

Program Year 2003 One-Stop LMI Grant

Employment Security Commission of North Carolina Labor Market Information Division

Statement of Work

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) recognizes the crucial role of labor market information and employment statistics in the planning, operation and evaluation of the employment, training and related activities defined in this act. In support of this role, the Labor Market Information Division (LMID) of the North Carolina Employment Security Commission has been designated as the lead employment statistical agency for the state.

The LMID is responsible for developing and maintaining a comprehensive system of labor market data for North Carolina. Included in the information gathered by the division are: labor force estimates, unemployment rates, wages by industry and by occupation, staffing patterns, industrial and occupational projections, as well as data on fringe benefits and other items.

In accord with the Secretary of Labor's efforts to provide funding to States to produce products and services that will serve as an integral part of the statewide employment statistics system and support the State's overall plan for workforce investment, the North Carolina LMID shall develop and/or enhance the products described in the work statement.

The products, systems and services outlined in this grant proposal are directed towards providing quality information for informed choices to all customers of the Workforce Information System. Primary One-Stop LMI customer groups to be served under this grant include:

- The business community
- workforce development professionals
- workforce information customers
- local workforce investment boards
- individuals engaged in job search and career exploration
- job and career counselors
- researchers
- government officials
- education and training providers
- economic developers
- planners and policy makers at the local, state and national levels
- other stake holders

This statement of work was prepared in consultation with staff of the State Workforce Development Board and the activities and planned customer outcomes are as defined in the State's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five Year Strategic Plan. As such, it responds to the vision and goals of that Plan, by closely articulating its proposed activities and services with those of the Strategic Plan.

North Carolina's Commission on Workforce Development has set forth six goals as guideposts for the State's workforce system. These include:

- Incumbent and dislocated workers will possess the skills necessary to make transition to new, higher-skilled jobs or self-employment

- The State of North Carolina will build strong collaborative linkages between the economic development partnerships and workforce development boards
- The workforce development system (Job Link Career Center System) will be a coherent and integrated system of employment and training services
- K-16 education will prepare students for both further education and work
- Training programs will be accountable for results
- The Commission will examine the governance and accountability of the state's workforce development (e.g., vocational, technical, and professional education and training) and delivery (e.g., labor market information, labor exchange, worker economic security, employment assistance, training referral, and training delivery) systems.

As noted in the Commission's final goal, the Labor Market Information delivery system is an integral component of the State's workforce development system. Each of the activities, services and resources proposed in this application for PY 2003 specifically addresses one or more of the above goals.

A draft of this plan was distributed to the One-Stop partners, including the state and local workforce development board directors, community college presidents, local economic development partnership directors and various state agencies who have an interest in labor market information for review and comment. These participants and stake-holders were been surveyed to obtain their input and direction concerning labor market information needs, and the provision of resources to address these needs. Their requests and suggestions for products and services were incorporated into the plan as deemed feasible.

Priority Core Products and Services

1) Continue to populate the ALMIS Database with state data and provide an employer name and address list that can be accessed by the public.

During PY 2003 North Carolina continued to populate and update existing tables in the ALMIS Database (version 2.2), including the core element tables and associated look-up and crosswalk tables, as defined in the ETA One-Stop Agreement and by the ALMIS Database Consortium. Input from present and potential users of ALMIS data provided the impetus for enhancement and expansion of data availability through ALMIS. This feedback was be solicited though a variety of methods including one-on-one meetings with local customers, participation in state and local workforce activities, and formal and informal surveys and focus groups. North Carolina's participation in the national ALMIS Database Maintenance Consortium allowed the incorporation of this feedback can be used in the continued development of the national structure, resulting in enhancement of the system for users across all states as well as specifically within North Carolina. During the program year, staff continued to update the North Carolina ALMIS Database as data were received. LMI staff participated in ALMIS Database training during this year, improving the ability of customers to access information in a timely manner pertinent to their needs

Staff will began the updating and addition of URL addressed for web accessible licensure information to the ALMIS database licensure tables. This will allow North Carolina the ability to provide to customers

comparable occupational licensure information and also provide access to the most current occupational licensure facts available via the internet.

North Carolina has integrated the Employer Database into the ALMIS Database in accordance with Consortium guidelines and will continue to use this resource to deliver employer name, address and related information to individuals engaged in job search, career exploration and/or other approved purposes. Employer Database software was delivered to LMI in April, 2004 and staff accordingly updated the appropriate tables. The Employer Database contract was renegotiated and signed with the vendor, InfoUSA.

