

Summary Report of the Third Quarter 2010 Advisory Group Meeting Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS)

Convened by conference call on September 29, 2010, from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC

Meeting Highlights

Welcome and Adoption of Minutes

- Karen A. Staha, Director, Division of System Accomplishments of the Office of Policy Development and Research, convened the Advisory Group meeting and provided an overview of issues to be discussed. Ms. Staha reviewed the Draft Summary Report from the Second Quarter conference call on June 23, 2010, and called for a motion to adopt, which carried unanimously.

Third Round Amendments: Status of Amendments 10-15

- Although most states have submitted signed Third Round amendments 10-15, a few states have not yet completed the signature process.
- As soon as all states have submitted the signed amendments, the Assistant Secretary will sign each amendment in accordance with the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement provisions. ETA will return copies of the executed amendments to the states and will post the amended Data Sharing Agreement on the WRIS Web site.

WRIS2 – Operations Protocols

- Two WRIS2 documents, the WRIS2 Draft Proposed Protocol with Process Flow Chart and the WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement, have been distributed to the WRIS Advisory Group for review and comment.
- John Glen, chairman of the WRIS2 Working Group, provided an overview of WRIS2 development and the WRIS2 processes.
- Each state PACIA that participates in WRIS2 may decide if it requires cost recovery from a Third Party Entity. States requiring cost recovery may establish terms in the agreement executed between the PACIA and the respective Third Party Entity.
- The WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement provides for establishment of a WRIS2 Advisory Group that will meet twice a year through conference call.
- The Work Group has scheduled a conference call on October 7, for interested states to discuss the WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement.

Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

- The WRIS Operations Contractor, ACS, discussed the Web services option available to states that are modernizing.
- ACS has successfully completed its annual security audit.

WRIS Training

- A Confidentiality Compliance Training Webinar is scheduled for October 26, 2010.
- An on-site training will be held in the District of Columbia on October 18, 2010. States interested in having an on-site training should e-mail WRIS@dol.gov.
- A second PACIA-SUIA Town Hall is planned for November.

WRIS State On-site Confidentiality Reviews: PY 2010

- On-site Confidentiality Reviews have been scheduled for the District of Columbia, Georgia, Missouri, Nevada, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Wyoming.

Additional Business

The Advisory Group's Fourth Quarter conference call meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 9, 2010.

Summary Report of the Third Quarter 2010 Conference Call

The Third Quarter 2010 conference call of the Advisory Group of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) was convened on Wednesday, September 29, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. EDT.

I. Welcome and Remarks

Karen A. Staha, Director, Division of System Accomplishments of the Office of Policy Development and Research, welcomed the WRIS Advisory Group to the Third Quarter conference call meeting. Ms. Staha introduced two new Division staff members: Luke Murren, formerly of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, and Casey Keilty, previously of ETA's Trade Office. She announced the departure of Greg Wilson, the Division's previous Team Leader, and outlined his many contributions to WRIS and to the Division. Ms. Staha also introduced the new Team Leader, Stan Blazek, who is joining the Division from the Chicago Regional Office. Lois Zuckerman, Assistant Counsel for Employment and Training Advice, Division of Employment and Training Legal Services, and Patricia Mertens, Unemployment Insurance Program Specialist, also participated in the call. For the roll of the meeting, Ms. Staha requested that conference call participants send an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov. Ms. Staha then reviewed the agenda for the call which had been sent to the Advisory Group and posted on the WRIS Web site.

II. Adoption of June 23 Advisory Group Meeting Summary Report

Ms. Staha briefly reviewed the draft Summary Report from the June 23, 2010, Second Quarter Advisory Group conference call. The draft had been e-mailed to the Advisory Group on July 12, 2010, and posted to the WRIS Web site. There were no comments or questions received. Gary Kamimura (Washington) moved to approve the draft Summary Report, and Eliza Arentz (Pennsylvania) seconded. There were no objections.

III. Third Round Amendments: Status of Amendments 10-15

Ms. Staha summarized the status of the Third Round amendments. Although most states have submitted their signed amendments, the amendments from several states remain outstanding. As soon as all states have submitted their signed Third Round amendments, the Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training will execute them, and the amendments will become effective. ETA will return copies of the executed amendments to the states and post the amended Data Sharing Agreement to the WRIS Web site. Ms. Staha emphasized the importance of the signed amendments and requested that all states expedite the submission of their amendments. There were no questions on the Third Round amendment process.

IV. WRIS2 – Operations Protocols

John Glen (Oregon), chairman of the WRIS2 Work Group, provided an overview of the progress that had been made on the development of the WRIS2 voluntary option for expanded data exchange and extended his appreciation to the members of the Work Group, Adam Leonard (Texas), Clinton Flowers (Missouri), and Rick Little (Utah), as well as to Stephen Maas (Utah), for their contributions. Mr. Glen noted that the Advisory Group had received two draft WRIS2 documents for comment: the WRIS2 Draft Proposed Protocol with Process Flow Chart and the Draft WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement.

