MARYLAND
WORKFORCE INFORMATION CORE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES PLAN
PY 2004

Section A: Statewide Workforce Information System

The statewide workforce information system continues to evolve. Coordination, cooperation and communication among system partners is critical to continuous improvement efforts, efforts which must take front and center if the system is to achieve its goal of providing a wide audience of users with the information necessary to ensure that Maryland's workforce will meet both the current needs and future demand of established and prospective employers. PY 2003 was a year of change for Maryland's Workforce Information System partners. The Governor's Workforce Investment Board (GWIB), the state's chief policy-making body on workforce development, moved under the umbrella of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (SWA). Responsibility for management of the SWA's One-Stop Centers was shifted to the local WIA Directors, increasing coordination and strengthening the relationship between the SWA and local WIA's. By joining these partners under a single umbrella, the SWA can provide a more focused delivery of services and information, channeling resources toward the goals and objectives of state and local partners.

- **Process to ensure that the SWIB can exercise its responsibility for ensuring that policy is responsive to needs of state and local workforce investment system**

  Maintaining an open dialogue with and reinforcing the relationships established during PY 03 between the SWA and system stakeholders through meetings, focus groups, conferences and training will promote the regular exchange of ideas between workforce information data developers and users.

- **How the statewide workforce information system supports the goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan for state and local workforce development**

  Maryland has developed four strategic goals related to workforce development

  - To develop a workforce development system that produces the best educated and most highly skilled workforce
  - To develop a labor market system that will provide students, job seekers, incumbent workers, out-of-school youth and employers with the labor market training and assistance needed
  - To develop a governance system focusing on unified planning, continuous improvement and accountability
  - To gain universal recognition of Maryland's success in developing a world-class workforce development system

To achieve these goals, the SWA will, through One-Stop funded grant activities and through fee-for-service activities, make a concerted effort to bring participating partners together in order to focus on integrating systems, initiatives and services currently in place. This integration will facilitate information/product development and help to guide marketing and dissemination activities.

- **How the grant activities are consistent with the strategic vision of the Governor and the SWIB**

  The strategic vision guiding the implementation of the state's workforce development system is to ensure Maryland's ability to produce and continuously develop a highly skilled workforce, a workforce that will be properly prepared to meet the current and future demand of employers. Aligning worker skills with employer requirements requires a pooling of resources and the expertise of a number of key players. In working toward this vision, the SWA's responsibility will be, through its data and information development activities, to provide stakeholders on both the supply (training providers) and demand (employers) side of the economy with timely, accurate and relevant information about local and regional labor market dynamics and demographics – information that can be used to encourage worker skills upgrading and to foster economic development/business expansion. In the aggregate, this information will be used to support the data needs and to provide guidance to secondary and post secondary education systems.

- **The strategy of the SWA and the SWIB for consulting with local WIB's and stakeholders in the workforce investment system to determine customer needs for workforce information**

  Round table discussions, which were held on multiple occasions during PY 03 between SWA staff, the GWIB and the local WIA Directors, proved to be an invaluable tool in assessing local needs. With all the stakeholders on the same playing field, the SWA was able to brainstorm with the locals and flesh out the details needed to move forward with the production of information and publications tailored to local needs. Locals were given the opportunity to critique information development/publications during the production stages – a process that contributed to continuous improvement and helped to ensure that targeted needs were being met. This sit down approach was quite successful in providing direction and focus to product planning, and will continue to be the approach utilized in PY 04.

  Since the SWIB is committed to sustaining a workforce system responsive to business needs, increased attention will be focused on the employer community and identifying worker shortages. A cluster-based approach to industry analysis was begun in PY 03 as a means of connecting specific industry needs with the workforce development system – a process that will carry over into PY 04 and beyond. Employer committees are being formed to assist in strategic planning for workforce and economic development. Strengthening the partnership between these committees and local and state education and training providers will help to create a

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seamless, coordinated, demand driven workforce investment system. SWA staff will play an integral role in helping to fulfill the informational needs critical to this effort.

- **The broad strategic approach for workforce information delivery to principal customers**

Increasing awareness and providing easy access to information will be accomplished through aggressive marketing of new products. While the release of select print based publications will continue, the SWA web site will remain the primary vehicle for information/product distribution. During PY 03, a practice was established to apprise preferred customers – local WIA's and One-Stop Managers -- of new releases as they became available through e-mail notification. This practice was a means of reinforcing the relationship between the SWA and its workforce development customers.

The SWA has, in recent months, dedicated a staff person to engage in marketing efforts. This person will work closely with agency public information staff and workforce development partners to promote products and increase SWA visibility.

SWA staff will also rely on its analysts to proactively market products, services and information through training and technical assistance efforts and through routine communications initiated through point of service and e-mail contact.

- **How workforce information and services are delivered as core services to customers through the state's One-stop service delivery system**

The SWA will continue its role as an active information/service provider in the One-Stop system by providing training, consultation and technical assistance to One-Stop intermediaries, focusing on LMI products/systems and their utility in serving clients and in improving employer outreach. Virtual LMI, Maryland's delivery system for labor market information will be available for public view during PY 04. To promote its use, SWA staff will provide training to key staff in the One-Stop Centers on how to navigate and understand the system.

- **Description of customer satisfaction and assessment methods to be used to collect/interpret customer satisfaction information and the principal customers to be consulted**

    See Section C – Consultation and Customer Satisfaction

- **Summary of customer satisfaction findings for the most recent survey of products/services and the effect those findings had on the planned products/services for PY 04 including how plan addresses inadequacies/gaps identified by users**

The formal mail-out survey conducted during PY 03 yielded an overall satisfaction rating of 88% with product/services. Users really didn't identify any gaps; comments were geared more towards data presentation on website. Based on comments, minor changes in the website configuration were made.

During PY 03, in interacting with local WIA Directors, Directors were asked to develop a "Product/ Information Wish List" as a means of possibly identifying data gaps. This list was used as the basis for new product development during the year. Products, as developed, were test marketed during the various training sessions held for local WIA staff and LWIB's. This test marketing prior to final release, which will again be employed in PY 04, was an immensely popular and successful method of determining product satisfaction and soliciting input for continuous improvement.

Some of the uncompleted items on the WIA Wish List, such as data development based on industry clustering, will be a focus activity during PY 04.

Section B: Core products and Services

1. Continue to populate the ALMIS database with state data

SWA staff will continue to maintain the ALMIS database, keeping all economic and labor market information as current and as geographically detailed as possible. Refreshing of all core table data components, as well as updating of the licensing database will occur during PY 04.

Designated SWA staff will continue to work with agency IT personnel to effect the service transfer of the ALMIS database from GeoSolutions, the contractor currently hosting ALMIS for Maryland, to the Career and Workforce Information website. It is anticipated that Virtual LMI will be operational, enabling public view on the web during the 2nd quarter of PY 04.

Tasks for this objective are:

Task	Task Focus	Milestones	Principal Customers*
Routine Update of Core Tables	Data update	Ongoing	Employers, WIB's, Economic Dev., Educ., Job Skrs, Students
Input Info USA updates into ALMIS	Data update	Ongoing	Same
Input industry/occupational projections (statewide)	Data update	2nd qtr PY 04	Same
Input short-term industry/ occupational projections (statewide)	Data update	4th qtr PY 04	Same
Occupational Licensing Data	Deliverable	4th qtr PY 04	Same
Estimated Cost	$100,750 (incl. approximate $55,000 Virtual LMI maintenance		

2. Produce and disseminate industry and occupational employment projections

During PY 04, the SWA's initial focus will be to publish both statewide long-term (through 2012) and short-term (through 2005) projections, consummating activities begun during PY 03. SWA staff will then move on to the development of long-term (through 2012) projections at the WIA level. The training of a staff person to take over short-term projections activities, begun during the latter part of PY 03, should be completed by mid PY 04, enabling work on short-term (2004-2006) projections at the statewide level to proceed during the final quarter of PY 04.

The population of the ALMIS database with projections data will be undertaken as required.

Tasks for this objective are:

Task	Task Focus	Milestones	Principal Customers
Develop statewide long-term industry/occupational projections	Data Development	Carry-over from PY 03 Completion Sept 2004	Employers, WIB's Economic Development, Educ, Job Skrs, Students
Develop short-term industry projections through 2005	Data Development	Carry-over from PY 03 Completion Oct 2004	Same
Develop long-term industry/ occupational projections by WIA	Data Development	3rd qtr PY 04	Same
Develop statewide short-term industry/ occupational projections 2004-2006	Data Development	4th qtr PY 04	Same
Attend appropriate projections training seminars	Trg/Capacity Bldg	As offered	SWA staff
Estimated Cost		$175,500	

3. Provide occupational and career information products for public use

SWA staff will continue to produce regularly released publications such as Employment and Payrolls and Monthly Labor review to provide those making career decisions with the generic types of information necessary for "getting to know the job market." Other specialized studies/information directional tools will also be developed.

Tasks for this objective are:

Task	Task Focus	Milestones	Principal Customers
Marine Industry Job Vacancy Survey	Data Development/ Analysis	Carry over from PY 03 Complete Sept 2004	LWIB, Ec. Development Educators
LED Older Worker Report	Data Development/ Analysis	October 2004	Employers, WIB's Economic Development, Educ, Job Skrs, Students
Publish latest OES occupational wage data for state and by WIA	Information Delivery Update	2nd & 4th qtrs	Same
Demand occupations by training codes	Information Delivery Update	3rd qtr	Same
Develop specialized LED products using census templates	Data Development	Ongoing	Same
Respond to requests for specialized data /information production	Data Development	Ongoing As Requested	Same
Estimated Cost	$160,000		

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

Facilitating state and local WIB planning needs is at the core of the SWA's efforts. While generic labor market information (LMI) products may well satisfy the "need to know" function relative to labor market conditions/indicators, a blanket strategy in product development may fail to address individual needs. Since each WIB has its own distinct way of approaching/achieving its workforce development goals, data customization has become a popular marketing strategy in developing and maintaining working relationships with the local WIBS. During PY 03, SWA staff met repeatedly with local WIA Directors to discuss needs, embracing their ideas in subsequent product development. A number of these products will be updated and released according to approved schedules. New product development will focus on some of the unmet needs during PY 03.

