

The Employment & Training Administration (ETA) Data Validation Project

Project Goals:

- Develop a comprehensive data validation system to ensure data integrity across programs
- Increase uniformity in data definitions and collection across similar programs
- Strike proper balance between data integrity and efficiency (an acceptable level of error at a sustainable cost)

Programs Included:

- Unemployment Insurance Benefits and Tax (UI)
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Migrant & Seasonal Farm Worker Program (MSFW)
- Division of Indian & Native American Programs (DINAP)
- Welfare-to-Work (WtW)
- Title V, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- Youth Opportunity Grant Program (YO)
- Wagner-Peyser (Employment Service)

The Department of Labor Perspective:

- Develop a reputation for reliable and accurate program data
- Develop a systematic approach to data integrity issues
- Improve basis for state incentives and sanctions
- Support continuous improvement efforts

Project Stages & Highlights:

- Analyze program reporting, performance and validation requirements
- Develop performance and reporting specifications
 - Reducing variability and to include the creation of detailed instructions as official ETA guidance (e.g., handbooks)
- Develop validation tools
 - Including handbooks containing reporting specs, validation instructions, and acceptable source documentation
- Software completed for some programs
 - Completed software for WtW, Wagner-Peyser, TAA, and WIA programs
 - Distribution of software and handbooks via ETA websites
- Pilot validation methodology
 - Two formal state pilots – Texas (WIA) and Washington (WIA, TAA, W-P, WtW)
 - Numerous states/grantees testing software
 - Other programs to be piloted separately
- Training and Technical Assistance
 - Regional training sessions planned for some programs
 - Training strategy to be determined individually for others
- Telephone and e-mail TA available
 - Including installation of software, building extracts

Data Validation Systems enhance and simplify reporting and analysis

- Improve communication between ETA and programmers
- Provide roadmap for understanding performance and reporting requirements
- Minimize burden of interpreting specifications
- Provide clear standards for assessing validity
- Provide detailed diagnostic data for correcting problems
- Valuable tool for analyzing performance (e.g., impact of wage records)
- Valuable tool for analyzing program operations (e.g., intake, services, exit)

*Validation files represent a window into the data
and can supplement or replace ad hoc queries*

Report Validation

- Given the stored data, is the software generating the correct counts?
- Development of an audit trail to support each reported count
- Efficiently extract and organize data
- Classify data into logical groups and enable non-technical staff to validate report counts

Data Element Validation

- Accurate reports depend on accurate data being used by the software
- Requires checking data elements against source records to verify compliance with federal definitions
- Handbooks contain instructions and lists of acceptable source documentation for each data element validated
- *Self-reported data elements are not validated*

Eligibility Validation (WIA only)

- All registrants self-certify to key eligibility requirements
 - Adults self-certify prior to receipt of intensive services (e.g., low income)
 - Dislocated workers and youth self-certify at registration
- A sample of the registrants document the data elements to which they self-certified
- Using sample results, an estimate of percentage of all ineligible registrants is calculated

Validation software produces a report validation summary, a data element validation summary and an analytical report

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Data Validation Contractor: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR)