

VERMONT ANNUAL PLAN  
PY 2004 WORKFORCE INFORMATION GRANT

**I. Statewide Workforce Information System**

- (1) The State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) in Vermont is the Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC). Federal legislation recognizes only the state WIB in Vermont; however, Vermont legislation predated the federal law and created the structure for the eleven local WIBs that currently exist. The Executive Director of the HRIC and the Chairperson work closely with the Commissioner of the Department of Employment and Training (DET) to ensure a coordinated effort in meeting the needs of employers in Vermont. Policy meetings for both organizations include members from the HRIC and DET. In fact, the Commissioner is a member of the HRIC and sits on its executive committee.

The Labor Market Information Director meets directly with the HRIC Executive Director to discuss the annual plan for the ETA Workforce Information grant. The close physical proximity of the LMI staff and the HRIC staff also make it easy to meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss current issues and needs.

In addition, the LMI Director is a member of the DET senior staff that helps to shape the program policy for the Department of Employment and Training. Meetings include the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Program Directors and often review issues related to program services. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner meet twice a month to discuss activities of mutual interest with the Executive Director of the HRIC.

- (2) According to the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five Year Plan, Vermont's workforce development strategy has four primary goals:

- Respond to labor market supply and demand
- Be customer focused
- Be regionally focused
- Be built on public/private partnerships.

Labor Market Information helps the workforce development system achieve the first three goals. Vermont produces employment and wage data through the standard BLS programs that shows current labor market conditions. Information is available for various industrial and occupational categories statewide. It is also produced for many geographic configurations such as town, county, labor market area, and workforce investment board area. Occupational and industrial projections are produced according to the requirements of the ETA LMI grant and are configured to satisfy state and local needs. LMI has invested substantial resources to make information easily available to the public through the Internet, helping DET satisfy regional needs. The convenience of the web also helps keep labor market information and our

services customer-focused. Clients provide feedback on their needs and request detailed information to find the best labor market opportunities. Electronic access is especially valuable in a rural state where travel can be challenging during much of the year.

- (3) The Governor designated the Department of Employment and Training as the primary agency to deliver workforce related services through its network of Career Resource Centers. Labor Market Information works closely with the service providers from DET and other state agencies to make the one stop concept envisioned under the Workforce Investment Act effective. Our products are designed to help employers and workers achieve their economic goals. LMI works closely with program planners and Workforce Investment Boards to determine the best strategy for achieving their objectives. The strategic vision of the State Workforce Investment Board is to provide a framework that links the business and education communities and helps bridge the gap between the workforce of today and the one needed for tomorrow. Labor Market Information is the tool that facilitates the transition by producing occupational projections, current occupational wages and other related information.
- (4) The consultation process to determine customer's needs is based largely on direct contact between the Labor Market Information Director and service providers throughout Vermont. Since the implementation of WIA, the LMI unit has sponsored LMI training sessions for staff from DET's Career Resource Centers, WIBs, Social Welfare Agency (PATH), Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), Vocational Rehabilitation, and other public and private social service organizations. The purpose of these training sessions is twofold: help front line staff use labor market information on the Internet, and receive comment and suggestions on the products that are most helpful in serving clients.

In order to make the communication process direct and effective, these sessions are a joint effort of the LMI Director and the VCRN Director (Vermont's Career Resource Network). While it may be somewhat unusual to have program directors providing technical training to staff, it is a very effective way to receive feedback from customers in a small state such as Vermont. Working together, VCRN and LMI are able to provide a wide array of products that satisfy the needs of a diverse group of program professionals.

Consultation with the business community is done through the State Workforce Investment Board (aka Human Resources Investment Council). At least half the members of the state board must be from the business community. Local boards, which are an extension of the state board, also have substantial business representation. The Commissioner meets regularly with the Executive Director of the State Board. The LMI Director meets weekly with the Commissioner at senior staff meetings. The LMI Director also meets informally with the Executive Director of the State Board on topics of interest to both.

The Vermont Department of Employment & Training coordinates activities with the Vermont Department of Labor & Industry, which are of special interest to the business community. This includes information related to the Unemployment Insurance Program and the Worker's Compensation Program. Employer organizations, such as Associated Industries of Vermont, discuss program policy proposals with the appropriate Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners. The Labor Market Information Director assesses the need for related statistical information and produces special reports as needed. In addition, the Departments cooperate in producing a monthly newsletter that address current topics of interest to the business community and provides detailed quantitative information to indicate current labor market conditions. Business leaders comment on current issues covered in the newsletter through the appropriate political channels.

Direct communication from individuals is often based on use of the LMI web page. Email comments indicate the overall satisfaction with products and may also request additional details.

- (5) The Internet is the main distribution tool for all types of customers but it is not the only format used. Publications are still available in paper format and we maintain mailing lists for anyone who wants to receive our publications regularly. We also provide email notification when a publication is available in Adobe pdf format on our web site.

Business customers and Workforce Development professionals probably have the best access to the Internet. We promote the LMI web site with bookmarks that are distributed at various conferences and meetings. We have also mailed substantial quantities to libraries where individuals may be browsing various resources. Posters promoting the web are available in the Career Resource Centers where people may investigate different job hunting tools.

- (6) The One-Stop Career Resource Centers have personal computers and Internet access for client use. All our major publications are available in Adobe pdf format on the web. In addition, LMI staff has created dynamic look-up tables that allow individuals to search our database for information. The results are returned in a formatted table with appropriate historical comparisons.

The LMI home page will also remain available separately, providing links to many related sources for educational and career information. Staff in the CRCs has been trained to answer questions about LMI resources accessed through the Internet. LMI staff maintains our web site and has expanded the array of products available to customers.

- (7) Customer satisfaction will be assessed for all items available through the Labor Market Information web site. This includes all items produced under the U.S. Employment and Training Administration Workforce Information grant and many items produced as part of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Cooperative Agreement.

The assessment tools include counters for the various products on the web site. Quarterly reports will be generated to allow us to track usage. In addition, counts will be maintained for paper publications distributed and contacts with customers by telephone and email.

The electronic survey and web counters will be most effective with employers and organizations with Internet access. Manually tracking other publication requests will help to fill the gaps for groups without Internet access. The number of paper copies distributed is an indication of the demand for and usefulness of a publication.

During PY 2004 we also plan to mail a Customer Satisfaction Survey to everyone on the mailing list for the Department’s monthly newsletter. This survey will cover approximately 3,000 customers and help us judge the effectiveness of our efforts to keep all types of customer’s informed about the Department’s full range of activities under WIA.

- (8) The Customer Satisfaction Survey results generally indicate the information is relatively easy to understand but some people had a difficult time finding what they were looking for. In PY 2004 we plan to continue working on a “Regions” tab for the web page, which will summarize all the data for one geographic location through one access point. This may make it easier for people to get the “big picture” for specific substate regions, such as WIBs. We also plan to update the ‘Site Map’ to clearly show the options available on our expanded web site. We will continue to offer training to a wide range of users to help them learn to navigate the Internet and become comfortable with the many resources available. A summary of the responses from January 2004 through June 2004 shows:

### Customer Satisfaction Survey

[www.vtLmi.info](http://www.vtLmi.info)

The information was:	1	2	3	4	5	0	Overall	% of All
Indicate your level of agreement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A 1/	Rating 2/	Resp. 2/
	Number of Responses							
Easy to find	1	2	0	1	2	5	3.2	55
Timely	0	0	1	1	3	6	4.4	45
Detailed Enough	0	0	1	1	3	6	4.4	45
Easy to Understand	0	0	0	2	3	6	4.6	45
Helpful	0	1	0	1	3	6	4.2	45
In a useful format	0	1	2	1	1	6	3.4	45
Satisfied with the website	2	0	0	3	1	5	3.2	55
1/ - Checked by default, includes both those who checked it and those who skipped the question.								
2/ - Based on those respondents who checked one of the five rating levels.								

## Vermont Web Usage

In order to assess which sections of the LMI web page are being used the most, LMI staff developed a FoxPro program to count the 'Visitor Sessions' from the web log for our site. Based on the activity from July 2003 through June 2004, the following sections of our site were used the most:

### Vermont LMI Web Products Highest Usage

Web product / page	Visitors	Visitor Sessions	Page Views	Hits
TOTAL	33,203	95,488	169,413	758,114
Home	10,001	19,281	23,108	112,667
/index.cfm	9,261	17,461	20,806	103,474
Occupations home	8,811	14,300	19,488	107,303
/occupation.cfm	8,811	14,300	19,488	107,303
Occupational info center	7,389	12,091	33,406	92,383
Career exploration	6,080	11,890	15,673	69,633
/oic2.cfm - occupation list	6,322	9,549	21,097	45,642
Qcew	4,626	9,293	12,889	30,260
/oic3.cfm - occupation report	5,884	9,112	20,200	45,811
Wages & income home	5,516	8,188	8,979	36,985
/wageincome.htm	5,516	8,188	8,979	36,985
Ces	2,864	5,924	7,197	13,262
Downloads	1,845	5,557	7,171	8,454
/career.cfm	3,366	5,307	5,907	22,731
Economic and travel indicators	1,002	5,250	7,877	10,650
Unemployment home	3,030	4,679	5,274	19,708
/unemp.cfm	3,030	4,679	5,274	19,708

The table shows the strong demand for occupational information and that is where we are concentrating our development efforts. As indicated in the core products, we are expanding the Occupational Information Center to include occupational skill information to complement other occupational details.

We have received feedback through meetings and discussions with users about our fringe benefit survey and feel a more comprehensive survey would be more useful. We are therefore considering the possibility of using the fringe benefit questionnaire from the ETA Fringe Benefit Consortium in our next survey (see core products description).

(9) LMI projects are leveraged by coordinating staff efforts with other section of the Department of Employment and Training. Examples include joint training efforts by the LMI Director and the Director for America's Career Resource Network. There is a common interest in helping users of labor market information and Career

Information understand how to find and use available information. So, we work together to help train customers for both programs. We also work with the ACRN staff on projects such as the Career Tabloid for students and identify occupations for special research. We have worked together on the need to provide occupational information for the health care field. We are updating our web site to link to resources from health care facilities, such as hospitals.

A similar sharing of staff resources helps promote the availability of services under WIA when we work on the Vermont Job Link system. We have expanded the limited LMI in VJL by providing direct links to the key elements on the LMI web page, e.g. projections and occupational wages.

We work closely with the Economic Development Department by providing information on the available pool of workers to encourage firms to relocate to Vermont. The 'Labor Exchange' tool on the LMI web site shows the latest number of active applicants and the wages for positions posted at DET. We respond to ad hoc requests for information from both the state agency and the firms who contact us directly looking for information to help them evaluate locations in Vermont. The Economic Development Department provides a link to the LMI web site for unemployment, employment, wage and licensing information.

There is no direct transfer of funds but we coordinate efforts in areas of common interest to "enhance delivery of products and services."

## **II. Products and Services**

### **(1) POPULATE ALMIS DATABASE**

- Description: Update files for the ALMIS database quarterly with latest Vermont data. Populate all core tables and any new tables as required. Maintain version 2.2. Participate in national training and access national web site to maintain knowledge of database requirements. Conduct survey to update occupational licensing information and submit files to service center for ACINet.
- Customer Support: Products developed for web-use show heavy demand by business and job seekers. Contact with students through the Vermont Career Resource Network indicates that web systems are popular and helpful to students.
- Five-Year Plan: This activity is consistent with both the "Strategic Vision" and the "Workforce Development Strategy" for Vermont's 5-year plan.
- Customers: Program managers and software developers who use the information in products and on the Internet to summarize labor market information.
- Outcomes: Stimulate increased usage of electronic and web based systems by all users. Students who increasingly rely on the Internet will expand use of LMI systems. Out-of-school job seekers will benefit from new skill information to help them determine the appropriate choice for retraining.

- Milestones: Update standard data quarterly during the program year; begin licensing survey in January 2005; submit licensing files to service center by July 2005.
- Estimated Cost: \$65,000.

## (2) PRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE INDUSTRIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS

- Description: Complete occupational projections to 2012 for two substate areas and complete publication activities for state and areas. Develop statewide, short run industrial and occupational projections to 2006. Submit data to the projections Managing Partnership and update Vermont web site.
- Customer Support: Products developed for web-use show heavy demand. Contact with clients trained by LMI show a strong interest in projections and the need to provide easy to use products.
- Five-Year Plan: This activity is consistent with both the “Strategic Vision” and the “Workforce Development Strategy” for Vermont’s 5-year plan.
- Customers: Students, dislocated workers, and general public looking for career information.
- Outcomes: Stimulate increased usage of electronic and web based systems. Dislocated workers and older workers in need of a new career will benefit from updated occupational projections. By promoting the availability of the projections information, we expect to see an increase in the use of the LMI products.
- Milestones: Complete long run area activities by December 31, 2004. Complete short run projections to 2006 by May 2005.
- Estimated Cost: \$75,000.

## (3) PROVIDE OCCUPATIONAL AND CAREER INFORMATION PRODUCTS

- Description: Continue to work on the addition of occupational skill information from O’Net to Vermont’s Occupational Information Center. This allows individuals to search for specific occupational information and retrieve related information through one web page. Produce occupational wage estimates for substate regions based on OES wage survey. Estimates will cover 4 regions not included in the BLS sample design. The North Carolina EDS software will allow us to reconfigure the data to meet local needs and publish data on the Internet. Work with customers and other state agencies to expand fringe benefit survey in 2005 based on consortium questionnaire. Respond to telephone and email requests from the public for various publications and guidance in searching for new jobs.
- Customer Support: Products developed for web-use show heavy demand; frequent telephone and email requests show need for providing personal assistance for some customers. Contact with the Vermont Department of Health Care Administration indicated need for expanded fringe benefit survey.

- Five-Year Plan: This activity is consistent with both the “Strategic Vision” and the “Workforce Development Strategy” for Vermont’s 5-year plan.
- Customers: Students, dislocated workers, and general public looking for career information, employers, Vermont Department of Health Care Administration (DHCA).
- Outcomes: Stimulate increased usage of electronic and web based systems and expand the distribution of printed publications, particularly for business users as a result of an expanded fringe benefit survey. By working closely with DHCA on the fringe benefit survey we expect to see greater demand for the printed copies of the fringe benefit survey results. It is likely that there will be a significant increase in the number of new business users of LMI data. Fringe benefit information is one of the most frequently requested items by business users and the expansion of this activity will likely increase their use of LMI.
- Milestones: Integrate skill information in Vermont web site by October 1, 2004. Work on expanded fringe benefit survey throughout program year. Substate wage estimates will be done twice during the program year. Requests for information are handled on a flow basis throughout the year.
- Estimated Cost: \$60,000

