

PY 2005
Workforce Information Core Products and Services Grant Plan
State of Maine
Department of Labor
Division of Labor Market Information Services

Friday, August 05, 2005

A. Statewide Workforce Information System

The Division of Labor Market Information Services (LMIS) of the Maine Department of Labor has been designated as the state agency responsible for the production, analysis and dissemination of labor market and workforce information. With core data collection responsibilities assigned under the collaboration agreement with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, LMIS develops and maintains the most comprehensive and reliable measures of labor market and workforce performance. In addition, LMIS assembles additional labor market and workforce information from public as well as private sources for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of labor market and workforce developments. These data systems along with the expert interpretation made by LMIS analysts provide the basis for assessing economic performance, guiding the development of public policy and supporting countless individual and business decisions.

The Employment and Training Administration's new strategic emphasis to create a more demand-driven workforce system requires considerable alignment of information, planning, program development and accountability. For states to be successful in creating a more responsive workforce development system and achieving greater rates of return from limited public investments, cooperation and collaboration among multiple state and local partners is essential. For producers of labor market and workforce information to be responsive to the needs of information consumers, a deep and sustained commitment to translating the requirements of customer groups is fundamental. Our annual plan has been developed around two major areas of emphasis for how we invest labor market and workforce information dollars.

- We pledge to adhere to the highest standards and scientific principles for collecting, analyzing and reporting labor market and workforce information to ensure its accuracy, reliability and applicability for the myriad of public and private uses to which it is put.
- We will strengthen our existing efforts for developing and distributing core labor market and workforce information products and systems with the guidance, support and oversight from our information consumers including the state workforce investment board, local workforce investment boards and the many workforce professionals who serve to connect information to the decision support and planning needs of users. We further propose to undertake a number of new initiatives and establish collaborative planning systems to ensure that new products such as Longitudinal Employment Dynamics (LED) are made more accessible to workforce boards, employment and

guidance professionals, business and industry and economic development experts along with job seekers themselves.

To ensure that LMIS remains fully accountable and responsive to a broad array of information consumer groups, we have taken an active role in the following:

WIA/Wagner- Peyser Plan. LMIS staff assumes an active role in the development of WIA/Wagner-Peyser Plans. LMIS analysts working with the Maine Jobs Council and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) planners provide data related to the identification of target groups used to identify those in need of services from the workforce development system. Analysts also assume an active role in the identification of industry and occupational employment trends to guide job placement services and the selection of occupations for training. Drawing on a number of data sources including Occupational Employment Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Unemployment Insurance Claimants data, U.S. Census information and a variety of additional public and private sources, staff from LMIS work to organize, synthesize and interpret this data to help the BES make strategic decisions and guide program development.

Maine Jobs Council/State Workforce Investment Board/Governor/Workforce Cabinet. LMIS staff will continue to serve as an important resource in providing the Governor, the Cabinet and his designated advisory groups with critical analysis of short and long term labor market and workforce developments. We are regularly called on to make presentations, assemble background research and offer insights about workforce and labor market challenges that confront the State of Maine. A State of the Workforce Report was completed this year. This report provides focus for policymakers offering analysis of workforce demographics, short and long term forecasts of employment developments and recommendations for workforce strategy and policy formulation.

Support for Local Workforce Investment Boards. LMIS will take an active role in regular meetings convened by the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services and Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs). In addition, the LMIS executive team will visit with LWIBs to ensure that their needs for local labor market and workforce information are understood. We will also develop collaborative projects and provide customized research services to local boards. During this year, we will make a particular emphasis in conveying the opportunities for local labor market and industry analysis available through the use of the Longitudinal Employment Dynamics (LED), Quality Workforce Indicators (QWI).

One Stop Career Centers/Core Services. LMIS has three principal mechanisms to supply the informational and labor market research needs of Maine's CareerCenter network. First, we produce a series of publications describing employment opportunities and the prospects for employment in Maine. These publications are featured prominently in the resource rooms of every CareerCenter. We also support the Maine Employment Information Guide, a web based distribution system that provides quick and easy access to the vast array of labor market and workforce information. LMIS also provides three regional labor market analysts located in local CareerCenters who cover regional developments. The combination of all three mechanisms has been designed to create a highly responsive labor market and workforce

information system with expert analytical capability serving job seekers, employers, economic developers, education and career guidance professionals and local government officials. These efforts are routinely evaluated through the oversight provided by the Labor Market Information Advisory Workgroup made up of frontline CareerCenter staff.

