Purpose

The purpose of this report is to describe the core workforce information products and services that were provided to our customers in support of the State of Missouri’s overall workforce development plans in Program Year (PY) 2008.

Plan Period

July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009

Plan Narrative

SECTION I: Performance Summary
SECTION II: Review of Deliverables
SECTION III: Customer Feedback and Recommendations
SECTION I

Performance Summary

The Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) delivered a variety of targeted products and services to stakeholders in PY 2008. These outputs addressed a range of economic and workforce issues identified in the DOL-ETA Workforce Information Grant (WIG) Core Products and Services Plan. In that plan, MERIC completed 51 deliverables across 6 core product groups. Some highlights include:

Missouri JVS Skills Gap Report
The Job Vacancy Survey Skills Gap Report summarized by Now, Next, and Later occupations to better inform educators of issues at each level of training or experience.

WIA Demographic Summary Reports
Reports outline current and 5-year projected demographic on ethnicity, income, and age as well as educational attainment.

2006-2016 Career Grades Report
Report on state and regional top jobs breaks out occupations by Now, Next, and Later categories and provides a letter grade for better understanding of an occupation’s outlook.

2009 Missouri Economic Report
Comprehensive report covers major economic indicators in the state and regional performance measures.

WIA Retail Trade Analysis Reports
Regional reports profile industry statistics, retail pull factors, and market areas to better understand tourism and regional spending patterns.

2009-2010 Missouri Career Guide
A concise how-to guide to assist job seekers in selecting a rewarding career through self-assessment and knowledge of top jobs. Guide is a very popular print and web product.

Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Regional Hotspot Reports
Reports highlight employment centers that drive regional economies. Information includes industry and occupational summaries, educational attainment, and commuting patterns.

Math, Engineering, Science, and Technology Occupation Reports
Two products, a Job Vacancy Survey and Occupation Skills Report, detailed information concerning the high-skilled jobs that are vital to promoting a knowledge-driven economy.

Webinars on Workforce Issues
Staff gave over 20 webinar presentations to customers in Missouri during the first year of the technology’s use.
SECTION II

Review of Deliverables

Core Product 1 - WID Database

1.1 Description
Continue to populate the Workforce Information Database (WID) with state and local data.

1.2 Principal Customers
The WID database provides data to jobseekers, workforce professionals, employers, economic developers, education and training professionals, the media, and researchers. Customer feedback indicated the need for query-driven data access through the MERIC web, more timely data updates, scalable geographies, and more diverse data.

1.3 Support of State Economic and Workforce Development Plans
The Workforce Information Database will be the main data source for populating MERIC’s web services. WID improves economic and workforce information delivery by allowing access by a wide array of customers. The Workforce Information Database supports a demand-driven information system by allowing customized data queries based on user needs.

1.4 Deliverables

1.4.1 Maintain and update license files.
- COMPLETED License.dbf, licauth.dbf, lichist.dbf
- COMPLETED Implement Version 2.4 Release expected June 2009

1.4.2 Update lookup and crosswalk tables
- COMPLETED NAICS, SOC, CIP crosswalks
- COMPLETED O*NET

1.4.3 Populate industry and occupation employment projections.
- COMPLETED Long Term and Short Term Projections for Statewide and Sub-state Regions

1.4.4 Populate core and non-core tables
- COMPLETED As information becomes available

1.4.5 Populate Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
- COMPLETED Current Employment Statistics (CES)
- COMPLETED Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)
- COMPLETED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)
- COMPLETED Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

1.4.6 Deliverables Support Activities
- COMPLETED Server-side database maintenance and management
- COMPLETED Recovery and Back-up maintenance
- COMPLETED Establish and manage production database
1.4.7 Provide ad hoc WID database technical and policy support to main customer groups

- COMPLETED Provide as needed

**Core Product 2 - Employment Projections**

2.1 Description

Produce and disseminate industry and occupation employment projections.

2.2 Principal Customers

Employment projections are useful to workforce developers, workforce boards, education and training providers, and economic developers. Customers use this data to make informed career choices and to direct programs towards specific occupations and industries.

2.3 Support of State Economic and Workforce Development Plans

This product group supports improved economic and workforce information products by providing the foundation for a whole series of career and industry analyses. Projections data supports identifying targeted occupations and industries.

