

South Carolina's Employment Statistics System

The Employment Security Commission's Labor Market Information (LMI) Department is the designated entity for management of the statewide employment statistics system. Ongoing strategies are being maintained and enhanced for collaboration with the state and local WIBs, as well as other primary workforce development customers, to strengthen the employment statistics system. The Customer Support department within LMI is continually being improved to provide better information support and services to the WIBs and other customers.

The LMI Department coordinates with ESC's State WIA Administrative Department (SWIAD) to ensure that ongoing information products and services support the five-year strategic plan for state and local workforce development. Initially developed through a special grant from SWIAD, comprehensive WIA area profiles are maintained and updated quarterly by LMI to provide necessary information for strategic planning. LMI also collaborates with SWIAD on data delivery via SC Virtual One-Stop, the new statewide WIA operational and tracking system.

The point of communication between the LMI Department and the state Workforce Investment Board is the state Policy, Planning and Coordination Committee. Reports on the status of LMI products and services will be submitted to the committee on a quarterly basis for review, discussion and transmittal to the full State WIB, as appropriate. The LMI director, assistant directors, and/or designated staff will attend and make presentations at meetings of the committee and full board, as appropriate.

Ongoing communication with local WIBs is maintained through local visits, attendance/presentations at local WIB meetings, and presentations at monthly meetings of the WIA administrators association. Workshops are also conducted regularly at annual state WIA conferences, which are widely attended by administrative, state and local workforce development staff and partners. Special collaborative efforts planned in PY 02 include the release of a new quarterly newsletter highlighting LMI activities and services for WIA ; initiation of a WIA listserv for data dissemination, and an LMI open house for local WIA administrators.

The state employment statistics system is further enhanced through communications with the LMI Advisory Council, which is made up of business, education, economic development, and local workforce development representatives. The goal of this group is to provide input and feedback to help the LMI Department improve responsiveness to customers through enhanced products, services, and dissemination. The council will be revamped in PY 02 to be more fully representative of the customer community.

Information product and service delivery to business customers, individuals/job seekers, and workforce development partners is facilitated through a wide range of printed publications and brochures, a comprehensive LMI website, and the in-depth web-based Palmetto Economic Analysis and Research System (PEARS). There will be increased emphasis in PY 02 on customized products for the state's One-Stop Workforce Centers.

Statement of Work

Summarized below are the products and services to be provided under the PY02 One-Stop Workforce Information grant. All products and activities will be planned and conducted in consultation with the state and local workforce investment boards (WIBs).

Core Products and Services

1) ALMIS Database: Work will continue on populating and updating of the ALMIS Database in PY 02. The database will be populated/maintained to the fullest extent possible, including all specified core data tables. Version 1.1 is currently being used to facilitate electronic data delivery via our Palmetto Economic Analysis and Research System (PEARS). Efforts will be made to upgrade to Version 2.2, by the end of PY 02. This may require the maintenance of both versions until PEARS is upgraded to accommodate the new version. Occupational licensing data will be maintained, updated, and submitted to the NCSC, as specified.

Ongoing coordination will be maintained for data delivery via the state's new WIA operational and tracking system, SC Virtual One-Stop. Workforce information from the database will be accessed for integration and display via various components of this new web-based system, which is now being tested in local WIA areas. The system will serve as another means of information access for program staff, partners, and customers. Further opportunities for use of the state's ALMIS Database for information sharing, analysis, and delivery will be explored in PY 02.

South Carolina will continue to participate as a member of the ALMIS Database Maintenance Consortium, and will continue to coordinate national education and communication activities related to the database.

2) Long-Term Industry and Occupational Employment Projections: Statewide industry and occupational projections are being developed for 2000-2010, using the tools, methodology, and guidelines provided through the new National Projections Managing Partnership. Statewide industry projections have been completed, and substate industry projections by WIA area are scheduled for completion by April 2003. Occupational projections will be delayed to accommodate inclusion of an additional round of OES program data. Statewide occupational projections are scheduled for completion by February 2003, with WIA area projections available for dissemination by April 2003.

The ALMIS Database will be populated with statewide and local projections data, for electronic delivery via PEARS and other interfaces. Statewide projections will be made available electronically, as well as via a printed publication that will also include occupational skills and wage data.

3) Short-term Industry and Occupational Employment Forecasts: State-level short-term industry and occupational employment forecasts will be developed and disseminated by the end of PY 02, according to guidelines developed by the National Projections

Managing Partnership. The production of forecasts data for substate WIA areas will also be tested in accordance with guidelines issued by the Partnership. Forecasts data will be disseminated according to Partnership requirements and procedures.

4) Occupational Analysis Products: Continued emphasis will be placed on the development of customer-focused occupational and career information products. Information brochures highlighting demand occupations, wages, educational requirements, and licensing requirements will be produced and widely disseminated; development of Spanish versions of the brochures will also be initiated to target a more diverse customer audience. Customized area brochures and posters highlighting occupational information, with associated wages and educational requirements, will be produced and made available for use in One-Stop Career Centers and other customer service settings. Localized information on nontraditional occupations for males and females will be provided to fulfill local needs. Other products will be explored in consultation with local WIBs and other stakeholders. Efforts will be increased to incorporate skills-based information into occupational analysis products, using O*NET and other resources. Occupational analysis products will be delivered via a combination of printed/electronic media, as deemed appropriate through coordination with local WIBs and other LMI customers.

5) Employer Name and Address List: The ALMIS Employer Database is integrated within the state ALMIS Database. Delivery of ALMIS Employer Database information via PEARS will be continued. Through this Internet-based system, customers can access employer information for occupational categories of interest by WIA area. Employer Database information will also be a part of the new SC Virtual One-Stop System. Ongoing training and technical assistance will be provided to develop customer awareness as to the access and functionality of employer information. South Carolina will continue to participate as a member of the ALMIS Database Maintenance Consortium which is involved with the oversight and coordination of Employer Database activities.

6) Other Products/Services and Support to WIBs: Ongoing communication with local WIBs, WIA staff, partners, and other stakeholders will be maintained to assess their needs for workforce information and services. The LMI Department will take a more active role in initiating meetings with local WIA administrators and boards to discuss their planning and policy development activities, and associated information requirements. More formal statewide communication and strategic planning will take place through coordination with the Policy, Planning and Coordination Committee of the State WIB, as well as staff of the State WIA Administrative Department (SWIAD). Regular updates to WIA Area Profiles will be disseminated to facilitate ongoing availability of information for planning. Additional information projects will be initiated as requested to meet the needs of the individual WIA areas. Collaborative efforts and fee-for-service projects will be explored to better fulfill the workforce information needs within the WIA areas. LMI Department staff have been assigned as the points of contact for individual areas of the state; their roles will include becoming more knowledgeable about their areas of the state to provide more streamlined and personal service.

Ongoing coordination will be maintained with the agency's Communications/Media Department to ensure that labor market information is promoted as one of the premier agency services available to customers. Work will continue on joint agency promotional projects such as job fairs, business/education expositions, management presentations, and marketing materials. Special joint efforts are being directed toward the agency's business customers. An employer toolkit of informational materials is being jointly developed for use in agency staff communications with businesses. The material will be promoted in agency training sessions on employer relations. Additionally, a joint project is being coordinated in collaboration with the SC Labor, Licensing, and Regulation agency. This unique effort will provide career educational materials through a series of "Career Close-Ups" newspaper pages and a comprehensive career guide for students called "Be Your Own Navigator." LMI staff will also work with the agency's WIA marketing coordinator to incorporate products and services into state and local WIA marketing efforts.

The annual "SC Workforce Review" (formerly "SC Labor Market Review") publication and monthly "Workforce Trends" newsletter will continue to serve as the primary published documents for delivery of comprehensive workforce information to meet the needs of a broad range of customers. The formats of these publications have been greatly improved for greater customer appeal and usefulness. Surveying of employer practices and benefits will be continued, due to positive customer response to this information. South Carolina will continue to participate on the national Fringe Benefits Workgroup to provide input based on experiences with this survey project. Among the other topics being researched or considered for study are textile industry trends, employer vacancies, underemployment, skills gaps, and occupational skills requirements.

