

State of Utah

PY 2014 Workforce Information Core Products and Services

Annual Performance Report

This report is a description of the activities conducted by Utah's Workforce Research and Analysis Division (WRA) within the Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) during PY2014 for each of ETA's core products. The goal of these activities was not only to meet the requirements of the PY2014 TEGL 23-13, but to also deliver quality customer service through the production and dissemination of labor market information. As demonstrated in this report and in previous year's reports, WRA strives to set a high standard in this endeavor. The activities performed and described below were not able to be performed with Workforce Information Grant Funds only. Additional state and federal funding was necessary to complete the described PY2014 activities.

Workforce Information Database (WIDb)

WRA is currently operating WID_2.5 Annotated edition of WIDb software, including all the core tables as prescribed by ETA. During PY2014, all core tables were populated with current data in accordance with guidelines issued by the Analyst Resource Center. In addition, Utah also populated six non-standard WID tables—mostly geared toward O*NET and occupational skills. Additionally, eight Utah-specific WID tables were populated and updated. WRA updated the content of the database in a timely manner.

To exhibit data from the WID as an Internet product on the Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) website, years ago Utah created its own presentation system called the Utah Economic Data Viewer (UEDV). This is a product within DWS that is exclusive to WRA and our task of making ALMIS data available to the public. WRA is responsible for the UEDV structure, maintenance, and enhancements. The WRA unit is supported by an IT programmer in this process.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/default.do>

The UEDV consists of eight separate modules that present statewide and local level labor-related data. The eight modules are:

- Occupational Explorer—This module focuses upon occupational information, including occupational projections, wages, skill and education requirements, and training programs, and presents statewide information along with regional information (Utah planning districts). Its focus is to thoroughly examine a profile of a single occupation.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoOccinfo.do;jsessionId=EA8E2D2F39C201E76F9249421E116682>

- Wages and Occupational Openings Data (WOOD)—Occupations can be compared against each other, compared in regional environments, grouped together by educational needs or through Holland Codes. This is a tool custom built in response to Utah user feedback.
<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/almiswage/wage-home/>
- County and Statewide Information—Economic and demographic profiles and publications for Utah counties including employment information, population, sales tax, and construction information.
<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/regions/county/index.html>
- Labor Force Data Viewer—Utah employment and unemployment data by county and statewide from 1990 to current.
<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoLaborforce.do>
- Industry Employment and Wages—Industry employment and wage data is collected through the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program. <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoIndustry.do>
- Population Data Viewer—Utah population data is obtained from the Utah Population Estimates Committee. The Utah Population Estimates Committee prepares the official state and county population estimates for the State of Utah.
<http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoPopulation.do>
- FirmFind—This module provides names, addresses, phone numbers, industry, and employment size of virtually all firms in Utah. Information is available for specific county, groups of counties, or for the entire State. It draws its information from QCEW data. <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/firmfind/welcome.do>
- Info Group Employer Database—Utah employer information provided by Infogroup.® <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/gotoEmpdb.do>
- Licensed Occupations—This module was updated in PY13 and files submitted to the National Crosswalk Service Center (NCSC) in PY13. No updates were done to the files in PY14. A new submission for PY15 will be updated and posted by the end of November 2015.
<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/licensedoccup/>

No new tools or products were added to the UEDV this PY. However, maintenance and restructuring work is an ongoing process.

State and Local Industry and Occupational Projections

Utah took a different approach this Projections cycle, producing both statewide and substate industry and occupational projections in the same year. In all previous

iterations, statewide long-term industry and occupational projections were produced in odd-numbered years, then substate executed the following year. In other words, the projections were made from the top down (geographically-speaking).

For this round, Utah took a bottom up approach. With two research staff producing the industry projections, Utah felt it could generate all of its statewide **and** substate industry projections within the required time for production of statewide occupational projections. The idea was to address the projections process once every two years, instead of splitting the process (statewide and substate) across two years.

The statewide projections were derived as the sum of the substate industry projections. These were carefully analyzed by the economic staff to ascertain whether this bottom-up approach produced sensible statewide projections. In this case, we felt it did. As both the statewide and substate industry projections were now available, the occupational projection process could also produce both statewide and substate output. The statewide occupational projections were generated and submitted by the June 30, 2014 deadline.

Utah felt it a better approach to generate all of its occupational projections at the same time. This way, where occupational projections are being referenced throughout the various modules of Utah's Economic Data Viewer, all geography levels are referencing projections covering the same time period.