Mr. Glen outlined the principles that serve as the foundation for the WRIS2 Draft Proposed Protocol and September 28th WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement:

- Participation in WRIS2 is voluntary. States that opt-in to participate will be required to sign a WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement.

- The purpose of WRIS2 is to permit PACIAs to use the WRIS2 system for preparing aggregate reports and analysis of the employment experience of participants of programs beyond the employment and training programs covered by the existing WRIS Data Sharing Agreement. The list of programs is included in Section VII.C.1 of the Draft WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement, distributed to the Advisory Group members for review and comment.
- Only PACIAs will have access to the raw wage data. No individual wage information will be shared with a Third Party Entity (TPE). Only data aggregated into a group containing no fewer than three records will be shared with any Third Party Entity.
- For a Third Party Entity to receive summary aggregate reports, the entity first must enter into an agreement with the PACIA. The agreement will identify the work to be performed by the PACIA, and that the PACIA will perform the analysis and provide only summary aggregated data to the Third Party Entity.
- Confidentiality Compliance reviews will occur for states participating in WRIS2 to monitor compliance of the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement.
- The WRIS2 system will be an entirely separate system from WRIS. The Work Group determined that having two completely separate systems would prevent the possibility of data from WRIS getting "mixed" with data from WRIS2. A WRIS2 portal, similar to the WRIS portal, will handle all data exchanges.
- To minimize their work load, SUIAs from states participating in WRIS2 will be asked to submit only an initial DDBI file to WRIS2. Thereafter, the WRIS DDBI file sent by SUIAs to the WRIS Clearinghouse on a quarterly schedule will be added to the WRIS2 DDBI file. This process will relieve the state SUIAs participating in WRIS2 from having to create and submit two separate DDBI files.
- The process of obtaining wage records from states volunteering to participate in WRIS2 will mirror the matching process currently within WRIS. The PACIA will upload a request file through the WRIS2 portal to the WRIS2 Clearinghouse. The WRIS2 Clearinghouse will send queries to participating state SUIAs that have wage records that match the request. The participating SUIAs will provide responses to the matched WRIS2 requests back to the WRIS2 Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse will compile the states' data and notify the PACIA that the file containing wage data is available. The PACIA will download the file within 14 days. After the 14 days, the file will be deleted.

Mr. Glen noted that the Work Group continues to consider comments it receives from the states. Regarding comments on cost recovery on the part of the PACIA for the work performed to provide aggregate reports for a Third Party Entity, he indicated that the Work Group thought it preferable if each state decided whether it required cost recovery, and, if so, establish cost recovery terms within the agreement executed between the PACIA and a state Third Party Entity.

Mr. Glen invited questions about WRIS2 operations or the WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement. In response to questions from Jo Doyal (Alabama) regarding Advisory Group meetings and potential programs to be included in WRIS2, Mr. Glen indicated that the WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement provides for a WRIS2 Advisory Group from member states that will meet twice a year and that the programs listed in the WRIS2 Draft Data Sharing Agreement (*Section VII. Operation of WRIS2*, Subsection C, Paragraph 1) are distinct from those now covered by the WRIS Agreement.

David Pavelchek (Washington) asked if, for performance measurement purposes, any state program that met the criteria established in the generic language describing types of programs, such as professional licensing and certification and applied technology, would be covered under WRIS2. Ms. Staha replied that the decision on whether the language satisfies the ability to share aggregate data rests with the states participating in the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement, but that the language has to comply with the participating states' statutes and regulations, or policy, first. Mr. Pavelchek inquired if there were two classes of uses of WRIS2, the categorically-permitted uses under Section VII.C.1, and the by-special-permission uses under Section VII.C.2 for specific research and evaluation activities. Ms. Staha and Mr. Glen replied in the affirmative. Mr. Pavelchek asked under which section performance measurement on a state-only dislocated worker program would fall. Mr. Glen responded that performance reporting purposes are covered under Section VII.C.1, while extensive research and evaluation outside of general analysis would fall under Section VII.C.2. Mr. Pavelchek asked for confirmation of whether a state program that met one of the generic labels would be permitted under Section VII.C.1, and Ms. Staha replied yes. Mr. Pavelchek also inquired about how WRIS2 affected ETA's federal access to wage data. Ms. Staha responded that ETA does not have access to state wage data. However, if ETA wished to have access, ETA would have to go through WRIS and the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement. Patricia (Pam) Mertens added that if the information ETA sought was for some other study, for example on the Trade Act, then ETA would have to have a separate agreement with each of the states, because it would not be covered by either WRIS or WRIS2. In response to Mr. Pavelchek's inquiry about the function of Section VII.D, Ms. Staha and Mr. Glen indicated the provision would be reviewed and clarified.