Other new initiatives are being undertaken to improve services to field staff and One-Stop Workforce Centers around the state. Personal visits are being made to all field offices and One-Stops by the LMI Director, accompanied by LMI staff representing various programs. These visits are serving to promote current LMI products and services, as well as a means of assessing special information needs in the field. A number of excellent new products and services are being planned, in response to requests from these visits. As part of this local customer service effort, LMI staff have been individually assigned as the points of contacts for multi-county areas around the state. They will be learning about the economies and workforce needs of their local areas, in order to provide better service by functioning somewhat like in-house "area analysts." Additionally, LMI staff are participating in a project to cross-train with and shadow staff in the nearby One-Stop Workforce Center. This effort has provided new insight into operations in the one-stop environment, while helping one-stop staff manage customer flow on peak business days. A new project in PY 02 is the design and implementation of an LMI business resource center for the one-stop setting. A "Business Solutions Center" prototype will be developed and tested in the field, with plans to promote and adopt the concept statewide.

7) Support for Workforce Information Delivery Systems: PEARS will be maintained and enhanced in PY 02, and the system will be strongly promoted as the most comprehensive electronic source of information for research and planning in the state. New avenues for improving the system's delivery and customer access will be explored. Training and technical assistance for system users will be ongoing throughout the year, and new promotional materials, as well as a PEARS desk aid, will be released. Collaborative efforts will be maintained for the integration of LMI into the state's new WIA operational and tracking system, SC Virtual One-Stop.

The LMI website will be improved to offer new features and an enhanced format for more customer-friendly access to workforce information. New features, such as the LMI chart room and county/WIA spotlights, have recently been added. Emphasis will be directed toward more streamlined information access for various customer groups, incorporating universal access and customer choice as key components. LMI staff will continue to work closely with web development staff in the agency's IT Services Department to ensure that LMI web delivery is compatible with other agency operational and information systems. Greater emphasis will be focused on measurement of customer access to web-based information as a means of monitoring performance and customer satisfaction. Additionally, potential new applications for information delivery and customer access will be explored in the coming year. Technologies for potential use in data sharing with other states will also be explored.

8) Workforce Information Training Activities: Ongoing collaborative efforts will be maintained with other agency departments, as well as state and local WIA staff/partners, to provide workforce information for staff and customers. The basic "LMI Resources" curriculum that has been developed will be continually enhanced and customized for use in training various customer groups. In addition to a basic overview of workforce information resources, the training includes modules on accessing information, national information resources (Career One-Stop and O*NET) and PEARS, as well as case studies that illustrate the use of information in workforce development settings.

In PY 02, the LMI Department will be heavily involved in the comprehensive new agency staff development and training program. There will be specific LMI components in both the series of induction training sessions for new employees and the management/leadership training sessions for career employees. Additionally, LMI staff will conduct portions of other training sessions for staff throughout the year. These include a segment on web-based information resources as part of introductory computer training, and segments on labor market areas and business resources as part of employer relations training.

Presentations and training for customers will be ongoing throughout the year. Workshops will be provided at agency-sponsored and other conferences, including the annual Workforce Development Conference and the Business and Education Summit. Other venues for promoting the availability and use of workforce information will be explored. Ongoing LMI staff development will be emphasized through participation in training offered by the LMI Training Institute and other providers, as funding allows.

Customer Satisfaction Assessment

The LMI Department will continue to focus on providing excellent customer service in PY 02. The Customer Service Department within LMI has responsibility for handling customer relations, customer service, and marketing of available information products and services. The Customer Service Unit within the department functions very effectively as a centralized point of contact for customer information requests. Customer service operations include a toll-free telephone line for enhanced access, with all calls answered by customer service specialists who are very familiar with LMI products, services, and operations. Information requests are continually monitored/evaluated to assess customer information needs and satisfaction with existing products and services.

In PY 02, efforts will be concentrated toward the development of a process for more systematic customer satisfaction assessment. Customers will be contacted initially by mail via a customer satisfaction survey postcard (with return postage paid). Survey cards will also be distributed with publications, as well as with information packages provided at workshops, presentations, exhibits, etc. An electronic version of the survey will be added to the LMI homepage. Development of an e-mail survey process will also be considered. Additionally, telephone calls will be randomly made to customers after information requests have been filled to determine their opinions of the information and service received. Follow-up calls (and possibly personal visits) will be made, as needed, to ensure customer satisfaction and to foster relationships. Customer visits to the LMI homepage and PEARS will be tracked electronically to determine volume of access, as well as information components accessed most frequently.

All customer contact information will be kept in a database for review and evaluation. Continuing strategies will be implemented to ensure improvements in areas of deficiencies, as noted by customers, throughout the satisfaction assessment process. Ongoing improvements will be made to the assessment and evaluation process, based on experiences and potential ETA guidance.