

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DIVISION OF LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SERVICES

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR
PROGRAM YEAR 2004 COST REIMBURSABLE GRANT FOR
ONE-STOP WORKFORCE INFORMATION**

PRIORITY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

(1) Continue to populate the ALMIS (America's Labor Market Information System) Database with State data.

Maine's ALMIS Database has been updated to reflect version 2.3 of the database structure. Populating the database was initiated. Occupational licensing tables were updated to conform with requirements. Staff training was a priority to ensure the full utilization of this resource in meeting national, state, and local customer needs.

(2) Produce and disseminate industry and occupational employment projections.

State-level long-term occupational employment projections for the 2002 to 2012 period were developed in adherence to the methodological, software tools and guidelines provided by the Projections Consortium and Projections Managing Partnership. Six substate area long-term industrial and occupational projections for the same base year and projected year were completed. A publication of the 2002 to 2012 industry and occupational projections was developed.

The ALMIS Database was populated with the projections data and the data was submitted for public dissemination following procedures established by the Projections Consortium and Projections Managing Partnership.

In lieu of short-term projections, Maine conducted a Job Vacancy Survey. The survey results will provide data about the quantity and quality of job openings, including the number of job opening by business size, industry and geographic location (LWIBs). Information on wages, benefits offered, education and experience, vacancy duration and full/part-time status will also be collected. Survey results will assist decision making by policy makers, training service providers, businesses and job seekers.

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

Occupational and career information products were developed for job seekers, employers, and other CareerCenter customers using the latest occupational employment projections. The series of brochures and publications describing LMI products and career opportunities that were updated include *Highest Paying Jobs in Maine*, and *Knowledge/Skills/and Abilities-An Introduction*.

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The *Maine Employee Benefits Survey-2004 Summary Report* was released in this spring while work continued on the full publication. Nearing completion were an updated *Labor Market Area* map, the *Labor Market Area Desk Aid*, and the *Hot Jobs in Maine* poster.

We maintained availability of these products, including enhancements to, and a new version of, the *Maine Employment Info Guide* via our web site.

(4) Ensure that workforce information and support required by state and local workforce investment boards are provided.

The Division of Labor Market Information Services maintains an active outreach program with the Maine Jobs Council (state workforce investments board) and the four local workforce boards. We routinely participate in board meetings and make formal reports and presentations related to strategic workforce challenges facing the State of Maine and we report routinely on status/trends for statewide and regional economies and labor markets. We field regular requests from both state and local boards to supply research and analysis that is used for the design, development and evaluation of workforce programs. We provide background research and analysis for grant applications and funding proposals.

Over the longer term, we solicit input in number of ways from board members and staff to ensure that the products and services we provide are responsive to their needs. We attend board meetings regularly and have scheduled meetings with board staff to ensure that their input is solicited and incorporated in product, content and service development.

We have also been requested by the Maine Jobs Council to provide regular staffing to the Council's Industry Advisory Committee made up of employers and representatives of business and trade associations.

(5) Maintain and enhance electronic workforce information delivery systems.

The updated ALMIS Employer Database was made available to the appropriate individuals and entities on CD. The database was networked to Maine's CareerCenters. The Employer Database was also incorporated into our full-service interactive LMI product, the *Maine Employment Info Guide*.

The *Maine Employment Info Guide* (MEIG) was rebuilt to be compliant with version 2.3 of the ALMIS database. Updating the necessary tables in the ALMIS database to reflect the 2.3 structure was started. The Employer Database was updated, and all core tables were continually updated in line with printed publications of the data.

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(6) Support State workforce information training activities.

Communicating labor market and workforce information and effectively supporting customers to interpret and apply such information for planning, analysis and decision support is one of the most fundamental responsibilities that state LMI units must carry out. Job seekers, employers, career guidance and employment specialists, economic development planners and those responsible for the evaluation of programs and the analysis of public policies should have the benefit of additional training and technical support to enhance their use of labor market and workforce information. The Division of Labor Market Information Services (LMIS) is deeply committed to consulting with its customers about the efficacy of how labor market and workforce information is presented and how it can be improved. Furthermore, we increasingly focused on collaborating with customer groups, both within and outside of the Maine Department of Labor, to ensure that labor market and workforce information is more intensively applied to the formulation of workforce strategies, the development of education and training programs and integrated with services delivery in Maine's CareerCenter system.

We continued a number of important strategies and activities that have contributed to strengthening the delivery of labor market and workforce information.

- LMI Advisory Workgroup. For over ten years, LMIS has regularly convened frontline staff from Maine's CareerCenter system for the purpose of reviewing LMI products and services. These reviews have been instrumental in improving products and services ensuring that they better meet the needs of end users. We supported and utilized the Advisory Workgroup as the basis for product and service reviews by holding regular meetings in Maine CareerCenters.
- Customer Service Feedback. LMIS used a customer feedback form to support product and service evaluations by end users and information consumers. We tabulated these results to improve LMIS products.
- LMI Institute Staff Training. LMIS made regular use of the national LMI Institute to ensure that staff benefited from training and professional development. This rich curriculum provides opportunities for staff to gain not only technical skills related to the production, reporting and analysis of labor market and workforce information, but also to learn more about connecting to information consumers and to better satisfy the needs of end users.

We strengthened our consultation and feedback systems to ensure we better align LMIS products and services with the broader aims of the Maine Department of Labor overall and particularly, with the Bureaus of Employment Services, Rehabilitation Services and Unemployment Compensation as Maine continues to develop a more integrated workforce development system. The establishment of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet including the Departments of Labor, Education, and Economic and Community Development along with the presidents of the University and Community College systems means that Maine is pursuing a more integrated approach to the development of workforce policies and the implementation of workforce programs.

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- LMIS consulted with members of the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet to solicit input and obtain recommendations about development and distribution of labor market and workforce information.
- LMIS Senior Management Team met quarterly with senior managers from the Bureau of Employment Services to assess progress, review challenges and agree on methods and approaches to supply and integrate labor market and workforce information to meet the needs of CareerCenters and other workforce programs.
- The LMIS Director met regularly with the executives and staff from Maine’s Workforce Investment Boards to review levels of satisfaction with the quality of LMIS products and services.
- LMIS began organizing a small advisory committee of representatives of business and trade associations and economic development planners to solicit their input and feedback for designing and delivering more responsive products and services.

We planned a series of training, technical assistance and professional development activities that equipped end users and LMIS customers with deeper knowledge and expanded skills in the application of labor market and workforce information.

- Maine LMI Training Academy. A group of subject matter experts from LMIS and training staff from the Bureau of Employment Services developed the first of a series of courses designed to equip CareerCenter and other frontline program staff with increased knowledge and more sophisticated skills to apply labor market and workforce information. This collaborative development process reflects a commitment to a partnership with our user communities. They drew on the work that BES has already completed to develop “Workforce Consultants” and incorporate online activities from LMI@Work developed by National Association of State Workforce Agencies and reviewed training modules developed by other states. The initial training for BES and CareerCenter staff was rolled out in the spring of 2005 and was very well received.
- Training on the Use of the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) System. LMIS staff worked with outside experts from the National Center on Education and the Economy and the Jacob France Institute of the University of Baltimore to organize the first of a number of training and information sessions on the use of LED. One session was specifically aimed at staff from BES, the local workforce boards and CareerCenters. Another session was specifically aimed at human resource professionals, employers and trade associations.
- Integrating Labor Market and Workforce Information with Maine Learning Results. LMIS staff began a partnership with the Maine Department of Education to provide technical expertise to support the continued development and revisions of Maine Learning Results, the educational standards used to assess student progress under the “No Child Left Behind” legislation. Through participation on

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workgroups and presenting labor market and workforce developments to Maine educational leaders, we help connect the worlds of schooling and work in Maine.

- Using Labor Market Information for Accountability in Higher Education. LMIS entered into formal research partnership with the University of Maine to explore the merger of Maine wage records with detailed student information from the University's Student Information System (SIS). The combined data set is being used by researchers to examine the employment outcomes for University graduates and to further explore relationships between academic preparation and labor market success. LMIS and University researchers have submitted new funding proposals to sources such as the Fund for Improvement in Post-Secondary Education.

CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ASSESSMENT

LMI assessment of customer satisfaction with state Workforce Information products and services continued to be very positive from current feedback received.

LMI employed a number of methods to collect and interpret customer satisfaction information from a variety of users. An LMI Advisory Workgroup, made up of individuals representing One-Stop partners, constantly monitored and provided feedback concerning our products. LMI analysts, while conducting on-site visits throughout the state, consulted with WIBs and other customers to determine customers' LMI needs. Individuals indicated their satisfaction through use of a self-addressed customer service questionnaire contained within publications and provided comments to the LMI web site.

To add customer value where needs for improvement are indicated by these methods, LMI continued, or in some cases, undertook certain activities. LMI Workgroup feedback was incorporated into new product drafts, for both external and internal (Desk aids) customers. The Management Team reviewed, discussed, and made procedure changes based on the LMI analysts' information gathering in the field. Staff updated/improved products based on suggestions from the customer service questionnaires and from an internal suggestion file maintained by LMI colleagues. Staff also stepped up utilization of the publication logs to better serve the CareerCenters, as indicated by their comments. In addition, LMI continued to adapt its web site to increase access to more individuals as well as to provide more depth and breadth to the format and content.

After each Maine LMI Training Academy session, nearly 100% of participants responded to open-ended evaluations. Very positive feedback commended the style, content and message that labor market information is a valuable tool for CareerCenter consultants. The comments additionally offered suggestions on related topics for future training sessions.