The 2012-2022 occupational projections are incorporated into the WIDb database after WRA regional economists assign "Star Ratings" to selected occupations. This Star-Ratings concept is a customized Utah approach to present occupational projections in a more meaningful way for users. Ratings are applied to occupations based upon a combination of occupational openings and median wages in those occupations. High openings and high wages are assigned a five-star rating, down to low openings and low wages with a zero-star rating. The Star Ratings are designed to give an occupation an economic evaluation through the combination of openings and earnings. Star ratings are only applied to occupations that meet a minimum threshold of base-year employment. Utah has used the Star Ratings approach for several years.

A summary pamphlet of these occupational projections is titled Utah Job Outlook with a subtitle of Jobs with the Best Career Options. This pamphlet speaks to openings and fastest growing, and speaks to occupations with various training levels, and incorporates Utah's star rating in relation to the best outlook for jobs based on openings and earnings.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/outlooks/state/outlookbrochure.pdf>

Long-term occupational projections were presented to Utah's customers in a full-listing spreadsheet on the state website. These are made available at both the statewide and

substate designation. Additionally, Utah's UWORKS system (DWS' Employment Counselors' client career planning tool) links directly to the appropriate occupational information in the WIDD database. This makes it easier for the department's Employment Counselors to use WRA projections to help their customers make informed career decisions. WRA also worked with the department's internal training staff to develop a required web-based Employment Counselor training module. WRA information is a key tool in Employment Counselor advice to job-seeking customers, so their familiarity and knowledge of occupational, wage, and job opening information is imperative. Therefore, the WRA information and staff are key components in DWS building and maintaining a comprehensive Employment Counselor training program.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/outlooks/state/index.html>

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/employmentcounselors/>

Short-term industry projections were developed and posted on the WRA webpage for the 2014-2016 timeframe.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/publicat.html>

Annual Economic Analysis and Other Reports

WRA participates yearly in writing an annual Utah employment, wage, labor force, industry, and county-level summary within Utah's collaborative Economic Report to the Governor (ERG). The ERG has been produced yearly for decades and is directed by the Department of Economic Analysis (DEA) within the Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB). DEA spearheads the solicitation and compilation of information and analysis pertinent to Utah's annual economic profile. Agencies such as the Utah State Tax Commission, the Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Utah, and the Utah Office of Education are contributors, among others. The WRA piece is of primary importance as WRA provides the data (graphs and tables), analysis, and written commentary on the state's employment performance, employment distribution, industry profiles, wage performance, unemployment statistics and labor force profile, and analysis upon significant labor force issues pertinent to the times. As employment is most state's key variable in measuring the performance of the economy, the WRA piece is of high value and priority.

<http://gomb.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/01/2015-ERG.pdf>

In PY2014, WRA posted numerous workforce information reports and profiles on the Internet through several different modes, including publications in downloadable formats, data and statistics in the Utah Economic Data Viewer with downloadable formats, blog postings on economic topics, press releases of the latest Utah labor market information, and other economic interests directly within the web pages themselves. Users are alerted to the postings when they sign-up for our e-mail subscription service.

All web products are placed on the web within days of their production, and for printed material, even before their hard-copy printing. WRA continually encourages customers to go to the web to access our products and the latest labor market information. Our publications often promote web links, either in relation to an article or as a stand-alone advertisement.

County-level data was produced and made available on the web. Each county has its own web page. It is visualized through the Tableau software with the most current set of economic variables. The most recent available data is presented in a format we call "Snapshots." These are updated at least four times a year; always when new QCEW data becomes available. These Snapshots include current county-level employment, unemployment, initial unemployment claims, new construction permitting and gross taxable sales. These various categories are represented in their own tabs. The Snapshots are spearheaded by the Tableau visualizations of charts and graphs, but there is also a short narrative attached to each page that gives an economist's summary of what is seen.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/regions/county/index.html>

County annual profiles are also made available in the Tableau format. Some economic variables are not updated as often as is the data within the Snapshots, such as population figures or major employers, so a calendar year summary of each county is made available with more economic variable covered than those appearing in the Snapshots. The annual profiles take on much the same look as the Snapshots, but include more economic variable tabs than the Snapshots. Additions include major employers, population, demographics, and income. Upon clicking on a data chart, the data can be downloaded to a text file that can be imported into Excel or other program.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/eprofile/index.html>

(Note: Several years ago Utah incorporated Tableau as its data visualization vehicle for data presentation on the web. Tableau's strength is that it allows the viewer to be interactive with the data. The viewer can choose the reference variables, geographies, or time frames of their choosing.)

