

Wyoming's PY 2014 Workforce Information Grant Performance Report

Introduction

Research & Planning (R&P) was part of a major merger between Wyoming's Department of Workforce Services and Department of Employment, finalized in PY 2011. During the merger, R&P became part of the Office of the Director and now reports directly to the Agency Director. In PY 2013, R&P successfully leveraged its position within the Office of the Director to gain agency support for a U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) Grant application. R&P was awarded a three-year, \$722,000 WDQI grant. The WDQI award, along with new Memorandums of Understanding with the University of Wyoming, the Wyoming Community College Commission, the Wyoming Department of Education, and 11 data sharing agreements with Labor Market Information shops in other states, positioned R&P to produce products to track Wyoming's high school and college students, WIA participants, State incumbent workers, and other employment and training participants into the workforce.

The WIG grant, state funds, stimulus funding under the Green Jobs initiative, and workforce research funding under the Affordable Care Act have allowed R&P to establish and develop an infrastructure of administrative databases, relationships with data providers, associated establishment survey work, and analytical strategies over the past two decades. This infrastructure has been dramatically advanced by WDQI funding and for this reason WDQI activities are frequently mentioned in this report. Moreover, the WDQI initiative positions R&P to play an even larger role in the implementation of WIOA than we did in WIA. R&P has the

capacity to conduct program evaluations as required by WIOA, and it has in place the capacity to “assess the progress of [WIOA] participants that are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment...” (HR 803, section 102(C)(iv)(II)).

While the work facilitated by the WDQI and WIG Grants in PY 2013 continues in PY 2014, R&P has experienced significant changes in executive leadership over the past year. Our long-time Director of the Department of Workforce Services left the agency recently, and was replaced with an interim and then a permanent director, John Cox, in October 2015. R&P anticipates a continued rich working relationship with our new executive director, and is working with Director Cox and his team to update him on the important Labor Market Information research produced in our section of the agency.

Research & Planning continues to receive funding from the Wyoming Legislature’s General Government Appropriations Bill. R&P’s PY 2012 report, *Monitoring School District Human Resource Cost Pressures*, led to approved funding for PY 2013 and a new report on the same topic. Legislative funding in PY 2014 facilitated the transfer of student records from Wyoming Department of Education to R&P in preparation for Hathaway Scholarship research.

The combination of R&P’s recent grant awards, continued requests from the Wyoming Legislature, position in the Office of the Director, and data sharing agreements with other state LMI shops has allowed us to increase the awareness of LMI products in PY 2014 and allowed us to partner with state, local, and private entities to continue developing important LMI products.

One such partnership discussed in detail later in this report is our work with the Wyoming Workforce Development Council (WWDC) – Wyoming’s Workforce Investment Board. R&P attends all WWDC meetings, produces a quarterly newsletter for the Council, and presents regularly at Council meetings. This level of involvement allows R&P to produce timely, impactful LMI and facilitates informed decision making by the WWDC.

With the exception of this report, for which R&P requested and was granted an extension, R&P has completed the requirements of the PY 2014 WIG on time and within the specified framework. The combination of our organizational restructure and funding sources with diverse research objectives has allowed us to increase the awareness of Labor Market Information products, as evidenced in the remainder of this report.

Finally, R&P’s spending pattern in PY 2014 is not vastly different than PY 2013. Actual expenditures for each of the deliverables are detailed in the remainder of this report.

I. Grantee Activities and Core Deliverables

A) POPULATE THE WORKFORCE INFORMATION DATABASE, ESTABLISH NEW SERVER FOR R&P

Research & Planning’s (R&P) Workforce Information Database is current as of June 30th, 2015. While many of the files produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) programs are revised monthly, our update schedule occurs quarterly. This is due to analyst resource availability and

our normal quarterly data capture schedule. The BLS data are collected as created, archived, and imported on the quarterly schedule corresponding to the second week following the beginning of a calendar quarter. At that time, the data are also posted to our Labor Market Information module managed by GeoSol.