Customer Consultation/Assessments. The primary source of consultation and feedback about LMIS products and services comes from the LMIS Advisory Workgroup. This group of frontline CareerCenter staff meets regularly with LMIS representatives to review and comment on use of LMIS products and services. They also serve as an important sounding board for the development of new products and services being planned by LMIS. We have also made attempts this year to solicit feedback and input from all the customers that use our products. The inclusion of feedback questions with each mailing has not resulted in the kind of feedback that we had anticipated. We will review and retool feedback solicitation during this year. We also plan to add two focus groups that will be organized as a means of soliciting feedback. We will convene a group of business leaders and economic development experts to provide us with reviews of LMIS products and services. We will also work with Maine's Department of Education, local schools and career guidance associations to solicit their input about our products and services. These two focus groups will be convened a couple of times over the course of the year.

Funds Leveraging Activities. The new business model for labor market information units advanced by the Employment and Training Administration demands the consideration of new methods for developing funding and support. LMIS has reached agreement with the Bureau of Employment Services to construct a customized set of tools and products to support National Emergency Grants (NEG) requests made to the U.S. DOL. Such funding is critical in making up the losses that have been experienced through regular formula allocations. We are also actively entering into Research Partnerships with organizations outside of the Maine Department of Labor. These partnerships will be used to develop joint research projects including data sharing. We will also develop new funding proposals to foundations and other government sources to support the research activity. We have already entered into a Partnership with the University of Maine where we are actively researching the integration of wage records and student information and conducting longitudinal study. We have also entered another Partnership with the Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) program, combining wage records with program data and student records to track labor market experiences of JMG graduates over multiple years. Proposals submitted to the MBNA Foundation to support this work have been funded during PY 2004. We anticipate entering into additional Partnership agreements with economic development groups and business and trade associations over the course of this year.

B. Products and Services

1) **Continue to populate the ALMIS Database with State data.**

Maine's ALMIS Database will be updated to reflect version 2.3 of the database structure. The database will be populated to the fullest extent possible beyond the core requirements in order to maximize usefulness for state/local information delivery. The database will be updated continually in order to be as current as the state's most recent publications and data releases.

Occupational licensing tables will be updated to conform with requirements. Staff training will be a priority to ensure the full utilization of this resource in meeting national, state, and local customer needs.

Customers: CareerCenter staff, libraries, schools, community organizations, planners, researchers, economic developers, job seekers, employers, marketing managers, labor market analysts, government personnel, and general public.

Completion Date: Continuing

Estimated cost: \$50,728

Allocated Amount: \$41,175

2) Produce and disseminate industry and occupational employment projections.

Industry and occupational employment projections will be produced and disseminated with adherence to the methodological, software tools, and guidelines developed by the Projections Consortium and the Projections Managing Partnership. Statewide long-term industry and occupational projections for 2004 to 2014 will be developed. Statewide short-term projections for 2005 to 2007 will be developed. Substate long- and short-term projections will be developed if time and resources are available.

The ALMIS Database will be populated with the projections data and will be submitted for public dissemination following procedures established by the Projections Consortium and the Projections Managing Partnership.

Customers: Workforce Investment Boards, CareerCenter staff, employers, job seekers, training providers, career counselors, students, economic developers, planners, policy makers, and government agencies.

Completion Date:

Statewide long-term industry projections: completed June 2006

Statewide long-term occupational projections: completed June 2006

Statewide short-term industry projections: completed June 2006

Statewide short-term occupational projections: completed June 2006

Estimated cost: \$107,069

Allocated Amount: \$86,896

3) Provide occupational and career information products for public use.

The latest occupational employment projections will be used to develop occupational and career information products to serve the needs of job seekers, businesses, economic developers, educators, and workforce partners. One of these products is the series of brochures providing high wage/high growth career opportunities, including *Hot Jobs in Maine*, *Top 40 Careers in Maine*, *Careers in Maine for College Graduates*, *Highest Paying Jobs in Maine*, *Jobs with Limited Demand in Maine*, and *Employment Change in Maine*. Two first-time periodic brochures, *Wicked Good Stuff for Job Seekers* and *Workforce Information for Business*, would benefit from an updating of the cited resources.

We expect to publish results from the *Maine Employee Benefits Survey-2004*, thus providing a relevant tool that businesses can use to evaluate their own benefits, design compensation packages, and better understand the labor market. Redefined Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas based on new standards and Census 2000 data will warrant an updated *Labor Market Area Map*. A *Labor Market Area Desk Aid* will also be developed to help CareerCenter staff identify LMA codes needed for input to the One Stop Operating System.

Maine will analyze changes in the Job Vacancy Survey between the survey years of 2002 and 2005. Change in the quantity and quality of job openings, including the number of job openings by business size, industry and geographic location (LWIBs) will be included. Skill requirements of the job openings will be analyzed and training needs assessed. Information on wages, benefits offered, education and experience, vacancy duration, and full/part-time status will also be analyzed. Survey results will assist decision making by policy makers, training service providers, businesses and job seekers.

Depending on available resources, a variety of potential opportunities exist for products addressing current and future training needs. Examples include products relating to occupations in demand, occupational wages and profiles, career ladders, occupational skills, non-traditional occupations, emerging occupations, older workers, and people with disabilities.