WRAs flagship publication is *Local Insights*. It was produced four times during PY2014, and each of the state's eight multi-county regions is assigned its own publication. It focuses upon the current state of the local labor market along with economic articles of ad hoc topics and interests. It is scheduled for production when new QCEW county-level data is available. It parallels the Snapshots in terms of the quarterly data covered, but it lags the timing of the Snapshots due to it being a publication that needs to be formatted, edited, and printed. The Snapshots are designed to get the QCEW data to the public as quickly as possible. *Local Insights* is designed to give people a tangible product to hold in hand.

Local Insights includes more than just a summary of the current QCEW data. It also includes a highlighted feature article made pertinent to the local area. Various topics

highlighted in the various PY2014 *Local Insights* included occupational employment outlook, local-level new hire statistics (LED data), summary of new ACS data, and county-level construction permitting and its history. The idea is that when new data elements are published by either WRA or other government agencies, this local data will be evaluated and presented.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/localinsights/current/index.html>

WRA continues to expand its LMI web presence through the division's blog, which focuses on local economic events, economic and demographic data release announcements, marketing of our publications and web tools, and other information surrounding and affecting the Utah economy. WRA is using the blog as a primary forum to analyze and write about pertinent, current, or time-sensitive economic issues. A regular blog schedule is in place, with each Regional Economist assigned to contribute. Blog posts are produced with statewide economic subjects and posted as a statewide summary, but blog posts are also generated and posted for local, regional subjects and interests as well. <http://economyutah.blogspot.com/>

Several years ago the WRA unit posted a Utah veteran's labor force profile. This profile was updated in PY2014 with the most recent ACS statistics. Pushing veteran employment and employment opportunities is a key component DWS' services to the public. Information on Utah veterans is highly sought and referenced, so we have been told this profile garners high interest in the legislative and political sphere.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/laborforceveteran.pdf>

Two other labor force profiles have been created and were updated in PY2014. These include an Older Workers profile, and a Women in the Labor Force profile.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/laborforceolder.pdf>

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/hardatwork/>

Throughout PY2014, WRA undertook a major employer survey to ask about the employer community's difficult-to-fill jobs. WRA partnered with the University of Utah's Center for Public Policy and Administration (CPPA) in both building this survey and carrying out its administration. This survey was a major endeavor throughout PY2014 and involved much staff time in insuring the building of the survey, its proper sampling and methodology, preparing the employer list, and then coding and analyzing the employer responses.

This survey was largely funded through job growth monies coming from the collection of state unemployment insurance taxes. But since WRA is an economic unit, and the focus of the study was upon a key issue within the economy, the survey was housed in WRA and the staff time was funded under this grant.

The survey's necessity stemmed from the larger debate that is going on throughout the nation in terms of "skills gaps." It has been noted by those on the blunt end of that

debate, namely the education community and those who fund and design it, that the debate is largely centered upon “failures” within the labor force and by extension, the education community that empowers the labor force. Rarely is there dialogue about the role and accountability that the business community plays within this dynamic. Many have felt that there needs to be a more rounded analysis and understanding toward this issue. To do this, Utah’s economic development and education communities were supportive when DWS spearheaded this surveying of employers and their difficult-to-fill jobs.

As the fallout of the skills-gap debate falls upon the education community, this study was designed to go after higher-end jobs (those requiring advanced skills, training, knowledge, and/or STEM emphasis). The idea is that if this survey were to guide policy or debate, then the debate should be at a high enough level to have an economic impact. The occupations that “lead” the economy should be the occupations under scrutiny.

The survey brought forth what many have suspected when trying to identify true skill gaps; that low offered wages play a major role within many perceived “skills gaps.” Employers can toss the skills-gap net in a very broad fashion, but economists know that wages are a major part of any skills gap dialogue. A true skills gap is largely isolated to labor-supply difficulties without wage difficulties. This survey largely brought to light the wage deficiency in the broad dialogue, and has helped to put it in a more balanced light in the Utah labor dialogue. The survey has been found of interest and demanded for presentation by the Lieutenant Governor’s office, the Utah State Legislature, the economic development community, higher education, and other business leaders.

