

## **Draft Summary Report of the Third Quarter 2011 Advisory Group Meeting Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS)**

*Convened by conference call on September 22, 2011 (2:00 p.m. EDT), from the Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC*

### **Meeting Highlights:**

#### **Welcome and Adoption of Summary Report**

- Karen A. Staha, Chief of the Division of Strategic Planning and Performance for ETA's Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR), led the Advisory Group meeting. Ms. Staha reviewed the Second Quarter 2011 Draft Summary Report, which was then adopted. In her remarks, Ms. Staha briefly discussed the state requests that she had received recently; and, confirmed that the WRIS Agreement, signed by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, did not permit the provision of wage data from the WRIS for the purposes requested.

#### **WRIS2 Implementation Plan**

- Kate Louton, OPDR, and John Glen (Oregon), Chairman of the WRIS2 Work Group, provided an update of the implementation plan for WRIS2 initiative. The WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement has now been approved by DOL and will be e-mailed to the states.
- Ms. Louton and Mr. Glen highlighted the basic principles of WRIS2, including:
  - Participation by states in the WRIS2 initiative is voluntary and strictly opt-in.
  - States will be required to sign the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement to participate.
  - Only authorized PACIA staff in participating states will be permitted to submit requests to the WRIS2 Clearinghouse. The PACIA is required to have a written agreement with the Third Party Entity (TPE) prior to submitting requests on behalf of the TPE.
  - TPEs, defined in the WRIS2 Agreement at Section IV, are any public body, agency, or private career school required by law to meet state and/or Federal performance measures. The list of programs permitted through WRIS2 is included in the WRIS2 Agreement at Section VII.
  - No individual confidential wage data can be provided to the requesting TPE.

#### **Performance Reporting Technical Assistance**

- Ms. Louton referred Advisory Group members to the Division's Web site (<http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/trainingtutorials>) for information related to the online WIASRD Tutorial and for training presentations that provide technical assistance on a number of fiscal and performance topics.

#### **FEDES and WADE Update**

- At this time, the US Postal Service (USPS) cannot participate in the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES).
- The WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Evaluation (WADE) is currently with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for clearance. OMB clearance is anticipated to occur in the near future, and more information should be available for the Fourth Quarter 2011 meeting.

### **Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grants**

- ETA continues to prepare the second-round Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA); the SGA is expected to be released in the winter or early spring 2012.
- The SGA will be available only to states that do not currently have a WDQI grant.

### **WRIS Training Schedule**

- The November 8, 2011 Town Hall WebEx will focus on WRIS issues and emerging WRIS2 issues.
- The initial 2012 Confidentiality Compliance and Incident Response WebEx is planned for January 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Suggestions for topics, additional content, and other revisions for the Town Hall and the Confidentiality Compliance WebEx should be e-mailed to [WRIS@dol.gov](mailto:WRIS@dol.gov).

### **Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations**

- Distributed Database Index (DDBI) data is currently submitted by 49 states and the District of Columbia. Hawaii is testing its programming and may have data available for the next cycle.
- The updated DDBI data will be available online October 10, 2011.
- Following the WRIS2 Agreement signature period, ACS will reserve approximately 60 days to establish the WRIS2 environment for participating states.
- States participating in WRIS2 will not be required to submit an additional DDBI file.

### **Additional Business**

- December 1, 2011 (2:00 p.m. EST) was proposed as the date for the Fourth Quarter Advisory Group conference call meeting.
- In response to questions regarding IT requirements related to the WRIS2 initiative, a technical assistance conference call will be scheduled.

## **Draft Summary Report of the WRIS Advisory Group Third Quarter 2011 Meeting**

The Third Quarter 2011 meeting of the Advisory Group of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) was convened by conference call on September 22, 2011 (2:00 p.m. EDT) from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.

### **I. Welcome and Remarks**

Karen A. Staha, Chief of the Division of Strategic Planning and Performance for ETA's Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR), welcomed the WRIS Advisory Group to the Third Quarter 2011 conference call meeting. Ms. Staha reviewed the agenda for the call, and introduced participants from ETA, Employment and Training Legal Services (ETLS), and WRIS contractors. In the interest of reserving additional time for discussions, Ms. Staha asked state Advisory Group representatives to confirm their participation in the meeting through an e-mail to [WRIS@dol.gov](mailto:WRIS@dol.gov).

Ms. Staha briefly discussed the Obama Administration's American Jobs Act, which would potentially designate additional funding to the U.S. Department of Labor and ETA. She referred the Advisory Group members to the "*Fact Sheet: American Job Act*" that is available on the White House Web site at: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

Ms. Staha also outlined recent state inquiries she had received regarding wage records received through the WRIS. Specifically, several requests have been made by states that have community colleges selected as finalists for the Aspen Institute's Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Ms. Staha confirmed to the requestors that such release of wage data is not permitted under the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement, signed by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and that the WRIS Distributed Database Index (DDBI) is an index covering a period only up to eight quarters. She invited states that have continuing questions regarding the limitations within the WRIS Agreement to send them via [WRIS@dol.gov](mailto:WRIS@dol.gov). In his related comments, Howard Simmons (South Carolina), proposed accumulating and maintaining wage records for WRIS beyond the current eight quarters time period. Ms. Staha noted that a state is welcome, at any time, to propose an amendment to the Data Sharing Agreement, based on the provisions at Section 10. *Amendment of the Agreement*. Ms. Staha further proposed that a group discussion take place subsequently regarding a time period for data that might be longer than eight quarters.

In closing, Ms. Staha briefly discussed a feature of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), namely that WIA requests an individual's occupation for training and also occupation of employment. Ms. Staha emphasized that verification of the employment occupation is a challenge because sufficient detail is not provided through the wage records. Ms. Staha expressed her interest in knowing whether any states have come up with additional ways to more closely identify occupation of employment.

### **II. Adoption of Summary Report for Second Quarter 2011 Meeting**

Ms. Staha reviewed the Draft Summary Report of the June 2, Second Quarter 2011 Advisory Group conference call. The draft had been distributed, for review and comment, to the Advisory Group on June 16, 2011, and was posted on ETA's WRIS Web site. Jo Doyal (Alabama) made the motion to approve the Draft Summary Report, and Jon Eller (Oklahoma) seconded. The Second Quarter 2011 Summary Report was adopted without objection.

### **III. WRIS2 Implementation Plan**

Ms. Staha introduced Kate Louton, Division of Strategic Planning and Performance, and John Glen (Oregon), Chairman of the WRIS2 Work Group, to provide an update regarding the voluntary WRIS2 initiative. Ms. Louton announced the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement has now been approved by the Department of Labor and that the next step will be to obtain signatures from the states that wish to participate. Ms. Louton indicated that although WRIS2 is strictly an opt-in program, ETA hopes there will be broad participation, especially from states with Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grants. Ms. Louton also explained that the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement will be distributed by e-mail and that states will have a 60-day period to review and sign the Agreement.

Mr. Glen provided a summary of WRIS2 basic principles. He stressed that participation by states in the WRIS2 initiative is voluntary and states will be required to sign the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement before they can participate in the data exchange. Mr. Glen explained that only authorized PACIA staff members, in the participating states, will be permitted to submit requests through the WRIS2 Clearinghouse for matching. The PACIA is required to have an agreement in place with a Third Party Entity (TPE) prior to TPE files being submitted by the PACIA for WRIS2. Mr. Glen clarified that TPEs are defined in the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement as “any public body, agency, or private career school required by law to meet state and/or Federal performance measures.” The list of approved programs is included in the Agreement under Section VII. *Operation of WRIS2.* Finally, Mr. Glen noted that the state-authorized PACIA staff will be responsible for reporting and for providing to the requesting TPE only aggregate data from the WRIS2 exchange system. No individual confidential wage data can be provided to the requesting TPE. In closing, Mr. Glen thanked the WRIS2 Work Group members who have worked on the initiative since early 2009.

### **IV. Performance Reporting Technical Assistance**

Ms. Louton indicated her remarks would be very brief in order to provide more time for other discussion items on the agenda. Ms. Louton referred the Advisory Group to ETA’s Performance and Results Web site for information related to the recently completed online WIASRD Tutorial, as well as for information on the training presentations focused on technical assistance for a variety of fiscal and performance-based topics. The links that Ms. Louton referenced are: <http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/trainingtutorials/> and <http://www.doleta.gov/Performance/>.

### **V. FEDES and WADE Update**

Ms. Louton provided a status update for the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES) and the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Evaluation (WADE). During June’s Second Quarter 2011 Advisory Group meeting, Deb Serum (MN) had raised concerns about delayed receipt of FEDES data from the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Ms. Louton advised the members that a subsequent meeting had been held with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to discuss the constraints, the value of the data, and the importance of the timeliness of USPS data. OPM had explained that the USPS had a multi-step process that is currently being streamlined. However, at this time, the USPS still cannot participate in FEDES.

Also, during the Second Quarter 2011 Advisory Group meeting, Dan Holton (TN) had inquired about the status of WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Evaluation (WADE) which was initially discussed during the Fourth Quarter 2010 Advisory Group meeting. The WADE study was authorized through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) to determine the effectiveness of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs by examining intensive services and training. Mr. Holton had asked if the local areas had been selected and if the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was available. Ms. Louton reported that WADE currently is being reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); until WADE achieves OMB clearance, it cannot move forward. Ms. Louton anticipated that clearance would occur in the near future and hoped to have more information at the next quarterly meeting in early December.

#### **VI. Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grants (WDQI)**

Ms. Louton, the Federal Program Officer (FPO), provided a status overview of the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grants and noted that ETA is continuing to work on the second-round Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA). Ms. Louton explained the SGA, expected to be released in the winter or early spring 2012, will be available only to states that do not currently have a WDQI grant. She also reported that current WDQI recipients will be meeting in Washington, DC, in November 2011, in conjunction with the Department of Education's Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant recipients; and that additional information will be forthcoming.

#### **VII. WRIS Training Schedule**

Ms. Louton reported that 39 staff members from 25 states participated in the Confidentiality Compliance and Incident Response WebEx that was presented in late August. An autumn Town Hall WebEx is currently scheduled for November 8, 2011, and will focus on WRIS issues and emerging WRIS2 technical issues. Additionally, at the request of Wyoming, a Confidentiality Compliance and Incident Response WebEx is tentatively scheduled in early November for its staff members and others from interested states. The first 2012 Confidentiality Compliance and Incident Response WebEx is planned for January 24. In light of the high level of staff member participation in the WebEx presentations, Ms. Louton asked that suggestions for topics, additional content, or other WebEx revisions be sent via an e-mail to [WRIS@dol.gov](mailto:WRIS@dol.gov).

#### **VIII. Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations**

Amanda Gohl, ACS, the WRIS Operations contractor, discussed the quarterly Technical Operations Review, which had been e-mailed to the Advisory Group prior to the meeting. Ms. Gohl provided an overview of the operational participants, noting that 49 states and the District of Columbia had submitted data for the current Distributed Data Base Index (DDBI). She noted that Hawaii continues to test its SUIA programming and hopes to be able to participate in the next DDBI cycle. Although Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands currently are not participating in the DDBI, both are eligible for WRIS membership. Ms. Gohl reported that the current DDBI data has been available online since July 11, and that the updated DDBI data will be available online on October 10, 2011.

Ms. Gohl also discussed technical aspects of WRIS2 and explained that ACS will reserve approximately 60 days, following the WRIS2 Agreement signature period, to establish the WRIS2 environment for the states that will participate in the opt-in data exchange. Ms. Gohl noted that ACS will be able to add in any other states that agree to participate in WRIS2 following the initial signature period for the Agreement. Ms. Gohl also stated that the SUIAs in the states participating in WRIS2 will continue to submit a single WRIS DDBI file each quarter. For WRIS2 member states, the DDBI file submitted for WRIS will be copied for the WRIS2 DDBI applications. The SUIAs will be sent daily WRIS2 requests in a separate set of JCL ('job control language'), provided by the respective states; and, the WRIS2 FTP states will pick up a separate file with WRIS2 daily requests. For the PACIAs, there will be a distinct site established for WRIS2 and the existing one for WRIS. In closing, Ms. Gohl reminded the group that ACS has new phone numbers that are included the Technical Operations Review.

#### **IX. Additional Business**

Ms. Staha proposed December 1, 2011 (2:00 p.m. EST) as the date for the Advisory Group's Fourth Quarter conference call meeting. Ms. Staha also invited the members to raise new business or questions for discussion. Donna Blair (Washington, D.C.) inquired about annual reporting, specifically whether or not states are penalized for resubmitting WIASRD files to correct errors. Ms. Staha responded that states would not be penalized, and reminded the Advisory Group that the deadline for the data related to the WIA annual report is very strict and must be adhered to by states. This year's WIA data is due October 3, 2011 by 11:59 p.m. EDT. Data submitted after the deadline is considered late. Ms. Blair also suggested that ETA consider sending confirmation e-mails when files have been successfully submitted and also consider communicating by e-mail when there are IT system failures.

In response to inquires from Donna Winsloe (Florida) regarding additional IT requirements for SUIAs related to WRIS2 implementation, Ms. Staha stated that a technical assistance conference call for WRIS2 will be scheduled.

#### **X. Adjournment**

Ms. Staha thanked the Advisory Group members for their participation in the Third Quarter 2011 meeting and invited them to e-mail any follow-up questions to [WRIS@dol.gov](mailto:WRIS@dol.gov). The meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m. EDT.