#### (4) SUPPORT STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS

- Description: Participate in the U.S. Census Bureau’s Local Employment Dynamics (LED) program. Combining the state wage record data with the Census Bureau’s survey data will provide valuable details for WIBs to use in planning for their regions. Analyze local data and provide information to state and local WIBs.
- Customer Support: Discussion with state WIB Chairperson indicated a desire to use the LED program in Vermont to help make local LMI more useful. A meeting was scheduled to discuss the possible benefit of pursuing LED in Vermont. The Department’s Deputy Commissioner, as well as the WIB executives, indicated that other states had reported a very positive experience with the LED program.
- Five-Year Plan: This activity is consistent with both the “Strategic Vision” and the “Workforce Development Strategy” for Vermont’s 5-year plan.
- Customers: WIBs, employers, program planners.
- Outcomes: Stimulate increased usage of all types of Labor Market Information by WIB planners and private business establishments. The U.S. Census Bureau will provide detailed reports on employment, wages, and turnover for local WIBs to complement the array of products currently produced by LMI. In addition, the LMI staff will make expanded use of the wage record files returned by the Census Bureau. The more detailed information will be valuable to business planners and increase their use of electronic and paper products.
- Milestones: Hire staff person to work on program by October 2004; train staff and arrange for state participation in LED by January 2005; create local reports for WIB use by April 2005.
- Estimated Cost: \$60,000



## (5) MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE ELECTRONIC WORKFORCE INFORMATION DELIVERY SYSTEM

- Description: Maintain recent enhancements to the LMI web site. Examples include the following Cold Fusion systems: ALMIS Employer Database application, Labor Exchange Summary Tables, Occupational Information Center. Continue to coordinate with Vermont Job Link for efficient distribution of LMI to employers and workers registered with DET through WIA programs. Enhance the LMI web site by creating a “Regions” tab to improve accessibility of diverse information for selected geographic regions, such as WIBs.
- Customer Support: Responses to web survey indicate a need for easy access to an integrated system that summarizes information for geographic areas. Discussion with WIB executives indicated the need for a more focused option to view information for the WIB geographic areas.
- Five-Year Plan: This activity is consistent with both the “Strategic Vision” and the “Workforce Development Strategy” for Vermont’s 5-year plan.
- Customers: WIBs, employers, workers, planners, general public.
- Outcomes: Stimulate increased usage of electronic and web based systems, particularly by WIB planners and economic development specialists. The availability of a quick summary of economic and demographic information for towns, WIBs and counties will make it easier for government and private planners to see the most important factors affecting growth and development for a region.
- Milestones: Maintenance is ongoing throughout the program year. Regions tab will be available for testing by February 2005; system completed by May 2005.
- Estimated Cost: \$55,000

## (6) SUPPORT INFORMATION TRAINING ACTIVITIES

- Description: Two sessions will be offered at locations with significant demand for LMI/Career Information training. Each session will provide training to a group of about 20 professionals. Hands-On access to the Internet is used to demonstrate how LMI can be used for career development and program planning. Exercises are included to help the learning process. The training is open to staff from DET Career Resource Centers, Social Welfare, WIBs, Vermont Students Assistance Corporation, Economic Development Specialists and Nonprofit Career Counseling Organizations. In addition, LMI staff will participate in LED training, GIS training and other courses offered by the LMI training Institute as needed. Vermont will also provide support for the LMI Training institute by contributing 0.5 percent of our grant to the Institute’s operations.
- Customer Support: Evaluations from prior training sessions indicate a strong interest in hands-on training for accessing various types of LMI. In addition, discussion with LMI staff indicates the need to maintain staff skills in order to be able to produce the wide variety of new products and services requested by customers.

- Five-Year Plan: This activity is consistent with both the “Strategic Vision” and the “Workforce Development Strategy” for Vermont’s 5-year plan.
- Customers: WIBs, planners, counselors.
- Outcomes: Improved capability of all customers to locate, understand, and apply labor market and career information. This will be evident from increased use of electronic and paper products. Mailing lists will grow, web usage statistics will increase, and we expect to see an increase in favorable comments about the LMI web site from our customers.
- Milestones: Likely LMI training dates are November 2004 and May 2005. LED training will be scheduled by the LMI training Institute.
- Estimated Cost: \$20,067.

### A Description of How Each of the sub-Items Is Accomplished

As indicated already above for each of the core items, Vermont has established an extensive system to analyze the needs of its customers and to deliver the products and services authorized by grants from the Employment and Training Administration.