The staff member responsible for maintaining the WID recently resigned and the Labor Market Information Supervisor has taken on the responsibility for the WID maintenance. In previous years we had a staff member that participated in all Analyst Resource Center activities and this was the case during the PY 2014 WIG grant. Going forward we no longer have the staff or time available to continue that relationship.

Extent to which the activities conform to schedule:

The WID portion of the WIG conforms to specified guidelines and was completed on schedule.

Actual Aggregate Expenditures and variance: \$24,932

**B) PRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS**

Outcomes of this objective:

Research & Planning completed the statewide short-term (2014-2016) industry and occupational projections before the February 28, 2015 deadline. Similarly, substate long-term (2012-2022) industry and occupational projections were completed before June 30, 2015 deadline.

Wyoming's analyst developed both long-and- short-term projections using the Projections Suite (PS) software system. The PS system is well supported via the new Projections Central Support website. Short-term projections were published on our website and uploaded to the Projections Central website. Long-term substate projections were also posted to our website and featured in the August 2015 issue of *Wyoming Labor Force Trends*. With the recent decline in oil prices and associated job cuts, our customers have sought out our short-term occupational projections data for guidance in possible re-employment opportunities for laid off workers.

When developing the long-term substate projections, the projections analyst asked QCEW program staff for confidentiality flags for industry employment at the multicounty region level. However, since QCEW was unable to provide flags, other R&P staff were enlisted to create custom queries to develop appropriate confidentiality flags for these series.

R&P's projections analyst attended the Projections Managing Partnership (PMP) Summit in Portland, Oregon on June 9-10, 2015. He also participated in a number of webinars conducted by PMP. Generally, these training opportunities were helpful, especially with preparing for the new occupational separations methodology that states will use for the 2016-2026 long-term projections.

Extent to which the activities conform to schedule:

The industry and occupational projections portion of the WIG conforms to specified guidelines and was completed on schedule.

Actual Aggregate Expenditures and variance:

Actual Expenditures - \$36,300.

C) CONDUCT AND PUBLISH A STATEWIDE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS REPORT AND OTHER REPORTS AND PRODUCTS.

Outcomes of this objective:

The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services placed R&P back in charge of this report during PY 13, after different entities being in charge for several years. This change, which the ETA National and Regional Offices have long recommended, has yielded an immediate and noticeable improvement to this ETA-required LMI deliverable. The 2015 Annual Report may be found at: <http://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/annual-report/2015-Annual-Report.pdf>. The analyses and workforce-based conclusions are driven by properly referenced data and the report looks at the Wyoming workforce and economy in 15 different ways:

- Succession Planning in Wyoming
- Wyoming Job Growth Lags Behind Surrounding States
- Industry Sector Job Growth Forecasts

- Top Five Occupational Job Growth Projections by Education Requirement
- Wyoming 2014 Industry Employment
- Wyoming 2014 Unemployment Rates
- Occupational Fatalities in Wyoming for 2014
- Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes
- Wyoming New Hires by Education Level
- Wyoming Jobs With Access to Benefits
- Wyoming 2014 Unemployment Insurance Benefits
- Nonresident Employment
- Workers' Compensation Claims Trends
- Actual vs. Projected Wages in WIOA Participants
- 2014 Wyoming Quick Facts

R&P's development and production of the economic analysis report ensures that the analyses and workforce-based conclusions are data-driven, the data are properly referenced, and the report analyzes the Wyoming economy and workforce in an in-depth manner. R&P has delivered a report that aligns with ETA expectations for scope and quality.

Extent to which the activities conform to schedule:

The Statewide Economic Report portion of the WIG conforms to specified guidelines and was completed on schedule.

One of R&P's greatest strengths is in the economic research/applied LMI arena. R&P produced a number of high-quality economic reports and special studies in PY 14. All are accessible from the main LMI website (<http://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/>) and include two major reports, the creation of a multi-state LMI partnership called WE Connect, and special studies released through our monthly *Labor Force Trends* publication, plus three special reports taken from our major studies as special features in *Labor Force Trends*. Here are the synopses of the major reports and products:

Workforce Data Quality Initiative Report No. 1 for Wyoming: School Attendance and Employment, 2006 to 2013

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/education_we_connect/WDQI_Pub1.pdf.

