

Summary Report of the Conference Call of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) Advisory Group

Third Quarter 2009 Conference Call: September 29, 2009

Convened September 29, 2009, from Employment and Training Administration (ETA), U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC

Meeting Highlights

Welcome and Adoption of Minutes:

- ETA Administrator for Performance and Technology, John R. Beverly, III convened the meeting, provided an overview of issues to be discussed, and welcomed the State of Hawaii to WRIS membership. Karen Staha, Director, Division of Performance Accountability, reviewed the Draft Minutes from the June Quarterly Meeting and called for adoption, which was unanimous.

Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act of 2009 (TGAAA):

- Susan Worden, Division of Trade Assistance, provided an overview of the Trade Globalization and Adjustment Assistance Act (TGAAA) of 2009, and highlighted the newly required data elements for the Trade Activities Participant Report (TAPR). Among the statutory data requirements is the "sector of employment" for participants who become reemployed following program participation. The element will be collected through the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code in the second quarter after program exit.

Data Quality Initiative: U.S. Departments of Education and Labor:

- John Beverly outlined the current status for the Data Quality Initiative supported by the Departments of Education and Labor. In the Department of Labor's FY 2010 budget request, \$15 million was requested to link valuable workforce information to the longitudinal studies. The Department has worked closely with the Department of Education in development of the Initiative to ensure the work is complementary rather than duplicative. Mr. Beverly encouraged the Advisory Group to consider how their states might participate in the opportunity.

Expanded WRIS Access Options: WRIS II:

- John Glen, Chairman of the Advisory Group's Working Group, outlined the development of WRIS II, the voluntary initiative to expand access options. He confirmed the initiative will maintain strong data safeguards, including a separate Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) and a separate portal established by the WRIS Operator. The receiving PACIAs will aggregate data for the new entities under guidelines specified in the separate DSA.

Amendment Proposals to the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement:

- Greg Wilson reviewed the timeline and process for the 'third round' amendment proposals that were e-mailed to Advisory Group members and state Contacts on September 23, 2009. During the current 60-day comment period, members were encouraged to review the proposals with their state colleagues and e-mail comments to WRIS@dol.gov. The second, 30-day comment period will include a conference call to discuss the amendment proposals. The amendment process is detailed in the Data Sharing Agreement at Section X. Amendment of the Agreement.

Retention of WRIS Records:

- Mr. Wilson advised that ETA was reviewing the current policies for retention of WRIS records. He requested that members e-mail copies of retention rules and policies for their states to: WRIS@dol.gov.

Quarterly Technical Report of the WRIS Operator:

- The Operator is working with the State of Hawaii, a new member, to assist with preparation for participation in the Distributed Database Index (DDBI).
- The July SUIA – IT Town Hall focused on further processing improvements.
- The heaviest traffic continues to be concentrated at the time the DDBI is posted. The next DDBI is scheduled for posting on October 12, 2009.

Minutes of the Conference Call

The Third Quarter 2009 Conference Call Meeting of the Advisory Group of the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) was convened on Tuesday, September 29, 2009, at 3:00 p.m., EDT.

I. Welcome and Remarks

John R. Beverly, III, Administrator, Office of Performance and Technology (PROTECH), Employment and Training Administration (ETA), welcomed the Advisory Group and outlined the agenda for the conference call. Noting that several states had appointed new members, Mr. Beverly reviewed the formation of the Advisory Group, through an amendment to the Data Sharing Agreement, to advise the Assistant Secretary of ETA on WRIS-related matters. The Advisory Group continues to provide a venue for communication, discussion of operations and related policy issues, and recommendations for improvements. In his subsequent remarks, Mr. Beverly extended a warm welcome on behalf of the Advisory Group to the newest WRIS state, Hawaii, which was represented at the meeting by Ms. Ellen R. Kai. The WRIS membership now stands at 50 states and the District of Columbia.

II. Approval of Minutes from the Second Quarter Meeting, June 8, 2009

Karen A. Staha, Director, Division of Performance Accountability, briefly reviewed the Draft Minutes for the June Advisory Group meeting that had been e-mailed to representatives on June 16, 2009, and posted on the WRIS Web page. Having received no comments or corrections since the distribution, she asked for approval of the Minutes. Ms. Jo Doyal (AL) made the motion to approve; Mr. Gary Kamimura (WA) seconded. There were no objections.

III. Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act of 2009 (TGAAA): Implications for WRIS

Susan Worden of ETA's Division of Trade Assistance, Office of National Response, provided an overview of the Trade Globalization and Adjustment Assistance Act (TGAAA) of 2009. Signed into law as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the TGAAA amends the Trade Act of 1974 as it concerns the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. These amendments affect all program areas, including expanded eligibility, funding, benefits, services, as well as new requirements for program administration and monitoring.

Sections 239j and 249B of TGAAA provide new guidelines for state level reporting on TAA program activity and post participation outcomes. To meet these new data requirements, a revised quarterly data collection has been designed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for implementation in FY 2010. The new collection, the Trade Activities Participant Report (TAPR), will consolidate TAA data currently collected through three reports into a single streamlined report format. The 2010 TAPR is also designed to collect a number of new statutory data elements. State, Industry, and National Aggregates of data collected through these elements must be provided on an annual basis to Congress and must also be accessible through a public website (www.doleta.gov/tradeact)

One of these statutory data requirements is the "sector of employment" for participants who become reemployed following program participation; this element will be collected through the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code in the second quarter after program exit. NAICS codes are currently available through state UI wage records. Although most WRIS member states provide the NAICS data voluntarily, an amendment is being sought to the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement to require population of this field. (Amendment proposal No. 15)

Although the OMB-approved TAPR will collect this code through a four to six-digit iteration, the TAA program office would consider reporting this information on a two-digit level, in order to minimize concerns about the ability to identify large employers in some states.

IV. Data Quality Initiative: U.S. Departments of Education and Labor

John Beverly outlined the current status for the Data Quality Initiative. Over the past several years, the Department of Education (ED) has provided states with grants to develop longitudinal education databases. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) included an additional \$245 million for this initiative.

In the Department of Labor's FY 2010 budget request, \$15 million was requested to link workforce information through the Workforce Data Quality Initiative. Valuable data can be gleaned from the linkage including an improved life cycle view of education, training, and other labor market services as they relate to wages over time and employment over time in the labor market experience. Longitudinal data provides the ability to track outcomes over the life cycle based on an individual's investment in skills and experience, which in turn, affects one's wages. The data will be a rich resource for providing an overview of the types of choices people make, and how educational steps and work experiences translate into labor market experience. Mr. Beverly stressed that ETA has worked closely with the Department of Education in development of the Data Quality initiatives to ensure the work is complementary rather than duplicative, and he encouraged the Advisory Group to consider how their states might participate in the opportunity.

V. Expanded WRIS Access Options: WRIS II

Greg Wilson, Division of Performance Accountability, introduced John Glen (OR), Chairman of the Working Group, who provided an update regarding the WRIS II initiative to expand data sharing on a voluntary basis. Mr. Glen, with Working Group members Clinton Flowers (MO), Adam Leonard (TX), and Rick Little (UT), had conducted a survey of members regarding interest and constraints for expanded data sharing earlier in 2009.

Mr. Glen explained that the WRIS II initiative would be an entirely separate undertaking governed by a participant approved Data Sharing Agreement; the current WRIS program governed by a fully executed Data Sharing Agreement would not be changed in any way. States interested in participating in the WRIS II initiative would do so on an entirely voluntary basis. To protect the data, WRIS II will maintain strict confidentiality safeguards. The WRIS Operator, ACS, is developing a distinct information portal through which the PACIAs that have executed the new WRIS II Data Sharing Agreement will receive the wage data. The PACIAs would then provide only aggregate data, defined as information comprised of at least three records, to the expanded entities.

Noting that the WRIS II Data Sharing Agreement is in development and that the name "WRIS II" is informal, Mr. Glen solicited Advisory Group members for suggested provisions for the Data Sharing Agreement and for the initiative name, asking that members e-mail their comments and suggestions to John.L.Glen@state.or.us and copy WRIS@dol.gov. Mr. Glen indicated that although he thought that all Federal programs might be able to request data under WRIS II, the listing of entities eligible to receive the data should be a discussion topic among the interested participants for WRIS II. In thanking the Working Group, Mr. Beverly referenced their report of June 2009 and noted that, as chairman, Mr. Glen would be providing further updates on how the initiative is moving forward.

VI. Third Round Amendment Proposals to the WRIS Data Sharing Agreement

Greg Wilson briefly discussed the timetable and process for the Advisory Group's consideration of the six 'third round' amendment proposals, e-mailed to representatives and to the designated

state Contracts. He noted that the amendment process is specified in the Data Sharing Agreement at Section X. (Amendment of the Agreement), and that a copy of Section X. had been e-mailed previously to the Advisory Group on September 24, 2009.

Mr. Wilson indicated that the six amendment proposals (No. 10-15) had been e-mailed on September 23, 2009, opening the 60-day comment period. He asked that any Advisory Group member who did not receive the amendment proposals contact WRIS Administration by an e-mail to WRIS@dol.gov or telephone call to 202.693.3750. Advisory Group members can also view the amendment proposals on the WRIS Web site: <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/WRIS.cfm>.

Advisory Group members were asked to review the amendment proposals with their colleagues during the 60-day comment period and to e-mail their comments to WRIS@dol.gov by November 24, 2009. At the conclusion of the 60-day comment period, the WRIS administration will review the comments received and provide preliminary assessments on the appropriate disposition of the proposed amendments. The proposed disposition, decisions, and/or revised proposals will be e-mailed to the parties to the Data Sharing Agreement and will be posted on the Web site; these actions will initiate the final 30-day comment period. During the final 30-day comment period, ETA will host a conference call to discuss the amendment proposals as specified in Section X. E. of the Data Sharing Agreement. Amended proposals to which no objections are raised during final 30-day comment period will be issued to the states for execution through signatures of the parties. Mr. Wilson indicated that the Advisory Group will hold the conference call for the 30-day comment period in mid-December, and that a copy of Section X of the Data Sharing Agreement would be distributed with the Draft Minutes of the September 29 meeting.

Mr. Wilson briefly summarized the six 'third round' amendment proposals for the Data Sharing Agreement:

- Expand, at Section IV.A., the definition of Aggregate Data to include employer data. (Amendment proposal No. 10)
- Increase specificity for the confidentiality restrictions at Sections VIII. A.6, B.9, and C.8. (Amendment proposal No. 11)
- Expand the legal authority references, at Section II, to include Section 303(a) (1) of the Social Security Act (SSA) and Section 3304(a) (9) (B) of the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA). (Amendment proposal No. 12)
- Revise, at Section V., the Advisory Group's quarterly meeting format (conference call or in-person session) and the timeline for the related Draft Minutes. (Amendment proposal No. 13)
- Provide for, at Section VII.C.3, the exchange of Wage Data for new programs or grants funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) for purposes of performance reporting. (Amendment proposal No. 14)
- Expand, at Section IV.N., the definition of Wage Data to include industry sectors in which employees work, as identified by the 6-digit North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) codes. (Amendment proposal No.15)

VII. Policies for Retention of WRIS Records

Greg Wilson advised that ETA was reviewing the current policies for retention of WRIS records and requested input from the Advisory Group. He asked that representatives share the retention rules and policies that are followed in their respective states. Materials should be e-mailed to: WRIS@dol.gov.

VIII. Quarterly Technical Report of the WRIS Operator

The WRIS Operator's Third Quarter Technical Report was presented by Amanda Gohl, Account Manager. The Report, previously distributed by e-mail to the Advisory Group and state Contacts,

included operational specifics regarding schedules, security, hub operations, and performance statistics.

Ms. Gohl reviewed the performance sections included in the Report and indicated that the pattern of heavy volume continues to be around the time of the Distributed Database Index (DDBI) posting. The next DDBI will be posted on October 12, 2009.

Ms. Gohl also discussed the SUJA - IT Town Hall that had been held by Webinar on July 28, and was very productive. Participating IT representatives indicated that they would work with the PACIAs and SUIAs to monitor on-site processes and help avoid processing problems. The WRIS Operator had confirmed that its staff would continue to monitor and evaluate the processing flow before proposing any other revisions to delivery schedules from the hub to the states. The Technical Report also included suggested processing modifications that could be implemented if problems are not otherwise resolved by the states. In closing, Ms. Gohl expressed her appreciation to the Working Group for their leadership on the voluntary WRIS II initiative for expanded access.

IX. Additional Business

In response to a member's question, it was confirmed that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) is distinct from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Many of the programs covered are offered through federal Departments other than the Department of Labor. However, through the Recovery Act, there are discretionary grants for "green jobs" for which ETA will wish to obtain outcome data. By including the Recovery Act grants under WRIS, aggregate outcome information could be developed through the Common Reporting Information System (CRIS) operated through the State of Kansas.

X. Adjournment

Receiving no further responses or questions, Ms. Staha thanked members for their participation in the Third Quarter Advisory Group meeting and invited them to e-mail any follow-up questions to WRIS@dol.gov.