

# Workforce Information Advisory Council

## Summary of Virtual Meeting

### December 8, 2021

### 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET

The Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC) was convened for a virtual meeting at 12:00 PM on Wednesday, December 8, 2021. The Council was convened pursuant to Section 308 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Pub. L. 113-128), which amends section 15 of the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 (29 U.S.C. § 491-2) and in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended (5 U.S.C. App.) and its implementing regulation at 41 CFR 102-3.

Mr. Steven Rietzke, Chief, Division of National Programs, Tools, and Technical Assistance (DNPTTA), Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Council, convened the meeting. The entirety of the meeting day was open to the public and concluded at 4:00 PM on Wednesday, December 8, 2021.

#### **In Attendance:**

##### **Members of the Workforce Information Advisory Council**

Bruce Madson, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (Chair)

Thomas Anderson, Wellons Land Company and Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Alicia Crouch, Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Lesley Hirsch, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Adrienne Johnston, Florida Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research

Dean Jones, Greenville County Workforce Development Board

Chelsea Mason – Placek, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Andrew Reamer, George Washington Institute of Public Policy, George Washington University

Jennifer Zeller, Georgia Power

##### **Members of the Council Not in Attendance**

Daryl Bassett, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Deborah Carlson, Texas Workforce Commission

### **Invited Speakers**

Nick Hart, Ph.D. President, Data Foundation

Julia Lane, Co-Founder, Coleridge Initiative

### **Staff**

Steve Rietzke, Chief, DNPTTA, ETA (DFO)

Don Haughton, ETA

Lauren Fairley, ETA

Pam Frugoli, ETA

Danielle Kittrell, ETA

Julie Hatch, BLS

Ken Robertson, BLS

Michael Wolf, BLS

Cynthia Forland, Forland Consulting

Torrie Nickerson, The GA Team

Betsy Roberts, The GA Team

### **Members of the Public Offering Comments or Called Upon to Address the Council**

Douglas Holmes, UWC – Strategic Services on Unemployment & Workers Compensation

### **Others Attending for All or a Portion of the Meeting**

Allison Forbes, LMI Institute

Yufanyi Nshom, ETA

Marty Romitti, LMI Institute

David Schmidt, NV Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation

Fran Valentine, Indiana Department of Workforce Development

### **Subcommittees Reporting During this Meeting**

#### Subcommittee Two: Data Sharing and Standardization

Lesley Hirsch (Chair)

Deborah Carlson, Texas Workforce Commission

Dean Jones, Greenville County Workforce Development Board

Bruce Madson, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

## **Proceedings: December 8, 2021 12:00 PM ET**

### **Welcome and Review of Agenda**

**MR. RIETZKE** convened the meeting of the Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC). He provided opening remarks on the agenda for the day. **MR. RIETZKE** thanked the Council members for their participation at the meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Council members who were present at the meeting introduced themselves.

**MR. RIETZKE** turned over the platform to **Lesley Hirsch**.

## Opening Statements

**Lesley Hirsch**, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, provided opening statements and introduced the members of the Data Sharing and Standardization Subcommittee.

**MS. HIRSCH** shared a presentation on the subcommittee's progress to date. She explained that the subcommittee initially expressed interest in the WIAC's 2018 recommendations report regarding data sharing, but ultimately decided to consider modifications, additional requirements and caveats. **MS. HIRSCH** explained that the subcommittee is responding to three needs relating to data sharing: the need to evaluate workforce and employment programs; the need to organize states to avoid duplicative efforts, especially the technical and legal aspects of data sharing; and the need to understand movement within the labor market across state boundaries. These needs require interagency, interstate, or intergovernmental data sharing. **MS. HIRSCH** identified the major barriers of a complete data sharing solution: access to data due to privacy and confidentiality controls; problems with data quality; and the lack of common data models.

**MS. HIRSCH** referenced the 6<sup>th</sup> recommendation from the *Recommendations to Improve the Nation's Workforce and Labor Market Information System, 2018*. She emphasized the WIAC's call for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to support the capacity of state agencies to carry out evidence-based policymaking, further referencing the evidence-based policymaking recommendations that identified the vehicle for data sharing as a National Secure Data Service (NSDS). **MS. HIRSCH** also shared a list of experts the subcommittee met with to inform their dialogue on the NSDS. The list included two members from the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building (ACDEB).

**MS. HIRSCH** outlined the goals and anti-goals of a National Secure Data Service. She identified the NSDS as a service that would allow agencies to submit data and have it matched. **MS. HIRSCH** explained that the desired achievements of the NSDS are to achieve more and higher quality activity in evidence-building, analytical capacity at all levels of government, and the development of a talent pipeline of public and private sector analysts using data for the public good.

In conclusion, **MS. HIRSCH** provided an overview of the subcommittee's draft recommendations and the foundational principles for the NSDS as identified in the Data Foundation report, *Modernizing U.S. Data Infrastructure: Design Considerations for Implementing a National Secure Data Service to Improve Statistics and Evidence Building*, July 2020.