Customers: CareerCenter staff, libraries, schools, community organizations, planners, researchers, economic developers, job seekers, employers, marketing managers, labor market analysts, government personnel, and general public.

Completion Date: Continuing

Estimated Cost: \$98,622

Allocated Amount: \$69,294

4) Ensure that workforce information and support required by state and local workforce investment boards are provided.

The development and dissemination of labor market and workforce information must be guided by those who use it for planning and decision-making. The Maine Jobs Council (state workforce investment board) and the four local workforce investment boards are not only critical information consumers but also assume a key role in providing strategic guidance to determine the direction that the statewide labor market and workforce information program needs to move in.

Senior staff from the Division of Labor Market Information Services will continue to provide staff support and respond to the information needs expressed by the Maine Jobs Council. We will also work closely with the various sub committees that have been established to ensure specialized needs for information and research are responded to. For example, the Council's Women's Employment Issues Committee has an enduring interest in monitoring the labor market experiences of Maine women including the examination of pay equity issues and the breakdown of gender stereotypes among many occupations. The Industry Committee has

expressed an interest to finding ways for LMIS and industry associations to collaborate in collecting and interpreting industry focused labor market and workforce information. We have also completed a comprehensive report, **Trends and Implications for the Maine Workforce** to provide the Maine Jobs Council with critical information and strategic guidance in formulating long-term workforce development policies and strategies. We will continue to work closely with the Maine Jobs Council to explore more targeted and specialized research that may be suggested from the broader study. In fact, as part of our sustained focus on Maine's emerging workforce, research efforts are underway targeted on immigrant and refugee populations in Maine and how these groups are being integrated in Maine labor markets.

To ensure consistent strategic and policy guidance for shaping Maine's labor market and workforce information systems and investments, we will be working closely with Maine Jobs Council members and staff to explore the establishment of a labor market and workforce information and research committee.

LMIS also works closely to support the planning and research needs of Maine's four local workforce investment boards. Along with a group of researchers and analysts based in the central office, LMIS has assigned a team of three senior economic analysts in the field to directly support the work of these local workforce boards. Each field analyst works closely in examining regional labor market and economic developments and trends. These analysts play a critical role in preparing labor market and economic analysis as part of the plans prepared by each local workforce board. In addition, the analysts are called on regularly to provide labor market updates, occupational outlook information and assessments of the economy to the local workforce boards. Also, during plant closings and workforce reduction events, LMIS analysts prepare detailed analyses of the local economy and provide a well researched jobs outlook that help local boards develop career transition and employment strategies for impacted workers.

Completion Date: Ongoing

Estimated Cost: \$115,154

Allocated Amount: \$80,902

5) Maintain and enhance electronic state workforce information delivery systems.

Maine provides electronic public access to the information in the ALMIS Database through the Internet version of The Maine Employment Info Guide (MEIG), which will be updated and maintained continually. The MEIG includes services specifically designed to meet the needs of individuals and employers.

The ALMIS Employer Database Application will be updated and made available on all CareerCenter workstations. The most current version will also be available to LMI and CareerCenter staff in CD-ROM format. Employer Database data will populate the Empdb table of the ALMIS database with respect to the changes in version 2.3 of the structure.

Customers: CareerCenter staff, libraries, schools, community organizations, planners, researchers, economic developers, job seekers, employers, marketing managers, labor market analysts, government personnel, and general public.

Completion Date: Continuing

Estimated Cost: \$64,736

Allocated Amount: \$45,465

6) Support state workforce information training activities.

LMIS has developed a permanent training format to ensure that consumers of labor market and workforce information have regular access to knowledge, information and skills development related to the use and interpretation of labor market and workforce information. We have established the **Maine Labor Market and Workforce Information Academy** (LMWIA). The purpose of the Academy is to provide seminars, technical training and discussion forums for Maine consumers of labor market and workforce information. Our aim is to organize stimulating, interactive sessions for regular users of our products and services and to introduce potential users to the array of products and services that may be of interest to them. The Academy is an organizing framework drawing upon staff from the Division of Labor Market Information Services (LMIS) and other parties within and outside of the Maine Department of Labor to present seminars and provide more in depth technical training on pertinent workforce topics, special labor market studies and reports and review of data systems maintained by LMIS.

The LMI Academy is a training institution whose purpose is to

- 1) Educate regular users
- 2) Introduce potential users

to labor market and workforce information and the vast array of LMI products and services available. Our primary audience is CareerCenter staff; our aim is to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities in order to achieve a strong base of expertise in delivering workforce information. Training sessions will be followed immediately by open-ended evaluations and several weeks later by a self-test of competencies and usage of the tools.

