

## State of Utah

### PY 2013 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) during PY2013 for each of ETA's core products. The goal of these activities was not only to meet the requirements of the PY2013 TEGP 29-12, 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 funding was necessary to complete the described PY2013 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 PY2013, all core tables were populated with current data. The core tables were populated 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. Utah maintained the occupational licensing data and updated all required files.

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 nine 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>

No new tools or products were added to the UEDV. However, maintenance and restructuring work was done within the system. Our team of economists was each designated two modules within the data viewer and assigned to work through each as if they were a customer, with an eye toward looking for areas of improvement and better data presentation and structuring. Also, customer feedback is always welcome on the data viewer. Via emails received and through suggestions coming as feedback from our agency's frontline staff and business development specialists, a listing of enhancements and presentations were assembled and implemented by our IT programmer at various times throughout the year.

For years the WRA unit had a keen desire to make historical county-level employment data available via the data viewer in electronic form. Historical data was only available from 2001 to present in electronic format. Historical county employment prior to 2001 was only available in hard copy; in tables in old annual labor market reports. These were not on the web.

The large volume of work required to transfer this hard-copy data to an electronic format made the task prohibitive as it would require a large amount of time and effort; time not available by staff due to everyday work requirements. However, with the federal government shutdown in early October, some idled analysts were assigned the task of

making this long-awaited conversion. Much work was done to figure out how to turn the hard copies into an electronic format that could combine multiple years of tables and data, and produce an electronic copy available through the data viewer. In the end, all of Utah's counties in their presentation of BLS QCEW data now have an Excel spreadsheet available for download that will include total monthly employment for 1976 through 2000, along with quarterly total wages for each county.

### **State and Local Industry and Occupational Projections**

Several years ago, WRA moved much of the industry projections activity to two research economists on staff. Time and resources were devoted then to improving the overall quality and accuracy of the projections.

Utah took a different approach this year with its industry and occupational projections, producing both statewide and substate projections in the same year. In all previous iterations, statewide long-term industry and occupational projections were produced in one year, then substate executed the following year. In other words, the projections were made from the top down. 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 a reasonable time for delivery to those producing the 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 sum of the substate industry projections became the statewide projections. These were carefully analyzed by the economic staff to see if this bottom up approach produced a sensible statewide projection. In this case, we felt it did. As the statewide and all 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, 2013 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 from the same time period.

In producing its 2012-2022 industry projections, estimates were generated for over 100 industries in *eight* substate areas. The methodology takes into account more economic criteria than had been done in year's past. Previous projections only applied population and personal income as independent variables in the time series models. This round, 14 independent variables based on substate data were used, including population, real and nominal GDP, real and nominal personal income, real and nominal disposable income, and residential and non-residential construction data among others. To be used as independent variables in the modeling of industry employment, the 10-year forecasts had to be produced for each of these predictor variables and a variety of ARIMA and Holt-

Winters models were estimated and considered to determine the best forecasts. The industry employment projections were generated within the PMP Projections Suite software (version 4.4). Additionally, the method for estimating self-employment and unpaid family workers was adjusted to more closely reflect the methodology employed by BLS. As a last step, these models were entered into the Projections Suite software and the best final models were determined.

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.

Both long and short-term occupational projections were presented to Utah’s customers in a full-listing spreadsheet on the state website. Additionally, Utah’s UWORKS system (DWS’ Employment Counselors’ client career planning tool) links directly to the appropriate occupational information in the WID. 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>

Short-term industry projections were developed and posted on the WRA webpage for the 2013-2015 timeframe.

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

### **Annual Economic Analysis and Other Reports**

In PY2013, 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. Web statistics show that WRA's web domain averaged over 50,000 hits per month in PY2013. Web hits continue to climb as compared to last year, and WRA believes that the department's new web page with its accommodation of access through mobile devices and smartphones plays a role in this enhanced exposure.

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. In PY 2013, two ERG products were contributed to: the 2012 ERG and the 2014 Economic Outlook. [http://gomb.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2013/08/2012\\_ERG\\_11\\_20\\_2012.pdf](http://gomb.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2013/08/2012_ERG_11_20_2012.pdf)

Since the collection of annual data can take over six months to collect, the annual report (2012 ERG) is published roughly nine-months after the end of the calendar year. To fill the time gap and provide economic data and forecasts in the interim, DEA worked with its ERG partners to publish an upcoming-year Economic Outlook in January 2014. WRA provided the employment and wage forecast. <http://gomb.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/01/2014UtahEconomicOutlook.pdf>

County-level data was also produced and made available on the web. Each county has its own web page. It is visualized by Tableau with the most current set of economic variables. They get updated at least four times a year, each time new QCEW data becomes available. County annual profiles are available. Links to other parts of the Economic Data Viewer take users to county industry and wage data, labor force statistics, regional occupational projections, and other products. <http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/regions/county/index.html>

WRAs flagship publication is *Local Insights*. It was produced four times during PY2013, 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 articles of ad hoc economic topics and interests. It is scheduled for production when new QCEW county-level data is available. Various topics highlighted in the PY2013 *Local Insights* include

local area key industries, new hires and wage data (LED data), local area occupational projections, and local area EEO profiles. The idea is that when new data elements are published by either us or other government agencies, this local data will be evaluated and presented. <http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/localinsights/current/index.html>

At DWS, our work and outreach within the state is separated into regions. Local Workforce Development Specialists are the main DWS representatives to work with the employer community for local services and information. In response to their request for customized industry information for each Specialist's local region, WRA developed Industry Briefs for all of the state's local regions. This is the second year for these publications and they were all updated in PY2013 reflecting 2013 data. The industries chosen and presented for each region are industries that carry the most importance in those regions, as determined by each region's WRA economist. The brief's focus upon an important industrial sector for that region (most regions have multiple industries presented) and describe employment and wage details for that local industry along with a history, a list of largest employers in that industry, and a profile of occupations that are prevalent in those industries including number of employees and hourly wage information. <http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/industrybriefs/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 (one to two articles per week), with each Regional Economist assigned to contribute. <http://economyutah.blogspot.com/>

WRA also provides written economic analysis for all eight of our state workforce agency's Economic Service Areas (ESA). The ESA directors use the labor market data and analysis to guide their decisions and strategic plans for the upcoming calendar year. Written analysis were provided at the county level for each area. In addition, regional economists followed up with each director to ensure they had the information they needed for their specific plan in their areas, assisted them in utilizing the data in the plan, and answering any questions. This information was compiled into a single report entitled "Counties in Review" and posted on the web for other users who may want to refer to this local analysis provided to the ESAs. <http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/countiesinreview.pdf>

WRA economists teamed with state BLS program staff to conduct a fourth quarter 2012 Job Vacancy Survey. The completion and release of this survey was delayed until early PY2013 due to participant BLS staff leaving for other jobs. The completion of the survey was transferred to WRA, and the economists had to pick up where the process left off, learn the survey parameters, and apply appropriate analysis. This survey was designed to cover the entire range of industries in Utah. In addition to a statewide analysis, it was also dissected into a metropolitan and rural breakout, and also regional breakouts. <http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/jvs/current.pdf>

DWS executive management and business liaisons find value in job surveying. In reference to the just-mentioned JVS, customer feedback asked for a JVS with a less wide range of industries. Oftentimes these surveys tell us what is common knowledge; that the low-paying, high-turnover jobs have the most openings. Policy makers have little desire to do anything about this. This is just a normal part of any economy, and does not lead an economy. Other industries, though, do lead the economy. Those that produce occupations that demand a much higher training level and skill set with accompanying high wages are the areas in an economy where policy makers would like to focus. Therefore, in response to this customer feedback, a skill shortage/hard-to-fill type shortage is now being developed. This survey will focus on higher-end occupations and the industries that need them—those with a STEM application, and will evaluate employer’s abilities, challenges, needs, etc. in finding workers and filling jobs of this higher-end nature. There is much talk about skill shortages, and this survey desires to evaluate such, with an eye to identifying distinctions between perceived and real skill shortages.

