

State of Washington

PY 2005 Workforce Information Grant Plan

A. Statewide Workforce Information System

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW 50.30.050) designates the Employment Security Department (ESD) as the official source of Labor Market Information (LMI) in Washington State. The ESD accomplishes its tasks through the Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch (LMEA). LMEA employees develop and disseminate data and analysis at both the state and local levels. In addition to General Administration, LMEA is organized into five basic sections: Current Labor Force Statistics; Customer Coordination and Delivery System; Operations Support; Economic and Policy Analysis; and Area Labor Market Information. These sections support the State's five-year plan for workforce investment by creating and disseminating LMEA products and services and by providing analyses to various customers. Out-stationed and central office staff economists accomplish this through a combination of electronic systems, publications, and in-person services. Specific information regarding these products and services to support workforce information systems are described in this plan.

- **The process used to ensure that the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) can exercise its responsibility for ensuring that state workforce information policy is responsive to the needs of the state and local workforce investment system.**

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) (Washington State's SWIB) is responsible for overseeing the statewide workforce development system. On June 30, 2004, the Board adopted *High Skills, High Wages: Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development*.

Included in the Strategic Plan is the following vision: "A workforce development system that offers every Washingtonian access to high quality academic and occupational skills education throughout his or her lifetime, effective help to find work or training when unemployed, and the personalized assistance to make progress in the labor market, and Washington employers access to the skilled workforce they need."

The Strategic Plan identifies LMI as a key component in creating a high skills, high wage workforce. Providing high-quality labor market information enables programs to respond to changes in workforce requirements and informs students and other customers about current and future career opportunities. LMEA is improving the quality of labor market information by working with partners and customers in order to shape products and services that best meet the needs of workforce development programs, partners, and participants.

The Workforce Board reviewed and approved the Information Grant Plan on July 7, 2005.

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

The workforce information system supports several of the key strategies in the state's strategic and operational plans that form the state unified plan.

The State Strategic Plan includes the strategy: "Provide high-quality labor market information that enables programs to respond to changes in the labor market and informs students and customers about current career opportunities, especially in high demand clusters such as health care and information technology."

The State Strategic Plan emphasizes a cluster-based targeted sector approach for workforce and economic development. High-quality LMI is critical for identifying the key clusters at the state and local levels.

The Governor submitted the new Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Wagner-Peyser two-year operational plan in May 2005. Included in the plan is the One-Stop Career Development System called WorkSource. The WorkSource goal of "universal access" specified in the two-year plan is made possible through the Internet by using the award-winning Workforce Explorer website (www.workforceexplorer.com) that provides universal access to a large number of LMI productions and services.

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

Activities carried out through this grant will be consistent with Governor Christine Gregoire's goals and Washington State's unified plan for Workforce Development.

- **The strategy of the State Workforce Agency (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 State Workforce Agency (ESD in Washington State) has a representative on the state Workforce Board and each of the Local Workforce Investment Boards (Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) in Washington State). LMEA contacted the director of each of the 12 WDCs and sought their input regarding this plan. In addition, LMEA works closely with the WDCs on a variety of subjects, make presentations at their meetings, and work with WDC members and staff on a wide range of topics. These contacts will be developed into a more cohesive consultative strategy in collaboration with the SWIB as LMEA continues to work more closely with the WDCs throughout the year.

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

The broad strategic approach is to provide the highest quality labor market information through the most convenient access possible. Many customers are satisfied by accessing electronic forms through the internet, while some customers prefer to have individual attention and others, publications. This grant provides funds to meet the preferences of each type of customer.

The Workforce Explorer web site is the primary means of access for most customers for most types of labor market information. The web site includes a sophisticated query tool for the America's Labor Market Information System (ALMIS) data base and downloadable Excel spreadsheets for most types of data demanded by customers. In addition, the web site includes a comprehensive electronic career center, an occupation explorer, industry explorer, regional data profile, links for employers, students, job seekers, and data analysts, electronic assessment tools, links from occupations to job openings on Washington's electronic labor exchange, and numerous topical articles and labor market analyses.