The first of the Workforce Data Quality Initiative Reports to be released by R&P details the completion rates and earnings of seven cohorts (2006/07 to 2012/13) of Wyoming high school students during and after high school. The study is the first of its kind by R&P, and is part of the cutting-edge effort of a few labor market information offices to begin linking education and workforce outcomes. Outcomes are available by gender and county, and for both general education and special education students.

Construction Labor Shortages in Wyoming and the Nation

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/w_r_research/constr_2014.pdf.

This report begins by examining recent media coverage of the construction industry suggesting a shortage of workers, especially subcontractors, in the Rocky Mountain and High Plains region.

The wealth of anecdotal evidence prompted Research & Planning (R&P) to closely examine construction industry growth, wages, and employment. In this report, we determine which construction occupations are facing a shortage in Wyoming and if support for training in these occupations would alleviate the state's shortage.

WE Connect: Workforce-Education Connection

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/education_we_connect.htm).

The WE Connect effort, spearheaded by R&P, is a tri-state consortium which includes Nebraska and South Dakota. The purpose of WE Connect is to work together to improve LMI products and to inform work-to-school policy by producing quality research on student outcomes in the labor market. WE Connect offers states the chance to communicate on a regular basis about the products and services they are developing, and to establish common outcome measures for education and workforce data. R&P is working to expand the number of states participating in the WE Connect consortium in PY 2015.

In addition to the reports and products detailed above, R&P produced special studies and special reports (taken from our major studies) released through our monthly *Labor Force Trends* publication:

Wyoming Labor Force Trends Articles

July 2014: Local Jobs and Payroll in Wyoming in Fourth Quarter 2013: Modest Job Growth Continues; Training for What? Using New Hires Survey Data to Identify Training Opportunities

August 2014: A History of the Minimum Wage in Wyoming and the U.S.; Now Online: Wyoming Short-Term (2013-2015) and Long-Term (2012-2022) Industry and Occupational Projections

September 2014: The Decline in Teen Drivers: What it May Mean for Wyoming; Wyoming Occupational Fatalities Decrease to 26 in 2013

October 2014: Local Jobs and Payroll in Wyoming in First Quarter 2014: Oil & Gas Jobs Come Back and Overall Job Growth Accelerates; A Closer Look: Ambulatory Health Care Services in Natrona County

November 2014: The Recent Labor Market Downturn as a Natural Experiment, Part 1: Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimant Labor Market Behavior: Length of Benefit Collection and the Likelihood of Exiting the Labor Market

December 2014: The Recent Labor Market Downturn as a Natural Experiment, Part 2: The Effects of Labor Market Conditions and Employer Re-Hiring Practices on Repeat Use of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) System; Technology Jobs in Wyoming, 2003 to 2013; Now Online: Labor Shortages in Wyoming and the Nation

January 2015: Local Jobs and Payroll in Wyoming in Second Quarter 2014: Construction Leads Job Growth; The Recent Labor Market Downturn as a Natural Experiment, Part 3: Previous Unemployment Insurance (UI) Spells as a Predictor of the Length of Future UI Benefit Collection

February 2015: Wyoming New Business Formation in 2012 and 2013; The Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses for 2013

March 2015: Fewer Youth Working in Wyoming; Research & Planning Publishes Community College Market Pay Study

April 2015: Local Jobs and Payroll in Wyoming in Third Quarter 2014: Nearly Half of New Jobs Are in Construction; Understanding How Commuting Flows and Job Losses in Other States Could Affect Wyoming's Unemployment Rate

May 2015: Youth Transitions: Life Events and Labor Market Behavior; Map: Job Growth by State, April 2010 to April 2015