Jon Eller (Oklahoma) asked if ETA would have access to data for audits and data validation purposes. Ms. Staha replied that although audits and data validation purposes are acceptable under the current WRIS Data Sharing Agreement, ETA would not conduct data validation for WRIS2 since the aggregate data exchanged under WRIS2 would not be within the purview of ETA's data validation activities.

Roger Therrien (Connecticut) expressed support for the generic listing of the types of programs for which WRIS2 data can be used. He noted that, although the WRIS2 protocol mentions post-secondary education programs, it does not permit a way to track the employment experience of high school graduates. Since the K-12 entities in the states are receiving longitudinal data system grants, interest is high in the employment outcomes of high school graduates. Mr. Therrien further asked if participants in WRIS2 would be able to obtain more than eight quarters of data, since eight quarters will not be sufficient time for identifying the employment experience of people in groups covered by WRIS2. Ms. Mertens suggested that the WDQI grants, not yet awarded, would help in building the longitudinal database. When all the states have built their longitudinal databases, more than eight quarters of data will be stored. The issues around having more than eight quarters of data readily available, rather than archived, are the limits of existing technology. Ms. Staha said that, initially, not more than eight quarters would be available under WRIS2, but, as technology advances, more than eight quarters may become available.

Mr. Glen indicated that the WRIS2 Work Group had scheduled a conference call for Thursday, October 7, at 1:00 pm EDT, to discuss in more detail the September 28 draft of the WRIS2 Data Sharing Agreement. In closing the discussion, Ms. Staha said it would be helpful if interested parties sent their comments to WRIS@dol.gov prior to the WRIS2 conference call.

V. Quarterly Technical Report of WRIS Operations

Amanda Gohl of ACS, the WRIS Operations contractor, discussed the Quarterly Technical Report, distributed to the Advisory Group in advance, and focused on the key updates. Currently, fifty states are exchanging information; Hawaii is developing the code for its WRIS responses. ACS has met with the state ICON programmers and reviewed the operating procedures. Ms. Gohl discussed the ACS Web services option available to states that are modernizing and suggested that SUIAs interested in modernizing could take advantage of the services.

The technical presentation reviewed the previous Town Hall Meetings and the discussions held during them. Ms. Gohl also discussed upcoming training opportunities and indicated that ACS is available to host any of these sessions by special request at any time. The number of WRIS requests and responses remains consistent. In closing her presentation, Ms. Gohl reported that ACS has successfully completed its annual security audit and has updated contact information.

Deb Serum (Minnesota) asked if there were any recommended solutions to the problem of states receiving their own data back in their WRIS response, as had been noted during the Data Quality Town Hall held in late August. Ms. Gohl explained that there are some cases when combined wages on unemployment insurance claims are not flagged in a state as being “used,” causing the state to sometimes receive its own data back. Most of the time, the PACIAs note the double-up and only count the wages one time. Bruce Olinsky (New Hampshire) said that his state runs a validity check and purges any duplicates.

VI. WRIS Training

Confidentiality Compliance Training: A Confidentiality Compliance Review training Webinar for PACIAs and SUIAs is scheduled for October 26, 2010 at 2 pm EDT. The training module will be repeated in early January 2011.

On-site Training: At the request of the District of Columbia, an on-site training will be held on October 18, 2010. Although resources are limited, ETA will endeavor to provide on-site training to states making a request. Interested states should send an email to WRIS@dol.gov

PACIA and SUIA Town Halls: A Data Quality Town Hall was held on August 26. An additional Town Hall for state PACIA, SUIA, and IT staff will be offered in November. Advisory Group members should send suggestions for future Town Hall topics to WRIS@dol.gov

VII. WRIS State On-site Confidentiality Reviews: PY 2010

The WRIS Data Sharing Agreement, in *Section VI. Responsibilities of the Parties*, provides for on-site confidentiality reviews. During the next five months, on-site reviews will be conducted in the District of Columbia, Georgia, Missouri, Nevada, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Wyoming. Ms. Staha emphasized that the reviews are not monitoring visits; rather, they are to review state confidentiality procedures, provide technical assistance, and document promising practices to be shared with other states. CDS², the WRIS Administration contractor, is conducting the reviews on behalf of ETA. Advisory Group members having questions or suggestions regarding the Confidentiality Reviews can e-mail WRIS@dol.gov

VIII. Additional Business

Ms. Staha suggested that a topic for future discussion at an Advisory Group meeting is how WRIS might support the ongoing work of the Workforce Investment Act Gold Standard Evaluation.

December 9, 2010, was proposed as the date for the Fourth Quarter conference call and participants were asked to e-mail WRIS@dol.gov if they had an objection to that date. Ms. Staha additionally suggested that an in-person Advisory Group meeting may be held for the First Quarter of 2011, in conjunction with the performance-related, technical assistance forums.

IX. Adjournment

Ms. Staha thanked members for their participation in the Third Quarter Advisory Group meeting, and invited them to e-mail any follow-up questions to WRIS@dol.gov.