In addition, LMEA staff provide direct services to customers with complex information needs or regular inquiries about labor market information. Specific staff are assigned to meet the needs of customers whenever appropriate. For example, our Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) supervisor provides direct service to the state Office of the Forecast Council because they most often have questions about QCEW data. Similarly, the Regional Labor Economists most often provide service to the local WDCs, as they are experts in local labor markets.

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

In Washington State, the WorkSource centers make up the One-Stop service delivery system. The Workforce Explorer is Washington's principal delivery system for labor market data and analysis. The system is accessible to all WorkSource centers in all 12 of the State's Workforce Development Areas (WDAs). To promote the use of Workforce Explorer, LMEA is using bookmarks and presentations at workshops, training sessions, conferences, and symposiums. In addition, LMEA publicizes the web link in all hard copy publications and, as requested, LMEA provides training for local staff on how to navigate and apply the systems. Where LMEA has stationed Regional Labor Economists in One-Stop WorkSource centers, they provide training and other information for One-Stop staff and customers.

- **A description of the customer consultation and satisfaction assessment method(s) to be used to collect and interpret customer satisfaction information and the principal customers to be consulted.**

Several approaches will be used to collect customer satisfaction information. The Workforce Explorer web site includes feedback ratings for every article to ensure that articles written for the Internet are meeting the needs of customers such as jobseekers, businesses, and economic development agencies. LMEA continues to improve the Workforce Explorer website based on user feedback. We will continue to seek an overall web-based survey to rate the Workforce Explorer's effectiveness. We are holding several business round tables to solicit suggestions for improvement and rate our products. This information will ensure our products and services meet the needs of businesses to the maximum extent possible. LMEA also gauges customer satisfaction through the feedback forms collected at Economic Symposiums.

- **A concise summary of customer satisfaction findings for the most recent survey of products and services and the effect those findings had on the planned products and services for PY 2005 including how the plan addresses inadequacies or gaps identified by users.**

In June 2005, LMEA surveyed the WDC directors for their input on the development of this plan.

LMEA has solicited feedback and ideas from conference participants; surveyed publication readers, and have asked for comments and feedback electronically.

Washington's LMEA recognizes the ongoing importance of customer satisfaction assessment and its role in improving current products and services, and in meeting new and emerging customer needs.

Some of the new methods for collecting feedback include an opportunity for readers to evaluate each article on the Workforce Explorer; overall web-based survey, and focus group results.

- **Identify funds leveraged or matched from funding sources other than these grant funds and how these funds will enhance delivery of products and services as part of the state's workforce information system.**

Washington State law requires several labor market information products that enhance, extend, and elaborate on the products required from this grant. RCW 50.38.040 and RCW 50.38.050 mandate the following from LMEA on an annual basis:

- (1) Oversight and management of a statewide comprehensive labor market and occupational supply and demand information system, including development of a five-year employment forecast for state and labor market areas.
- (2) Produce local labor market information packages for the state's counties, including special studies and job impact analyses in support of state and local employment, training, education, and job creation programs, especially activities that prevent job loss, reduce unemployment, and create jobs.
- (3) Coordinate with the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Office of the Forecast Council to improve employment estimates by enhancing data on corporate officers, improving business establishment listings, expanding sample for employment estimates, and developing business entry/exit analysis relevant to the generation of occupational and economic forecasts.
- (4) In cooperation with OFM, produce long-term industry and occupational employment forecasts. These forecasts shall be consistent with the official Economic and Revenue Forecast Council biennial economic and revenue forecasts.

The Department shall submit an annual report to the Legislature and the Governor that includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) Identification and analysis of industries in the United States, Washington State, and local labor markets with high levels of seasonal, cyclical, and structural unemployment.
- (2) The industries and local labor markets with plant closures and mass layoffs and the number of affected workers.
- (3) An analysis of the major causes of plant closures and mass lay-offs.
- (4) The number of dislocated workers and persons who have exhausted their unemployment benefits, classified by industry, occupation, and local labor markets.

- (5) The experience of the unemployed in their efforts to become reemployed. This should include research conducted on the continuous wage and benefit history.
- (6) Five-year industry and occupational employment projections.
- (7) Annual and hourly average wage rates by industry and occupation.

For these purposes, LMEA receives funding from the state through two fund sources to provide this specified labor market information to customers. By leveraging these resources with funding under this grant, LMEA is able to provide Washington State labor market information customers with a higher level of service of improved quality than would be possible if we did not use these funds together with funds from the ETA One-Stop LMI grant in an integrated manner.

