

Workforce Information Advisory Council

Summary of Virtual Meeting

August 19, 2021

12:00 PM – 4:00 PM EDT

The Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC) was convened for a virtual meeting at 12:00 PM on Thursday, August 19, 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 Thursday, August 19, 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

Daryl Bassett, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

Deborah Carlson, Texas Workforce Commission

Alicia Crouch, Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Lesley Hirsch, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development

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

Andrew Reamer, George Washington Institute of Public Policy

Jennifer Zeller, Georgia Power

Members of the Council Not in Attendance

Adrienne Johnston, Florida Bureau of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research

Dean Jones, Greenville County Workforce Development Board

Invited Speakers

Chike Aguh, Chief Innovation Officer, Office of the Deputy Secretary

Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary

William Beach, Commissioner, Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS)

Brent Parton, Senior Advisor for Workforce Development, Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

Staff

Steve Rietzke, Chief, DNPTTA, ETA (DFO)

Michael Wolf, BLS

Don Haughton, ETA

Cynthia Forland, Forland Consulting

Pam Frugoli, ETA

Annette Summers, The GA Team

Julie Hatch, BLS

Torrie Nickerson, The GA Team

Ken Robertson, BLS

Betsy Roberts, The GA Team

Staff Not in Attendance

Lauren Fairley, ETA

Others Attending for All or a Portion of the Meeting

Guadalupe Cerritos, BLS

Joseph Heavner, ETA

William Katt, Lewis-Burke Associates

Tamika Ledbetter, State of Alaska DOL

Fran Valentine, Indiana Department of Workforce Development

Kevin Reuss, ETA

Kim Vitelli, ETA

Katie Smith, Walgreens

Bill Wiatrowski, BLS

Subcommittees Reporting During this Meeting

Subcommittee One: UI Wage Record Enhancement

Dean Jones (Chair)

Alicia Crouch

Jennifer Zeller

Subcommittee Two: Changing Nature of Work

Andrew Reamer (Chair)

Daryl Bassett

Adrienne Johnston

Bruce Madson

Subcommittee Three: Funding for State and Local WLMI Capacity

Chelsea Mason – Placek (Chair)

Thomas Anderson

Deborah Carlson

Lesley Hirsch

Proceedings: August 19, 2021 12:00 PM EDT

Welcome, Review of Agenda and Goals for August Meetings

MR. RIETZKE convened the meeting of the Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC). He provided opening remarks on the agenda for the day in addition to the objectives for the series of August meetings. **MR. RIETZKE** thanked the Council members and the Steering Committee for their work on the draft recommendations.

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

Opening Statements

MR. RIETZKE introduced Council Chair, **Bruce Madson**.

MR. MADSON recognized and thanked the Council members for their work on various subcommittee topics. He reflected on the unforeseen changes that have taken place in society due to the pandemic and addressed the uncertainties that lay ahead for employers, workers, and their families as it relates to career and life decisions.

MR. MADSON emphasized the importance of having timely and accurate data in order to support those decisions. Timely and accurate data will also assist in the process of improving on the utility of the data that is generated.

MR. MADSON explained that the most important decisions state and local workforce boards have to make right now revolve around getting citizens back to work. While this is a challenging time in the Workforce and Labor Market Information (WLMI) realm, it is also an exciting time.

Panel Discussion: US Department of Labor's Interest In and Uses Of Data and Labor Market Information

MR. RIETZKE moderated a panel discussion with invited speakers Chike Aguh, Chief Innovation Officer, Office of the Deputy Secretary and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary. **MR. RIETZKE** explained how the Council's draft recommendations were a direct correlation to the changing nature of work and he emphasized the importance of WLMI data in managing pandemic recovery efforts.

MR. RIETZKE asked the panelists to share their perspectives on the importance of improved WLMI in order to better understand the changing nature of jobs and work.

Chike Aguh, Chief Innovation Officer, Office of the Deputy Secretary proposed a list of questions regarding jobs and work that are directly impacted by labor market information (LMI). He also emphasized how critical LMI is as it relates to race and gender.