June 2015: Planning vs. Performance: Why Outcome Wages May Fall Short of Accountability Measures; Employment and Wage Data for the Nonprofit Sector; Employment and Wage Changes in Wyoming's Private Coal Mining Sector; Which Occupations Could Be Affected by a Minimum Wage Increase?; New Demographics and Earnings Tables Available from R&P; Workers' Compensation Claims Continue Downward Trend

Note: Each issue of *Trends* includes the following elements:

- State Unemployment Rates – Seasonally Adjusted
- State Unemployment Rates – Not Seasonally Adjusted
- Current Employment Statistics (CES) Estimates and Research & Planning's Short-Term Projections
- Wyoming Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment
- Economic Indicators
- Wyoming County Unemployment Rates
- Wyoming Normalized Unemployment Insurance Statistics: Initial Claims
- Wyoming Normalized Unemployment Insurance Statistics: Continued Claims

Publications PY 2014:

Construction Labor Shortages in Wyoming and the Nation (published December 2014)

http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/w_r_research/constr_2014.pdf

Wyoming Community College Market Pay Study (published January 2015)

http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/education_costs/community_college_pay_study.pdf

Wyoming Benefits Survey 2013 (published February 2015)

http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/benefits2013/benefits_2013.pdf

Workforce Data Quality Initiative Report No. 1 for Wyoming: School Attendance and Employment, 2006 to 2013 (published May 2015)

http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/education_we_connect/WDQI_Pub1.pdf

Wyoming Workforce Annual Report (published May 2015)

http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/annual-report/2015/2015_Annual_Report.pdf

Other Resources

New Hires Survey Results, 2011Q4-2013Q3 (published August 2014)

<http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/newhires.htm>

Wyoming Industry and Occupational Projections, Short-Term, 2014-2016 (published April 2015)

http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/projections/2015/Short_Term_Ind_2016.htm

Wyoming Long-Term Sub-State Occupational Projections 2012-2022 (published June 2015)

<http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/projections/2015/LT-substate/index.htm>

Extent to which the activities conform to schedule:

The conduct and publish relevant economic analysis portion of the WIG and other reports and products conforms to specified guidelines and was completed on schedule.

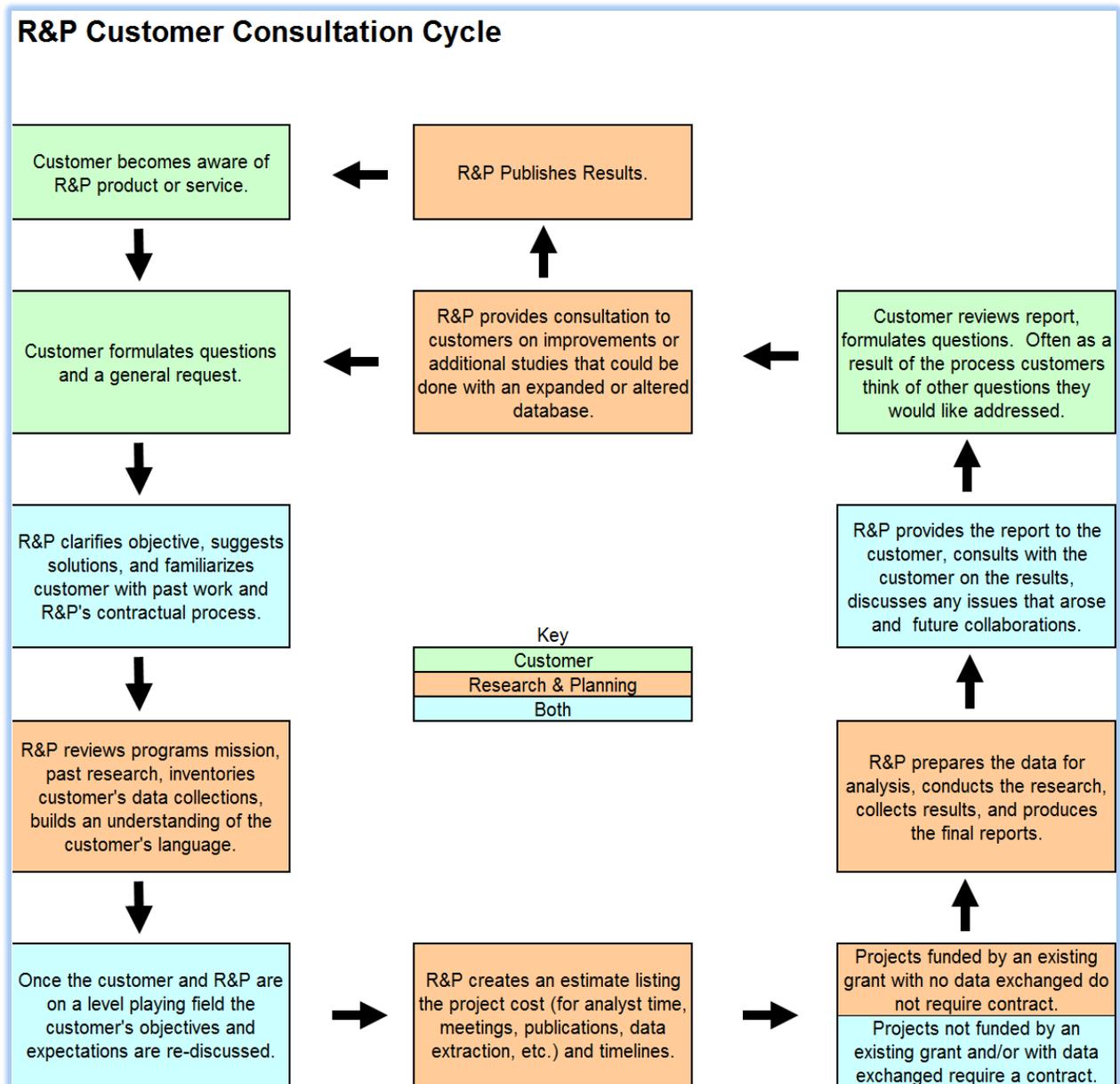
Actual aggregate expenditures and variance:

Actual expenditures - \$142,700.

D) Customer Consultations

Methods used for consulting:

R&P’s approach to customer consultations generally follow the path outlined below. This approach has not changed from last year, and was incorporated into a flyer to market R&P’s research capabilities to interested parties. As part of the flyer, the figure below was created to demonstrate that customer consultation is a continuous dialogue:



Initially, customer consultations begin when a potential client becomes aware of a specific product, service, or analysis produced by R&P via our publications, presentations, or word of mouth. The customer then approaches R&P with a generalized request and R&P responds by setting up a meeting to clarify the customer's objective, suggest realistic solutions, and familiarize the customer with past work of a similar nature. This phase often involves educating the potential customer on data availability, confidentiality, the social science research methods, and R&P's contracting process. It also creates a necessity for R&P to gain cursory knowledge of the customer's program, mission, data collections, and language. Once the customer and R&P are on a level playing field the customer's objectives and expectations are re-discussed.

The second stage typically begins with R&P staff outlining the project's parameters, analysis, timeline, products, and analysts' resources necessary for the project's completion. The results are compiled into an estimate listing the project cost (for analyst time, meeting, publications, data extraction, etc....) and timelines. At this point R&P already has a feel for whether the project can be completed under an existing grant or if the project will need to be paid for by the requesting customer. There are two potential outcomes: 1) the project will be funded by an existing grant, no data will be exchanged, and no contract is required, or, 2) the project will be funded by an existing grant or the customer will fund the project, data exchange is required, and a contract is required. When a contract is required, it will list the responsible parties, data security, transmission, and maintenance, products to be produced, timelines to be met, and the not-to-exceed cost of the project.

During the third stage, R&P prepares the data for analysis, conducts the research, collects results, and produces the final reports. During this process there is frequently a need to consult with the customer. While R&P staff immerses themselves in the subject matter related to the project, the knowledge gained is not the same as the knowledge and experience the customer has about their own program. For instance, R&P typically tries to collect the program's archived historic data along with the current data. Situations often arise where the historic trends are disrupted and the analyst is unsure of how to explain the disruption, but a customer consultation then reveals policy changes that dictated how and when the data were collected.

The last stage is to provide the report to the customer, consult with the customer on the results, discuss any issues that arose, and discuss future collaborations. Often customers will think of other questions they want addressed, such as a question that their current database does not support. As part of the project wrap up R&P provides consultation to customers on improvements or additional studies that could be done with an expanded or altered database.

The end result is that the customer uses the data to support their efforts, which creates the need for additional or continuing analysis, which leads back to the first stage of customer consultation.

The approach outlined in the last few paragraphs is just one of the many ways that R&P assesses the needs of our customers. Others include documenting questions and contacts with customers via phone calls and emails, as well as tracking hard copy and internet publication distribution.

We report usage and request data to the Workforce Information Council for publication in the "Level of Demand for State Labor Market Information Products and Services" reports. Lastly, we listen as participant observers at the many councils, boards, and consortiums we attend.

Customer Consultations were conducting with the following entities during PY 2014 (this list is not exhaustive):

- Board of Medicine
- Office of Homeland Security
- Governor's Staff
- National Center for Education Statistics
- Data Quality Campaign
- National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
- Professional Teaching Standards Board
- The Media
- University of Wyoming
- Wyoming Community College Commission
- Wyoming Department of Education
- Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
- Wyoming Legislative Service Office
- Wyoming State Board of Nursing
- Wyoming Vital Statistics Service
- Wyoming Workers Compensation and Safety
- Wyoming Workforce Development Council

A portion of our customer contacts are reoccurring, and also enhance our ability to build partnerships. For example, during PY 2013, and into PY 2014 R&P attended all Wyoming Workforce Development Council (WWDC) meetings in an advisory role. During PY 2013 and

into PY 2014, R&P began presenting information at every council meeting due to increased requests for LMI from the WWDC's Strategic Planning Committee. R&P's advisory role continues to grow, and we compiled a list of high-demand, high-wage occupations in Wyoming, which may help determine how the WWDC allocates Workforce Development Training Fund dollars. R&P also provides labor market information to the WWDC on other areas of interest as requested. Examples of such requests are presentations to the WWDC on Wyoming's Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and presentations on supply and demand in Wyoming's labor market.

R&P also continues its work with the Wyoming Department of Education to assess the impact of the state's Hathaway scholarship program, in particular the future retention of Hathaway scholars in Wyoming and their wage progression after leaving college. R&P received its first set of student records from the Wyoming Department of Education in PY 2014, and has begun using them to describe completion rates and earnings for Wyoming high school students. The outcomes reporting requirement for the Hathaway analysis is a component of the March 2012 funding by our state Legislature.

In addition, R&P is engaged in a number of activities which add value to our customer contacts. All agreements (MOU) in which R&P participate have language related to R&P's right to publish the research conducted. R&P provides the contracting entity first review and a mechanism for timely comment prior to publication. This allows R&P to showcase research that would not typically be conducted and is often times on the forefront of applying existing and new methods to diverse problems.

R&P also keeps apprised of our customer's interests through the tracking of meetings, publication distribution, data requests, presentation requests, and our website usage. To this end we have collected an in-depth analysis of our website usage logs. The R&P main website had 10,834 hits in PY 2014. This equates to an average of nearly 30 LMI web-visits per day. Among the most-visited sites within R&P's main website were Industry and Occupational Projections (5,866 hits), Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (4,369 hits), Labor Force Trends (2,100 hits), and Occupational Employment Statistics (1,900 hits).

Besides working with the customers outlined above, R&P participates in work groups, committees, councils, and consortiums, as outlined in the next section. This allows R&P staff to keep apprised of current issues that Labor Market Information could address and gives a venue to suggest their application.

Extent to which the activities conform to schedule:

R&P continues to provide high quality customer service through ongoing consultations.

Actual aggregate expenditures and variance:

Actual expenditures - \$26,400.

F. New Tools

WE Connect: Workforce-Education Connection

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/education_we_connect.htm

The WE Connect effort, spearheaded by R&P, is a tri-state consortium which includes Nebraska and South Dakota. The purpose of WE Connect is to work together to improve LMI products and to inform work-to-school policy by producing quality research on student outcomes in the labor market. WE Connect offers states the chance to communicate on a regular basis about the products and services they are developing, and to establish common outcome measures for education and workforce data. R&P is working to expand the number of states participating in the WE Connect consortium in PY 2015.

Workforce Data Quality Initiative Report No. 1 for Wyoming: School Attendance and Employment, 2006 to 2013

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/education_we_connect/WDQI_Pub1.pdf.

As outlined in Section C of this report, R&P's *Workforce Data Quality Initiative Report No. 1* represents a new tool for our LMI office and allows R&P to both leverage and extend the work done under the WIG grant. The first of the Workforce Data Quality Initiative Reports to be released by R&P details the completion rates and earnings of a cohort of Wyoming high school students during and after high school. The study is the first of its kind by R&P, and is part of the cutting-edge effort of a few labor market information offices to begin linking education and workforce outcomes. Outcomes are available by gender and county, and for both general education and special education students.

Construction Labor Shortages in Wyoming and the Nation

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/w_r_research/constr_2014.pdf.

This report begins by examining recent media coverage of the construction industry suggesting a shortage of workers, especially subcontractors, in the Rocky Mountain and High Plains region. The wealth of anecdotal evidence prompted Research & Planning (R&P) to closely examine construction industry growth, wages, and employment. In this report, we determine which construction occupations are facing a shortage in Wyoming and if support for training in these occupations would alleviate the state's shortage.

G. Efforts to Create Partnerships and Collaborations

R&P continued to build its partnerships and collaborations in PY 2014, and many of our partnerships are detailed in section D of this report, which will be expanded on and listed in this section of the report.

R&P reached out to many partners in PY 2014, and as a result was invited to collaborate with many organizations in their LMI research and work. Tom Gallagher, Manager of R&P, testified to the Wyoming State Legislature's Joint Education Committee on Technical and Career Education, R&P produced a Community College Market Pay Study at the request of the Community College Presidents in Wyoming, and R&P also partnered with the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance to speak at their STEM Summit in August of 2014 to talk about the demand for STEM jobs in and outside of Wyoming.

Our office also partnered with the State's Occupational Epidemiologist on a NIOSH grant application, participated in a national SLDS / WDQI conference, and participated in meetings and advisory committees for Wyoming's College Completes effort. These partnerships allowed R&P to bring our expanding capacity for education and labor market analysis to a wide variety of constituents during PY 2014, and we continue to grow and nurture these relationships by being responsive to our customer and partner requests. Many of the partnerships established in prior years continue to grow, for example, R&P is in discussion with the Department of Corrections to carry out ex-offender research and reporting. An MOU is expected in PY 2015.

Tom Gallagher, Manager of R&P, also participated in the national joint State Longitudinal Data Systems and Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grantee Convening in Bethesda, March 2015.

Mr. Gallagher also provided testimony before the Legislature's Digital Information Privacy Task Force in July 2014.

R&P's partnerships and collaborations continued to grow in 2015, and our partners and collaborative customers are listed below.

Wyoming Workforce Development Council

- Community College Commission
- Community-based organizations
- Labor
- Local education
- Private sector employees
- University of Wyoming
- Western Wyoming Community College
- Wyoming Business Council

- Wyoming Department of Education
- Wyoming Department of Family Services
- Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
- Wyoming Governor
- Wyoming House of Representatives
- Wyoming State Senate
- Youth
- Research & Planning

State Longitudinal Data System Task Force (SLDS)

- Central Wyoming Community College
- Wyoming Afterschool Alliance
- K-12 Representation
- University of Wyoming
- Wyoming Department of Education
- Community College Commission
- Wyoming Chief Information Officer
- Research & Planning

Statewide Employer Information Seminar Group

- Department of Workforce Services
- Labor Standards
- Mine Inspectors Office
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits
- Unemployment Tax Employer Services
- Worker's Compensation and Safety
- Worker's Safety Risk Management

Analyst Resource Center Consortium

- Employment and Training Administration
- National Crosswalk Service Center
- Workforce Agencies in 17 states: Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

H) Activities to Leverage LMI – WI Funding

WE Connect

https://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/education_we_connect.htm

The WE Connect effort, as detailed in Section F of this report, is not only a new tool for R&P, but leverages LMI funding by partnering with Nebraska and South Dakota. The purpose of WE Connect is to work together to improve LMI products and to inform work-to-school policy by producing quality research on student outcomes in the labor market. WE Connect offers states the chance to communicate on a regular basis about the products and services they are developing, and to establish common outcome measures for education and workforce data. R&P is working to expand the number of states participating in the WE Connect consortium in PY 2015.

I) Recommendations for Changes or Improvements to WIG Requirements:

Wyoming recommends that ETA establish an ongoing appropriation and budget to fund the Estimates Delivery System (EDS) and the Analyst Resource Center (ARC). These two initiatives are necessary for states to meet the requirements of WIOA. ETA has already taken steps to emphasize the importance of EDS and ARC, through the PY 2014 WIG.

Wyoming recommends that the National and Regional staff coordinate with state LMI offices to identify best practices and assist states in meeting the demand for LMI. Cross-fertilization and the benefits of capitalizing on the experiences of other LMI shops is important, and facilitating that kind of small scale investment that could lead to substantial results.

Several years ago R&P offered an alternative approach to creating industry and occupational projections. The method was systematic and used the QCEW data as the foundation combined

with actual turnover data from Wyoming's Wage Records. We demonstrated that the results created from the systematic approach were more accurate when compared to actual QCEW data collected at a later date. At that time we suggested incorporating our New Hire survey data to further enhance the quality of the projection estimates. R&P continues to use state funds to capture a sample survey of new hires in Wyoming. This program was developed using ARRA funds and the results have been used to complement the projections methodology. Utilization of the Projections Management Partnership reduces the ability of the State to produce data that are more likely to be a closer estimate to reality.

There are also gaps in the current WIG which impact program evaluation (e.g., WIA) not only as a means of determining whether or not training programs produce a return on investment over and above what the market would produce, but whether occupational projections are accurate. At this point, projections are not assessed. Additionally, the WIG does not support the analysis of labor supply across the states. Given the dubious value of short-term projections, resources from this portion of the WIG could be dedicated to the acquisition of student records and program completion information to ascertain the extent to which demand drives supply. WIG funds, and a supporting consortium, should support labor shortage analysis based on OES real wage change by occupation – specifically for high demand occupations. Linking student outcomes and labor shortage analysis to projections would permit an assessment of the degree to which the market is responding to high-demand occupational growth.

Finally, ETA should recognize that the State-Federal BLS infrastructure is in decay. QCEW editing and management software used by the states is archaic and funding for basic maintenance has been in decline for many years. This decline affects the quality and timeliness of local LMI,

projections, the OES sample, and the accuracy of the ETA's estimates of FUTA. The OES survey software has been in need of modernization for years. Moreover, the program lacks funds essential to transforming it into a time series which would create substantial impacts on the production of "real time" occupational demand. However the necessary funding for these improvements is not part of the BLS Budget agenda. BLS began withholding part of the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund appropriation to the states for the QCEW program in FY 2007 to re-write the QCEW. It aborted the effort in FY 2013. At no point from FY 2007 to 2014 has BLS requested funds from Congress to redesign the QCEW system. BLS made one \$5,000,000 request to develop a time series in OES. The decay of infrastructure needs to be reversed. The Secretary should request funds in FY 2017 for the QCEW and OES, to oversee the necessary upgrades, and halt and reverse the decay of these critical systems.