Tasks for this objective are:

Task	Task Focus	Milestones	Principal Customers
Fact Sheets by WIA and County	Information Delivery	Qtrly	Employers, WIB's Economic Development, Educ, Job Skrs, Students
Unemployment by WIA	Data Development	Mnthly/Qtrly/Annually	WIB's
Industry Cluster Chartbooks*			Employers, WIB's
Hospitality	Data	September 2004	Economic Development,
Education		September 2004	Educ, Job Skrs, Students
Aerospace		October 2004	
Retail Trade	Development	November 2004	
Construction		November 2004	
Manufacturing		December 2004	
Tourism	and	January 2005	
Health Care		January 2005	
Transportation & Warehousing		February 2005	
Finance & Insurance	Information	March 2005	
Business Services		March 2005	
Information Technology		April 2005	
Communication	Delivery	May 2005	
Biotechnology		June 2005	
Workforce Demographics in Retail Trade - LED product development	Data Develop./Info Delivery	November 2004	Employers, WIB's Economic Development,
Target Group Data Development	Data Develop./Info Delivery	As Requested	WIB's
Performance Measurement Technical Workgroup	Technical Assist. & Data Development	Qtrly Meetings	WIB's
Estimated Costs	$180,000		

*Publication order tentative – may change to accommodate user needs

5. Maintain and enhance electronic state workforce information delivery system

LMAI will continue to work with the agency's IT staff and Web Team to enable public access to Virtual LMI. Once the system is operational and user training and user comfort with system capabilities has grown, SWA staff will solicit input from users and, based upon this feedback, will explore system enhancements and information delivery options available through Geographic Solutions.

Tasks for this objective are:

Task	Task Focus	Milestones	Principal Customers
Work with IT to enable public access to ALMIS through Virtual LMI	Information Delivery	Carry-over from PY 03 Complete Nov 04	NA
Install available updates to Virtual LMI	System Update	As available	NA
Upload various publications/data series to website	Information Delivery	Ongoing	Employers, WIB's Economic Development, Educ, Job Skrs, Students
Work with Web team on web presentation and updates	System Update	Ongoing	Same
Estimated Cost		$32,000	

6. Support state workforce information training activities

During PY 03, SWA staff engaged in extensive LMI user training. LMI training on data availability/uses, initially provided to WIA Directors, was, during a number of specially tailored programs, provided to local WIB's and support staff in local WIA's and One Stop Centers. Based on the frequency/scope of training provided during PY 03, the need to revisit LMI training with these groups will most probably be limited during PY 04. However, SWA staff will continue to respond to requests for individualized training.

Some planned training activities, basically designed as "train the trainer " sessions, are slated for PY 04. The reengineering of the LED website, currently underway, should be completed during the 2nd quarter of PY 04. Once completed, training packages will be developed to provide LED training to key staff from the local WIA's. These training sessions will also be used as an opportunity to conduct Virtual LMI training.

Tasks for this objective are:

Task	Task Focus	Milestones	Principal Customers
Develop training package for LED "Train the Trainer" session	Training Development	2nd qtr PY 04	NA
Conduct LED training	Training	3rd qtr PY 04	WIA/One Stop staff
Develop training package for Virtual LMI "Train the Trainer" session	Training Development	2nd qtr PY 04	NA
Conduct Virtual LMI training	Training	3rd qtr PY 04	WIA/One Stop staff
Provide training/technical assistance as needed/requested	Training	Ongoing	Employers, WIB's Economic Development, Educ, Job Skrs, Students
Attend relevant LMI training	Trng/Capacity Bldg	As offered	SWA staff
Estimated Cost	$35,000		

Section C: Consultation and Customer Satisfaction Assessment

The round table discussions utilized to determine local needs employed during PY 03 were very effective. Meeting with customers (local WIA Directors and staff) face-to-face provided a more focused approach to assessing and clarifying data needs, discussing information options and setting priorities. It provided SWA staff with the opportunity to establish the SWA as the first point of contact in fulfilling information and data development needs. SWA staff will again, during PY 04, use the quarterly meetings of local WIA Directors as the forum for this type of exchange.

The SWA will remain an active participant in the committee developed to further the industry clustering project. Committee membership includes representation from the workforce development community, including Education (both secondary and postsecondary), Local WIA's, Economic Development and the GWIB. Bringing these multiple stakeholders to the table to work toward common goals has helped to lend cohesion to product development, making products multi –faceted rather than singularly focused.

The mail-out customer satisfaction survey will again be employed in PY 04. The business community will be the primary user group in this sampling. Efforts will be made to redesign the survey instrument in an attempt to elicit more definitive feedback on data deficits in order to better focus and, if necessary, realign data development activities. Web metrics will also be examined as a means of determining customer focus.

Estimated cost $33,325

Total Grant $716,575