Funds from the Wagner-Peyser program are used to help support the dissemination of local labor market career and occupational information to jobseekers across the state. These funds help support the nine regional labor economists stationed at LMEA headquarters and throughout the state. This funding is combined with funds from this grant to ensure that local labor market information is distributed in a coordinated and complete manner. In addition, the activities of the regional economists are, in some cases, supported by their primary customers, the WDCs. Some of the WDCs provide office space and other support for the regional economist for their area.

Other grants and contracts that are leveraged with funds from this grant include the America's Career Resource Network (ACRN) grant from the Workforce Board. The WIA dislocated workers program supports the Washington State Job Vacancy and Benefits surveys, and the U.S. Census Bureau, through the Local Employment Household Dynamics (LED) program also provides data for a broad range of labor market information products and services.

B. State Workforce Agency Deliverables

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

Description of core product, service, or other demand activity:

Washington State's LMEA will continue to populate and maintain all ALMIS database table designated as core tables in accordance with guideline issued by the ALMIS Resource Center. In addition to the designated core tables, maintenance and updating of occupational licensing tables, such as LICENSE, LICAUTH will also occur and be coded to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). This data will be provided to the National Crosswalk Service Center for inclusion in the America's Career Information Network upon their request.

LMEA will complete the transition to the new ALMIS 2.3 structure. This includes changes to the licensing information, enhanced SOC titles, and changes to the ALMIS Employer Database tables. This year, we will continue to expand the geographic choices available for core data tables in the database, with emphasis on increasing access to WDA data, and local information. We will also work with data providers and customers to better understand needs to improve the data distribution process through the ALMIS database and applications built upon it.

Customer support for product or service as indicated in customer satisfaction survey results or other consultations:

Customer's report high satisfaction and increasing need from using electronic delivery systems to extract, query, and view local occupational and economic information stored in our ALMIS database. These applications include Workforce Explorer, Occupations in Demand, and the Adjudicator Assistant. Without continuously updating of the ALMIS database, the Workforce Explorer and other tools would be quickly out-of-date, customer satisfaction would decline rapidly, and labor costs of providing this information one on one basis would increase. We will collect satisfaction ratings, feedback and needs from both users of applications relying on ALMIS data and from data providers dealing with timeliness of data, quality of information, and amount of details to help guide our database population activities. Information will be shared with data providers as well, for possible improvements which may lead to better data.

How the deliverable supports goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan:

In Washington's Five-Year Plan, the products and services of LMEA that utilize data from the ALMIS database are an integral part of WIA implementation. The Workforce Explorer is the principle data delivery system specified in Washington's WIA plan as the source of core labor market information. The goal of "universal access" specified in the five-year plan is made possible through the Internet by using the Workforce Explorer website. Job seekers, employers, students, workforce development and anyone else that has Internet access can utilize this resource 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This access is available at WorkSource Offices, libraries, school and from home. For those that cannot access the Internet, LMEA has a toll-free telephone number to a Labor Market Information Center (LMIC) that provides LMI answers and printed copies via mail. They rely on the Workforce Explorer, which utilizes the ALMIS database, to respond in a timely, efficient manner.

Principal Customers of the deliverable:

Job seekers, employers, WDCs, WorkSource staff, training providers, students, economic development councils, Chambers of Commerce and other state and local government agencies all have products and services derived from data extracted from the ALMIS database. Internally, it is used as a data warehouse, helping to improve the quality and consistency of delivering data to customers. Requests and feedback are monitored, and improvements are made to promote self-service of information through access to the ALMIS database.

The outcome(s) and system impact(s) projected for each deliverable:

The principle outcome and primary impact will be universal access to current labor market information. An integrated source of data promotes improved consistency and reliability of data and analysis to users. Job seekers, students, employers and workforce professionals will be able to apply current, accurate labor market information to make informed career decisions, job search efforts and business plans. The ALMIS database will continue to be the central repository of data that our primary delivery systems rely on to meet existing and new customer needs.