2.4 Deliverables

2.4.1 Produce industry and occupation employment projections per ETA guidance.

- COMPLETED Long-term 2006-2016 Industry Projections (10 Sub-state Regions)
- COMPLETED Short-term 2008-2010 Industry Projections (Statewide and 2 Sub-state Regions)
- COMPLETED Long-term 2006-2016 Occupational Projections (10 Sub-state Regions)
- COMPLETED Short-term 2008-2010 Occupational Projections (Statewide and 2 Sub-state Regions)

2.4.2 Produce Occupational Studies.

- COMPLETED METS Occupation JVS Report
- COMPLETED Cheetah Report on Fast-Growing Firms
- COMPLETED Projections Overview Report
- COMPLETED 2008-2009 Career Guide
- IN PROGRESS Green-Collar Report – Initial Report Completed but Summer Survey to Alter
- COMPLETED Career Grades 2006-2016 Report
- COMPLETED Education and Training Outlook 2008-2010
- COMPLETED Education and Training Outlook 2006-2016
- COMPLETED Gateway Skills Report 2008
- COMPLETED Top Growing/Most Openings Career Briefs (Statewide and 2 Sub-state Regions) 2008-2010

2.4.3 Leveraged Product Releases

- COMPLETED Competency Models for IT and Transportation Target Industry Clusters
- IN PROGRESS Competency Model for Two Additional Target Industry Clusters – Due June. 2010
- COMPLETED Regional Job Vacancy Survey Reports

2.4.4 Provide ad hoc technical and policy support to main customer groups.

- COMPLETED Provide as needed
Core Product 3 – Economic Performance and Forecast

3.1 Description
Produce and disseminate an annual economic report of the state.

3.2 Principal Customers
MERIC’s release of the annual economic report is targeted to The Office of the Governor, Missouri General Assembly, state and local workforce boards, the Missouri Department of Economic Development, and various policy makers. Customers will utilize this product to support policy-level decisions at the state and sub-state levels.

3.3 Support of State Economic and Workforce Development Plans
Delivery of a consolidated report on Missouri’s economy will equip targeted customer groups with a common source of key economic indicators and information about Missouri’s economic performance and expectations in support of policy direction and decisions. It will include pertinent data and analyses of local and regional economies. Content will be based upon calendar year activity and trends.

3.4 Deliverables

3.4.1 Produce and disseminate Annual State Economic Report
• COMPLETED Release Report

3.4.12 Missouri Economy Today - Television Show
• COMPLETED Profiles of Missouri’s economic and community assets

Core Product 4 – Web Accessible Information

4.1 Description
Provide workforce information deliverables on the internet and make deliverables alternatively available through other electronic media and means of distribution.

4.2 Principal Customers
Mass availability of information via the internet and targeted distribution by other electronic media formats permits accessibility to the general public which includes all of MERIC’s core customer groups.

4.3 Support for Economic and Workforce Development Plans

4.3.1 The Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) operates, in cooperation with the Missouri Government’s Information Technology Services Division, a website located at http://www.missourieconomy.org.
The MERIC website receives more than 250,000 total visits, accumulating nearly 4 million total hits annually and is prominently inter-linked with other related public sites.

4.3.2 MERIC actively participates in the development and distribution of Missouri Focus E-news, the Department of Economic Development’s (DED) flagship communications piece delivered weekly to over 2,600 subscribers. MERIC contributes weekly content on economic conditions and workforce information.

4.3.3 MERIC continues to partner with the DED public relations office for distribution of economic conditions releases on a regularly scheduled basis to state media outlets.

4.3.4 MERIC partners with the Missouri Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis on various collaborative dynamic web applications and research products.

4.4 Deliverables

- MERIC will develop “e-friendly” products and assure availability on the website and through other electronic distribution channels as necessary to reach targeted customer groups and the general public.

- MERIC will develop further enhancements to the MERIC website.

- MERIC will provide and post to the web site in a .pdf version suitable for report printing routine workforce information reports especially useful to special interest and target customer interest groups.

4.4.1 Examples of Product Releases

- **COMPLETED** Two (2) Focus Economic and Workforce Newsletter Articles
- **COMPLETED** Socio-Economic Indicators
- **COMPLETED** Missouri Export Briefs
- **IN PROGRESS** Missouri Intelligence Web Portal – Leveraging additional funds to improve beta site

**Core Product 5 – Workforce Investment Board Partnership and Consultation**

5.1 Description

Partner and consult on a continuing basis with state Workforce Investment Board and Local Workforce Investment Boards in order to identify and provide needed information support for workforce investment strategic planning and response to rapidly changing economic conditions and state and local initiatives.

5.2 Principal Customers

Workforce Investment Boards
5.3 Support of State Economic and Workforce Development Plans

“Smart” delivery of products and services will allow MERIC to assure that core products are being understood and utilized to their full potential and that specific needs of this customer group are being met with respect to their regions. MERIC will take advantage of electronic media to announce and deliver additional products to WIBs. Webinar training to enhance workforce/economic knowledge will be offered again as a cost-effective method of learning.

In addition to partnering with the workforce boards, MERIC collaborates and consults with several related organizations to leverage increased outputs:

5.3.1 MERIC collaborates with the Missouri P-20 Council to develop products that inform the public and educators about job training needs. The mission of the Council, led by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Department of Higher Education (DHE), and the Department of Economic Development (DED), is to align educational efforts to better prepare students for the workforce of tomorrow.

5.3.2 MERIC is a key partner in a workgroup providing career planning information to students and job-seekers. This public outreach project includes the DED, DESE, DHE, Missouri Center for Career Education, and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce.