WRA initiated the work on this new survey approach in latter PY2013, which will be completed in fall 2014. WRA is leveraging WIGS money here to bring this about. WRA is providing the survey blueprint, its design, its management, its analysis and publication. State monies are funding most of this survey, including the subcontracting of the surveying itself. The initial prep work and survey design were initiated in the PY2013 window.

Several years ago the WRA unit posted a Utah veteran’s labor force profile. This profile was updated in PY2013 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>

### **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.

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**

WRAs participation in the Utah Economic Council just mentioned, we view, as part of our commitment to our customer's 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.

The Governor requested that WRA conduct analysis pertaining to the issue of underemployment in Utah. Data was gathered to identify what variables within the economy can best signal underemployment, and to what degree does underemployment plague the state's labor force. The end product was compiled into a presentation that has been given to DWS's Senior Staff (which includes the Unemployment Insurance and Workforce Development directors), the Governor's Economic Council, the SWIB, and the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

In the UEDV WOOD tool, a listing was added for green job occupations. This was done to help DWS' State Workforce Development Specialist continue the legacy of the State Energy Sector Partnership grant. This is the summary of that grant as presented to WRA by our Workforce Development Specialist; "As part of our sustainability plan for the State Energy Sector Partnership (SESP) Grant, we indicated that we would develop a web resource for individuals to continue to identify LMI and training resources for green jobs that we trained in as part of the grant. The SESP grant was a \$4.6 M grant awarded to develop curriculum, the workforce, and create jobs in green construction, alternative fuels, energy management and efficiency, and renewable energy and transmission." The grant was awarded January 29, 2010 and ended June 30, 2013. Training provider partners include Bridgerland Applied Technology College (ATC), Davis ATC, Salt Lake

Community College, Southwest ATC, Uintah Basin ATC, Utah State University – Eastern, and Utah Valley University.

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>

At the beginning of PY 2013, the upcoming implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandate scheduled for January 2013 was a hot topic of discussion. When speaking before audiences, WRA economists found that the concerns about the ACA and its coverage garnered the most questions. Requests for any information surrounding its economic impact were common. One of the regional economists posted a page on our website relating to ACA and health insurance coverage in Utah's local areas. It featured a Tableau map, and had a table including each county and showed total working-age pop, the population count and percentage insured, and then the numbers uninsured. At the time, it was an informative addition and addressed a current topic, but has since been removed as the unknown around ACA has subsided.

### **New Tools and Resources**

WRA continued migrating the presentation of its county data on its webpage through the Tableau software. Tableau allows the user to actively choose the visual presentation of local labor market information. In PY2011, WRA incorporated the data visualization product Tableau into some web tools. This was continued and expanded in PY2013 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.

For example, when new BLS QCEW data becomes available, quarterly economic Snapshots are made for each county. These have graphs and tables of the most recent county-level economic variables. In the past, pdf's would have to be produced for all 29 Utah counties, and each county's pdf posted to the web. One would have to go through the portal for each county to get to each county's pdf. With Tableau, a Snapshot for each county can be accessed from one site. Just select the county you want from the list of Utah counties, and the graphs and tables within the Snapshot will change to the county you selected. Ease of use and much less navigation are the tangible benefits.

### **Efforts to Create and Support Partnerships and Collaborations**

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. Out of this 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 is currently serving as the first president of the economic club.

WRA partnered with the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and the other workforce councils representing regions and industries across the state in PY2013. 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 division of the state into various regions. Each region 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.

WRA continues 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.

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.