The first event held was a well-received Longitudinal Employment Database (LED) presentation. The audience included a number of representatives from Maine's economic development and business attraction agencies. The second event is a series of five one-day interactive presentations (lecture, exercises, role-play, online learning) throughout the state to train CareerCenter staff in the use of specific LMI tools when helping jobseekers. Future offerings will be developed in response to demands from CareerCenter staff, local workforce boards, economic developers, business and industry associations, career counseling and guidance staff and other information consumers.

LMIS founded this Academy to help serve its operational goals and the existing LMI Advisory Workgroup serves as its guide.

Customers: Job seekers, career counselors, CareerCenter staff, labor market analysts, community organizations, educators, and general public.

Completion Date: Continuing

Estimated Cost: \$84,666

Allocated Amount \$59,472

C. Consultation and Customer Satisfaction Assessment.

The Division of Labor Market Information Services is deeply committed to gathering feedback and encouraging input from the broad array of information consumers that rely on our products and services. Key user groups are consulted regularly and their input is used to improve systems, services and products. Among these groups are the following:

- Business and industry
- Worker and students
- Economic development planners
- Education and training specialists
- Career guidance and counseling professionals
- Public policy leaders

Meetings and interviews have been conducted over the course of the year with business and industry leaders (Maine Small Business Alliance, Industry Committee of the Maine Jobs Council), economic development officials (Economic Development Council of Maine, State of Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, Northern Maine Regional Planning Commission), education and training specialists (Maine Adult Education Association) and career guidance and counseling professionals (Northeast Career Action Network) to gather input about their needs for labor market and workforce information. We also explored new opportunities with various groups and associations for joint data gathering and analysis projects.

The Maine Labor Market Information Advisory Workgroup is a partnership comprised of a cross-section of representatives from Maine CareerCenter field operations, including members from: Training and Development Corp.; Training Resource Center; Bureau of Employment Services; Western Maine Community Action, Inc.; Rehabilitation Services; Coastal Economic Development Corp.; Career Resource Network; Veterans Programs and Labor Market Information Services.

This Workgroup provides continuous guidance, insight and practical suggestions to LMIS by identifying the needs of CareerCenter customers and staff, and reviewing LMIS products for accuracy, timeliness, clarity, relevance, utility, design, and user friendliness. Successful teamwork with LMIS is achieved through all members being open to new ideas, differing perspectives, continuous improvement and by focusing on the needs of local jobseekers and CareerCenter staff. We have incorporated a number of suggestions made by this group and their ongoing reviews and critiques have contributed to vastly improving our products and services.

We will continue to rely on this group during the next year ensuring that this Workgroup will meet regularly and take an active role in product reviews and services assessments.

Ongoing consultations and needs assessments were initiated with staff from the Bureau of Employment Services, Local Workforce Boards and Maine CareerCenters during the spring of 2005. These reviews sought input from executives, policymakers and CareerCenter managers about satisfaction with current products and services produced by Labor Market Information Services. We also invited these senior managers to identify unmet needs and to make suggestions for new products and services.

Customer Service Feedback. LMIS has introduced a customer feedback mechanism to support product and service evaluations by end users and information consumers. We will continue to include questions as we distribute each of our products requesting feedback from our customers. This feedback will be tabulated and used to improve LMIS products.

LMIS has assessed customer satisfaction with state Workforce Information products and services to be very positive from current feedback received. CareerCenter comments have validated some assumptions we had made about our most popular products. Questionnaire respondents are pleased with the clearness and conciseness of major publications, such as “Maine Occupational Wages.” In particular, local coverage vs. statewide has been praised.

LMIS employs a number of methods to collect and interpret customer satisfaction information from a variety of users. An LMI Advisory Workgroup, made up of individuals representing CareerCenter staff and One-Stop partners, constantly monitors and provides feedback concerning our products. LMI analysts, while conducting on-site visits throughout the state, consult with LWIBs and other customers to determine customers’ LMI needs. Individuals may indicate their satisfaction through use of a self-addressed customer service questionnaire contained within publications, or by providing comments to the LMI web site. A survey in the CareerCenters is conducted to determine the level of satisfaction and volume needs of printed LMI products provided. As feedback volume grows (one of our aims), more complex evaluation methods may be warranted.

To add customer value where needs for improvement are indicated by these methods, LMIS will continue, or in some cases, begin to undertake certain activities. LMI Advisory Workgroup feedback is constantly incorporated into new product drafts. The Management Team reviews, discusses, and makes procedure changes based on the LMI analysts’ information gathering in the field. Staff will update/improve products based on suggestions

from the customer service questionnaires and from an internal suggestion file maintained by colleagues. Staff will also step up utilization of the publication logs to better serve the CareerCenters, as indicated by their comments. In addition, LMIS is currently restructuring its web site to increase access to more individuals as well as to provide more depth and breadth to the format and content.