

STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
LABOR MARKET INFORMATION DIVISION

WORKFORCE INFORMATION GRANT REPORT PY 2014-2015

The Alabama Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Division (ADOL/LMI) makes every effort to make use of the established methodologies provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics and Employment and Training Administration in a cost-effective, and superior manner to collaboratively fulfill responsibilities as Alabama's official statistical data collection and analysis experts for the Alabama Workforce Investment System. Customers of Labor Market Information have had access to quality information, data and resources to help make data driven decisions at the local, regional and state levels.

As the U.S. economy has been gaining momentum from the recent recession, many aspects of the labor force have shifted. As a result, the strategic plans for both education and economic development have been raised to a higher level. This shift has boosted the desire for planners in the State of Alabama to seek labor market information more than in the past. The increased emphasis on labor market information is beginning to open doors to stronger partnerships with other workforce agencies. ADOL/LMI has increased its efforts to deliver information through all types of mediums, with the lofty goal of ensuring that all career counselors, career technical teachers, postsecondary teachers, local and regional planners, policymakers, economic developers, and workforce development boards are aware of this free labor market information available to them. ADOL/LMI works to reach as many customers as possible through personal interaction, because better understanding seems to emerge from this approach.

During PY 2014, ADOL/LMI continued its efforts to build a stronger relationship with partner agencies across the state. The enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) presented the perfect opportunity to build stronger bonds with partner agencies. During the program year, monthly WIOA planning meetings were established in preparation for the transition from WIA to WIOA regulations. These monthly meetings with agency partners, Vocational Rehabilitation, Dept. of Human Resources, Adult Education, Career Technical Education, Workforce Development, and the Alabama Career Center System were scheduled to discuss how the State will transition from WIA and to begin the work on formulating a *State Unified Plan* for WIOA, which is due March 2016. ADOL/LMI continues to support strategic plans in both economic development and education. Analysis of the industry clusters associated with *Accelerate Alabama*, the economic development strategic plan for the state, continues in order to expand the information provided in the reports the division has created. The division is working closely with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Career Technical and Workforce Development staff to provide information on high demand careers and train career coaches how to encourage their students to research careers before making decisions. During this program year LMI staff began working with this group to formulate some career ladder information for students to reference. All of this information is vital for students who, when entering 9th grade, are required to submit a *4-year Career Preparedness Plan* prior to their return to school year August 2015-2016.

ADOL/LMI strives to stay abreast of new training, economic development, and funding initiatives in the state, so that the division can customize reports and materials to best meet the needs of customers. In addition, the division continues to follow, as closely as possible, economic shifts at the local level. Furthermore, the division stays current with national initiatives in economic development, training, and connecting workers with employers. Many of the reports that are produced by ADOL/LMI are a result of staff research on what is happening in other states

and at the national level. The division strives to ensure that the State of Alabama continues to produce the most useful labor market information products, with available resources, in the nation.

A result of ADOL/LMI staff staying current on the hot topics nationally in employment trends, Alabama funded a statewide *Skills Survey* at the end of 2013. The goal of the survey was to report actual employer responses to questions on their difficulties hiring qualified applicants and their difficulties with current employees. The survey was completed in early 2014, and results are posted in an online dashboard. The topic of workplace skills will continue to be a source for additional research and reporting. ADOL/LMI is contemplating the content of the next survey, when it should occur, and should the same survey process be utilized, or a new process be developed.

DELIVERABLES AND ACTIVITIES

I) WORKFORCE INFORMATION DATABASE (WIDb)

OUTCOMES FOR THIS OBJECTIVE

The Workforce Information Database (WID) is to be converted from version 2.5 to version 2.6 by June 30, 2016. Prior to that date, all core tables including crosswalks were updated with the latest available information according to consortium guidelines. LMI staff has continued to participate in training opportunities through webinars and conference calls to stay abreast of additional information that needed to be added to the database and of changes made to the WID system.

II) INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

OUTCOMES FOR THIS OBJECTIVE

In July 2014 LMI developed Industry and Occupational Projections for the ten workforce development regions. Extensive analysis was conducted to ensure that the OES staffing patterns were reasonable for the substate areas. During the development of the regional projections, some adjustments had to be made to the State totals. The State long term projections were revised in October of 2014, and the regional data was finalized and submitted at that time. At the very end of the previous program year, it was discovered that the data published for the state on the national projections site did not match the data that the state published. Analysis of the Long Term Regional Projections for 2012-2022 had previously revealed some areas that needed some revisions at the state level. This analysis was completed to ensure that the state projections as well as the regional projections were as accurate as possible so they are a reliable source of data for customers to use for both career preparation and industry recruitment.

At that point work began to update the multitude of LMI resources that are based primarily from the long term projections, such as *High Demand Occupations* reports and posters, Career Cluster posters and brochures, *Career Exploration Guide*, *Licensed Occupations Guide*, and various other reports. Towards the end of January 2015, ADOL/LMI staff began work on the *Alabama Statewide Short Term Occupational Projections for 2014-2016*. Data was received from the Economic Model of the Center of Business and Economic Research from the University of Alabama for analysis to use in concert to develop the short term projections. Projections files were submitted to the appropriate location for national review through the Projections Software, created by the Projections Managing Partnership sent by the end of February 2015.

Furthermore, all webinar updates and training events were attended by members of the LMI staff to ensure that the most current information was available to all staff involved in working on all aspects of industry and occupational projections.

III) ANNUAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND OTHER REPORTS

OUTCOMES FOR THIS OBJECTIVE

In October, 2014 the Alabama Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Division, along with several other public and private partners, such as The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education, Alabama Industrial Development Training, and the Alabama Office of Workforce Development, reinstated its partnership with the University of Alabama, Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) to produce State of the Workforce Reports. ADOL/LMI signed a two-year agreement for CBER to produce one State of the Workforce Report each year. ADOL/LMI continues to work closely with CBER to provide them with essential data needed to achieve the ultimate goal of the report, which is to provide recommendations to planners, policymakers, developers, and educators on how to move the economy in a positive direction in coming years. These recommendations are based on labor market information data from ADOL, The Alabama State Data Center, and various other resources. The reports are produced for the State of Alabama, Jefferson County Workforce Board, Mobile County Workforce Board, and the ten regional workforce boards in the state. After the report is published, LMI staff partner with CBER staff to present information from this report and new products from the LMI division to each of the ten workforce development regional boards, to the extent the Governor's office of Workforce Development and the Regional Boards will work LMI in to their regular meetings. Due to the fact that the report was not available until June of 2015, presentations will be made to the workforce boards during the upcoming program year. The most current State of the Workforce Report is available in a downloadable PDF file on the LMI website at the following link; <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/workforcedev/WorkforceReports/Alabama.pdf>.

The LMI division has continued during Program Year 2014 to produce monthly reports based on data collected from the Help Wanted Online (HWOL) data series. In addition, the division has conducted several in-depth studies into the data offered by The Conference Board, Wanted Analytics, and the Help Wanted Online Data Series. Monthly historical data for all counties was organized to allow customers to see the trend of online job ads for specific occupations, both total ads and new ads. This gave planners in workforce development regions a good idea through a visual medium how the demand for specific occupations has changed in recent years, and through the recession. LMI staff also began to realize and explore some additional data features in the Wanted Analytics data module. During analysis of the HWOL data, LMI staff found some reporting problems with the data. LMI staff worked with staff from The Conference Board to get these issues resolved, and continue to work together to refine the data so that it is as accurate as possible. The reports are available on the LMI homepage at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/default.aspx> and the following link provides an example of the statewide 2-page report <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/WORKFORCEDEV/HWOL/AL.pdf>. In addition to the report for the State of Alabama, monthly reports are also published for each of the twelve metropolitan areas and each of the ten workforce development regions. Special HWOL reports are being generated monthly at a county level for specific economic and workforce development councils and boards,

often being presented during monthly board meetings. After each LMI presentation, there is more interest in HWOL reports generated particularly by educators and career coaches/counselors. The division plans to conduct additional analysis and publish even more customized reports with data provided through this valuable resource.

The Business Employment Dynamics (BED) Newsletters continues to be updated on a quarterly basis, and posted on the LMI website at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/workforcedev/BEDPR.pdf> . This report has a nine-month lag period.

