

# U.S. Department of Labor Two-Year Plan for the Workforce and Labor Market Information System Fiscal Years 2025 - 2026

## Introduction

This document and its attachments constitute the two-year Workforce and Labor Market Information (WLMI) system improvement plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and FY 2026. The U.S. Department of Labor (Department or DOL) developed previous plans for WLMI system improvements in 2020 and 2022, providing Congress with the Secretary of Labor's plans for improving the WLMI system at the state and national levels. The two-year plan is mandated by Section 15(c) of the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), (29 U.S.C. 491-2(c)).

This plan includes a description of the current state of the WLMI system, including recent and ongoing improvement efforts, as well as recommendations from the Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC). This plan also includes a description of state and local contributions to the nationwide WLMI system, an update on activities described in the 2022 two-year plan (which covered FY 2023 and FY 2024) and presents the Department's plan for the next two years.

WLMI consists of the data and information utilized by businesses, workers, jobseekers, students, education and training providers, workforce development planners and policymakers, and others, to make informed decisions in areas such as hiring and advancement, career choice, curriculum development, and investments in training. The WLMI system includes the development and dissemination of occupational information, which describes the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for an occupation, as well as the activities and tasks performed. Since the passage of WIOA, DOL, acting through the WLMI system, has made local workforce information available for millions of employers, jobseekers, and researchers. For example, cataloging over 900 occupations, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) maintain some of the largest databases of labor market and occupational information and make them available through web services and mobile applications.

The WLMI system administered by ETA and BLS, state and local governments, and grantees, provides workforce information, online career tools, and performance outcomes information to assist individuals make career decisions and seek training options. The WLMI system supports the public workforce system through both self-service access to career and training information for individuals and for career counselors that help customers in American Job Centers (AJCs) and other points of service.

## Executive Summary

ETA and BLS will continue building upon the WLMI system's strong foundation by undertaking efforts to further improve the quality, relevance, and availability of data on employment dynamics, occupations, skill and credential requirements, and employment and training program outcomes. The Department will work to improve the response rates to BLS surveys, expand sub-national data publication, produce employment projections that are skills-based, improve communication between state Labor Market Information (LMI) offices and their customers, publish a Workforce Data Hub to provide customers increased usability of workforce data, and continue to work with the National Labor Exchange to improve access to job postings for real-time application and research, to streamline the O\*Net website, and to work with the National Science Foundation (NSF) on data sharing and data linking.

Through these improvements, ETA and BLS seek to facilitate more robust, data-informed decision-making among their stakeholders. The Department envisions students, jobseekers, and underrepresented communities having easy access to more comprehensive information about the job opportunities available in growing industries and occupations, the skills and credentials needed for those jobs, where to find available training, and how to find help to ensure they succeed. The Department also envisions career counselors, educators, and training providers having easy-to-use and insightful data on the employment landscape to better guide students and jobseekers on career choices; more effective assessment tools to identify participants' skill gaps; and more complete information on the skills addressed by, and the success rates of, training programs. By improving the WLMI products and continuing vigorous outreach through our stakeholders and grantees, the Department is providing tools and actionable information to those who might not otherwise have easy access to information to help guide them on an upward economic mobility path by obtaining good jobs and careers. Finally, the Department is looking forward to maintaining and improving the work between federal and state partners, as well as continuing public-private partnerships and data-sharing arrangements to produce time-sensitive workforce information.

## **Section 1. Current Major Activities of the WLMI System**

BLS and ETA support the production and dissemination of a range of WLMI products. Much of this activity takes place through federal/state cooperative programs, with state labor market information (LMI) offices working in partnership with BLS and ETA to produce workforce and labor market information to support informed decision making for a variety of customers. State LMI offices work closely with their stakeholders, such as Local Workforce Development Boards, AJCs, economic development organizations, and educational institutions, in addition to working directly with employers and jobseekers. LMI offices help produce state and local data such as employment, unemployment, and wage statistics including projections of in-demand jobs. The broad goal of LMI data is to help drive education and training decisions to meet the hiring needs of employers for a skilled workforce.

### **BLS Federal/State Cooperative Programs**

The federal/state cooperative programs funded by BLS include the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Current Employment Statistics (CES), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), and Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).

States can also voluntarily participate in the BLS Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records program. BLS produces national employment projections and the online Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), which has occupational profiles to assist students and jobseekers with career decision making. BLS transformed the OOH into a mobile app to better serve younger populations who prefer to interact with the data that way.

BLS interacts with the states on a regular basis allowing feedback to promote program improvements and efficiency. Examples include a National LMI Conference, BLS LMI Oversight Council meetings, and Program Policy Council meetings. These meetings are managed jointly by BLS managers and state LMI directors. BLS works closely with the Projections Managing Partnership (PMP) and the LMI Institute to provide needed statistical inputs from the BLS national employment projections program to the states' programs. BLS also actively works with states through the National Association of State Workforce Agencies' (NASWA) WLMI Committee and the WLMI Partners group. BLS also continues to collaborate with the Jobs and Employment Data Exchange (JEDx), a public-private approach to collecting and using standards-based job and employment data to reduce respondent burden and improve data quality.

BLS Regional Office staff support states modernizing their unemployment insurance systems to help minimize the chances of WLMI needs not being met. In addition, since all BLS cooperative programs are voluntary under federal law, Regional Office staff share knowledge of how other states have made OEWS mandatory in their state.

BLS also remains supportive of the National Secure Data Service (NSDS) on several different fronts. BLS reviews pilot proposals and provides comments as necessary. In addition, BLS was the originator of a pilot project to support building capacity in state, local and territorial governments by using wage records data for evidence-building. Details about that project can be found at [https://www.americasdatahub.org/building-capacity\\_adeb-24/](https://www.americasdatahub.org/building-capacity_adeb-24/).

## **ETA Support for State and Local WLMI Infrastructure**

ETA provides critical support to its state and local partners. The Workforce Information Grants to States (WIGS) provide funding for the development, management, and delivery of WLMI. The WIGS grants are issued annually in the summer and enable states to produce and publish state and local area estimates of the jobs in-demand from the occupational employment projections. States provide in-house expertise to state policymakers and to state and local workforce boards. The projections produced under these grants help to inform planning, training design, and career counseling among the workforce system, including education and training providers and other stakeholders.

ETA supports and maintains the ETA Data Hub as a data resource for state and local partners. The ETA Data Hub has links to relevant ETA data resources in a one-stop location including the ETA Data Inventory, a searchable list of ETA's publicly available data and links to retrieve relevant data. The ETA Data Hub also includes the Workforce Services Dashboards which examine WIOA Titles I & III program data quality, system reach, and differences in access to services and outcomes between demographic groups by State. These data and visualizations are

resources for states and locals on programs in their areas. Also available on the ETA Data Hub is Trendlines, a monthly data newsletter that provides insights on timely issues in the labor market and in the workforce development field. It features articles written by DOL staff and other contributors and is designed to raise awareness of data, trends, and resources for the labor and workforce community.

ETA provides funding to the PMP for developing and maintaining employment projections at the state and sub-state levels, while BLS independently creates the national employment projections. The PMP is a state consortium that develops and updates software tools used to create state and local employment projections that are consistent across the nation. The PMP provides training and technical assistance for the software tools used to develop the state employment projections, and trains state staff when upgrades or methodological changes occur. In 2024, the PMP partnered with other state LMI offices and users of local LMI data to develop and deliver a training program that describes the types of actionable LMI data state LMI offices can provide and also describes the data needs of users of local LMI data.

ETA funds the Analyst Resource Center (ARC) through a grant, which supports the work of the WIGS by ensuring that state workforce databases are current, complete, and consistent from state to state. This state consortium, led by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, develops, maintains, and updates software tools and databases that ensure data consistency and data sharing across all states, particularly for the data products resulting from WIGS. The ARC maintains a set of national crosswalks (e.g., from Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes to other classifications, including military and civilian crosswalks), as well as an analytics platform that allows states and local areas to process state/metropolitan statistical area/census-tract data into local workforce-specific estimates consistent with BLS methodologies.

ETA oversees the nationwide network of approximately 2,300 AJCs, which provide a wide range of WLMI and employment services to jobseekers, career changers, and employers. AJCs provide information on other local services, such as career education and job training opportunities, which assist customers in achieving their goals of either finding employment opportunities or identifying qualified jobseekers to meet the needs of local businesses.

### **ETA Support for National Electronic Tools**

ETA supports both the CareerOneStop and O\*NET suites of websites, which provide critical information to the workforce system and many other users across all levels of the education spectrum, from K-16 through graduate school. The CareerOneStop suite of tools (<https://www.careeronestop.org/>) provides workforce development information and hosts a monthly average of over 1 million visitors to the website and has an average of 7.7 million monthly page views. The CareerOneStop web application contains links to locally available job openings, training, and in-person services for jobseekers and unemployed workers. It also provides valuable local information for businesses, students, and career advisors, with a variety of free online tools, information, and resources.

The O\*NET system is the nation’s primary source of descriptive and qualitative information on occupational characteristics and requirements. The O\*NET database contains information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors detailing knowledge, skills, abilities, tasks, work activities, and other characteristics for over 900 occupations. A key feature of O\*NET is that it contains both stable and dynamic descriptors which are updated at different frequencies. Stable descriptors are ones that do not change rapidly, such as knowledge areas, basic and crosscutting skills (e.g., reading comprehension), abilities, work context, work values, work styles, and career interests. Updates to dynamic descriptors are provided on a quarterly basis; these include associated alternate job titles and technology skills used (such as specific software, coding languages, computerized equipment, and similar), as well as high demand technology skills. In addition to implementing modernization efforts to streamline the survey of incumbent workers and occupational experts, within the last two years, O\*NET has applied machine learning and natural language processing (NLP) methods to update the occupational interest profiles and high point codes, associated with the online Interest Profiler assessment tool, and to identify emerging occupational tasks.

