus substantial efforts on the production of timely, high-quality data, but often encounter obstacles inhibiting efforts to coordinate, share, or synchronize their data development efforts.In addition to providing funding to maintain these critical programs and to support the need for significant quality improvements, ways to enhance collaboration is increasingly important.

The **Workforce Information Advisory Council** was established by Congress to advise the Secretary of Labor on the Federal-State workforce and labor market information system—how well it is currently working, what improvements are needed, and how the Federal and State governments can enhance cooperation in managing the system. The Council, consisting of 14 members representing a broad mix of knowledge and public and private sector interests, was chartered and convened in 2016 under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration in collaboration with the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Council's responsibilities are to:

- Examine workforce and labor market information issues;

- Seek information on innovative approaches, new technologies, and data to inform workforce and economic development decision making and policy; and

- Advise the Secretary on how the workforce and labor market information system can best support workforce program planning and development.

The Council's website, https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/wiac/, provides a copy of the charter along with information documenting meetings and activities.

WORKFORCE INFORMATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Name	Organization	Representing Entity
Pamela Bucy	Montana Department of Labor and Industry	State Agency Representative (Workforce)
Aaron Fichtner	New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development	State Agency Representative (Workforce)
Ellen Golombek	Colorado Department of Labor and Employment	State Agency Representative (Workforce)
Bruce Madson	Ohio Department of Job and Family Services	State Agency Representative (Workforce)
Mathew Barewicz	Vermont Department of Labor	LMI Director
Cynthia Forland	Washington State Employment Security Department	LMI Director
Brenda Lisbon	South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce	LMI Director
Graham Slater*	Oregon Employment Department	LMI Director
Angela Pate	University of Florida Startup Quest, OwnForce, Inc.	Provider of Training Service
Jennifer Zeller	Georgia Power, Community and Economic Development	Economic Development Entity
Mark McKeen	General Motors	National Business or Trade Organization
Chelsea Orvella	Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, IFPTE Local 2001	National Labor Federation
Bruce Ferguson	CareerSource of Northeast Florida	Workforce Development Board
Andrew Reamer	George Washington Institute of Public Policy	Research Entity

*Former Chair. Resigned due to new position in January 2017.