WIAC Subcommittee 2
Report to the Workforce Information Advisory Council
June 21, 2017

Overview

Opportunities
Opportunity #2 – Informing Career Decisions of Students and Workers
Opportunity #5 – Making Workforce and Labor Market Information More Accessible and
               Relevant to End Users

Meeting Dates: May 18, May 26, June 6, June 8

Participants
WIAC members: Mathew Barewicz (Chair), Aaron Fichtner, Chelsea Orvella
SME contributors: Pam Frugoli, DOL/ETA
Presenters (external experts providing information): None

Materials
- WIAC Subcommittee Guidance 2017-05.docx
- Reference Materials: Opportunity 2.docx, Opportunity 5.docx, Key Resources for Opportunity 2.doc, Key Resources for Opportunity 5.doc, Data Sources Table- LMI Institute.pdf, WLMI Customers-Actions Influenced by LMI.docx, WLMI Improvement Efforts – Possible SMEs.docx, WLMI SWOT Summary.docx
- ETA News Release, 1/12/17 on NCSL occupational licensing project funded by USDOL
- New Zealand career information website http://occupationoutlook.mbie.govt.nz/
- Interview notes from 5 interviews conducted to date (stakeholder outreach process)

Potential WLMI Improvements

Improvement 1 – Update O*NET More Frequently and Expand Information Available on Occupations

Need: There is a need for more frequent updates of required job skills for specific occupations currently provided via O*NET and a need to include additional information not currently provided.

Rationale: O*NET is currently the best resource for detailed descriptions of the knowledge, skills, abilities, work-related tasks, and tools and technologies used by specific occupations (974 occupations covered). However, the entire database is completely refreshed only once over a period of 10 years. Students, jobseekers, and workers need more up-to-date information on required job skills, given the rapidly changing nature of work.

Supplementing O*NET with additional information would make the resource more robust and useful. Additional information for specific occupations might include for example: better delineation of skills needed for jobs; retention and layoff rates; rates of full-time vs. part-time work; and level of on-the-job training (OJT). In addition, skill gap information is needed to help students, jobseekers, and workers target what training is needed to fill those gaps, along with making the connections between skills, occupations, and training education courses/curricula more systematic and transparent.

Programs/Products Affected: O*NET (ETA); CareerOneStop (ETA)
Implementation Issues:
Summation:

Improvement 2 – Create a Comprehensive Resource on Credentials

Need: There is a need for a comprehensive, up-to-date resource of labor market credentials that is validated for quality. For purposes of this improvement, credentials include industry-valued degrees, certifications, and occupational licenses; although separating these may be warranted and will be determined as the Subcommittee furthers its work.   In addition, there is a need for information on the value of industry certifications and other short-term credentials in the labor market.

Rationale: Post-secondary credentials have become an increasingly important factor for individuals making career choices in relationship to business hiring decisions. A reliable source of industry and trade certifications and occupational licensing requirements is an important labor market resource for students, workers, and the educators and trainers assisting them in their career development. While some states maintain inventories of occupational licenses, some do not, and for some there is no single, centralized state resource.   With regard to industry certifications, some efforts have been made or are underway. For example, ETA's CareerOneStop website provides general information on certifications and licensing; however, details are lacking and more up-to-date information is needed. Credential Engine (www.credentialengine.org) is an initiative underway to create a registry of credentials. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), under a USDOL grant, is engaged in a 10-state project to: identify licensing criteria to ensure that existing and new requirements do not create unnecessary barriers to labor market entry; and improve portability for selected occupational licenses across state lines (see ETA News Release, 1/12/17).

Programs/Products Affected: CareerOneStop Certification Finder, License Finder and Apprenticeship Finder (ETA)

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 3 – Obtain Better Data on Training/Education Program Outcomes

Need: There is a need for unambiguous data that align the outcomes of program completers from specific workforce training and education programs with specific jobs they obtain. The most efficient way to accomplish this would be to include an occupational identifier on UI wage records and to designate the state workforce agency statistical division with responsibility for access to and analysis of UI wage and other administrative records, and the assessment of training and employment outcomes for WIOA partners and others seeking evidence-based workforce outcomes.