In the 2014 Utah legislative session, HB 90 created the Women in the Economy Commission. Economists from WRA contributed to the research that led to the passage of HB 90. The research mainly focuses upon compiling workforce and demographic data to paint the picture of how women contribute to and are affected by the state of the Utah economy. WRA's Chief Economist now serves as a member of the commission, and 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 top-50 list of occupations that feature or demand STEM training and skills. A filtering criterion was on occupational openings and wages. UTC desires to lobby the education community and policy makers, promoting the

need for STEM training and emphasis in Utah's education community. 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. The timing on this was advantageous as the Governor's Office of Economic Development was approaching DWS about STEM occupations and is there enough emphasis within the state of Utah's educational system on these occupations? In other words, if the education community is going to push students down the STEM road, what occupations can they expect to fall into when they come out the other side?

*Local Insights* garnered national attention in PY2013. In one issue, a feature article made use of the U.S. Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics (LED) data and its use down to the county level. This caught the attention of the Census Bureau and C2ER, who are always looking for best-practice examples of promoting LED data. C2ER hosts national webinars highlighting LMI data or data useful to LMI analysts, and how users use this data. As an example of how LED data can be used and published at a local level as seen in *Local Insights*, C2ER employed one of Utah's Regional Economists to be the presenter of using LED data for local economies in one of these national webinars. The focus of the webinar was uses and visualizations of LED data as telling the economic story of a local economy. It occurred in August 2013.

#### **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 PY2013, WRA staff gave a total of 31 presentations with a total audience of 1,800 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 18 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 three 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 is another example where other federal and 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.

Several projects were undertaken or contributed to by WRA's research economists in PY2013. These include follow up on PY2012's TANF research, contributions to a report on intergenerational poverty as mandated by the Utah legislature, a study on refugees and the effectiveness of refugee services and programs as administered through DWS, and looking for a predictive model for UI benefit fraud. These were all initiated by DWS' executive management as empowered by the Governor and the SWIB.

Utah's TANF research garnered some national attention. Part of the TANF research centered around a request from Utah's Senator Hatch, addressing the national question of why state TANF participants are not meeting the federally-mandated 50-percent participation rate within FEP work-search activities. This research was wrapped up in early PY2013 and the findings were presented by one of the research analysts at two national conferences. The first was to the National Association for Welfare Research & Statistic's 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Workshop and Research Academy in Chicago in August 2013. The second to the Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management's 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Research Conference in Washington, D.C. in November, 2013.

<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/tanfreport092012.pdf>  
<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/wrec062013.pdf>

Another research project undertaken in PY2013 relates to Utah refugees and their support programs through DWS. Like the TANF study, the goal is to evaluate the economic impact of DWS services upon the refugee community's economic improvement and transition to work. Are there areas of noticeable benefit to individuals, or areas of limited results? The initial moves within this project began in PY2012, in terms of laying the groundwork for data infrastructure and the means to gather data on the refugee community. The actual data gathering and performance of analysis were done in PY2013.

DWS is the state's central point for refugee-related monies coming to the state from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (ACF). DWS distributes these monies to various refugee-related organizations in Utah. The SWIB and DWS' Executive Director wanted some feedback as to the effectiveness of this money going to these organizations. WRA's researcher worked to understand the program and to gather as much available data on the refugee population to address the SWIB/Executive Director question. The only available organized data was DWS' internal data, such as eligibility-service statistics, job search activities, and UI records. Even this data needed to be administered, quantified, and organized differently to fully capture pertinent data. Statistical data from the receiving organizations is largely non-existent. The initial outcome of the study is that there is a data gap, and that the initial question cannot be currently answered. But interest in the subject remains strong, and DWS and the receiving organizations are partnering to understand, coordinate, gather, share, and eventually analyze data across the various parties to create a useable refugee-related-services database, with the desire to further help and elevate the refugee community into the Utah labor force.  
<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/pubs/specialreports/refugee14.pdf>

Another research project centered upon unemployment insurance benefits and the desire to build a model that could predict UI benefit fraud. In the end, no model arose with successful results, but it was determined that better data capture and analysis in the UI department would be needed for such a predictive model to be developed. This set the stage for some UI data system changes, and the possibility to revisit this project in the future as the needed data is accumulated.

**Recommendations to ETA for Changes and Improvements to WIGS Requirements**

None.