The questions were as follows:

- What is the work of the future?
- How do we best prepare workers for that work?
- How do we make sure that the worker and the work find each other?
- How do we guide our social benefits to support people through job transition?
- How do we map out the job transition path for workers?
- How can we grow LMI to ensure individuals are in quality jobs, and how can we grow LMI to better understand where quality jobs are located?
- How are we serving people across the scope of equity?

Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary also raised the issue of equity and who LMI is serving. In order to ensure underserved populations and communities are benefiting from government services and outreach, DOL should provide evidence in the form of LMI. Additionally, **MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ** described the need for LMI to better understand how specific interventions improve outcomes for individuals in underserved communities.

MR. RIETZKE asked **MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ** to provide comments on the changes to alternative and contingent work arrangements in relation to the Contingent Worker Supplement (CWS).

MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ shared that DOL is very interested in understanding trends in alternative work arrangements. There is a growing body of work that suggests that some of the practices that the CWS tracks have major impacts on workers and their opportunities for economic mobility and economic security. One example of an area that the CWS has helped shed light on is scheduling practices. **MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ** explained that a large portion of the workforce face unpredictable and irregular schedules of which they are not able to exercise control. There is evidence that suggests this has negative impacts on workers. There are few resources that provide information on characterizations of scheduling practices. This is an example of an important practice where **MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ** would like to see more LMI on.

MR. RIETZKE asked **MR. AGUH** to discuss the need for data-driven decision-making and evidence-based policymaking as it relates to DOL's goal to more effectively serve American workers and advance key principals for equity and job quality.

MR. AGUH explained that if DOL can provide enough high-level information to individuals, business, and organizations they will be better situated to make decisions that positively impact workers and productivity.

MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ presented the topic of outcomes as it relates to job quality. He stated that there is compelling evidence that shows workers themselves report that a job is more than wages and employment. **MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ** suggested that this should be reflected in the data that is gathered and in the outcomes that are considered when evaluations are constructed for labor market interventions at DOL and across the country.

MR. RIETZKE asked the panelists to share their perspectives on the biggest challenges of gathering and using LMI to advance the administration's agenda.

MR. AGUH described two challenges in gathering and using LMI:

- Federated nature of the workforce system, citing multitudes of data in many different systems.

- Usability of data for all parties.

MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ agreed with **MR. AGUH**'s sentiments and also provided two additional challenges:

- The need for data that can disaggregate specific populations that are hard to track and have historic marginalization or past exclusion.
- The need for continuous investments in data.

MR. RIETZKE concluded by asking one final question to the panelists, "Do you have particular priorities related to WLMI that you suggest the Council members study, moving forward?"

MR. AGUH reiterated the importance of outcomes in order to better understand who WLMI data is serving. He suggested attaching skills and skill taxonomies to the unemployment insurance (UI) wage record and emphasized the need for usable data.

MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ shared that additional data on outcome measures and the ability to merge different data sets together are particular priorities that he would like to see in future activity.

MR. RIETZKE thanked **MR. AGUH** and **MR. HERTEL-FERNANDEZ** for their time and thoughtful comments.

Leadership Remarks from Guest Speaker

MR. RIETZKE introduced Dr. William W. Beach, BLS Commissioner.

William W. Beach, BLS Commissioner expressed his thanks to the members of the WIAC and his excitement to be working with DOL during this time of enormous change in the workforce and in the nature of work. **DR. BEACH** emphasized the immense changes that took place during the pandemic and how we think about work. He identified the work place as a force of change and the need for it to be defined and internalized. Since we no longer have to go to the workplace anymore, it comes to us. **DR. BEACH** outlined potential widespread implications due to the impending permanency of working from home and the increased need to understand new work data. He cautioned that the mobile workplace is rich with policy issues.

DR. BEACH concluded by underscoring the role of the LMI network in future policy debates. He challenged the Council to rethink their mission in regards to what they should focus on over the next 20 years in order to best develop data to analyze change.

MR. RIETZKE thanked **DR. BEACH** for his time and informative remarks.

Subcommittee Reports

MR. RIETZKE facilitated the review of each subcommittee's expedited recommendation draft. He called upon each subcommittee chair to summarize their recommendation based upon the guiding questions:

- What is the recommendation?
- Why is it important?
- Concrete steps for implementation.

In the discussions that followed each subcommittee report, the Council members provided immediate thoughts, comments, and feedback on each recommendation draft.

Pages two and three of these minutes provide a listing of each subcommittee and its members.

UI Wage Record Subcommittee Report

Jennifer Zeller, Georgia Power spoke for the UI Wage Record Subcommittee. The recommendation is to enhance the wage record with three data elements: occupational job title, hours worked, and job site location.

MS. ZELLER indicated that these three data elements had been previously included in the 2018 recommendations. The subcommittee chose to recommend the same enhancements due to the pandemic's impact on the labor force.

MS. ZELLER correlated the importance of this recommendation to the lack of information available during the pandemic and being able to better understand what is happening to regional economies and the national economy. Additionally, the enhanced unemployment insurance (UI) wage record will allow for a better understanding of labor force participation: full time, part time; occupation, industry; effectiveness of training programs; and greater insight for crossmatching to identify inequalities.

Concrete steps for implementation of enhancing the UI wage record are to begin a pilot program that will assist in building understanding for a national roll out in partnership with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). **MS. ZELLER** stated that key takeaways of the pilot program would be a set of best practices for states and the opportunity for states to share data.

Changing Nature of Work Subcommittee Report

Andrew Reamer, George Washington Institute of Public Policy spoke for the Changing Nature of Work Subcommittee. The recommendation is that the Secretary of Labor create a departmental working group to facilitate improvements in publicly available data and information on the changing nature of work. The three aspects of the changing nature of work, that the subcommittee focused on, are: contingent and alternative work arrangements, the rise of remote work, and the impacts of technological change.

DR. REAMER explained that this focus is important because of the trends in the labor market regarding contingent work, remote work, and technological change. **DR. REAMER** shared context stating that currently there is a great deal of work going on in these three areas that will benefit from attention from the Secretary's Office.

The concrete steps for implementation are to create a working group that will bridge political decision-makers and staff at BLS and ETA in order to better understand what is happening as it relates to work arrangements and how to effectively respond to it.

Funding for State/Local WLMI Subcommittee Report

Chelsea Mason-Placek, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO spoke for the Funding for State/Local WLMI Subcommittee. The recommendation is to restore funding to support state WLMI operations; both directly funding states at an adequate level and funding ETA and BLS at adequate levels to support state WLMI efforts.

MS. MASON-PLACEK explained that this recommendation is important due to the inadequacy of state and federal WLMI resources for the past 20 years. The inadequacies were magnified by the pandemic and the increased need for state driven LMI work and analysis. **MS. MASON-PLACEK** described the WLMI system as infrastructure that needs to be continually invested in so that it can grow and adapt in order to prepare for the future.

The concrete steps for implementation are to continue to have sustainable and adequate funding once the Secretary of Labor confirms and prioritizes the request of Congress to double funding for states, ETA, and BLS in support of WLMi efforts.

Public Comment

MR. RIETZKE opened the platform for the public attendees to ask questions and provide comments and feedback. No public attendees requested to speak. **MR. RIETZKE** requested that the public attendees send a request in advance of the next meeting if they would like to address the Council.

Discussion on Subcommittee Recommendations

Former WIAC Chair, **Cynthia Forland, Forland Consulting** led the Council through the final action item on the agenda, the discussion on subcommittee recommendations. The Council members reviewed each recommendation draft. In the conversations that followed, the Council members discussed, debated, and asked questions on each subcommittees' draft. **MS. FORLAND** charged each subcommittee chair with reflecting on the key questions and data elements discussed in order to make changes to their draft recommendations at the next meeting on August 24th.

Closing and Next Steps

MR. RIETZKE expressed his pleasure with the discussion and resulting ideas from today's meeting. He shared that members will be separating into subcommittee groups during the August 24th meeting in order to finalize edits on the draft recommendations.

The meeting was adjourned.