### **Additional Supports Across DOL**

In addition, DOL’s Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) has continued making strides to improve access to data for decision-making at all levels – federal, state, and local. For example, following completion of its Career Trajectories and Occupational Transitions (CTOT) Study, which aimed to understand worker’s career trajectories and transitions as they occur in the labor market for many sectors and occupations, CEO made data from the study available both via its Public Use Data Lake (PUDL)<sup>1</sup> and the CTOT Dashboard.<sup>2</sup> The dashboard is an interactive tool that allows users to view data from four nationally representative longitudinal surveys and online career profiles that capture how workers move through the labor market. The dashboard focuses on “mid-level” occupations that typically require education or experience beyond a high school diploma or equivalent and less than a four-year degree. Together with other sources of LMI, the CTOT Dashboard can be used to develop programs and policies that are responsive to local labor market needs. Users can interact with the data to explore how workers in mid-level occupations move through specific jobs and occupational clusters and how they experience wage growth over time. Policymakers and practitioners can identify “launchpad” occupations associated with higher wage growth, look for clusters or occupational characteristics associated with wage growth, and understand where disparities exist and could be addressed.

In addition to its PUDL, CEO also kicked off DOL’s new Secure Transfer, Restricted-Use Data Lake (STRUDL) this past year. STRUDL serves as a centralized portal for authorized researchers (those internal to DOL as well as those working for states, local areas, universities, etc.) to securely access confidential data, to advance research aligned with DOL’s mission. Once cleared, researchers can publish results in reports and other professional outlets, informing the states as well as the general public on practical worker issues. More information can be found at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/STRUDL>.

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<sup>1</sup> The PUDL is available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/data-repo>.

<sup>2</sup> The CTOT dashboard is available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/resources/career-trajectories-and-occupational-transitions-dashboard>.

## **Section 2. Progress on the Two-Year Plan to Improve WLMI in FY 2023 and FY 2024**

In the most recent Two-Year Plan that covered FY 2023 and FY 2024, the Department described a plan to improve the WLMI system at the national, state, and local levels. BLS and ETA, individually and jointly, identified specific areas for improvement, including improvements suggested by the initial set of WIAC recommendations to the Secretary. The subsections below highlight some of the Department's WLMI work from that plan in FY 2023 and FY 2024.

### **State UI Wage Records Projects**

The state UI wage records can be used to enhance the quality of important data series and allow for the production of new data series at more detailed industry and geographic levels in existing programs. State UI wage records may also allow for the production of new economic data at detailed levels of industry and geography.

Through its State UI Wage Records Program, BLS continues to collect wage record files from over half the country on a quarterly basis and is always adding more states. The most recent list of participating states can be found here: <https://www.bls.gov/wrp/overview.htm>. During the next two years, BLS will continue work to: (a) improve imputation of worksite and industry classification codes, (b) continue to develop systems and processes that will allow for multi-state wage records data sharing, (c) expand the number of pilot participants, and (d) facilitate state-driven wage record research agendas. BLS also continues to support state driven research. Examples of such research can be found at: <https://www.bls.gov/wrp/publications.htm>. BLS also continues to partner with states who have SOC/job titles on their wage records to evaluate the quality of the administrative data as compared to OEWS. Improved wage record occupational data quality could be used to supplement OEWS data to reduce respondent burden and/or expand data product offerings.

The BLS wage record program is exploring expanding access to the wage record program in DOL. Currently, the agreements include a provision to share the microdata with DOL's CEO. ETA and states participating in CEO evaluations would likely be major beneficiaries of this relationship since BLS wage record data can be linked securely within BLS to key BLS datasets with wage records, industry, and other key variables. Linked BLS-ETA data could produce tabulations and models measuring key outcomes of interest to ETA and states. Additionally, such access in turn supports the BLS wage records program. For example, ETA entered into a cooperative agreement with South Carolina for the development of an open-source, flexible, scalable, and shareable dashboard that harnesses the state UI wage records. The focus is to support the development of statistical capacity in the state, support the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce's mission to promote and support an effective, customer-driven workforce system that facilitates financial stability and economic prosperity for employers, individuals, and communities, and encourage greater regional participation in the BLS wage records program.

### **Expanded data**

BLS expanded subnational data on a variety of fronts. Notably the QCEW program published new data on the nonprofit sector such as employment and wage estimates for the nonprofit sector for the years 2018-2022 at the national total private, NAICS 2-digit, and 3-digit industry level as well as select 4-digit level. State-level data are available at the total private, NAICS 2-digit level, and select 3- and 4-digit industry levels, and totals and select industries at selected levels for counties where BLS nondisclosure requirements are satisfied. To increase transparency BLS posted revisions to the QCEW Website. The new webpages were created provide user information on QCEW revision history. In addition, QCEW developed factsheets, the first of which focused on average weekly wages.

