



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Research Portfolio Project

SUMMARY

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) requires the Department of Labor (DOL) to conduct periodic evaluations of WIOA affiliated programs and services. These reports summarize existing evidence related to the effectiveness of WIOA programs and services, as well as ongoing trends of the workforce system, to identify research gaps and future research topics that would contribute to the continuous improvement of WIOA programs and services.

The WIOA Research Portfolio: A Research Evidence Scan of Key Strategies Related to WIOA summarizes the state of evidence and identifies research gaps related to four overarching topics: case management, integrated service delivery, training programs, and youth services.

The WIOA Research Portfolio: A Scan of Key Trends in the Labor Market and Workforce Development System describes recent and long-term economic and policy developments with relevance for the public workforce system, including changes to the workforce system occurring in the wake of the pandemic. Key topics covered include broad economic changes and changes in employment and wages, changes to industries and occupations due to technology, growth in the remote workforce system services, and policy trends related to the public workforce system.

Information sources that informed these reports include large-scale and foundational studies of the workforce system, data from workforce development research clearinghouses, previously conducted evidence reviews, and existing studies on similar topics of interest.

These reports are the first products completed by the WIOA Research Portfolio study.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Research Evidence Scan of Key Strategies Related to WIOA:

- **Some evidence suggests that the receipt of case management can improve employment and earnings in a workforce development setting, though a number of related strategies have less of an evidence base.** An important research gap is that little is known about which services or elements of case management are responsible for positive impacts.
- **There is limited rigorous evidence on the effect of integrated services that are closely related to WIOA.** Because integrated service delivery is inherently a system-level intervention, there may be challenges with implementing a rigorous evaluation of integrated services models or programs. One of the purposes of





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integrating services is to allow participants to more easily access additional needed services, but there is limited evidence on the impact of these services.

- **There are promising findings from recent evaluations of career pathways and sector-based training, whereas transitional jobs have generally not been found to have long-term impacts.** There are research gaps related to the impacts of work-based learning strategies implemented under WIOA, and what initiatives help increase training completion, obtaining credentials, and obtaining jobs in the field of training.
- **Studies of training models provided to youth demonstrated some positive impacts, particularly those that included some combination of work experience or supportive services in addition to training.** The evidence on interventions serving specific populations of youth is limited and finds mixed results, and it does not always examine interventions provided exclusively to these populations.

Scan of Key Trends in the Labor Market and Workforce Development System:

- **Unemployment rates, labor participation rates, and projections for employment by industry have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic's economic fallout, in some cases substantially.** The unemployment rate rose by more than ten percentage points in early 2020 and has not returned to its pre-pandemic rate. Substantial effects on certain types of employment have been observed with notable increases in medical research and decreases in hospitality/leisure. Labor force participation has recently declined, especially among women. Wage and income growth has remained slow with low-wage jobs disproportionately held by black, Hispanic, and women workers.
- **Technological advancements, including the rise of automation, have led to shifts in the type of skills demanded by the employers particularly during the pandemic.** The need to minimize human contact during the pandemic may have further accelerated trends of automation and remote work. The number of US employees who work remotely, which increased by 115% between 2005 and 2015, rose dramatically during the pandemic with one survey finding 42% of US workers working remotely in May 2020.
- **The pandemic necessitated the acceleration and expansion of remote and virtual workforce services. If proven effective, such services could be maintained after the pandemic.** Though some aspects of public workforce services have been online since the 1990s, many core programs were held in person. As a result of the pandemic, many job seekers and workforce practitioners have had to rapidly improve their digital literacy skills, while practitioners have delivered services to large numbers of laid-off workers. Challenges to accessing remote services remain, include lack of access to computers, high-speed Internet connections, and spaces to participate in services.





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