Rationale: Currently, the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have administrative data systems that provide high-level data on program enrollee completion and placement rates. However, there is no way to determine which specific programs are more successful in helping students, jobseekers and workers obtain and succeed in the jobs they were trained for (with regard to most programs). Use of UI wage records is key to identifying the employment success of program participants; however, an occupation identifier would need to be included on UI wage records to enable occupation-specific results to be produced. Further, the sharing of such data among multiple WIOA partners has been problematic due to privacy and confidentiality issues. The implementation of a centralized state solution, whereby a statistical analysis unit (most often the LMI unit) within the state workforce agency would be officially tasked to provide wage record data analysis and related program outcome assessment services, would help alleviate this problem. Taking these steps would ultimately lead to improved consumer choice and a more effective workforce system.

Note: Potential overlap with Opportunity #3 (program effectiveness) and Opportunity #4 (enhanced wage records and generating local level data).

Programs/Products Affected: Unemployment Insurance (States, ETA)

Implementation Issues: Changes to employer reporting systems and state UI data systems

Summation:

Improvement 4 – Improve Information on Job Quality

Need: There is a need to expand and make accessible to students and workers information about job quality in an occupation, such as retention and layoff rates, the rate of full-time vs. part-time work, the level of direct employment, paid benefits typically available, and on-the-job training opportunities.

Rationale: In general, career resources center on the skills/training needed, job prospects, and wages in the occupation or industry. In reality, job seekers consider various other aspects of jobs/careers including economic security and quality of life during employment and in retirement. Such information can be important to business for attracting and retaining employees and for informing the decisions of students, jobseekers and workers.

Note: Potential overlap with Subcommittee #1, which is looking at retention. See also Improvement #1 above.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 5 – Create a Common, Integrated Set of WLMI Resources Available Nationwide

Need: There is a need to provide end users with improved accessibility to WLMI. All end users of the workforce system—businesses, workers, jobseekers, students, and educators—along with government policymakers and workforce system intermediaries—need easier access to data and information relevant to their particular needs. In addition, this integrated set of resources should have the capacity to address local workforce needs.

Rationale: Currently, there is no common, integrated set of WLMI resources nationwide that also addresses local workforce information needs. A consistent, common, integrated set of resources would help end users access the same type of information in the same format, regardless of locality. All end users would benefit from this improvement in terms of making more informed labor market decisions. Further, information for their local area is far more helpful to many businesses and prospective workers than national or state-level information. Given the importance of local level data, a cut, for example, to the sample size of the OES survey (BLS) would make generating statistically valid local-level data more difficult.

Note: Potential overlap with Opportunity #4 with regard to local level data needs.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 6 – Improve Data Access and User Experience through Advanced Technologies and Tools

Need: There is a need to implement new and evolving technologies and tools to make WLMI easier to access, understand, and use by all end users. Examples include: user interfaces tailored to specific user needs; innovative search capabilities; mobile applications; infographic visualizations; and data mapping tools.

Rationale: Over the years, much has been done to improve the end user experience; however, technology advances are constantly changing how people access and use information. For example, more American households now access the Internet via mobile devices than traditional computers. Increasing use of interactive and visual interfaces is important for helping users more easily find and use information relevant to them and making the user experience more appealing and enjoyable. Applications/user interfaces such as DataFarrett (Census) that allow for more customized use of WLMI would be extremely helpful to more experienced data users.   Ultimately, technological advances in WLMI delivery systems will provide for better informed decisions by businesses and individuals across the nation.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues: Development of the technical infrastructure and applications; funding

Summation:

Improvement 7 – Customize WLMI Delivery to Better Meet User Needs

Need: There is a need to customize the usability/accessibility of WLMI to better address the needs of user/consumer groups such as businesses, researchers, career guidance intermediaries, and the education community, and specific public end user audiences such as youth, mature workers, dislocated workers, underserved populations, and so forth.