The subcommittee's draft recommendations are as follows:

1. Take immediate action to support the establishment of a National Secure Data Service (NSDS) styled after the concept of a Federally Funded Research Center
2. Articulate and champion key NSDS design principles
3. Publicly commit to USDOL's engagement
4. Fund state engagement

The Data Foundation's Foundational Principles for the NSDS are as follows:

1. Transparency and trust
2. Legal authority to protect privacy and confidentiality
3. Independence
4. Legal authority to collect data from agencies

5. Scalable functionality
6. Sustainability
7. Oversight and accountability
8. Intergovernmental support

## Featured Speaker Panel Discussion

**MS. HIRSCH** moderated a panel discussion with invited speakers Nick Hart, Ph.D. President, Data Foundation and Julia Lane, Co-Founder, Coleridge Initiative.

**MS. HIRSCH** asked the panelists to discuss the immediate benefits of a National Secure Data Service to the workforce and labor market information systems.

**Julia Lane**, Co-Founder, Coleridge Initiative indicated the need for better data on jobs, unemployment, employment, and labor market activity that can be used at the state and local level. The infrastructure to achieve this does not currently exist and therefore it is difficult to know what impact the shocks to the labor market are having on people.

**MS. LANE** proposed a question, “How can we knit together a state infrastructure that can share data across agency and state lines that can utilize existing data for more purpose that can help disadvantaged populations and provide better services and better value to the tax payers?” **MS. LANE** indicated this is what the NSDS can do.

**Nick Hart**, Ph.D. President, Data Foundation stated that immediate benefits are difficult to measure as these efforts are extremely hard to implement inside government. The design and intent of the NSDS is for the long-term and not short-term. The NSDS is intended to begin the process of modernizing the federal statistical systems. It is also intended to be a whole of government services that can cut across different agencies. **MR. HART** shared that implementation will take years.

**MS. HIRSCH** asked **MR. HART** and **MS. LANE** to identify the must-have features of the NSDS and how to ensure the NSDS has these features.

**MR. HART** identified three, top-tier, must-have features. First, clear leadership capability. It requires senior level leadership because it requires engagement with state, local, and federal agencies. Second, political will. The interest in sharing data across agency silos will rise to political debates due to privacy concerns and how privacy protections are being responsively deployed, and the agencies’ self-interests in not sharing data. Third, money. There is an upfront investment need from government.

**MS. LANE** stated that the most critical must-have feature of the NSDS starts with a value proposition. She provided an overview of the three use cases as identified in the ACDEB report. The three use cases are: complimentary measures to help inform evidence at the state and local level on labor market activity; education workforce transitions; and health statistics.

**MS. HIRSCH** asked the panelists to share what DOL could do to support the successful development and implementation of the NSDS.

**MS. LANE** explained that the DOL can help to clarify the value proposition of the NSDS.

**MR. HART** agreed with **MS. LANE**’s sentiments on the value proposition. He also shared the importance of DOL being the first federal agency to support development and lead the charge in the implementation process of the NSDS.

**MS. HIRSCH** explained that the subcommittee's recommendations on data sharing, to the Secretary of Labor, focus mainly on instituting an NSDS as recommended in the Evidence Act. She asked **MR. HART** and **MS. LANE** to discuss the positives and negatives of on a central effort like this and what important issues might be left behind as a result of this focus.

**MR. HART** provided background information on the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSE). He stated that a key provision that is not yet being used, that could be helpful for the NSDS, is the Presumption of Data Accessibility. **MR. HART** emphasized the importance of layering new capabilities on top of the current system without interfering with the things that currently work well.

**MS. LANE** stated that with access to the rich natural resource of state data, it has become increasingly possible to answer state and local questions and further enhance the programmatic capacity to help the DOL answer questions that are critical to local officials. Building an infrastructure around that is the end goal, which is represented in the structure of the ACDEB. Additionally, a useful recommendation to the WIAC is to look forward at what data might be used in the future, aside from administrative data.

**MS. HIRSCH** concluded by asking one final question to the panelists, "Can you discuss the monetary requirement that would be involved in implementing the NSDS?"

**MS. LANE** stated that the annual base-line cost for the platform to serve 50 state departments of labor is \$5 million a year. She also indicated that any additional funds should come from philanthropic organizations.

**MS. HIRSCH** thanked **MR. HART** and **MS. LANE** for their time and thoughtful comments.

## Large Group Discussion

**MS. FORLAND** facilitated the large group discussion on the reactions to the panel discussion. She encouraged the Council members to consider the responses from the featured speakers and contemplate the ideas that **MS. HIRSCH** presented. **MS. FORLAND** asked the Council members for their thoughts and comments on the idea of a National Secure Data Service.

In the discussion that followed, the Council members asked questions, shared ideas on how the NSDS could be valuable to their individual work, and considered criteria to include when building a recommendation for the NSDS. Overall, the Council members expressed unanimous support for the NSDS.

## Public Comment

**MR. RIETZKE** opened the platform for the public attendees to ask questions and provide comments and feedback.

**MR. RIETZKE** announced that he had received one request to address the Council.

**MR. RIETZKE** welcomed public attendee, **Douglas Holmes**, UWC – Strategic Services on Unemployment & Workers Compensation.