## **The Future of Work**

The Department's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (OASP) has convened a cross-DOL working group on the Future of Workers, including workstreams related to changing employment structures (especially the classification of workers), the impact of technology on workers and working conditions, and training and job quality. Part of this effort involves better understanding data collection opportunities, including around changing working conditions.

BLS collected data on contingent and alternative work in July 2023 as a supplement to the Current Population Survey and released results on November 8, 2024. BLS plans to collect data on contingent work again in 2025. In September 2024, BLS collected data about Work Schedules. BLS continues to explore how new technologies, including automation, are impacting the workforce. In addition, BLS currently publishes several statistics related to remote work or telework from the perspectives of employers and workers.

## **CareerOneStop – High-Impact Service Provider**

As noted above, CareerOneStop.org is an ETA-sponsored website designed to deliver integrated, easy-to-understand local workforce information that helps job seekers, students, workers, workforce intermediaries, and employers develop their capacity and make sound economic decisions regarding employment, training, and services. CareerOneStop.org is the third most visited site within DOL, with over 1 million site visits and an average of over 7.7 million page views every month. The average session duration of 7m 20s indicates the content provided is valuable. CareerOneStop.org content and services continue to earn the trust of its users, as indicated by their response to the FY 2024 A11 Customer Satisfaction Survey. COS consistently received a rating well above the 75% goal, ending the year with an 85% trust rating.

In 2021, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) designated CareerOneStop.org as a High Impact Service Provider (HISP). The HISPs are selected due to the scale and critical nature of their public-facing services. Annually, HISP teams conduct comprehensive assessments of their high-impact services, measure their customer experience maturity, and identify actions to improve service delivery. As part of this effort, ETA worked with its grantee operating CareerOneStop.org (the State of Minnesota) to make significant improvements to the website in FY 2023 and FY 2024. The team redesigned webpages to improve user navigation and remove unnecessary or redundant information, leading to the increased 85% trust rating in the Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Work to improve the website is ongoing and focuses on installing a new



Content Management System to facilitate the ability to quickly make uniform changes across the website as well as enhance the overall administration and management of the website.

### **Workforce Information Grants (WIGS)**

As noted above, State Workforce Agencies use WIGS to develop and disseminate essential state and local WLMI for job seekers, employers, educators, economic developers, and others. During times of economic changes, the data and information produced by the WIGS is particularly important. Each year, ETA publishes a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) that describes required, encouraged, and other allowable activities, and explains the rationale for ETA policies and requirements. In PY 2023, ETA streamlined the requirements for the state and local employment projections to eliminate the requirement for states to create a two-year employment projection. This allowed states to use limited resources to focus instead on the ten-year employment projections, which provide a better projection of expected occupational growth when used for planning purposes.

## **Section 3. Evaluation of the WLMI System and Improvements Needed**

ETA and BLS collaborate to identify and engage stakeholders to evaluate the functioning of the WLMI system. In partnership with industry leaders, ETA and BLS advisory committees regularly seek feedback regarding the operations of the WLMI system, including challenges for data collection and analysis, and the needs of diverse stakeholders.

### **BLS Evaluation and Improvements Needed**

BLS evaluates LMI programs through several different methods. One of the methods is the BLS submission of an Annual Operating Plan for its programs, which includes performance measures. BLS conforms to the conceptual framework of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy's "Guidelines for Reporting Performance by Statistical Agencies." BLS measures accuracy, timeliness, relevance, dissemination, and mission achievement. These criteria are common among statistical agencies to measure performance and monitor continuous improvement.

A second method for evaluation is the comparison of actual accomplishments to the annual Associate Commissioner's Memo, which spells out expectations and needed improvements for each program, including statistical standards the programs must meet. A third method is through internal BLS Quality Reviews which are used to identify improvements in products and methods. This process evaluates against best practices, assesses resource allocations, provides for external review, and encourages proactive analysis. The recommendations are monitored regularly to assess progress and accomplishments. Documentation regarding BLS budget and performance can be found at [https://www.bls.gov/bls/bls\\_budget\\_and\\_performance.htm](https://www.bls.gov/bls/bls_budget_and_performance.htm).

### **ETA Evaluation and Improvements Needed**

One of the mechanisms ETA uses to evaluate the functioning of the WLMI system is engagement with key stakeholders who are users and producers of workforce data. ETA



collaborates with BLS to administer the WIAC, which engages in national meetings and detailed discussions of the status of BLS and ETA WLMI programs. WIAC efforts culminated in a total of fifteen recommendations the WIAC submitted to the Secretary in January of 2023 and five recommendations in November of 2024. In its recommendations, which are summarized in Section 5 of this document and provided in full as attachments, the WIAC identified several key areas for WLMI improvement.