The survey and its findings were presented this PY at the LMI Forum in Portland, Oregon. We were asked to participate as this is a study in line with vacancy surveys that many states undertake. This was a different approach upon that subject as it was more focused on higher-end occupations, and it was only focusing upon the areas that employers identified as hard-to-fill instead of just speaking about and quantifying all of their job openings.

The publication of this survey was presented in two forms to the public; a 24-page “brief” summarizing the study and its key points, and a full 86-slide full report and designed in a PowerPoint format.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/difficulttofill.pdf>

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/difficultfilljobstudy.pdf>

Customer Consultations

WRA must operate within the parameters of the greater DWS structure. Much of our customer feedback comes to us through the various DWS representatives who interact

with the state and local business, education, association, and employment services communities, as well as the WIBs. DWS representatives are a part of collaborative boards between business, economic development, higher education, and the labor supply (which is being represented by DWS). They convey feedback and data requests to WRA, and WRA partners with them on product design, enhancement, and delivery.

DWS maintains a feedback link on the department's webpage. Any feedback that comes through that avenue specific to the WRA webpage and its products is relayed to WRA for inspection and action.

<https://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/feedback/welcome.do;jsessionid=60EB4C201CEC43D5F4B64734F56C2B17>

WRAs Regional Economists are required to regularly dialogue and/or meet with the department's regional directors and Workforce Development representatives in the areas the Regional Economist's represent. The regional front-line workers are in direct contact on a regular basis with their local education, employer, economic development, and chamber of commerce communities. These local DWS representatives advocate DWS services to these communities, including the promotion of LMI. These DWS representatives are an invaluable source of feedback to WRA on the acceptance, usage, and development of WRA's labor market information, its presentation, and its effectiveness.

DWS also maintains a communication's department. This department is active in community outreach and information promotion. This department helps WRA in the clear production and dissemination of information to the public. The communication's department offers us regular feedback on what they are hearing and seeing from the customers to whom we supply data and information.

One aspect of the communication department's outreach was to undertake a DWS "familiarization tour." These were started just as the PY2014 was coming to an end. (One "stop" occurred in PY2014). The department dubs these as FAM Tours, with the FAM standing for familiarization. Each DWS region of the state is being targeted, with a session planned for each major city within each region. The idea is to invite all types of interested parties who may be familiar, or particularly unfamiliar, with who DWS is and what services and products we can offer. The idea is to have each major division within DWS showcased, of which the WRA division represents the labor market information piece. The session involves a division-by-division introduction to what product and service is offered within each division, and then a table set up for personal interaction and demonstration. WRA was a key part of this showcasing. From this, not only can WRA teach the public about its services, but the public can also give WRA direct feedback as to its products usefulness, assistance, and ways to improve product and delivery. These "tours" just started in the last month of PY2014 and will continue through PY2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyu3HW1gXXo>

Utah's greater economic community requests the WRA unit to be a leading part of Utah's economic message and interaction by being an active member of the Utah Economic Council. Response and participation in this request will be covered in more detail under the Partnerships and Collaborations section.

Activities Undertaken to Meet Customer Needs

Regional Economists and the LMI Analyst provide a range of services from data requests to economic reports to informational presentations. We consider immediate access to an economist by the public a key part of the economist's job. Ad hoc requests are a major part of the work activity. On a monthly basis, all economic staff are required to log their work activities, data requests, presentations, and such activities through a Survey Monkey format. This is done not only for informative statistics for ETA, but DWS upper management reviews monthly summaries of all DWS activities and this accounting helps in that summarization. In PY2014, WRA staff addressed close to 800 data requests and gave a total of 42 presentations with a total audience of 2,350 to state and local audiences on multiple economic topics.

WRA does its share of economic support work for public and private entities vying for federal or state grant monies related to supporting the Utah labor force, or supporting industries and industry clusters in the state. The foundation of these grant applications are generally industry or occupational profiles, or overall economic profiling and forecasting. Neither DWS nor WRA are applying for any of these grants, but WRA becomes the source these grant-seekers turn to for supplying the economic variables they need to lay the foundation for the grant request.