**MR. HOLMES** thanked the WIAC for the opportunity to provide public comments at the meeting and shared background information on UWC and its engagement in the unemployment insurance (UI) space and workers compensation. **MR. HOLMES** shared a presentation on employer reactions to the WIAC's recommended expansion of information required in UI quarterly wage record reports. He provided a historical context of UI quarterly report requirements and informed the meeting attendees that individual employers, payroll companies, and third-party

administrators report UI quarterly wage reports and have not been included in the conversation to enhance the UI wage record. **MR. HOLMES** outlined state workforce agencies and UI tax departments as the primary entities that receive and manage state UI quarterly wage information and that the primary function of these records is to determine UI monetary eligibility for claimant benefit rights. In conclusion, **MR. HOLMES** shared employer views of expanded UI quarterly report requirements and encouraged the WIAC to consider the additional burden the expansion would place on employers. He also noted the importance of demonstrating the value and benefit to employers in order to gain their support surrounding these efforts.

**MR. RIETZKE** thanked **MR. HOLMES** for his comments.

### **Subcommittee Presentation of Recommendations to the Secretary**

**MS. FORLAND** facilitated the discussion on the draft recommendations as presented by the Data Sharing and Standardization Subcommittee. **MS. FORLAND** encouraged the Council members to consider what the WIAC might be able to recommend in the area of data sharing and what concrete recommendations to put forth to the Secretary of Labor regarding data sharing and the NSDS.

The Council members and staff reviewed and clarified the specifics of the subcommittee's list of 4 draft recommendations. **MS. FORLAND** asked the Council members to share one outcome or functionality that they would like to see as a result of the NSDS.

In the conversation that followed, the Council members shared ideas and discussed potential successful outcomes of the NSDS.

The resulting ideas and outcomes are as follows:

- Post-secondary outcomes. For example, work flows from high school to college to employment both in and/or out of state.
- Regional nuances and trends. For example, industry strengths and weaknesses in the Southeastern labor market compared to the Midwest labor market.
- Educational program/provider-level data across state lines while respecting privacy/confidentiality.
- Usability of data to get better, usable information to inform and advise workers and students on career and education pathways.
- A robust understanding of the low-income workforce and the services and activities they are connected to throughout their employment growth. The ability to tap into a variety of other agency data sources to see how all the different supports are or are not effective in moving individuals into better employment opportunities. (i.e., TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, Housing, and Health Services)

### **Other Business: Large Group Discussion on Potential Criteria for Potential Build Back Better Funding**

**MS. FORLAND** led the Council through the exercise of discussing the potential criteria the WIAC might recommend for using the proposed additional \$100 million in WLMI funding, should the Build Back Better bill move forward.

The detailed list of potential criteria for potential BBB funding is as follows:

1. Allocate funding as soon as possible.

2. Look for the greatest potential ROI, with both funding to states and at federal level.
3. Focus on increasing state Workforce Information Grants.
4. With additional WIG funding, emphasize ability to use those funds for: 1) participation in multistate data collaboratives; and 2) new product development.
5. Balance of funding *not provided directly to states through WIG* to support the development of better state and local occupational employment projections.
6. Investments in evidence-building strategy, learning agenda.
7. Look to previous WIAC recommendations, especially the emphasis on enhanced UI wage records.
8. Need to emphasize local and regional participation, not stopping at the state level.
9. Align with broader economic recovery efforts.

In the discussion that followed the Council members and staff discussed and clarified the specifics surrounding several of the potential criteria ideas. The two criteria of particular interest were criteria 1 and 2.

**MS. FORLAND** asked **MR. RIETZKE** to provide practical examples of the criteria, *allocate funding as soon as possible*, from the DOL perspective.

**MR. RIETZKE** shared that competitively awarded money would require an internal process. From initiation to award, the process could take as long as 10 to 12 months. If money were added to the formula driven grant amounts that are allocated to WIGS, which could potentially be added as soon as program year 2022. Lastly, a technical assistant contract could take approximately 6 months.

**MS. FORLAND** asked the Council members to consider the second criteria, *look for the greatest potential ROI, with both funding to states and at federal level*, and to share ideas on how to demonstrate a return on investment to policy makers.

**MS. HIRSCH** and **MS. MASON-PLACEK** agreed that the funding to states should be a competitive process with states building their case for how they would use the funding to support various state and/or federal workforce initiatives.

**MR. HAUGHTON** provided feedback on having a mix of competitive funding and formulaic funding allocation by increasing Workforce Information Grants to States (WIGS) to account for years of flat funding.

**DR. REAMER** also expressed interest in the idea of formulaic funding allocation for states due to varying workforce and labor market information infrastructure by state.

## Closing and Next Steps

**MR. RIETZKE** thanked the Council members for their attention and contributions throughout the meeting. He shared that the Worker and the Work Subcommittee will be presenting during the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 meeting and the fourth and final meeting in this series will take place on Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

The meeting was adjourned.