

Next Steps in External Integration: BEA and BLS

BEA and BLS have collaborated in recent years on several projects to improve the quality of data available for both aggregate and industry-level productivity measurement. This note describes projects designed to further improve data quality and to allow data users to more effectively use the estimates provided by both agencies.

Capital Services Expansion

The measurement of capital services in a production account framework was endorsed as a concept for the 2008 version of the System of National Accounts (SNA). Imputing a net return on government and nonprofit assets was also approved. BEA will work with BLS to expand the coverage of the BLS measures of capital services to the entire economy. BEA's goal is to incorporate BLS estimates into the NIPA presentation.

Hours Worked Reconciliation

The BLS measure of total hours worked is more comprehensive than the BEA measure because the BLS measure includes self-employed persons and unpaid family workers. However, it does not include the hours associated with misreported employment and wages, which are included in BEA's estimates. BLS and BEA will investigate possibilities for developing more complete and consistent measures.

Industry Output Reconciliation

BEA and BLS manufacturing output measures are very similar partly because of earlier efforts to minimize differences, but nonmanufacturing output measures often differ to a large degree. BEA and BLS will identify the industries with the largest differences and will develop a plan to reduce differences and eliminate inconsistencies. Reconciliation tables will be provided to explain remaining differences.

Historical Production Accounts

BLS is developing production accounts for NAICS industry groups back to 1987. Extending production accounts before 1987 raises many data challenges that require joint agency work. BEA has initiated work to develop gross output estimates back to 1972 that BLS could use to prepare input-output tables. BEA will consult with BLS to find other areas in which BEA support could be provided.

Historical Industry Employment

BEA has provided value added and capital stock estimates by NAICS industry back to 1947. BLS has provided NAICS-based employment estimates back to 1990 for most industries, but does not plan to provide detailed industry estimates for earlier years. BEA plans to provide NAICS employment estimates back to 1947 at the same level of industry detail as value added. BLS will consider using BEA's estimates to extend its own series.