Rationale: Information products and delivery systems that tailor the integration and presentation of WLMI to specific users will lead to improved understanding and increased use of the data by users. See for example: New Zealand website and mobile application as a potential model to strive for with options to break down the information by region; KNACKS which provides games to assess competencies and illustrates an approach to tailoring career guidance to individuals; and ETA customized career guidance products such as www.mynextmove.org, www.myskillsmyfuture.org, and www.getmyfuture.org. Item 7A provides a brief illustration of a concrete, systematic approach to customizing career information for youth.

7A – Create a Blueprint for Tailoring Career Information to Inform Career Decisions

A blueprint for tailoring information for youth might include, for example:

- Elementary school—information that focuses on industry awareness/real world connections
- Middle school—information that focuses on occupational awareness/possible careers
- High school—information that focuses on the development of personalized learning plans

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 8 – Expand Outreach and Education Efforts to Inform End Users about WLMI Resources

Need: There is a need for WLMI producers to conduct more outreach to and education of end users about what is available, its importance, and how to use it.

Rationale: All too often, businesses and individuals are not aware of government-produced WLMI resources. For example, students and jobseekers may know about private online job posting and networking websites, but not be aware of information available about the knowledge, skills and abilities generally needed to gain employment in an occupation, the wages they could receive, or the prospects for long-term employment and advancement in a particular field. Expanded awareness and education-building efforts would lead to increased and more informed use of government-produced WLMI resources.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 9 – Expand Outreach and Education Efforts to Inform WIOA Partners

Need: There is a need for expanded outreach and education efforts concerning the availability and usage of WLMI among non-ETA/BLS partners, given the more integrated partnerships required under WIOA, especially partnerships with education entities.

Rationale: Education partners under WIOA such as vocational rehabilitation agencies and community colleges are generally not knowledgeable about LMI and how to leverage the data to support their career guidance, education/training, and related work. Expanded LMI outreach and education is needed to support their work and to strengthen the overall workforce-education system partnership.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 10 – Develop Methods for Determining How Well WLMI Products are Serving Customer Needs

Need: There is a need to develop methods for determining the extent to which WLMI products are helping customers with their career planning and decisions.

Rationale: Most WLMI is accessed via various web sites. As such, WLMI producers have general web statistics concerning usage (e.g., page views, site hits). These statistics provide usage trends (up or down), but do not provide data on how the site/information is being used, by whom (e.g., public end users vs. researchers or government staff), or whether the user was left with unanswered questions. In addition, there is no way of knowing what other inputs the user is getting to inform career decisions. For example, O*NET provides one set of inputs to career decisions, but other inputs may come from parents, teachers, and counselors.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues:

Summation:

Improvement 11 – Develop Guidance for Defining Skill Shortages, In-Demand Jobs, and Soft Skills

Need: There is a need to develop guidance for defining three key terms frequently used in describing the labor market but often defined differently—skill shortages/gaps; in-demand jobs/skills; and soft skills.

Rationale: These three terms are critical to user understanding, both for public end users such as students, workers, and jobseekers, and other users of WLMI such as intermediaries, researchers, and government agencies. For example, defining shortages/skill gaps is critical to the use of employment projections data and assisting policymakers in better identifying and addressing future labor market demand-supply issues. Are unfilled jobs attributable to recruitment difficulties or real skill shortages that training or other workforce development policies can ameliorate? With regard to soft skills, there are multiple frameworks with overlaps and no agreement on terms. For example, some soft skills are considered cognitive or educational competencies. In-demand jobs/skills are a targeted focus of training programs under WIOA; however, there is no definitive definition of what they are.

Programs/Products Affected:

Implementation Issues: Difficult to obtain national consensus on definitions; measurement issues; as economy changes, terms/definitions/measurement may need to change.

Summation: