

West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs
Division of Research, Information and Analysis

PY2004

Workforce Information Core Products and Services Grant Plan

Part A. A description of the statewide workforce information system.

The West Virginia Bureau of Employment Programs' Division of Research, Information and Analysis comprises the Office of Labor Market Information and the Office of Bureau of Labor Statistics Programs as well as an administrative and labor market information development office.

The task of implementing state workforce information services rests with the Office of Labor Market Information and the division director's office. From this structure is assembled the raw information provided by the Office Of BLS Programs that is developed into finished products. Also produced is much information independent of BLS-derived statistics, as well as planning and coordination of new information types and strategies. Functions included in the Office of Labor Market Information are programming, analytic and production, training and supervisory. Accordingly, the division serves as a representative on the Governor's Workforce Investment Division's Labor Market Information Committee where it is able to propose informational solutions and respond to expressed needs. The allows the division as well to offer long-term systemic approaches to developing, maintaining viable and useful information sources, and providing practical data and information as requested by GWID and the seven workforce area staffs.

Likewise, the division maintains direct relationships with local workforce investment boards through which regional information, analyses and training is produced from consultation and on demand. Quite often, local information produced is situational in response to immediate or special circumstances. The division encourages interaction among local workforce boards in determining their information needs and in working with the division in realizing them.

The division provides training on all information it produces and on the systems it has in place to deliver this information and make the most use of it. Training is an on-going activity each year and involves state and local workforce development staff, job placement specialists and counselors, school career and guidance professionals, business services specialists and others.

1. 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.
 - a. Economic forecasts—Short-term and long-term economic forecasts and their analysis are offered annually for the state and regions for strategic planning purposes. A long-term forecast for the state and regions is produced in even years for use in developing state and workforce area occupational projections. Short-term forecasts are particularly useful in planning for training programs and for making career and or employment choices. Forecasts are necessary as well when changing economic conditions occur within the state or within a region, as has happened recently in a major industry sector. Both industry and occupational forecast are available on the division's web site/career information delivery system.
 - b. Labor market studies: Monthly analyses for each local workforce investment area are prepared and published via the division's web site and in its Economic Summary publication. Special studies have been produced for local boards to assist them in developing their annual plans and as on demand products. The division encourages the use of this service by local boards and is capable of providing them on a regular basis.

- c. Industry studies. Many of West Virginia's key industries can be found centered in specific regions of the state; therefore some local workforce boards are particularly sensitive to their ups and downs. Regular analyses are conducted of key industries such as coal, steel, chemical, wood products to examine their current stability and their influence within particular workforce regions. Other industries subject to review by virtue of their economic importance to the state include information, communication, travel and tourism, health services, and high technology. Industries with development and employment potential likewise are studied for their occupational structures, the availability of a qualified labor force for them, and the skills or training required to attract or maintain them.
- d. Cluster analysis and special studies. Specific regions of the state provide unique business clusters that offer opportunities for strategic workforce development and the ability to take advantage of future economic growth. While some regional boards have completed or commissioned cluster studies for use in strategic planning, others are still needed. Some of these include: 1) West Virginia border economies, 2) shadow and underground economies and the implications for potential labor availability in light of recent declines in the state's civilian labor force and its effects on employers and those seeking employment, 3) the role of fringe benefits including health care access and disparity, and 4) labor productivity studies at the three-digit NAICS level. Development of occupational cluster information is a continuous effort and remains a priority for state and regional configurations. More timely demographic information from the LED project and the OES survey will be used for studies linking occupations with industries and areas.
- e. LED studies. With the launch of the Longitudinal Employment Dynamics (LED) program in West Virginia, the ability to link with surrounding states and their labor markets has become possible. Additional data products and reports are in the works following the recent release of "Older Workers in West Virginia," the first analytical product from this joint effort between the Census Bureau and the division. Quarterly workforce indicators (NAICS-based) are in preparation for the state and each workforce investment area. As the LED project becomes more established within the division, more extensive analyses will be forthcoming through the program year with an emphasis on local areas.

- 2. How the grant activities are consistent with the strategic vision of the governor and the workforce investment board.

Grant activities provided under this training and guidance letter fully embrace and augment "A Vision Shared," promulgated by the Governor's office and the state development office by insuring the breadth of labor market information to include complete aspects of its workforce, employers in business and industries and sub-state availability of as many data source as possible. Also, grant activities as described and elaborated upon in this document have been fully expounded in the white paper "Work Force West Virginia: An Integrated Team Approach to West Virginia Labor Market Information," as prepared by the Governor's Workforce Investment Division.

- 3. The strategy of the SWA and the SWIB for consulting with local workforce investment boards and stakeholders in the workforce investment system to determine customer needs for workforce information.

The division maintains an "open door" policy with a broad welcome mat for any local workforce board to request assistance, training, customized information or for assistance at any time. As well, the division has cultivated close working relationships with a majority of local workforce board staffs and continues to offer its support and expertise to others. In addition to its other attributes, the division is the state's sole research resource with the capability of producing information and analyses from administrative data originating in the Mid-Atlantic Career Consortium (MACC) operating system and has been instrumental in the development of this data source as an analytical base.

4. The broad strategic approach for workforce information delivery to principal customers.

The foundation of the division's approach is a three-fold process formulated with an information system providing up to date and state of the art products as embodied in the Virtual Labor Market Information (LMI) web site that serves as our home page and career delivery system. (As an adjunct to this system is our long-established web site will be maintained with mostly statistical and historical material.) The second level is direct service and analysis provided by programming and LMI analytical staff responsive to individual user needs, requests and assistance. The third level consists of information policy in terms of continuous and flexible planning for effective information bases and the involvement at this level of state workforce professionals.

5. How workforce information and services are delivered as core services to customers through the state's One Stop service delivery system.

Workforce information services are delivered through the One Stop delivery system primarily via West Virginia's Virtual LMI web site/career information delivery system. One Stop staff have been trained by division personnel and will continue to be trained as this system develops. One Stop clients have the opportunity of creating personal user accounts either on site or from any other location through this system and assembling a thorough reference point for their career and employment plans.

6. Description of customer consultation and satisfaction assessment.

In the recent past this division has conducted customer consultation, feedback and assessment through several means. We intend to continue with queries from personal contacts (telephone, e-mail, correspondence) and have user registration and feedback as a feature on our Virtual LMI system (at the option of the user). We will offer opportunities for focus groups and interchanges through both state and local workforce investment boards, One Stop center administrators and staffs, and other agency staff. Business and media users will be consulted by personal contact and documentation (a more astute group in defining what their needs are). Survey methods that have been used to measure customer satisfaction include mail out cards, questionnaires in periodic publications, random telephone surveys, focus group assessment within LMI training sessions, and a web based survey. Findings from the survey have identified the level of satisfaction for users, frequency of use, how helpful the information was, and the ease or difficulty encountered with using the data. The results of findings include identifying gaps in data sets beyond what was required by the (previous) plan(s), determining how to make the data more user-friendly for workforce investment staff, and developing the most useful method of preparing LMI training for WIA staff, business and individuals. Recommendations provided through the surveys may be directly incorporated into the process or gradually integrated into a product as preparation time allows.

Part B. Products and services.

As a condition for receipt of funds in support of the development and maintenance of comprehensive system of labor market information, West Virginia will perform the following activities during program year 2004.

1. Continue to populate the ALMIS database with state data.

The current database version in use is the latest one (version 2.2) with population of the core tables 100% complete as it has been for the past several years. Selected optional tables have been completed as well. Revision of licensed occupation data will be completed once more this program year and the updated data transmitted to the National Crosswalk Service Center (NCS) for inclusion on the America's Career Information Network (ACINet). Access to the ALMIS database can be obtained at either our new Virtual LMI web site (new URL www.wvlmi.com) or at our long-established web site which we will continue to maintain (www.state.wv.us/bep/lmi). The new Virtual LMI system has made information from ALMIS

database accessibly electronically to our customers twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Principal customers for this activity include clients of One Stop centers, the general public, employers and business owners, business organizations, public officials and employees, public and private educational professionals, job and economic development interests, state and local workforce investment officials and staff, the media, job seekers, and others. Utility of the ALMIS database has been an element in all labor market information training we have presented in the past several years and will continue to be in training presented this program year. Milestones for completing above: 100% completion of ALMIS and 100% of licensed occupations. Continued training on ALMIS contents to principal customers. The cost of this activity is estimated to be \$70,052.

2. Produce and disseminate industry and occupational projections.

Industry and employment projections for the state and seven workforce investment areas have been produced for the period 2002-2012 (long-term set). Occupational projections for this same period have been produced as well and all projections information is accessible via our Virtual LMI web site. Short-term industry and occupational projections for the state and seven workforce investment areas for the period 2004-2006 will be produced by mid-program year and will be disseminated via ALMIS and on our Virtual LMI web site. All projections are produced using Consortium and MicroMatrix methodology and software. Principal customers are job seekers and those planning career preparation, training or education, the general public, business and media interests, public and private educational professionals, state and local economic development officials, among others. Milestones are completion of short-term industry and occupational projections and their electronic dissemination. Completion of this activity is estimated to cost \$74,055.

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

New projections (both long and short term) will be augmented by extensive analysis on job viability, training and educational requirements, wage and salary levels (with wage history), employment activity tied in with LED analysis, and cluster analysis. Occupational wages will be expanded to new dynamic website format utilizing the Estimates Delivery System publishing module. Short-term industry and occupational projections will be utilized to develop an analysis of emerging occupations for the state and all workforce development areas. An occupational profile report for the state and all sub-state areas will be developed. This report will be designed as a One Stop resource for comparative wages, employment, forecasts, and industry makeup of occupations. Training for principal customers on the types and uses of occupational data is a fundamental part of our training regimen. Principal customers include job seekers and persons exploring career planning, state and local workforce administrators and staff, educational officials and professionals, job and career counselors, among others. This is an open-ended activity and one that it is hoped will generate the participation of principal customers in defining the types of occupational and career information of most use and value to them; milestones for this activity are on-going as information is continuously added through the year. Estimated cost for this activity is \$68,051.

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

Services and activities provided by the Research, Information and Analysis Division have been closely associated with the state's workforce investment system since its inception. Most types of information produced at the state level—economic, occupational, or other labor-market related—are produced for the local workforce level as well. Information developed by the division meets criteria established in the "Work Force West Virginia" white paper issued by the Governor's Workforce Investment Division and goes beyond in some areas. A key initiative to be undertaken this program year is the introduction, linkage and elaboration of LED data at the specific local workforce investment board level. It is hoped that through cooperation with state and local workforce investment officials that new information may be identified and developed. By the same token, the new Virtual LMI web site/career information delivery system which became operable near the end of the past program year is centered upon information assistance to individuals and businesses with its emphasis on local information. Much labor market information requested by local workforce investment boards is by nature related to specific circumstances and time frames for which it is difficult to plan. The RIA division is capable of responding to these types of situations with the best information available. Full support of the local workforce investment efforts remains a high priority for the division. Principal customers for this activity are the state and local workforce investment board officials, administrators, their staffs and their clients. Milestones for this activity will be determined as local information needs are described and completed. Cost of this activity is estimated to be \$68,051.

5. Maintain and enhance electronic state workforce information delivery systems.

The Virtual LMI system became the centerpiece of our labor market information/career delivery system during the last program year. Approximately twenty states have adopted the Virtual LMI system and the Research, Information and Analysis Division has been selected as a test state by the private developers of this system by virtue of our projections and other data bases being the latest versions available. Virtual LMI for West Virginia will be continually expanded and refined during this program year and thereafter. With its emphasis in serving job seekers, those searching for career information and guidance, and its structure to provide information at the most localized level possible, Virtual LMI fulfills a long-standing need in labor market information accessibility for West Virginia. Our previous web pages remain available as a repository for statistical and economic information and as a companion site for Virtual LMI. Principal customers for this activity will be all users as this system embraces nearly the totality of the labor market information we produce. The system itself is designed for local and individual usage. Milestones will be the completion of installation of various new information sets on this system. Cost of this activity is estimated to be \$48,036.

6. Support state workforce training activities.

Since the beginning of the program year in July 2004, division personnel have conducted training sessions for local workforce board staff at the state workforce annual conference, for the new business services unit team members and affiliated One Stop or local office staff, and for local job service and unemployment insurance office managers. Training will be provided to educational and school career counselors in series of across the state sessions in the fall. Continued training of local workforce board administrators and staff will be offered through the state workforce board administration and to local boards individually. Response to these offers will determine the content, timetable and emphasis of the training. Training can be performed on an overview of state and local labor market information products, occupational information such as projections, wages and wage history, employment prospects, and training requirements. Training can also be offered on LED data interpretation and use at the local level. A major aspect of training provided by the division includes an introduction to the Virtual LMI system and how local workforce board staff and clients can use it. Interactive training of participants is planned for this training at a central location in addition to training sessions

planned for different geographic locations across the state. Principal customers of this activity are local workforce board members (if willing to participate), local workforce administrators and staff, other One Stop staff, employment service interviewers and counselors, employment service business services team members, secondary school and other career and guidance counselors, vocational education and rehabilitation counselors, and staff members of other agencies. Milestones of this activity are the planning and scheduling phase and then completion of each separate training presentation. Cost of this activity is estimated to be \$72,054.

Part C. Consultation and Customer Satisfaction Assessment.

Throughout the program year the division will collect customer satisfaction information and customer feedback from this option on its Virtual LMI website. This information will be reviewed for content and courses of action. The division also will perform customer satisfaction measurements using questionnaires within monthly and other publications and random polling of telephonic information requests. Customer feedback and satisfaction will be addressed at all labor market information training sessions conducted by the division. A consultation process will be developed and offered to the Governor's Workforce Investment Division and to administrative officials of local workforce investment boards. Suggestions and requests deriving from this process will be incorporated into the division's strategies for and production of labor market information.