Planned milestones for completion of the deliverable:

This work is expected to continue through program year 2005 and updates to the ALMIS database are made as soon as new data is provided. Monthly, state and local industry employment estimates, and unemployment rate data are the primary updates. Biannual updates occur for employer database, occupational wage information, and short and long term industry and occupational projections. Many other data items are annual, with ongoing updates.

The total estimated costs of each deliverable, including identification of planned equipment purchases of \$5,000+ or more per unit cost:

Estimate Cost: \$141,550

Other Funding Sources: \$90,300

2. Produce and disseminate industry and occupational employment projections.

Description of core product, service or other demand activity:

LMEA will produce and distribute industry and occupational employment projections for Washington State and 12 local WDAs. A North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) based historical industry employment time series from January 1990 to June 2005 will be utilized for this project. NAICS based staffing patterns will also be constructed using confidentiality-screened information from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey.

Washington State will use the methodology proposed by the Projections Workgroup and Managing Partnership, but implement the methodology internally using E-Views software and leading economic indicators from the Global Insights Company, rather than consortium software tools.

Long-term projections for the 2004 to 2014 period and the short-term projections for the 2005Q2 to 2007Q2 period will be produced for the state and all 12 WDAs as required by Employment and Training Administration (ETA). In addition LMEA will produce the five-year industry and occupation projections mandated by Washington State legislation. In the preparation of the occupational projections LMEA will incorporate estimates of self-employment and use replacement rates from the Managing Partnership's Micro Matrix software.

LMEA will populate the ALMIS database with both short term (2005Q2-2007Q2) and long term (2004-14) industry and occupational projections and will submit the data for public dissemination following the procedures established by the Projections Workgroup and the Projections Managing Partnership. The short-term occupational projections will also be published in the state's annual report, in the county profiles, and will be used to produce the official occupational "demand" and "decline" list for training benefit purposes.

LMEA also plans to send staff members involved in projections work to Projections Workgroup and Managing Partnership sponsored meetings and training sessions in order to utilize the latest methodology and share Washington's expertise with other states.

Customer support for product or service as indicated in customer satisfaction survey results or other consultations:

Branch-wide efforts to solicit customer feedback indicate that industry and occupational projections are among the most sought after information that LMEA produces. The number of visitors to the Occupation Explorer tool on the Workforce Explorer has been greater than any other data tool on our website. In PY 2005, LMEA will continue to track projections data access on the web and solicit client feedback through direct contact and surveys of the WorkSource (One-Stop) Service centers. To insure that our efforts continue to be demand driven, LMEA will keep an inventory of all projections related presentations to different customer groups and will

solicit feedback at every presentation. This feedback will be summarized and guide our projections-related product development and dissemination.

How the deliverable supports goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan:

LMEA will continue to support the state's five-year strategic plan, localized training benefits lists, and other state and local workforce information products. To support the state's five-year strategic plan, both industry and occupation projections will be made available to everyone in Washington State through our electronic delivery system, the Workforce Explorer. Paper copies of publications printed from the LMEA web site will be provided to those who cannot access the projections electronically. In addition, information will also be communicated to customers through the toll free number of the LMIC (1-800-215-1617), other telephone requests, through formal presentations, and incorporated into occupational and career information products.

Principal Customers of the deliverable:

The main customer groups will include job seekers, employers, WDC, WorkSource center (One-Stop) staff, training providers, students, economic development councils, chambers of commerce, education planners, and other state and local government agencies.

The outcome(s) and system impact(s) projected for each deliverable:

The projected outcomes and system impact will be the availability of critical information needed in the state for policy decisions, program administration, and curriculum development.

Planned milestones for completion of the deliverable:

Refinement of NAICS based historical industry employment database - December 2005.
Prepare NAICS based short-term and long-term industry projections - March 2006.
Prepare a screened NAICS based staffing pattern from OES survey data - April 2006.
Prepare short, medium, and long term occupational projections - May 2006.
Populate the ALMIS Database and the "Workforce Explorer" home page with state and area projections - June 2006.
Transmit required projections to the Projections Workgroup for further public dissemination - June 2006.