WRA continues to receive requests for economic analysis to support the Immigrant Investor Program (EB-5) as administered through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services agency. This program encourages foreign investment into local areas with a goal of job creation. A key criterion for allowable foreign investment into a local metropolitan area is that area's unemployment rate in relation to the national unemployment rate (needs to be one and a half times higher). These areas of high unemployment are called Targeted Employment Area (TEAs). The program is supported by the Utah Governor's office, and building off WRA's close relationship with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) LAUS program (unemployment rate calculations), WRA has been designated by the Governor to oversee and identify the TEA unemployment rate designations and certify all TEA requests. Utah has chosen to evaluate these unemployment calculations down to the census tract level to help stimulate investment in high-unemployment areas and to foster the job creation required of these investments. Over the years, Utah has seen several projects take shape and create jobs with the help of this program. WRA maintains a link within the DWS website that informs economic developers and investors which areas within Utah qualify with a TEA

designation for the most recent year. The website is updated annually (or more often if needed) and includes contact information for those wanting to connect with WRA staff in developing their TEA proposals. WRA has also worked with educating legislators in the state who have shown interest in supporting the TEA program.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/statewide/tea/index.html>

STEM is a hot topic on the workforce and economic development landscapes nowadays. To help in the navigation of economic development and public policy, WRA undertook to standardize a STEM occupational definition in Utah, providing the state with an objective evaluation of what is STEM and what its needs are. This characterization was done following a Brookings Institution philosophy and methodology. Having this objective and unbiased formulation helps to counter other STEM lists or activities as promoted by special interest groups trying to promote their agenda and/or trying to influence the state legislature or other economic officials; the administrators and guardians of state resources and social energies.

WRA participates in the Utah Economic Council, a regular collaboration of Utah economic agencies, academia, and private sector representatives who work toward evaluating and collaborating on Utah economic issues and needs. WRAs work on these endeavors is not funded by the Economic Council. But a low cost is involved, and WRA feels this meets part of the WIG grant's fundamental goal of promoting LMI, its marketing, its use in practice, and the overall economic development of Utah. More is expounded on the Council and its economic value in the Partnerships and Collaborations section below.

There are many other things that could be listed under this category, as meeting customer needs is the heart and soul of the work within any LMI shop. Being available, marketable, accessible, unbiased, trustworthy, efficient, and personable are all major parts of operating a successful labor market information shop.

New Tools and Resources

WRA continued migrating the presentation of much of its webpage design and delivery of product through the Tableau software. Tableau allows the user to actively choose the visual presentation of local labor market information. WRA began experimenting with Tableau several years ago with its web tools. This has blossomed as WRA staff became more proficient with Tableau and was given DWS permission to allow the presentation of LMI data to differ from the presentation of other DWS web information. The successful use of Tableau and its dynamic presentation capabilities has caught DWS' eye, and WRA is supporting the Tableau presentation of other DWS data.

Tableau allows users the flexibility to customize their view of LMI through filtering, timeline adjustments, and criteria adjustments. WRA has found this tool to be

immensely helpful in the quest to meet all customers' needs in that the tool is dynamic in nature and allows the customer to make choices as to what is presented in the graphs and tables. Additional benefits are derived from the ability to quickly update visualization by simply adding new data to a core table.

WRA can state that using Tableau as our product delivery vehicle has reduced production and publication costs, has increase data-delivery time noticeably, and allows for staff to spend more time working on other products and resources.

Efforts to Create and Support Partnerships and Collaborations

WRA partnered with the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and the other workforce councils representing regions and industries across the state in PY2014. The current state workforce agency structure has led WRA to partner with local economic development groups and key workforce stakeholders through our relationship with the Economic Service Area (ESA) directors. The ESAs are DWS's segmentation of the state into various regions. Each ESA has a director administering DWS' functions and support in each of these regions. WRAs regional economists are designed to support ESA directors with site visits and support in council, chamber, or other local meetings requiring an economic-profiling presence. WRA also supports activities of ongoing regional councils and to be assessable economic resources to the local WIBs, Workforce Development Specialists, and the business community they aspire to enhance.

Spearheaded by the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah, a Utah Economic Council was formed in PY2013. The WRA Chief Economist is a standing member of this council. It includes representatives from private industry, Utah's higher education community, Utah advocacy groups, and multiple state government agencies with a tie to the Utah economy. The Council's goal is to promote economic dialogue and action in Utah, to address relevant Utah economic issues, and to promote a spirit of economic cooperation and understanding throughout Utah. WRA continued in PY2014 to participate in and support this conglomeration.

