

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 37-09
	DATE April 6, 2010

TO: ALL STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
 ALL STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
 ALL STATE ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER SYSTEM LEADS
 ALL STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS
 ALL STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DIRECTORS

FROM: JANE OATES *Jane Oates*
 Assistant Secretary
 Employment and Training Administration

SUBJECT: The Workforce Investment Act Gold Standard Evaluation

1. **Purpose.** Over the past two years, the workforce investment system has had to confront daily difficult recession challenges by working tirelessly to address the needs of the unemployed, dislocated workers, and many others. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) commends all stakeholders for the remarkable work you are doing and we know that the programs you are managing will continue to make positive change that benefits workers and employers.

To assess the critical work that has been done and yet to be done, ETA is announcing the “kick-off” of a rigorous random assignment evaluation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. This evaluation presents a tremendous opportunity for the workforce investment system to document the importance of WIA-funded services to the participants we serve, our oversight bodies including Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and the general public. This evaluation, through its rigorous examination of the operations and effectiveness, is consistent with the Obama Administration’s Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government by promoting transparency and accountability.

The evaluation will specifically examine the Adult and Dislocated Worker formula programs by 1) analyzing program impacts on participants’ post-program employment and earnings and their cost effectiveness; and 2) comparing outcomes of WIA participants to the outcomes of similar individuals who do not receive WIA services. Throughout the evaluation effort, state and local workforce agencies, project partners, and workforce investment system stakeholders will receive updates on the study’s progress.

2. **Evaluation Goals.** Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) will conduct the evaluation working with subcontractors Social Policy Research Associates, MDRC, and the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce. The evaluators will examine net impacts by subgroups including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and veteran status, among others with an additional emphasis placed on

the impact effectiveness of specific intensive services and the combination of intensive services on workforce investment system client's employment and earnings.

3. **Evaluation Tasks.** This evaluation will compare the outcomes of WIA participants to the outcomes of similar individuals randomly assigned to a control group. MPR and its subcontractors will design and implement random assignment procedures, monitor the evaluation throughout the client observation period, collect project and state administrative data, analyze the data, and produce interim and final reports. Please note that the control group in this study will be greatly minimized to reduce the impact on One-Stop Career Center operations; however, a small number of individuals will only receive core services rather than the full menu of One-Stop Career Center services. In this case, the limited services group is absolutely necessary to ensure that the results of the evaluation are rigorous. The evaluation will also include a comprehensive process evaluation of program activities in the thirty sites that will chronicle the best practices and lessons learned from field operations and will provide a rich context for interpretation of the impact results.

Data sources for this evaluation include: 1) client data collected through a project-specific management information system; 2) interview and focus group data collected through visits to participating local workforce investment boards (LWIBs) and One-Stop Career Centers; 3) state unemployment insurance wage and benefit records; 4) follow-up client surveys conducted 15 and 30 months after random assignment; and 5) other administrative data related to participation in Federal and state programs. The strictest confidentiality procedures will be maintained for all client data. Information collected during the evaluation process on individual LWIBs will be aggregated for research purposes to protect site confidentiality and will not be shared with other LWIBs or used for performance or management purposes by ETA. LWIBs will also receive individualized analysis of the data collected from the evaluation that could be used for their own program assessment and management improvement.

4. **Evaluation Site Selection.** This evaluation requires participation of thirty randomly selected LWIBs across the country to enable evaluators to construct a nationally representative sample of the workforce investment system. Without a nationally representative sample of LWIBs, the findings would not accurately portray the national workforce investment system. Through participation in this evaluation, selected LWIBs will have the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the workforce investment system. Therefore, participation of those randomly selected LWIBs is critical to the overall success of the evaluation. ETA will soon be contacting the randomly-selected LWIBs directly to notify them they have been selected to participate in the evaluation. The selected LWIBs will be compensated for the additional costs incurred for participating in the evaluation. LWIBs also will be part of a national learning network that will include a discussion with ETA leadership and a forum to discuss WIA reauthorization. Selected LWIBs will be contacted within 30 days after publication of this TEN. ETA will also notify the appropriate states of the LWIBs selected.

5. **Action Requested.** State Workforce Agencies are requested to: 1) review and convey the information contained in this issuance to local workforce partners, as appropriate; and 2) work

with MPR and their subcontractors to facilitate the acquisition of all necessary state administrative and unemployment insurance wage and benefit record data for the evaluation.

State Unemployment Insurance Directors are requested to fully cooperate with MPR and their subcontractors in providing all necessary wage and benefit record data for the evaluation.

LWIBs are requested to: 1) review and convey the information contained in this issuance to the One-Stop Career Centers and appropriate workforce partners in their area; and 2) actively participate in the evaluation, if selected, to ensure there is a nationally representative sample of LWIBs and evaluation results can be generalized across the nation; and 3) work with MPR and their subcontractors to facilitate the acquisition of all necessary administrative and participant-level data for the evaluation.

6. **Evaluation Time Frame.** The period of performance for this evaluation effort will be for five years beginning in July of 2010. An interim report is expected in 2012 and a final report is expected in July 2015.

7. **References.** P.L. 105-220, as amended: Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Section 172

8. **Inquiries.** For more information about this study, please contact Jonathan A. Simonetta, Federal Project Officer, Office of Policy Development and Research, ETA at (202) 693-3911, or simonetta.jonathan@dol.gov.