The total estimated costs of each deliverable, including identification of planned equipment purchases of \$5,000+ or more per unit cost:

Washington State law (RCW 50.38) requires five-year employment projections by industry and occupation, in addition to the two year and ten year projections required by this grant. For this purpose, LMEA receives funding from the state through ESD Client Placement Program (CPP) funds to provide this and other specified labor market information. By leveraging these resources with funding under this grant, LMEA is able to provide Washington labor market information customers with a higher level of service of enhanced quality that would be impossible if we did not use these funds in an integrated manner. This approach permits Washington to be among the national leaders in the development and dissemination of labor market information products.

Estimated Cost: \$108,950

Other Funding Sources: \$258,100

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

Description of core product, service, or other demand activity:

PY05 funding will be used to produce and disseminate occupational and career information products, incorporating related information such as occupational projections, wages, benefits, and demand/decline occupations by WDA.

The occupational information will come from the OES data and the ETA funded industry and occupational projections programs, benefits surveys, and Job Vacancy Surveys (JVS). LMEA will maintain links to the ETA-funded Occupational Information Network (O*Net) system as a primary source for information on occupational requirements including typical tasks, knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities and work context. The benefits survey and JVS will be funded by other than ETA One-stop/LMI resources. All products will be SOC-based and demand driven in consultation with intended customers.

This core product benefits from a high degree of financial leverage in Washington State. Fund sources that support similar products include

1. The state UI re-employment services (CPP) program supports the provision of local labor market information for job-seekers.
2. Local WDAs.
3. State law (RCW 50.38) provides for specific labor market information products that enhances those associated with this grant. These state-mandated products are funded through the Unemployment Compensation penalties and interest fund, and allocated by the state legislature.
4. Other grants and contracts that help support these and similar activities include the ACRN grant from the Workforce Board. The WIA dislocated workers program supports the Washington State Job Vacancy and Benefits surveys, and the US Census Bureau, through the LED program also supports the products and customers targeted by this core product.

Occupational and career information products, which will be supported in part through grant funds, and in part through other state and local fund sources, will include, but not be limited to:

1. A marketing brochure linking occupational projection and wage information to required training levels. The brochure will also provide information on how to link to the Workforce Explorer for more career planning tools. (To be produced in spring and summer of each year.)
2. An assessment of occupational supply/demand conditions for each occupation (with estimated employment over 10) in each WDA (beginning of the calendar year).
3. A designated list of high demand, high wage occupations for each WDA (in the summer of each year).
4. Published Job Vacancy Survey results for the late fall and late spring surveys. There will be an extended survey sample for key industries identified collaboratively by LMEA and the local WDCs.
5. Published employee benefit survey on benefits offered to employees by industry, area, and firm size, (annually).
6. A monthly targeted occupations report on the Workforce Explorer (monthly).

7. An annual report on the occupational outlook for the state and each of the 12 WDAs (for the state in spring, for areas beginning in December of 2005, and working through third calendar quarter of 2006).
8. Current unemployment insurance claimant information by county, occupation, and industry, (produced weekly and monthly)

Customer support for products or services as indicated in customer satisfaction survey results or other consultations:

The indicated products will be demand driven, developed in consultation with intended customers. LMEA will consult with other state agencies, the community colleges, and the Workforce Board and will gather information through the Workforce Explorer to develop both electronic and hard copy products that meet customer needs.

How the deliverable supports goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan:

To support the state's five-year plan, LMEA will produce an extensive range of SOC-based occupational and career information products, which will be supported by One-stop/LMI funds leveraged with several other fund sources.

LMEA has determined that several approaches are needed to disseminate industry and occupational information. Our primary means of dissemination will be the Workforce Explorer website, supplemented by the Occupations of the Unemployed website, special purpose lists such as the qualifying occupations for training benefits program, and electronic and hard copy reports such as the "Occupational Outlooks" that are produced for each of the 12 WDAs.

The project outcome will be "universal access" to occupational and career information as specified in the State's Five-Year WIA Operations Plan and support to effective career decision making and more effective training program planning.

Principal Customers of the deliverable:

- * **Job seekers**, distributed through workshops in WorkSource centers and by individual requests.
- * **Businesses**, who want to understand the skill set of the local workforce.
- * **WDCs**, who extensively use LMI on skills of workforce and available labor to create, implement, plan, and maintain programs.
- * **WorkSource One-Stop Centers**, providing career guidance to job seekers.
- * **Economic Development Councils**, to understand the characteristics of their local labor force and probable future labor force.
- * **Chambers of Commerce**, use information on labor availability to attract and retain businesses.
- * **Students**, principally high school, community college, four-year college and university students.
- * **Other governmental organizations** for policy information and to improve services.