The Five-Year Strategic Plan sets the direction for the activities of the Department. The planning process established by the Commissioner integrates the views of the division Directors, including Labor Market Information. The plan describes the general process for serving job seekers, employers, researchers, and all other legal residents and transients anywhere in the state. The Career Resource Centers deliver services from 12 locations around the state. The availability of multiple sites with direct customer contact dictates how their services are delivered. In contrast, Labor Market Information has only one central location for its staff. In developing a plan to deliver LMI, it is necessary to use the strongest aspect of the LMI system, which is the computer system. The development of the Internet has made it possible for LMI to reach out to customers throughout Vermont and the country by making products accessible through a single point of access. ETA encouraged this approach with One-Stop implementation grants. In recent years, we have expanded upon the initial developments under One-Stop by increasing the number of products and making them more user friendly. The specific products to be produced in PY 2004 are clearly indicated above under core products as required by TEG 1-04. These activities support the goals of the WIA 5-year plan because they are designed to provide the services defined in the plan and encouraged during the last 70 years by ETA. The scope and sophistication of the services have changed but the goals have not. We provide information to help all types of human beings. We give them quantitative information such as the unemployment rate, wage information, occupational projections, and industrial growth patterns. We give them qualitative information such as occupational descriptions and skills information. We summarize recent labor exchange information and direct people to occupation and regions where they are most likely to find employment. This is all consistent with the Five-year plan. We coordinate with the Career Resource Centers (in 12 locations) so that they can direct their clients to labor market information; either in the form of hard-copy publications or web access. However, the key for LMI activities is the maintenance and

development of application for the Internet. This is outlined in Departmental planning documents and was very clearly described to ETA in Vermont's One-Stop implementation grant application. These objectives for LMI are also outlined in the Workforce Investment Act.

Customer support is accomplished through the customer satisfaction survey on the Internet, the use of counters for the web pages, and a formal follow-up survey. All of these items are documented above. The feedback we receive from customers guides the development of future products within the constraint of the core products authorized by the TEG. The information we receive from customers is reviewed by the LMI Director and discussed with LMI staff to determine the products that are needed. At the same time an assessment of staff capabilities influences what activities are possible. If we need to train staff, we include that as part of the annual plan.

Since we are using the customer satisfaction survey, web counters and follow-up survey to guide our decision making process, we use the same information as a measure of the outcome success or failure. We check usage of the web by looking at the counters. We look at the use of new products on the web, and we ask people who request support if they are receiving the products and services they need.

The milestones and cost of each activity are based on the resources needed to produce the products. The cost of staff, computers and all support activities are included.

### **III. Consultation and Customer Satisfaction Assessment**

Customer satisfaction will be assessed for all items available through the Labor Market Information web site. This includes all items produced under the U.S. Employment and Training Administration Workforce Information grant and many items produced as part of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Cooperative Agreement.

The assessment tools include counters for the various products on the web site. Quarterly reports will be generated to allow us to track usage. In addition, our customer survey will be used to collect feedback from customers on the web.

Counts will also be maintained for paper publications distributed and contacts with customers by telephone and email.

Training sessions will be used as an opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses of existing products. A typical training session is attended by individuals from economic development, social welfare agency, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, and other LMI users. It is convenient to discuss the needs of the information users face-to-face while showing them how to access our latest information distribution system.

Our customers frequently volunteer comments about the information provided in response to telephone and email inquiries. This direct contact provides a clear indication of the effectiveness of our products and services. All comments reflect satisfaction with the timeliness of our response and the professional attitude of the LMI staff. On occasion, customers have expressed dissatisfaction with some technical details. For example, the data is not available for a specific geographic area or a particular industry. We did not tally this information during the last year. During PY 2004, however, we will follow-up by email or fax on data requests to determine satisfaction. We will summarize responses for basic quality standards: timeliness, professional service, and data satisfaction.