In its most recent report, WIAC included recommendations for how DOL might test the potential to produce new products that report the impact of local labor market shocks on skill demand and career transitions so that the WLMI system can more proactively prepare to meet the data needs of the field. That report also included recommendations for how DOL might better encourage and incentivize sharing and collaboration among partners in the WLMI systems nationwide. In the prior report, WIAC included a recommendation to enhance state UI wage records by including additional data elements such as occupational title, hours worked, and work site. This will enable much more in-depth analysis from the state UI data source and lead to improved understanding of career pathways and career ladders, better data on employment outcomes related to training and education, and more detailed state and local information on employment. WIAC also recommended that the Department increase investment in the analysis of workforce skill requirements of current and emerging occupations, and further analyze the transferability of skills among industries and occupations.

Separate from WIAC's recommendations, through work studying the effects of automation on the workforce, ETA has identified the need for more real-time data on skills and competencies, and their changes over time, which are not necessarily associated with specific occupations. ETA and other federal agencies are increasingly recognizing that such information would need to be obtained through data mining of multiple sources, and the application of machine learning and natural language processing algorithms to organize and analyze the data for specific purposes. The need for such data was heightened by the rapid pace of labor market change during the early stages of the pandemic, as well as subsequent changes in the nature of work during the recovery.

O\*NET information is used extensively in academic and other research on the potential impact of both automation and artificial intelligence (AI) on future skill and workforce needs, and its data are proving very valuable to these efforts. In particular, the Task information, along with other O\*NET descriptors, is being used to assess the relative "automatability" of various occupations—which occupations might decline over time, which ones may change regarding the nature of work performed, and which ones might increase in demand. Many of these efforts are documented at <https://www.onetcenter.org/initiatives.html#future-of-work>. To build on these efforts, the Department is exploring options for developing capabilities to increase the available information on changes in skill and competency requirements over time, likely in collaboration with multiple agencies, by means of supporting such data science analytics efforts. The National Center for O\*NET Development has already successfully used machine learning and natural language processing methods to update certain components of the information in the O\*NET database, including occupational interest profiles and high point codes and emerging tasks by occupation.

As previously reported in the 2022 version of this plan, to improve LMI, the final report of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policy recommended statutory or other changes needed to provide controlled access to and use of UI wage data for statistical purposes (referred to in the report as “state-collected administrative data on quarterly earnings.”) The Commission recommended that federal departments that acquire state-collected administrative data make them available for statistical purposes. At present, there continues to be limits on such data-sharing, even among federal agencies, which may require legislative or policy changes or the execution of multiple interstate memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

## **Section 4. Plans for the Next Two Years**

In considering the input of the stakeholders described above, ETA and BLS weighed the costs and benefits of the recommended improvements and determined their feasibility in the context of overall agency priorities, as well as agency budget constraints. Through the initiatives presented below, ETA and BLS seek to improve the quality and quantity of local data; enhance and improve IT systems; explore new and alternative data sources; improve both outreach and customer experience; and ultimately facilitate more robust, data-informed decision making among stakeholders.

The Department’s plans for improvements to the WLMI system are described by the priorities of BLS and ETA below, and continuing priorities described above in the prior section.

### **Major BLS Initiatives for the Next Two Years**

The downward pressure on BLS programs’ response rates and increasing costs of collection have been ongoing challenges; however, the pandemic exacerbated known weaknesses and uncovered others. Structural changes in collection have and will need to continue to occur. As such, with our partners, BLS is adapting to the environmental challenges to mitigate the response rate erosion as much as possible and reduce risk. Wherever possible, BLS is introducing multiple ways to respond to surveys such as flex reporting in CES. Flex reporting allows eligible Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) respondents the option to report via Web each month at their convenience, freeing up data collection resources to apply in other areas. The LAUS program relies on the Current Population Survey (CPS). BLS is working closely with the U.S. Census Bureau to develop a revised labor force section of the CPS questionnaire to deploy in a new Census web collection instrument in 2027. BLS continues to partner with states to conduct tests such as advance calling of OEWS respondents before they receive a notice in the mail, which has shown to increase the number of responses earlier during the collection period.

BLS remains committed to expanding its UI Wage Records Program. Specifically in the next two years, BLS is migrating the wage records database from an on-premises configuration to fully in the cloud. By leveraging the strong Fed/State partnerships, BLS will support continued growth of the Wage Records Program. They will establish new MOUs with partner states, collaborate in evaluating BLS programmatic uses of wage records, and continue to work with ETA to increase the utility of WLMI. BLS will expand on prior year’s research with respect to initiatives on job mobility, wage inequality, and applications of cohort studies.

BLS will update its geographic delineations according to OMB guidelines. The new delineations will be used by four programs: QCEW, CES, LAUS, and OEWS. The QCEW program implemented the updates with the processing of data for the first quarter of 2024. Both the CES and LAUS programs will convert to the new 2020-based metropolitan and micropolitan area geography effective with the release of January 2025 estimates. This will result in redefining small labor market areas and resetting inter-area relationships for the dynamic residency ratio adjustment process of the LAUS handbook methodology. For the OEWS program, new OEWS balance-of-state areas will be created, with input from states. The new balance-of-state areas will be used with the FY 2025 OEWS sample selection.

The national Employment Projections (EP) customers have expressed interest in more skills data, and this has also been a priority area identified by the WIAC. To meet this customer need, the EP program linked occupational projections data with skills data to produce a skills projection data product using the 2023-2033 projections data. The program published these for the first time on August 29, 2024.

### **Major ETA Initiatives for the Next Two Years**

Over the next two years, ETA plans to engage in a number of efforts to maintain and improve the capacity and capabilities of WLMI systems at the federal and state levels. These planned efforts are summarized below, and include work related to collaboration and capacity-building among WLMI partners; state-level job projections; and information on occupational skills and career transitions.

To promote collaboration and communication between state and local WLMI data producers and the data-user customers they serve, ETA initiated a technical assistance effort in FY 2024 called the Data Insights Academy. ETA will carry this effort out over FY 2025 and possibly into FY 2026. Through a collaborative learning environment in which state-based teams of data producers (state LMI agencies) and data users come together to identify opportunities to build closer relationships, ETA seeks to support LMI agencies in improving their understanding of data users' needs, while also supporting data users in gaining a better understanding of what state LMI resources exist and what is possible using state LMI. The teams will work on addressing a specific challenge related to the use and communication of LMI data.

To support the collaboration of state WIOA program partners, ETA funds the Workforce Information Technology Support Center (WITSC) at the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA). Specifically, this effort supports state partners in implementing effective and creative data-informed, human-centered technology-based workforce solutions for system customers. In FY 2025, WITSC will continue their efforts to build data literacy through events that equip workforce development staff with skills needed to understand, analyze, and interpret data and foster a data-driven culture within state agencies.

ETA is researching options to support states in using data as a strategic asset through data sharing and enhanced wage records. ETA has launched a Workforce Data Hub (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/datahub>) that highlights key information and uses graphics and visuals to render workforce information in a customer-centered, user-friendly manner that

increases the usability of the data. As part of this effort, ETA has developed a dashboard to support sector strategies through sector-based wage analysis. The online tool that is available to the public combines data sources and uses search features to identify key occupations within industry sectors to distinguish them by relative wage bands and typical education and training, to plan and target workforce development initiatives. ETA will continue to explore the development of additional tools that leverage data visualization capabilities to increase the usability of LMI.

To help build capacity among state WLMI partners, ETA, in partnership with the Coleridge Initiative, NASWA, and the State of Arkansas, has supported multiple rounds of applied data analytics training for state teams of WLMI staff. These training courses have focused on linking and analyzing data sources across multiple federal programs to better understand the impact of such programs on employment and wage outcomes and serve as a mechanism for learning and sharing across teams representing multiple states. To the extent feasible within available resources, the Department will continue to prioritize similar training and capacity-building opportunities for staff and leaders in the WLMI system.

ETA maintains an online community of practice called LMI Central on its WorkforceGPS website, which facilitates sharing and dissemination of information and tools among partners across the WLMI systems. ETA will continue to support this site and will explore ways to increase its use as a mechanism to further share practices and products.

ETA and BLS will continue to work with their state partners in the WLMI system to explore the feasibility of using sources like O\*Net data, employment projections, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, and the Current Employment Statistics survey to identify local labor market shocks and mitigate the impact of those shocks on skills demand within a state or region through WIOA resources.

ETA has started preliminary work to determine if job posting data contained in the National Labor Exchange (NLX) can be utilized by states or BLS to enhance the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) program. The NLX is run by the NASWA. State job banks send their job postings to the NLX as a central repository, and the NLX provides those job listings to CareerOneStop.org as their primary source of available jobs. The JOLTS survey sample may be improved by utilizing the information available in the NLX, and if successful, more robust state JOLTS data could be published.

ETA, in collaboration with the O\*NET grantee (North Carolina Department of Commerce), will pursue projects and initiatives to optimize, improve, and streamline content, data collection activities, websites and materials, and research to evolve with the changing world of work. Examples of these potential projects and initiatives include:

- integration of data visualization concepts into the O\*NET website;
- continued use and exploration of NLP within O\*NET data and research;
- use of AI within data collection processes; and
- further enhancing the extensive O\*NET Web Services.

ETA is in discussions with NSF regarding a potential pilot project to be sponsored through the NSF America's Data Hub Consortium to explore state-level data-sharing and data-mining to identify actual career transitions and the skills and credentials associated with such pathways. The Department, through ETA, BLS, and CEO, will take into consideration available resources, observations or outcomes under the NSF projects described above, along with the Department's research priorities, and will explore the feasibility of supporting additional demonstration projects that examine local labor market shocks, skill demand, career transitions, and related topics.

## **Major Departmental Data Initiatives for the Next Two Years**

DOL is implementing its Enterprise Data Strategy and Open Data Plan in ways that will support ETA by ensuring data from its core programs can best function as a strategic asset for the widest set of stakeholders and use cases. DOL has established the Open Data Application Programming Interface (API), a new public data service that provides users on-demand access to subsets of relevant data from much larger data sets in machine readable and machine actionable format. This will dramatically simplify user access to very large data sets such as apprenticeship participation and outcome data and WIOA Individual Performance Records. The API contains high profile data assets identified as important by the public and offers modes of access that promote innovation by allowing users to automate data integration into dashboards, analytical applications, and visualization tools. Each public data set is also supported by rich documentation to help ensure that the data are comprehensible and the public can meaningfully assess the extent to which the data are interoperable with other data and suitable for specific use cases.

Additionally, DOL's new data sharing program, STRUDL, can potentially provide numerous, ongoing benefits to ETA and states at virtually no cost as it expands. STRUDL's secure environment enables researchers to pursue studies of interest to DOL using confidential data. Numerous other agencies, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the Department of Education, have long-standing data sharing programs that have produced substantial, tangible benefits that further their agencies' missions. By agreeing to securely provide data to STRUDL, ETA as well as states can benefit from academics' eagerness to pursue research beneficial to the improvement of employment and training programs and advancement of ETA's mission at no cost to the agency.

## **Section 5. Summary of WIAC Recommendations**

This section provides background on WIAC's mission and composition, as well as summaries of the two most recent sets of WIAC recommendations below, which are from January of 2023 and November of 2024. For prior WIAC recommendations, see the documents listed at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/wiac>.

### **WIAC Mission and Composition**

The WIAC was established in 2015 and mandated by Section 308 of the WIOA. The WIAC is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. 10) and its implementing regulations

(41 CFR 102-3). The WIAC is responsible for providing recommendations to the Secretary of Labor, working jointly through ETA and BLS, specifically addressing: (1) the evaluation and improvement of the nationwide workforce and LMI system and statewide systems that comprise the nationwide system; and (2) how the Department and the states will cooperate in the management of those systems, including recommendations for the two-year plan required under Section 15(c) of the Wagner-Peyser Act. These systems include programs to produce employment-related statistics and state and local workforce and LMI. The WIAC accomplishes these objectives by:

1. Studying workforce and LMI issues;
2. Seeking information on innovative approaches, new technologies, and data to inform employment, skills training, and workforce and economic development decision-making and policy; and
3. Advising the Secretary on how the workforce and LMI system can best support workforce development, planning, and program development.

WIAC members consist of officials from the state and federal levels, as well as private citizens from specific groups. The Secretary appoints 14 members representing eight constituent groups to serve up to three-year terms, with consecutive appointments limited to two terms. Per section 15(d)(2)(B) of the Wagner-Peyser Act, WIAC members consist of:

- 1) Four members who are representatives of lead state agencies with responsibility for workforce investment activities, or state agencies described in Wagner-Peyser Act section 4 (agency designated or authorized by Governor to cooperate with the Secretary of Labor), who have been nominated by such agencies or by a national organization that represents such agencies;
- 2) Four members who are representatives of the state workforce and labor market information directors affiliated with the state agencies responsible for the management and oversight of the workforce and labor market information system as described in Wagner-Peyser Act Section 15(e)(2), who have been nominated by the directors;
- 3) One member who is a representative of providers of training services under WIOA section 122 (Identification of Eligible Providers of Training Services);
- 4) One member who is a representative of economic development entities;
- 5) One member who is a representative of businesses, who has been nominated by national business organizations or trade associations;
- 6) One member who is a representative of labor organizations, who has been nominated by a national labor federation;
- 7) One member who is a representative of local workforce development boards, who has been nominated by a national organization representing such boards; and
- 8) One member who is a representative of research entities that use workforce and labor market information.

The Secretary must ensure that WIAC membership is geographically diverse, with no two members appointed in categories one, two, and seven (above) representing the same state.

## WIAC Recommendations from January of 2023

Through a series of WIAC meetings and numerous subcommittee deliberations, which included reviews of existing products, programs and initiatives, discussions with subject matter experts, and consideration of public comments, the WIAC examined many areas and elements of the WLMI system. Summarized below are fifteen recommendations, all with unanimous support from the WIAC members. These recommendations are from the January 2023 WIAC report *Recommendations to Improve the Workforce and Labor Market Information System*. The Department's formal response to the WIAC is attached.

**Recommendation A.1.** Invest in in-depth qualitative research to identify, update, and refine understanding of the reasons why individuals leave the labor force and why they remain out of the labor force. This could take the form of a competitive bidding process for focus groups organized by need, region, and/or population group. Such research should embrace principles of qualitative research that facilitate self-identification of issues and problems from among the respondents.

**Recommendation A.2.** Engage in stakeholder discussions to identify gaps in existing labor market information that impede our understanding of labor force participation. This may include state and federal health and human services agencies, the Federal Reserve system, think tanks and advocacy organizations focused on the dynamics of labor force participation, and a cross-section of state, tribal, and local governments.

**Recommendation A.3.** Direct BLS to publish additional demographic data from the existing CPS about individuals who are nonparticipants but indicate that they want to work.

**Recommendation A.4.** Direct BLS to investigate opportunities to expand the data that can be published about reasons for nonparticipation that are collected and categorized under "Other." One opportunity may be improving the clarity of the question or explaining the answer options.

**Recommendation A.5.** Explore opportunities to expand the questions in the CPS or supplemental surveys to capture additional details about labor force nonparticipation, particularly for individuals who report that they want a job.

**Recommendation A.6.** Fund efforts to assemble a data system focused on answering questions about labor force nonparticipation. Such a system should consider the feasibility of combining existing and alternate data sources to assemble longitudinal data systems that reflect the workforce system's need to understand people's journeys into and out of the labor market and the underlying reasons, barriers, and opportunities for workforce system intervention to promote success for all workers.

**Recommendation A.7.** Direct BLS to consider increasing the CPS sample to provide greater coverage at the state level so that states may leverage the benefits of the survey as it currently stands as well as the new questions to address labor force nonparticipation. The Secretary should



also direct BLS to estimate the cost of expanding the sample on a state-by-state basis so that states may provide funds to increase the sample size for their state.

**Recommendation A.8.** Providing UI filers (not just recipients) with information on job postings, training, and the location of or even contact names within AJCs. This information should be provided multiple times either through email or text messages to act as a catalyst to promote employment.

**Recommendation A.9.** Utilize existing WLMI to implement focused marketing strategies to reach those individuals who may be unemployed but have not filed for UI and provide them with information on jobs, training, and the availability of the AJCs and the services they offer. Similar marketing efforts should also be developed to target individuals with disabilities, with a special emphasis to connect them with AJCs so they can have access to the wide range of services an AJC can provide.

**Recommendation A.10.** Encourage apprenticeship and training agencies within the states to work with unions and trade schools to promote apprenticeship opportunities and trade school curriculum that can lead to lucrative careers. Contacting high schools and conducting outreach activities to students in their early high school years is important so students are aware of career options other than those that require a college education.

**Recommendation A.11.** Encourage AJCs to utilize social media or other non-traditional means to conduct marketing and outreach of WLMI to reach populations that may not be responsive to traditional outreach efforts. This would include the Department providing the AJCs with tools and technical assistance toward that end. As an example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, CareerOneStop conducted a successful social media marketing campaign through YouTube, Spotify, and Pandora to reach populations that were unaware of the resources that CareerOneStop provides.

**Recommendation A.12.** Both the Department and the state workforce agencies should conduct marketing and outreach activities specifically targeted to promote how workforce agencies can use WLMI with employers to enhance their recruitment, hiring, and retention. By making employers more aware of the types of business concerns that can be addressed by workforce agencies and the AJCs, workforce agencies can provide a value-added service to enhance the human resource component of business—emphasizing enhancement rather than enforcement.

**Recommendation A.13.** Create and regularly update a comprehensive list, by federal department and agency, of industrial policy efforts that depend on WLMI provided by department.

**Recommendation A.14.** Take steps to ensure that the agencies responsible for these efforts are fully aware of [DOL's] WLMI resources and how to access and use them.

**Recommendation A.15.** On a regular basis, gather requests from these agencies for improvements in WLMI that would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts to promote the ability of U.S.-based industries to compete in global markets.

## WIAC Recommendations from November of 2024

The WIAC, with a new slate of members, submitted five additional recommendations in their November 2024 WIAC report *Reimagining the Workforce and Labor Market Information System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Those recommendations are summarized below, and the Department's formal responses are attached.

**Recommendation B.1.** Strengthen the coverage and accuracy of the NLX, so that it can serve as a low or no-cost foundation for near-time labor market information products providing timely, accurate, and local skills-based WLMI.

**Recommendation B.2.** Encourage, incentivize, and enable open, innovative, and actionable information, reports, and dashboards that result from collaborative work among and between the state partners in the WIOA and WLMI communities. A collaborative approach will ensure that advancements made by any individual state, local or tribal government can be shared by all of them and lift the whole WLMI system.

**Recommendation B.3.** Develop a national data sharing partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation and their state counterparts to match and leverage demographic data collected from motor vehicle license applications with state payroll administrative data collected in the UI program to enhance administrative data with much-needed demographic information and improve record matching throughout the system.

**Recommendation B.4.** Test the potential to produce new products that report the impact of local labor market shocks on skill demand and career transitions so that the WLMI system can proactively prepare to meet the needs of its constituents in the face of future challenges.

**Recommendation B.5.** Ensure that the data already produced by the BLS is made broadly available to the public through a robust, modern API. As new data sources are developed, these should also be made available through the API.

## Attachments/References

- WIAC Recommendations: *Reimagining the Workforce and Labor Market Information System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; November 2024
- Acting Secretary of Labor Response to *Reimagining the Workforce and Labor Market Information System for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; December 2024
- WIAC Recommendations: *Recommendations to Improve the Workforce and Labor Market Information System*; January 2023
- Acting Secretary of Labor Response to *Recommendations to Improve the Workforce and Labor Market Information System*; August 2023