The outcome(s) and system impact(s) projected for each deliverable:

The projected outcome will be universal access to occupational and career information as specified in the state's five-year plan. The primary labor market impact will be that customers in every customer group specified above will be able to make more informed career and occupational decisions based on LMI estimates, projections, and impartial analysis of occupational and career information.

Planned milestones for completion of the deliverable:

Workforce Explorer enhancements will be continuous throughout the program year. New versions of the Workforce Explorer are expected as are new products and e-services. As new and better defined customer needs are identified, new occupational and career information products will be developed and presented on the Workforce Explorer. Other product completion dates are indicated with the specific products listed above.

The total estimated costs of each deliverable, including identification of planned equipment purchases of \$5,000 or more per unit cost:

Estimated Cost: \$57,138

Other Funding Sources: \$458,700

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

Description of core product, service, or other demand activity:

In Washington State, central office staff, out-stationed regional labor economists and the Workforce Explorer internet site will provide state and local area support to the state Workforce Board and WDCs: The state and local boards will use the products and services to inform planning, analysis, policy development, and program operations.

In order to further facilitate effective collaboration, LMEA will implement scheduled quarterly meetings with Workforce Board staff responsible for LMI one-stop activities. The purpose of the meetings will be to provide an update on progress in meeting the grant deliverables, discuss ways to improve the one-stop products, and make mid-course corrections to the activities to better meet the needs of the Workforce Board and the local WDCs.

The state Workforce Board has adopted a cluster-based approach for workforce development, focusing resources on key economic sectors that have demonstrated their competitive advantage in the market. The Workforce Board utilizes LMI data on employment in order to identify key sectors. The Board then directs resources to WDCs and other entities to create skill panels of employers, labor, and workforce providers for those industries.

The Workforce Board also uses LMI products and services in order to identify project job openings and their educational requirements. The Board compares the information on openings with information on educational supply in order to determine areas of shortages that require additional student enrollment.

In PY 2005 the regional economists will be required, as in previous years, to devote a large share of their time in working directly with WDCs and local WorkSource centers in order to support local planning activities and meet local LMI needs. In addition, each regional economist will provide periodic economic briefings to the WDC members in order to keep them current on changes in local labor market conditions.

Since each area has its own distinct way of achieving its employment and workforce development goals, LMEA does not have a blanket strategy for meeting local needs. Each regional economist will work with local planners and program administrators to identify their needs and provide the necessary information. The regional economists have the responsibility to know the local labor market and to be able to answer questions about it. The regional economists will participate in the preparation of industry employment estimates, monthly narrative analysis for the Labor Area Summaries publication on the Workforce Explorer, and the preparation of special subject and area reports as they are identified by local client needs. They will assist WDC staffs in their work on sectoral analysis and skill panels, with their local efforts being client driven.

Each regional economist will be expected to prepare "County Profiles" for assigned WDA and special research report during this program year. The regional economists will assist local Workforce Investment Boards in the maintenance of their occupational supply and demand list used for "Training Benefits" administration. They will also be available to speak to interested local groups on subjects related to the economy and the local employment situation.

Customer support for product or service as indicated in customer satisfaction survey results or other customer consultations:

Since PY 2002, the LMEA Branch has been conducting Job Vacancy and Benefits surveys. Those surveys have been very popular with employers, job seekers and other customers, and LMEA will continue to administer them twice per year. Electronic customer surveys will gather client feedback on these products. Previous customer surveys have also indicated a need for assistance from trainers to locate and interpret data, and the skills of economists for an analysis of the employment situation in the local area. As these services are provided, feedback will be gathered to determine how well these needs are being met.

How the deliverable supports the goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan:

The indicated products and services will support WIA/Wagner-Peyser plans by providing the information as outlined in the five-year plans. Both central office staff and regional economists will develop data, prepare reports, and provide services to assist state and local staffs in planning and implementing WIA training and employment programs.

Principal Customers of the deliverable:

In addition to the state Workforce Board and local WDC planners and administrators, WorkSource service center staff and clients, principal customers will include employers, students, job seekers, analysts, reporters, and economic development planners.

The outcome(s) and system impact(s) projected for each deliverable:

The measurable outcome will be electronic reports, data and publications that address the specific workforce information needs of WIA planners, and other state and local LMI users. Training providers, students, and job seekers will have improved access to data-based decision making. Specific measurable goals will be identified for each regional economist and each WDA.

Planned milestones for completion of the deliverable:

The LMI delivery and support work will continue throughout the year. Currently, all WorkSource centers have electronic access to the LMEA data delivery websites and have LMI publications and/or brochures in their resource areas. Special reports will be posted monthly on the Workforce Explorer and electronic feedback opportunities for customers will be provided. Special efforts will be made to make sure that the local data users have access to the most current and most accurate information developed by the branch. Economic Symposiums will be presented in the fall and spring to publicize LMEA products and update clients on the latest employment situation in Washington State and the local areas.

The total estimated cost of each deliverable, including identification of planned equipment purchases of \$5,000 or more per unit cost.

The activities of the regional economists are, in some cases, supported by their primary customers, the WDCs. Some of the WDCs provide space and other support for the regional economists for their area.

Estimated Cost: \$137,546

Other Funding Sources: \$289,900

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

Description of core product, service, or other demand activity:

Washington State will continuously improve our flagship delivery system, "Workforce Explorer." The Workforce Explorer delivers workforce information core products, including data, graphs, and analysis, to a diverse group of users. It is integrated into the State's WIA service delivery system through linkages with WorkSource centers, WDC homepages and other state agency websites and Access Washington. It provides simple and advanced tools for viewing, saving, and downloading data tables, reports, and written analysis.

Along with routine updates, functional improvements which are based on user needs and feedback will be outlined, prioritized, tested, and implemented. Improvements will utilize feedback and customer focus groups for testing and verification of their need and results accomplished. Currently, priorities expected to be worked on include an improved site search tool, an improved data display and query tool for local industry employment, and enhanced displays with more visual graphics. New functionality includes improved access and integration of licensing information, organizing information around educational clusters and vocational programs, and new interfaces for retrieving occupational data based on various attribute parameters. Improved linkages to partners in the workforce development system will be promoted as well.

The Workforce Explorer application will be hosted and maintained, and three upgrades will be released throughout the year.

Enhancements to the application, to the usability, and to the display of information will be driven by feedback collected from users.

Customer support for product or service as indicated in customer satisfaction survey results or other customer consultations:

Workforce Explorer will include three primary ways of collecting customer feedback. First, articles and narrative include a “rating system” to allow us to identify most frequently read articles, and favorites based on user ratings. This rating system is integrated into the article itself.

Second, we will collect needs and satisfaction information from a comprehensive user survey, and also from periodic survey questions placed on the website. Surveys will be targeted toward different customer groups, helping to focus on specific needs. Follow-up will be performed to validate LMEA responses to the feedback.

Third, partnerships with agency liaisons and customer representatives will be used to better identify customer needs. Systematically, groups will be asked for feedback and to participate in needs analysis and prototype evaluations.

How the deliverable supports the goals of the state’s WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan:

Workforce Explorer is the primary service delivery mechanism for LMI. Continuously using customer feedback to enhance Workforce Explorer will enable LMEA to make certain that this intranet-based tool will be as effective as possible in supporting the five year plan.

The outcome(s) and system impact(s) projected for each deliverable:

The Workforce Explorer will be a fully functional system that is used extensively by the Workforce Information System and the citizens of Washington State. The number of visits and feedback from customers accessing the system will be used to measure the amount of use and satisfaction. To complement the number of visits, customer groups will be asked questions to help determine specific satisfaction amongst customer groups. LMEA will use the feedback to continuously improve Workforce Explorer.

Planned milestones for completion of the deliverable:

The maintenance and improvements of this system will continue throughout the year. Three new versions will be deployed as the contractor and consortium of states overseeing the system have developed various improvements. Needs and satisfaction measures will be collected for customer groups.

The total estimated cost of each deliverable, including identification of planned equipment purchases of \$5,000 or more per unit cost.