5.4 Deliverables

5.4.1 Workforce Investment Board Liaisons
- **COMPLETED** Continue Point of Service (POS) support for WIBs by regional staff liaisons
- **COMPLETED** Product release briefings for effective distribution of MERIC products

5.4.2 Technical and Policy Support to SWIBs, LWIBs, Partners and Customer Interest Groups
- **COMPLETED** Deliver WIB support as needed through regional staff liaisons
- **COMPLETED** Staff toll-free helpdesk line for communicating workforce and economic information.
- **COMPLETED** Maintain and answer MERICData e-mail inquiries from the MERIC web site.
- **COMPLETED** Develop training sessions for workforce partners using webinars

5.4.3 MERIC Customer Satisfaction Survey
- **COMPLETED** Customer e-mail survey to assess satisfaction and make improvements as needed.

5.4.4 Provide ad hoc technical and policy support to main customer groups
- **COMPLETED** Provide as requested
Core Product 6 – Special Studies and Economic Analysis

6.1 Description
Conduct special studies and economic analyses to provide information support for state, sub-state, and community workforce and economic development initiatives, targeted industry or occupational studies, and response to major layoffs or disasters. Ad hoc studies allow for flexible analytical responses to timely initiatives and represent a rapid-response element.

6.2 Principal Customers
Principal customers targeted for this core product group include workforce investment regions, regional planning organizations, economic developers, transportation planning officials, current and prospective businesses, educational providers, and other state-level policy makers.

6.3 Support of State Economic and Workforce Development Plans
This product group supports improved economic information delivery by coupling value-added research with customer focus presentation. Usefulness and usability is optimized by consultation with the specific customer throughout planning, development and delivery. Studies are leveraged when possible to meet the goals of various stakeholders.

6.4 Deliverable Examples Include:

6.4.1 Produce statewide and WIA regional retail pull-factor reports
- COMPLETED Retail pull-factor trends and analysis for various regions

6.4.2 Produce international trade and investment studies
- COMPLETED International Profile: China In-Depth - Expanded to 8 Country Profiles
- COMPLETED Foreign Direct Investment into and out of Missouri

6.4.3 Produce high-tech occupations and industries report
- PARTIAL COMPLETED Define high-tech industries by the occupations those sectors employ – high-tech industries and occupations updated based on new research but no formal report developed

6.4.4 Produce WIA and/or WIRED regional industry, workforce, and community reports
- COMPLETED Develop new reports that illustrate existing and future trends within the region using various in-house, federal, and commercial data sources.

6.4.5 Produce targeted industry studies
- COMPLETED Transportation / Logistics Profiles for Rail, Port, and Highways
- COMPLETED Agribusiness Industry Report

6.4.6 Provide ad hoc special studies and analysis to main customer groups
- COMPLETED Special Workforce Development Regional Report for 2008 Governor’s Conference
- INCOMPLETE Economic Indicators Tip Sheet – Other ad hoc request higher priority. See below.
- COMPLETED Provide as requested:
  - Home Loan Situation Reports (3)
  - Women in the Workplace
  - Tri-State Region Profile Report
  - WIA Economic Hot Spot Reports (16)
SECTION III

Customer Feedback and Recommendations

MERIC researchers, using a project tracking system, documented 844 Research and Information Products and 618 Customer Inquiries and Technical Assistance Outputs in PY 2008. Products were developed by incorporating feedback from past activities and from requests for new information. MERIC assigns a WIA liaison to each region so that customers can quickly reach a research professional with questions and comments concerning LMI data. MERIC has a telephone and e-mail hotline so that inquiries can be quickly directed to subject-matter experts for a response. A small sample e-mail survey indicated an average hotline satisfaction score of 4.2 out of a possible 5.0.

Recommendations for Improvements to LMI Core Products

1. Seek ways to leverage resources so that real-time job analysis tools can be acquired and used to develop value-added LMI information and to inform the projections process. At a minimum, well-designed job crawler tools with mapping components can help job seekers and workforce developers understand county and sub-county demand issues that are happening right now. The challenge continues to be the summary and reporting of trends so that clearer signals of policy direction can be gleaned from the noise of numbers.

2. Continue to leverage opportunities to improve web-based LMI delivery tools that offer easily accessible, basic information along with more flexible analysis options when desired. With the majority of users receiving labor market information through database-driven web sites, this delivery tool needs continuous attention to ensure that the public is well served.

3. Customer feedback through online surveys will be explored this program year to see if efficient tools are available to reach a broader base of customers.

4. The flexibility of special studies in the grant continues to be appreciated as states can customize research around particular needs. Please continue with this valuable approach.

5. On a more general note, the development of cross-agency comprehensive analysis tools, such as the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Mapping Application, should be expanded so that local and state researchers can produce value-added analysis without the individual expense and restrictions of proprietary software. The LED tool is extremely useful and represents a great model for further federal investment in economic research tools.