ADOL/LMI produces valuable reports in alignment with the economic development strategic plan for the State of Alabama called *Accelerate Alabama*. (Copy of the strategic plan is located at <http://www.madeinalabama.com/assets/2013/03/AccelerateAlabamaPlan.pdf>). This plan identifies eleven industry clusters for planners, developers, and policymakers to target in the state's economic development efforts through 2015. To assist the Alabama Department of Commerce with these efforts, ADOL/LMI continues to analyze the industry clusters associated with the plan, and also explore additional datasets that are valuable in analyzing the progress of these efforts. During the program year, information was added on employment and average wages by firm age. A downloadable PDF document for each of the targeted clusters is available on the ADOL/LMI website under the title *Accelerate Alabama* at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/workforcedev/default.aspx> . (An example of the Aerospace Report is available at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/workforcedev/AccelerateAL/Aerospace/Aerospace.pdf>). The reports were updated in June 2015 and made available to the Alabama Department of Commerce, who will also update them on their website, www.madeinalabama.com, under the information on the respective industry clusters.

IV) CUSTOMER CONSULTATIONS

Workforce development continues to focus improvement efforts in the areas of supply gaps, training issues, and high wage, high demand occupations and industries. The LMI division supports these measures by providing information on high demand occupations that require an associate degree and under, statewide and regional commuting patterns and detailed educational and training data by occupation and/or industry. Continuation of LED program (cooperative program with U.S. Census Bureau) and quarterly updates to LED are ongoing. LED reports also make information available on workers by age and stratification within industry. Industry and occupational analysis of workforce advisory areas and exploration continue as data becomes available.

Customer consultation in Alabama has continued to be evaluated using employer groups, workforce investment partner reviews, requests for publications, training events, and anecdotal information received from customers. During this upcoming year, ADOL/LMI staff will continue to extend the public's knowledge of labor market information and its benefits to the workforce and economy of the state.

There has been continued interest in information and training provided by the Labor Market Information Division. Customers asked for speakers and/or trainers at respective conferences and meetings. LMI staff conducted training at high schools, employer meetings, economic development meetings, career technical education training, and industry association meetings. Information requests came from a wide range of

customers such as workforce development, researchers, economic developers, employers, secondary education, postsecondary education, etc. During PY 2014, LMI staff answered over 423 requests for information made by phone, fax and email. Many of these phone calls involved technical assistance and customer service with callers looking for reports, data, and asking for navigational directions of our online resources. ADOL/LMI saw a large increase in requests for LMI printed materials following events where LMI staff had presented or exhibited (i.e., Workforce and Economic Development Council meetings, Career Fairs, Conferences, Training and Presentations, etc.). There was an increase in requests made by reporters gaining information for stories on the job ad information produced through help wanted online reports. Nearly 47% of the specific data requests have come from economic developers. More resource requests come from education. During this program year, 400 sets of posters, over 8,000 sets of career cluster brochures and over 23,000 Hot 40 posters were disseminated to ADOL/LMI customers. In addition, the career centers began requesting and distributing the new regional Workforce Development Region Hot 40 posters, new Spanish version Hot 40 posters, and giving out over 12,000 of the new regional High Demand Occupations Requiring Associate Degree & Under reports to their customers during the program year.

During PY 2014, LMI staff attended various meetings to become more knowledgeable in labor market trends in the areas and to gain information to help LMI provide better information to customers. ADOL/LMI staff also gave many presentations to different groups, such as adult education, Workforce Development, Rehab, and others. Finally, ADOL/LMI staff participated in multiple planning consortiums.

MEETINGS ADOL/LMI ATTENDED

Consortium Participation

- Served on the Department of Youth Services District 210 Committee and Career Technical Advisory Council.
- Served on the Selma & Dallas County Economic Development Authority's Planning Council.
- Served on the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) National Policy Council, representing the southeast region of the country.
- Served on the High Tech Consortium. The goal of this consortium was to devise a more current definition of "high tech industries" that what was published by Daniel Hecker in 2005.

Membership Associations and Organizations

- Membership to the Economic Development Association of Alabama
- Extended Membership to the LMI Institute partnered with C2ER

Meetings Attended

- Economic Development Outlook Conference, Montgomery, AL
- Annual Workforce Development Conference, Montgomery, AL
- GIS Alabama First Annual Conference
- Local Alabama Workforce Investment Area (Local AWIA) Region meeting, Montgomery, AL
- Selma & Dallas County Economic Development Authority's Quarterly Council Planning meeting

Meetings Where LMI made Presentations

- Calhoun Community College, Decatur, AL
- CTE Summer Conference, BJCC, Birmingham, AL
- Decatur/Morgan County Leadership Group
- Greenville New Career Coaches Training
- Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC) 2013 Annual Conference, Point Clear, AL
- Auburn/Opelika Local SHRM Chapter
- Alabama Business Educators Association (ABEA), Hoover, AL
- EDAA Winter Conference, BJCC, Birmingham AL
- Training for Career Tech Teachers, Ray Thorington Rd Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL

Meetings Where LMI Displayed and Offered Information at an Exhibit

- AL APSE and ACDD 2015 Conference “Waves of Change...Oceans of Opportunity” June 18-20, Mobile, AL
- “Central Alabama Gateways of Opportunity”, Mobile, AL
- Baldwin County College and Career Day, Bay Minette
- 2015 Alabama Association for Persons Supporting Employment First, Mobile

Workforce Board Meetings Where LMI Staff Presented

- Alabama State WIA Board Meeting
- Jefferson County Local AWIA Board Meeting
- WDR 2 Board Meeting
- WDR 3 Board Meeting
- WDR 4 Board Meeting
- WDR 5 Board Meeting
- WDR 6 Board Meeting
- WDR 7 Board Meeting

Central 6 Region County Existing Industry Summit Meetings Where LMI Presented

- St. Clair County Existing Industry Seminar
- Chilton County Existing Industry Seminar
- Shelby County Existing Industry Seminar

Personal Visit and Training to the Following Career Centers in the State

- All of Alabama Comprehensive and Satellite Career Centers

ALABAMA LMI WEBSITE LEVEL OF DEMAND

Website hits by *category* for the LMI website at www.labor.alabama.gov/lmi July 2014 - June 2015:

Help Wanted Online (HWOL) Monthly Reports	5,121
Accelerate Alabama Industry Cluster Reports	8,163
Alabama Underemployment Report	22,843

Underemployment Forecast Report	641
Webinars	4,707
Presentations	6,725

Approximate Total Visits during the period July 2014-June 2015 for the following websites:

www.greenjobsinalabama.com	65,379
www.alabamavlmi.com	6,117

PRODUCT USAGE

Resource Requests

- Career Cluster Posters 525 sets of 16 (8,400 individual career cluster posters)
- Career Cluster Brochures 8,012 sets of 16 (128,192 individual career cluster brochures)
- Hot 40 posters 23,363 (English and Spanish, combined)
- Career Exploration Guides 1,159
- Licensed Occupations Guides 1,452
- Career Website Guides 8,008
- Metropolitan Statistical Area Maps and Workforce Development Regions Maps 504
- High Demand Occupations Requiring Associate Degree & Under Reports 14,945
- Over 12,264 Hot 40 posters, over 7,500 High Demand Occupations Requiring Associate Degree & Under reports, and over 19,200 career cluster brochures have been distributed in Alabama Career Centers throughout the state during this reporting period.

CUSTOMER QUOTES AND ACCOLADES

"Thank you for your quick response and attention to the request for employment data in the downtown Dothan area. You are a great resource to have. May I call on your help in the future? Thank you."

Janet Kervin

Small Business Development Center - Troy

"This information IS GREAT, as is the fast response. Where could I find the number of people in the Civilian Labor Force for Fayette County? Thanks so much for your help!"

David Thornell, CEcD, EDFP

President & CEO

Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance

"Thank you soooo much!!! I truly appreciate it! I just realized today how outdated our posters were. I appreciate you'll be mailing them to me. Thank you again!"

Ivonne Rosado

**Administrative Assistant to the Associate Dean for Workforce and Technical Education
Chattahoochee Valley Community College**

"We appreciate you speaking at our Work Instructors meeting yesterday. You shared valuable information! Can we order 100 of the items (Hot Jobs, etc.) you discussed at the Work Instructors meeting yesterday for Corner High School, Jefferson County? I can pick-up the items at the Career Fair at Boutwell on 04/16. Thank you for agreeing to meet me half way. Thank you for the great service you provide.

James Moore
Jefferson County Education Board

*"Good Morning,
I recently was able to look at the Career Exploration Guide and was very interested in getting a copy for our guidance department. That would be so wonderful and helpful for our students! ... [follow-up email] We received the books Tuesday. I really appreciate you sending them to us so quickly. The other counselors and I are very excited to be able to share that information with our students. I was sitting in on an IEP for a student and the teacher was able to refer to the book to assist the student in post-high school plans. It was very helpful!"*

Laura C. Snowden, M.Ed., NCC
Counselor, G-N
Clay-Chalkville High School

"I am one of the counselors at Corner High School in Jefferson County and attended the Career Development Conference in Gardendale earlier this year. I attended one of your sessions and loved all of the promotional materials that were available. Please let me know the best way to request those free materials for our school. I especially loved the "Hot 40" handout, as well as the individual career specific brochures as well. Thanks so much for your help with this!"

Anya McGill
Counselor, Corner High School

"Good morning, The Director of the University of West Alabama Division of Economic and Outreach Services was recently in our office and liked the LMI posters and material that we have displayed. She asked if it would be possible for them to get some of the information to have in their center on campus. Specifically, she asked for: Career Exploration Guides, Licensed Occupation Guides, Set of the 16 Career Cluster Posters, Sets of the 16 Career Cluster Brochures, HOT 40 Posters – Alabama, and HOT 40 Posters – Region 3 & 6... Just to let you know, we are now using your LMI materials in the claimant profile and food stamp unit claimant meetings."

Larry Jowers
Alabama Career Center - Demopolis
Site Manager

"It was so nice meeting you last week at the Region 6 Workforce Development Council Meeting. I am working on a grant and could use some labor market numbers. What can you pull together on truck driving in the state of Alabama and truck driving in Region 6? I appreciate any help you can give me." ... [follow-up email] "You are the best! Thank you so much for all of this information! You really went the extra mile! I really appreciate your hard work on this project. (I will let you know how the grant goes!)"

Nicole M. DuBose
Workforce Development
Shelton State Community College - Tuscaloosa, AL

"It was a pleasure meeting you yesterday and I appreciate the updated material that you provided. It meant a lot having you take the time to go over all of this wonderful material with our staff. We never knew that all of this information was available to us. This will be very useful when I am out in the field, meeting with our customers [employers]."

Henry J. Lahti
Business Service Representative
Bay Minette Career Center

V) ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO MEET CUSTOMER NEEDS

During the previous grant reporting period, ADOL/LMI developed a plan to organize the multitude of reports and data resources available for each of the ten workforce development planning regions in the State of Alabama. The website was reorganized to include this type of format. The website is updated as necessary to ensure the most current data is available for the respective area. All of these are available at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/workforcedev/default.aspx> under the heading, *Statewide and Workforce Development Products*.

ADOL/LMI continues to place various presentations made during the year on the website for people who attended the meetings or anyone else who might be interested in the information that was presented. These presentations can be found under the heading *Training Materials and Archived Webinars* on the website at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/workforcedev/default.aspx>. Webinars that were conducted in 2012 and 2013 are also available at this location. ADOL/LMI hopes to offer additional webinars in the coming program year.

The *Alabama Licensed Occupations Guide* was updated to include current information from state and federal licensing agencies. This publication is available both in hard copy for customers and as a PDF file for customers to download from the ADOL/LMI website. This publication is available at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/WorkforceDev/LOG/LOG.pdf>.

The *Career Exploration Guide* was updated to include the new projections data and licensing data. Currently the publication is available in hard copy only, however LMI plans to have it available as a downloadable PDF file on the website as an option for customers. The website feature of *Career Exploration Guide* that was created during the previous program year has not yet been updated with the data from the latest *Career Exploration Guide* publication. During the next program year this will be updated, and the PDF added to the website. The website *Career Exploration Guide* is available at <http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/WorkforceDev/CareerExploration/Default2.aspx>.

During the program year, ADOL/LMI renewed its contract with the US Census Bureau, LEHD program. The new contracts through the program allows the program to provide national data, now that all of the states in the country are partners. LEHD Quarterly Workforce Indicators and Mapping data continue to be updated and used in reports to respond to information requests. The LEHD program has developed a new application, the QWI Explorer, which allows customers to be able to compare, rank, and aggregate quarterly workforce indicators through charts and interactive tables. ADOL/LMI has added this feature to its website. LEHD has

been behind schedule in producing updated commuting pattern data through the OnTheMap application, but anticipates adding the 2012 and 2013 data in the coming months. After the commuting patterns are updated, US Census Bureau anticipates getting back on the regular schedule with 2014 data being published by the end of calendar year 2015. Upon release of the 2013 data, ADOL/LMI will update all commuting reports available on the website.

The division continues to update its Comprehensive Interactive LMI System ACLMIS. The website link is <https://www.alabamavlmi.com/> and the Green Jobs in Alabama website at <https://www.greenjobsinalabama.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>, which was created through a grant from the ARRA in 2009.

The results of the *2013 Skills Report* remain available through a link on the ADOL/LMI website at <http://www.dashhound.net/alskills/>. This site is maintained by the contractor who ADOL/LMI funded to conduct the survey and display the survey results. The dashboard allows customers to be able to download tables and graphs with the survey results in a PDF file. In addition, summary reports for each area are available under the Statewide and Workforce Development Products section of the website.

In addition to internet availability, products have been distributed in training opportunities, emailed to customers in PDF formats, and mailed in hard copies where possible. The LMI Division makes certain that every report that is put on the website has some capability to be downloaded by its users, whether in a PDF format or in an excel spreadsheet for analysis.

VI) NEW TOOLS AND RESOURCES

ADOL/LMI staff developed an online (via Intranet) LMI Product Ordering System for the Alabama Career Center System. This new ordering system provides much needed access to LMI products and publications for Career Center staff to distribute during claimant profile and food stamp interviews, to walk-in clients, educational customers, as well as workforce and economic development customers.

ADOL/LMI strives to produce new products based on the demand of customers across the state. As a result of several visits to Career Centers, it was realized that it would be more beneficial for regions to have regional high demand data, rather than using the statewide high demand data. As a result, LMI developed Hot 40 posters for all of the workforce development regions in the state. When LMI staff realized the extent that the Alabama Career Centers used the *High Demand Occupations Requiring Associate Degree & Under* reports, ADOL/LMI also began generating *High Demand Occupations Requiring Associate Degree & Under* reports by workforce development region. Finally, as a result of a couple of Alabama Career Centers requesting the Hot 40 posters in Spanish, the division created every Hot 40 poster for all regions in both Spanish and English.

Research was conducted to examine ways to use O*NET to produce data for occupations that have certain specified work activities that would be appropriate for people with disabilities. Two new LMI occupational reports were created: 1) *Employment Analysis of Time Spent Sitting* and 2) *Employment Analysis of Vision Importance*. Both reports provide base employment, projected employment, and average annual wages. LMI staff plan to create more of these specialized reports in the upcoming program year.

Created the new *Alabama Education & Training Outcomes – Occupational Projections 2012-2022 Report*. This report was modeled after the national report that was released based on the national projections. Reports were produced for the state and each of the ten workforce development regions, and is available on the website under the Statewide and Workforce Development Products section.

VII) EFFORTS TO CREATE AND SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

With the enactment of the new Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), monthly WIOA planning meetings were conducted in preparation for the transition from WIA to WIOA regulations. These monthly meetings with agency partners, Vocational Rehabilitation, Dept of Human Resources, Adult Education, Career Technical Education, Workforce Development, and the Alabama Career Center System are necessary to work on formulating a *State Unified Plan* for WIOA, which is due March 2016. A representative from the LMI staff participated in the workgroup meetings to develop the *State Unified Plan*, so that the plan would incorporate labor market information to fulfill the requirement that workforce development goals be data driven.

LMI continues to build partnerships with various groups across the state. LMI has ongoing collaborations with Alabama Career Technical Education and with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. The division also plans to explore a partnership with the Alabama Library Association to ensure that all libraries have labor market materials available and on their computers for customers who use libraries to conduct job searches and career exploration. LMI also wishes to increase partnerships with economic development associations across the state.