Out of this Economic Council an economic club was born (The Economic Club of Utah), designed to facilitate community gatherings and lectures centered on Utah's economic issues. Economic topics of interest are promoted, with leading speakers and panels showcased. WRAs Supervising Economist again this PY served as the club's president.

WRA continued to use the concept of an LMI Analyst to coordinate the work of the economists with the needs of the ESAs in their workforce development endeavors. This work varies widely from one region to another, including data requests, participation in workgroups, providing analysis for economic development site selection projects, presentations of local economic information to various audiences, and local training. It

also includes trainings for customer groups on what type of LMI data is available, how it can help one's business/career/choices (etc.), and how to access and find this information on the WRA website.

WRA continued partnering with The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) in updating custom LMI for that agency's favored economic clusters. These include custom-defined industry sectors such as Information Technology, Life Sciences, Advanced Composites, and Digital Media, among others. WRA provided profiles of establishments, employment, and wages for these non-traditional sectors based upon a custom assembling of NAICS codes. WRA also provided GOED with county-level average wage data for verification of companies meeting GOED-approved tax incentives. New or expanding companies are required to produce jobs meeting or exceeding 120 percent of the location county's average monthly wage to receive the tax incentives.

For an economy of its size, Utah has a significant aerospace industry in Utah. It is one of the primary clusters as identified and promoted through GOED. GOED is looking to nurture this industry and understands that training and showcasing a ready labor force to support said industry is a major part of expanding and/or attracting more aerospace business. GOED has spearheaded a partnership effort of aerospace representatives, high school and technical college administrators, and DWS to put in place an education pipeline for aerospace. This is designed to produce production and technical-skill employees and not engineers and rocket scientists. One of aerospace's concerns is for an available production workforce. A pilot program is being established in two area high schools to steer kids into machinists and other technical programs, and then two area community colleges to accept these student's work and to further their progress beyond high school. Internships with the aerospace industry are also a part of this package. (This may sound familiar to the "German model" if you are familiar with that). WRAs role was to showcase the demand for these jobs, the potential demand for these jobs, the desirable wages that can develop around these jobs, and the strength inherent in this cluster and its important position in the state economy. This WRA information was the key piece for industry and GOED to convince the state legislature to appropriate funding to support this education pipeline and, by extension, support the further development of the Utah economy.

DWS strives to offer data and analysis to address the themes presented by policymakers represented by the Utah legislature's mandated Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission and the Intergenerational Poverty Advisory Committee, all related to the goal of ending long-term dependence on public assistance in Utah. DWS maintains a tracking system designed to measure welfare dependency and intergenerational use of public assistance. As such, an Intergenerational Poverty Report offers detailed analysis on labor force attachment, public assistance (PA) programs from the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), and lifetime use of public assistance. The WRA research staff was involved in the data analysis for this report, along with contributing to the narrative and graphics.

WRA economists continue to support the work of the Governor's Women in the Economy Commission by compiling workforce and demographic data to paint the picture of how women contribute to and are affected by the state of the Utah economy. WRAs Chief Economist serves as a member of the commission, and another economist serves on the research subcommittee which is currently working to develop research projects to collect information via focus groups across the state. WRA plays a crucial role in helping the commission achieve its goal of increasing awareness of the role of women in the Utah economy.

The Utah Technology Council (UTC) is a private-sector association for "growing and protecting" over 5,000 high tech, clean tech and life science companies in Utah." It desires to help Utah's IT community make business connections and address skill shortages in the IT community. STEM occupations are a current hot topic across the nation and are a vital part of the IT community's skill package within its labor needs. UTC approached WRA to help them develop a 'hot" IT STEM job list. UTC approached WRA for its knowledge on the subject, and WRA felt its expertise and unbiased approach would help give the list a degree of objectivity.

WRA volunteered to be a test state as part of an ETA-funded grant to further evaluate the use of "real-time LMI" data; or in other words, on-line job board summarizations. Utah had flirted with Help Wanted Online data in year's past but was unconvinced of its quality, and of course the price is always a concern. In the current environment, WRA was asked to evaluate several real-time job-board vendors and ETA would purchase a six-month use of chosen vendor for WRA to evaluate its use and effectiveness in relation to being a help/supplement to the traditional LMI information. WRA was willing to put some time and effort into this project. WRA feels it is part of a greater LMI/federal government community across the nation and looks upon such efforts as not only a way to contribute to this community, but also to learn and further its own use and knowledge of LMI tools and how they can be used to better serve WRAs customers. Upon evaluation, WRA gained confidence in the real-time LMI data and incorporated its use into various projects and evaluations. It was helpful to line it up with the traditional LMI, particularly industry demand and occupational needs.

WRA has also been closely involved with our state's preparations for the transition from WIA to WIOA. Members of our staff are on steering committee workgroups to represent labor market information as discussions unfold regarding the implementation of WIOA and components of that system including administrative data analysis, sector strategies, and developing a Unified Plan driven by regional industry analysis.

The Utah Legislature has mandated an ongoing evaluation of Intergenerational Poverty in Utah. The unique structure of DWS here in Utah being a combination of agencies that in the past were separate, such as the welfare activities, food stamps, and the unemployment insurance reporting activities, puts DWS in the unique position to track

welfare recipients and their family across time in juxtaposition with their work activities and earnings. Therefore, DWS is the lead agency to report upon the Intergenerational Poverty progression and analysis. As this is a research activity, it naturally falls within the WRA sphere of production.

Support of our state's emphasis on Intergenerational Poverty continues to be provided by the economists in WRA. The yearly report includes a section explaining the role of local economic conditions relative to the change in the number of people in our state identified in the cohort of those experiencing generational welfare dependence.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/edo/intergenerational/igp14.pdf>

<http://le.utah.gov/interim/2015/pdf/00002929.pdf>

Activities to Leverage LMI-WI Funding

Each of Utah's WIBs has access to a Regional Economist assigned to their area that develops and produces information responsive to the needs of the particular region. Regional economists develop web products such as the county economic snapshots, county job growth tables by industry, major employer lists, county economic and demographic profiles, and industry briefs, all used extensively by Utah's WIBs for decision making and strategic planning. The local WIBs strongly support having regional economists who produce extensive local area LMI and serve the state's various WIB regions. WIGS grant money is not enough to support Utah staffing with four Regional Economists. Therefore, DWS has provided state funds that partner with the foundational WIGS funding to make possible Utah's four Regional Economist positions. Over half of the Regional Economist funding comes through other monies supplementing the WIGS LMI production. Utah's use of Regional Economists helps to focus more of WRAs work and analysis upon the state's local areas.

The Regional Economists and the LMI Analyst work closely with regional councils, employment centers, schools, and a wide variety of other local stakeholders and customers to develop and continually improve products and services. To partner and serve the needs of the councils, Regional Economists and the LMI Analyst provide a range of services from data requests to economic reports to informational presentations. In PY2014, WRA staff addressed close to 800 data requests, and gave a total of 42 presentations with a total audience of 2,350 to state and local audiences on topics ranging from accessing LMI on the web to presentations and evaluations of the Utah economy and its local areas.

The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) is a uniquely built agency in relation to how most other states departmentalize welfare and work activities. DWS was created 19 years ago as a response to the Clinton-era welfare-to-work initiative. Various state agencies were brought together under one roof, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, Medicaid, Child Care, and the labor-exchange activities known in many states as Job Service. This one-stop combination offers Utah

the unique administrative opportunity to study the flow of customers through these disparate programs, such as the transition from the support programs like TANF and Food Stamps into the self-sustaining activities of job training, job search, employment, and even following post-TANF employment earnings over time to measure outcomes of TANF-program success. This social-services-and-job-search-activities combination provides DWS with unique information as to which programs and activities DWS should emphasize in terms of work-achievement success, which pieces within programs are successful, or which programs have minimal effect. These are the type of questions and issues that the unique multi-agency structuring of DWS offers for evaluation.

The data needed to answer these questions and to follow customers through time are stored in the agency's data warehouse. It becomes a matter of identifying, organizing and pulling pertinent data, then analyzing the product to come to research-based conclusions. The goal is to improve the labor market integration mechanisms for people who may be economically disadvantaged, or displaced and challenged by the labor market.

This was the DWS impetus in developing a research team five years ago that is housed and managed within the WRA unit, and partially funded by WIGS grant money. These researchers also work on traditional LMI-related research as well, and are the production team for the long-term statewide and substate industry projections. Utah's two-person research team (reduced to one during PY2014) is another example where other federal and/or state monies are used in partnership with WIGS grant money to enhance job-market evaluations and outcomes, in this case for economically-challenged segments of the community.

Recommendations to ETA for Changes and Improvements to WIGS Requirements

The move to not require a signed cover letter to accompany this summarization is a very welcome addition.