Public access to the Database continued to be provided via the Internet through WebSARAS, NC Profile, ESC's website and other associated applications.

2) Produce and disseminate long- and short-term, industry and occupational projections.

During PY2003, North Carolina completed and submitted both long-term (2002-2012) and short-term (2003, Quarter IV – 2005, Quarter IV) industry and occupational projections. Long term projections were submitted for review to BLS and subsequently reviewed and adjusted by LMI Projections staff in light of BLS comments. Short term projections were sent to Projections Workgroup for review prior to making them available on the ETA-supported Projections suite. Projections staff have begun publication of both statewide and substate occupational projections in concert with Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) data. Initial substate coverage will include all state local workforce boards. Attractive brochures and posters have been produced for communicating Projections related information, including the fastest growing occupations and associated educational/training requirements and average earnings. These informational materials are designed for customers such as JobLink staff, occupational and career counselors and job placement specialists for distribution. These are branded with each local workforce area's address and contact information.

During this program year, North Carolina staff will continued to focus on refinement of the NAICS-based historical industry employment series used in the projections process. This was the initial year in which NAICS-based projections were completed by LMI staff. Statewide NAICS-based historical data series were extensively reviewed and analyzed in the context of Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data. Historical data series were prepared for the period 1976-2002, using conversion ratios approved and supplied by the Projections Managing Partnership.

Long term statewide projections totals for 2002-2012 were submitted for distribution through the ALMIS Database. All industry occupational projections will be submitted for public dissemination following procedures established by the Projections Consortium and the Projections Managing Partnership.

Projections are used by businesses, workforce development professionals, local workforce investment boards, economic developers, curriculum planners, career counselors, government officials, researchers, policy makers (at local, state and national levels) and the general public. They are essential to workforce development planning, program/budget planning, public policy planning and career exploration.

The North Carolina LMID continued consultation with its user communities in a variety of methods (one-on-one meetings with local customers, participation in state and local workforce board activities, as well as formal and informal surveys and focus groups) in order to continue to collect information on customer's needs for projections information. Customers report that they value projections data highly, and would appreciate even more locally focused shorter term projections information than are currently

available. In light of these findings, LMI will implement a job vacancy survey strategy in PY2004 designed to serve as a supplement the information available through our Projections program in order to address customer needs.

Staff continued to participate in the Projections Consortium/Workgroup; this enabled LMI to provide customer feedback to the Consortium for incorporation into projects. In addition, staff availed themselves of the opportunity to attend projections training sponsored by the Projections Consortium/Workgroup.

3) Provide occupational and career information products for public use.

The state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan incorporates the use of occupational information for career planning as a major contributor to efforts in assisting the customers of One-Stop centers. Principal customers include One-Stop staff, One-Stop users, career planners, governmental officials, economic developers, economic researchers and advisors, businesses, educators, trainers, intermediaries, job seekers and students.

Investments in occupational information assist in meeting the needs among different customer groups. Users within each customer group want to know about current job openings, pay and benefits, skill requirements and availability. They also want to know the occupations that are growing in their area, and associated training requirements. Businesses want to know what is predicted in the future for their industry and the economy in general, the skill level of potential workers, as well as those of their own workforce. All users are interested in the general state of the local economy, the health of the industries within an area, occupations in demand and economic prospects for the future.

During PY 2003, LMI staff engaged in continued consultation with customers concerning the utility of the occupational information disseminated through the statewide workforce information system. Surveys eliciting opinion from customers were distributed at appropriate venues. These included the state's annual Workforce Conference sponsored North Carolina's Workforce Commission, regional economic development meetings, and local workforce board meetings. In addition, LMI's Outreach and Training staff consulted on a regular periodic basis with local workforce board members, their staffs and customers concerning needs and materials presented. Surveys and individual consultations afforded customer feedback concerning the usefulness of individual LMI products and services, the extent to which these met their needs and consumers' degree of satisfaction with the range of services provided by LMI staff. Customers typically expressed high degrees of satisfaction with LMI's resources, products and services. Among areas that were suggested for improvement were the development of electronic products that were capable of greater interactivity, that allowed for specification of more detailed geographic areas such as census tracts and zip codes for extracting and analyzing data, and for greater flexibility enabling data analysis by local or field based staff. In addition, considerable interest was expressed by customers in more user-focused training in the use of occupational and career information tools, particularly with respect to their application to economic development needs.

During PY 2003, the North Carolina LMI Division continued to produce and disseminate customer focused occupational and career information products designed to address the needs of business, workforce boards and One-Stop Career Center staff, as well as those of representatives of all customer groups. These products, as requested by data users, include job openings, occupational projections, demand occupations and supply indicators by geographic area, occupational pay and benefits, skill and educational requirements as well as career ladder information.

Staff undertook preliminary planning and investigation of alternative approaches to gathering and disseminating job vacancy and worker benefit data with particular emphasis on provision and cost sharing of health related benefits and the potential impact on employment retention and expansion plans of employers. Vacancy survey activity considerations centered on Job Vacancy Survey System Survey System developed by the WIC and sponsored by the JVS workgroup. In addition, LMI staff actively participated in and provided consultative services to efforts designed to enhance the availability of more contemporary, localized vacancy and workforce planning data undertaken by ETA-sponsored Workforce Information Project under the aegis of Georgia State University. This activity has had the benefit of informing our workforce partners in the Region as to the usefulness and applicability of LMI data as a component of an integrated workforce intelligence system. Electronic delivery mechanisms mentioned above (#1), including North Carolina's Career Compass, Consumer Guide, and Job Connector systems incorporated 'real time' openings data as reported through the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, local newspapers, Internet systems, and others. These systems also provide related elements such as wages, skill and educational level required to perform the jobs, and recommendations for short-term training on occupations in demand in the multiple workforce board areas will be given consideration, based on feasibility and user demand. Development of these systems, which is an ongoing process even following initial deployment, follows requests and suggestions as offered by the workforce, business and economic development communities that form the core of our customer base.

Requests for the potential labor supply in an area rank high, especially in the areas of previous heavy layoffs. Requests originate from local workforce board members and staff, economic development leaders, governmental officials and potential employers looking to relocate to an area. During this period, LMI staff will conducted several labor supply projects, incorporating related demographics, educational attainment, skill level assessments, along with related occupational information. Tools to assist this project include layoff and closing data, O'Net, occupational employment data and the associated EDS application (localizing data), LED job creation and destruction statistics and administrative Employment Security Commission data. These projects, partially supported through grant funds and partially from local sources, had the dual advantage of providing timely and relevant information to customers at local levels while at the same time informing LMI and the state's workforce and development communities of the need to develop a mechanism for providing locally tailored electronic information dissemination that can respond to the unique needs of specific geographic areas.

LMI Division continued publishing monthly/quarterly publications relating to current economic conditions and topics of interest as determined by user requests. Topical articles provided by expert researchers and professionals around the state, as well as within LMI, will be presented in hard copy and via the Internet. LMI also continued to edit monthly reports associated with the state and national employment statistics release. Reports will be presented to governmental officials in a 'pre-release' manner, advising those in governmental management of economic conditions and labor trends. Reports will also be distributed by hard copy and internet to data users. These round table briefings have had the positive effect of bringing executive, cabinet level, and legislative budget leadership 'around the table' to focus on labor market and economic conditions and trends each month, thus ensuring that the latest available labor market information is brought to bear on decision making, planning and programming.

During PY 2003, LMI staff completed research on and implemented a 'barometer' of current and prospective economic conditions for the state. These indices provide a parsimonious indication of North Carolina's economic climate, making use of a composite of statewide and national data that will measure and forecast present and future business and economic conditions.

During the period, LMI Division staff will continue to conduct research as requested by the user. Topics may range from studies on the struggling textile industry to the effects of age on reemployment probabilities. Oral presentations on such topics will be presented as requested. Projects will be completed within the time restraints of the requestor.

4) Provide public electronic access to the ALMIS Employer Database.

(Explained in Number 1.)

5) Provide information and support to state and local Workforce Boards (WIBs) and provide other special demand information products and services.

Educating workforce development staff regarding LMID products and services is an on-going process. At the core of the LMID's efforts to establish and maintain strong links between the workforce community and the Division is LMI's Outreach and Training and Team. Members of the team serve all twenty-four local boards in North Carolina. During PY 2003, LMID staff continued to attend board meetings, provide information for grant writing and strategic planning and keep local board members and their staff updated on available products and services.

Building upon successful initial connections with local boards, LMID's Outreach and Training team members further developed these relationships, to better identify local needs and, likewise, to make boards more cognizant of available LMID resources. During this program year, members of the team will continue to work with staff of JobLink Career Centers (North Carolina One-Stop Centers) to determine their informational needs and discuss available products and services. Feedback from local customers continued to be used in the development of customer-focused products and services.

In collaboration with the boards, staff developed compilations of key economic information tailored to the individual board areas. This information will be provided to local boards on a regular basis; it is envisioned that this in turn will lead to the development or refinement of on-line products. In cooperation with the Division of Employment and Training, the Workforce Development Board Directors' Association and JobLink Managers, LMID staff will participate in the development of a 'career needs' tool that will aid in career counseling, job exploration and training. In addition, LMID staff will participate in the development, enhancement, implementation and training on products elsewhere in this document.

LMID staff also expanded their reach in service provision to economic development and the business community in PY 2003. On-demand special projects in support of industrial recruitment efforts, mass layoff interventions (e.g., Pillowtex), and services evaluation and assessment were undertaken across the state in ways that maximized the use of LMI information in concrete, field based activities.

During PY 2003, the North Carolina LMID also continued work on a methodology for providing estimates of size and characteristics of the available workforce in specific areas and/or for specific occupations. The analysis combines information drawn from the O*NET worker requirements data, Employment Service (registered applicants) and Unemployment Insurance (claimants) administrative data, and Occupational Employment Statistics employment and wage estimates. This methodological development work was utilized in reports being developed in collaboration with several local Workforce Development Boards, and is an assessment of the characteristics of job-seeking workers, including socio-

economic (i.e., demographics, educational attainment, and earnings history) and transferable skills and knowledges gained through occupational employment experiences. In addition, projects were developed in collaboration with state agencies utilizing information on the similarity between occupations in terms of worker skill and knowledge requirements to provide estimates on the size of the workforce available for employment in occupations critical to economic development targets.

Also in PY 2003, the North Carolina LMID completed work on a collaborative project to assess the characteristics of the resident workforce, with an emphasis on examination of workers residing in yet employed outside of the Northeast Board area. The first phase of the project will be a labor market and economic profile of the area using available data (i.e., Decennial Census, ES-202, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, etc.) to examine population, employment, and industrial dynamics. A second phase of the project included a telephone survey of area residents and use of other data and information (i.e., Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Division of Motor Vehicles, Decennial Census Public Use Micro Sample, etc.) to examine the characteristics of the area's workforce and the dynamics of their labor force participation. This project was completed in the spring of 2004.

Data on layoffs and plant closings in specific industries and geographical areas are requested on a regular basis by the local boards and WIA providers, employers, economic developers, educational personnel, trainers and researchers. Such data are used for establishing training courses, assessing occupational skills available in an area for employer needs and, in some cases, locating physical facilities for economic development purposes. The LMID continued to monitor Unemployment Insurance claims, reporting all unemployed workers, the industry and geographic location of layoff activities and the reasons for the layoffs.

These data will be used to assess the economic impact of mass layoffs and plant closings on local communities. Studies on the 'ripple effects' on smaller industries and establishments, of layoffs in a larger industry or employer is most useful in measuring the impact on the community, dislocated worker services provided and the outcome of the individuals involved. These data would also provide a starting point for longitudinal analyses measuring the outcomes of those involved in a layoff or closing. Outcome analysis would be accomplished by linking the individuals with wage records and training information stored in the Common Follow-up System, a North Carolina developed tracking system. This comparison will help determine the outcomes of laid-off workers who received specific dislocated worker service to those who did not.

The LMID staff will also monitor newspaper reports from across the state on a daily basis, reporting all layoffs and business closings. Reports will be prepared on a monthly basis, detailing such findings by industry, geographic location and the number of workers involved. These reports will be made available on the Internet.

LMID staff will also participate in state and national conferences which afford opportunities to interact with local workforce development professionals. LMI staff and administration provided presentations and workshops at these meetings, providing attendees a greater familiarity with the potential usefulness of labor market and workforce information resources and the services that LMID can and do provide to customers. As noted previously, staff regularly survey and consult with workforce professionals and partner agencies to obtain input and feedback concerning products and services. The information obtained from feedback and customer demand will be reviewed and evaluated to better align products and services with customer demand.