We expect a combined cost of application hosting, application enhancements, and upgraded licenses and maintenance of software to cost approximately \$100,000.

Estimated Cost: \$241,282

Other Funding Sources: \$0.0

6. Support state workforce information training activities.

Description of core product, service or other demand activity:

Washington State will use grant money for training of LMI professionals and to conduct training sessions for LMI users. For LMEA staff, training will be funded to upgrade computer and analytical skills, as well as communication techniques for delivering labor market information to partners and participants in the workforce delivery system. In addition, LMEA plans to send staff to ALMIS sponsored training courses dealing with industry and occupational projections as well as courses dealing with area analysis skills and other technical training. Additional software training courses will be scheduled locally, as they are needed for new and existing staff to enhance their proficiency and productivity.

Training and technical assistance for new workforce information users will be provided, whenever possible, by LMEA staff working with locally based trainers and regional economists. In November 2005, LMEA will present an economic symposium for economists, planners, program staff, and other LMI data users. Much of the content will be driven by electronic delivery such as Workforce Explorer. Two smaller symposiums will be scheduled around the state as well. As usual LMEA presenters will also highlight recent economic developments and promote the use of Workforce Explorer.

The Workforce Explorer will include training snippets to enhance the usefulness of the website and aid customers in finding answers to questions. Navigation will be enhanced as well through frequently asked questions sections.

Our LMEA trainer will continue to promote the use of this curriculum to a wide variety of customers through training sessions, conferences, workshops, and events. Feedback from training participants will be brought back, reviewed, for improvements into products and services.

Customer support for product or service as indicated in customer satisfaction survey results or other consultations:

Training content will be designed to meet the needs of customers. All training sessions will include customer survey forms. The feedback from these customers will help to determine the content of future symposium and training curricula. The recommendations from readers of publications will be reviewed and incorporated into subsequent versions of the information, display tool, and analysis as appropriate.

How the deliverable supports the goals of the state's WIA/Wagner-Peyser Five-Year Strategic Plan:

This activity will support WIA/Wagner-Peyser program by providing training to program delivery staff and assisting clients in applying labor market information to assist them in their career planning and job search activities.

Principal customers of the deliverable:

LMEA staff, WDC staff, One-Stop staff, employment counselors and broad range of public and private customers interested in accessing and using the labor market information produced by LMEA.

The outcome(s) and system impact(s) projected for each deliverable:

The focus of the training effort will be to increase workforce development staff training and understanding of workforce information and to assist customers in accessing, understanding and using labor market information. All training will be done and created in consultation with clients. Increased use of labor market information tools such as the Workforce Explorer and associated publications should be a measurable impact of this activity.

Planned milestones for completion of the deliverable:

The Symposium, which has been held annually since 1995, is held during the second quarter of PY 2005 while training is expected to occur in all quarters of the program year. The regional labor economists will provide technical assistance to the staff of the WDCs and WorkSource centers as the need for training is identified. In PY05 two additional symposiums will be held.

The total estimated cost of each deliverable, including identification of planned equipment purchases of \$5,000 or more per unit cost:

Estimated Cost: \$63,062

Other Funding Sources: \$37,500

C. Consultation and Customer Satisfaction Assessment

LMEA will utilize a variety of tools and approaches to assess the level of customer satisfaction with its labor market information products and services. The Workforce Explorer web site will continue to collect feedback ratings for every article to ensure that articles written for the Internet are meeting the needs of customers such as jobseekers, businesses, and economic development agencies. We will also continue to seek an overall web-based survey to rate the Workforce Explorer's effectiveness. A Workforce Explorer user advisory group meets regularly to improve the usability and usefulness of the system. We are holding a series of business roundtables to help ensure our products and services meet the needs of businesses to the maximum extent possible. In addition, Economic Symposiums include a survey of the usefulness of our labor market information with suggestions for improvements.

The feedback from all these assessment approaches will be utilized in a continuous improvement process to fine tune our products and services to customer needs. Each manager within LMEA will be responsible for assessing the degree to which their products meet his or her customers' needs, and incrementally improving the products to address the demands of customers. Performance measures described in the LMEA Operational Plan will also lead to improvements. In this way, over time, LMEA will become more and more demand driven.