State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) meetings – In 2014, Governor Robert Bentley created the Alabama Workforce Council to study different aspects of workforce development in the state and make suggestions on how to improve it. One of the suggestions was to create a longitudinal data system to track students from education to workforce, in order to be able to measure the effectiveness of the state's education system to train students for the future workforce. LMI staff participated in the workgroup to write a grant application for federal money to jumpstart this effort through the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). The workgroup consisted of the following state partners: k-12 education ALSDE, Pre K education, community college system, adult education, Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), Department of Labor LMI. In June, the governor set up an office of Education and Workforce Statistics to manage the Alabama P-20W Longitudinal Data System through *Executive Order Number 6*. The office will be housed within the Alabama Department of Labor. The grant application was submitted in June of 2015. The state is waiting to hear back from the US Department of Education regarding the amount of funding it will receive, if any, for the project.

VIII) ACTIVITIES TO LEVERAGE WLMI FUNDING

During a monthly WIOA planning meeting, LMI staff made a presentation to WIOA agency partners outlining the role of LMI through WIA and WIOA. Emphasis was placed on the fact that LMI is mandated to work with the partners to provide data so that future training and workforce decisions are data driven. The presentation

outlined the deliverables in the past training and employment guidance letter for the Workforce Information Grant, so the partners were clear about what LMI is required to do to support the partners in their efforts toward strengthening workforce development. An emphasis was placed on the guidance which states that LMI is to partner with workforce agencies in the state, and leverage funds to support research projects that LMI could conduct that would help support the goals of workforce development in the state.

The LMI division has been printing large numbers of Career Cluster Posters and brochures due to the minimal cost for printing. The presence of a printing shop in the Alabama Department of Labor allows the division to print these resources at a much lower cost than most private printers could. However, there has been discussion to leverage funds from education grants to pay for the printing of these resources in the future. Since the Career Centers now have the LMI Product Ordering System, they are able to distribute all applicable LMI materials to their clients, and they can utilize their own grant funds to cover the costs. This is a move in the right direction to assist the division in leveraging funds to support the resources that the division produces with Workforce Information Grant funds.

FUTURE LMI GOALS

- In its ongoing effort to provide the value of labor market information to various customer groups across the state, the LMI division plans to reach out to industry associations and also employers across the state who are interested in the development of the workforce. It is important to establish working relationships with these customers to enhance the data that we produce.
- ADOL/LMI plans to explore means of conducting surveys with limited funds. Customers have responded well to the skills survey that was conducted in 2013, and have asked for additional surveys of that type for different industries. LMI plans to attempt to do this in the future, working with respective industry groups to create an appropriate survey instrument.
- LMI will contribute data, support, and use data from Alabama's longitudinal data system, once it is developed.
- ADOL/LMI plans to formulate a partnership with the Alabama Library Association to ensure that all libraries in the state have access to labor market information materials both in hard copy and on their public accessible computers. There are multiple advantages to strengthening a relationship with the association, and the division plans to learn about how this partners can assist in our efforts to make our information more widely available.
- The LMI staff will continue to attempt to leverage funds from partner agencies, such as the Office of Workforce Development, Education, Industry, Workforce Regional Boards, etc. With the growing distribution of labor market information throughout the education community in the state, the division is building a stronger partnership with the Alabama Department of Education, Career Technical Education division, and hopes to offer additional data through this effort.

IX) RECOMMENDATIONS TO ETA FOR CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS TO FUTURE WIGS REQUIREMENTS

It has been relayed to ADOL/LMI that ETA has considered including skills gaps as part of the deliverables for future grants. While it is understood that this is needed, it is imperative that states are provided with resources that includes both funds and methods for doing these skills analyses. Currently, there is no appropriate method of measuring skills gaps, especially those that are vital to employers. Most employers don't speak about skills gaps in terms of O*NET. As a result, some research needs to be done concerning how to better measure skills gaps before it is put into the grant deliverables.

With the enactment of the new Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), ADOL/LMI would appreciate more communication from ETA on the changes this new act will mean for the Workforce Information Grant, with respect to both funding and deliverables. Furthermore, it would benefit states to have more specific guidelines concerning the extent to which all agencies in respective states that receive any portion of Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act funds should work together on a regular basis in order to meet the desired outcomes of the act.

The hot topic, at this time, is a shortage of skilled workers. What are skilled and unskilled workers? How are they defined? It would be very helpful if there was a study conducted that would help standardize those definitions in relation to SOC and ONET codes, so that data could be produced for these categories, in the same manner studies were done on green jobs and also high tech jobs.