6) Improve and deploy electronic state workforce information delivery systems

Over the course of the Program Year, North Carolina LMID continued to deliver workforce information through a variety of internet-based applications designed to respond to the expressed needs and preferences of workforce customers. Primary mechanisms for this delivery consisted of WebSARAS, NC Profile, Career Compass, LMID's website on the ESC portal and other associated applications. Several ESC enterprise applications are currently in planning and development stages, the purposes of which are to expand access to available openings for job seekers and to facilitate work registration and application for UI benefits for initial claimants. A key feature of these systems will be their ability to link the user to timely and relevant labor market information pertinent to career exploration and job search activities.

During PY 2003, LMID explored the feasibility of alternative approaches for sharing information contained in North Carolina's ALMIS database with workforce professionals and their customers. In addition to internet-based applications that provide the opportunity for self-service to ALMIS data by our constituents, avenues for provision of selected ALMIS data elements to workforce partners will be considered in light of customer requirements. Since North Carolina shares common labor shed areas with other states, LMID will examine the compatibility of our workforce information system with those of neighboring states in an effort to ascertain the feasibility of closer coordination or integration of data provision systems and approaches with these states.

North Carolina will continue to provide and refine tools that allow individuals, local workforce development boards, planners, economic developers, and other workforce partner's easy access to the employer name and address information from the ASLMIS Employer Database. WebSARAS, NC Profile, Consumer Guide and Career Compass each incorporate the ALMIS Employer Database as an integral element of job search, career exploration and research functions.

LMID's Consumer Guide was updated during PY 2003 to enable the reporting of employment and earnings data for private as well as public educational and training providers in North Carolina. This activity builds on the recent expansion of Consumer Guide's display and analysis module to provide two years of employment and earnings experience for recent program completers. These updates will be made available to customers through LMID's Internet portal.

In PY 2003, LMID expanded its mapping capability and further incorporate tools to facilitate spatial analyses of data. LMID initiated prototype development and testing of applications to present employment and earnings data using temporal and graphical co-ordinate presentation. This enhanced data presentation and analysis capability is in response to articulated consumer demand for greater depth of coverage of earnings and employment data using wage records. LMI staff are engaged in efforts to expand geocoding of address locations in North Carolina in an effort to provide more localized and pertinent data responsive to user requirements.

During this Program Year, LMID has undertake preliminary planning and testing of applications that will enable ready download and analysis of data for "on the spot" quick answer capability in response to inquiries from business, workforce professional, government and general public consumers. Although currently available electronic tools and resources have proven their usefulness in responding to consumer information demands, many questions remain which require individual analyses within a rapid turn-around time frame. Development of such a system will directly address the need for such a service that our customers have both identified and requested.

7) Support state workforce information training activities

To increase and enhance understanding of available workforce information, customer training sessions were conducted at various locations across the state. Training participants included local workforce development boards and staff, Joblink Career Center managers and staff, Employment Security Commission (ESC) local office managers and staff, state and local planners and economic developers, WIA partner agencies, and members of the business community. Staff of the LMID's Outreach and Training Team worked jointly with the various customer groups to develop training material which is targeted to meet customer needs. Training included a brief overview of available LMI data, collection methods and on-line products and services. Sessions focused on applying labor market information to assist the job seeker with job and career choices and providing information to employers that can be used for business decisions, such as staffing and relocation. Each session will include a mix of direct instructional time, plus the practical application of the data for decision making. These were located at times and places that were convenient for local users.

Staff of the LMID made presentations and conduct workshops at state and local conferences for workforce development professionals, WIA partner agencies, economic developers and the business community. During PY03, LMID staff investigated the feasibility and user interest in a statewide Labor Market Information Forum. As a result of customer input, plans are to schedule the first forum during PY04. This conference will include participation by both the workforce and employer community, with presentations by these groups on using labor market information as an effective decision making tool. In addition the forum will provide a forum for identifying gaps and data needs from the various customer groups served by the LMID.

The LMID supported continuous capacity building for Division staff. Staff participated in training offered by the LMI Institute and other training facilities. LMID management has supported regular meetings of division staff for the purpose of reporting on recent training received, programmatic changes affecting data collection and analysis, conducting specialized training on statistical methods and presenting new and innovative customer self service tools being developed within ESC and in cooperation with WIA partner agencies.