

State of Alaska PY 2014 Workforce Information Grant

Performance Report

July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

Introduction

During Program Year 2014, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Research and Analysis Section (R&A) met the requirements of the Workforce Information Grant to States, outlined in TEGL No. 23-13, as detailed below.

I. Workforce Information Database (WIDb)

R&A updated the Workforce Information Database (WIDb) core tables with all of the required data sets, which were also used internally to deliver data and analysis to state users in a variety of formats and special reports.

The Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS) is an example of an Internet product that uses several WIDb data sets in a standalone career information delivery system. The WIDb provides Alaska wages, employment projections, and licensing information. AKCIS links these state-specific occupational and educational figures in one place, creating an interactive, Web-based education and planning tool for career seekers.

The AKCIS portal is at: https://acpe.alaska.gov/PLANNING/Education_Planning/AKCIS.

II. Industry and Occupational Employment Projections

Alaska met its short-term and long-term occupational forecast deliverables.

R&A used the long-term occupational and industry projections in a number of presentations to industry and educational audiences, and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) used the projections extensively in its ongoing effort to establish a consistent method for determining priority occupations.

R&A publishes the industry and occupational projections on its Web site and has incorporated them into many R&A product Web pages, presentations, and special reports.

III. Annual Economic Analysis and Other Reports

Workforce Information Grants to States (WIGS) funding helps support data and analysis for R&A's monthly economic publication, *Alaska Economic Trends* (labor.alaska.gov/trends/). R&A distributed more than 30,000 copies to subscribers in 2014, and *Trends* articles were downloaded at least 40,000 times.

Trends frequently cites data produced under WIGS deliverables in its industry and geographic profile articles and an entire issue is devoted to new long-term projections when they are published.

In recent months, R&A has published articles:

- Comparing Alaska’s current economy to the 1980s, when the state experienced its last large-scale recession due in part to a similar decline in oil prices: labor.alaska.gov/trends/sep15.pdf
- Tracking the history of tourism in Southeast Alaska and the effect of large cruise ship tourism: labor.alaska.gov/trends/aug15.pdf
- Detailing the characteristics of the state’s newest residents — where they moved from, what level of education they bring to the state, how old they are, and to what degree they are already U.S. citizens: laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/aug15art2.pdf

R&A’s Web site (laborstats.alaska.gov/) is the section’s primary dissemination tool for its products, reports, and data. In PY 2014, R&A’s Web site had more than 680,000 visits and 154,000 downloads of publications and products. WIGS funding plays an important role in funding both data production and dissemination.

IV. Customer Consultations

Alaska uses several methods to collect and interpret customer needs and satisfaction.

- **Customer satisfaction survey:** R&A maintains a Web-based user survey. Customers who completed the survey were mostly “very satisfied” with the products and services that R&A offers. Of those who were familiar with the data they were seeking or using, all expressed satisfaction with the Web site. (Some people reported difficulties finding data or information that isn’t produced by R&A — for example, information on how to file for unemployment insurance.) Some customers offered suggestions for displaying additional data or data in different formats, to which R&A responded.
- **Informal discussions and collaboration:** R&A worked closely with its primary user groups — including AWIB, employers, and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Division of Employment and Training Services — to meet data needs. Alaska’s principal customers expressed strong support for R&A and its services and products.

- **Information requests:** R&A receives and responds to hundreds of requests for information a year from industry, administration officials, state legislators, the media, economic consultants, and the public.

V. Activities Undertaken to Meet Customer Needs

As noted above, there is substantial communication between users and R&A as the section publishes and disseminates data and analyses. R&A often simplifies, amends, or enhances its Web pages in response to those exchanges.

R&A regularly monitors Web traffic, including by individual article for *Alaska Economic Trends*. Topics that generate significant traffic are noted and more likely to be revisited or explored further. Research requests from state and local government officials periodically become *Trends* articles. Questions about Alaska's changing age profile, for example, resulted in an article quantifying and examining the characteristics of Alaskans in their 20s: laborstats.alaska.gov/trends/sep14art1.pdf.

R&A's core values are to provide accurate, objective, and clear data and analysis, and the section is always looking for ways to improve in those three areas in particular, whether in response to issues raised by users or to problems identified internally.

VI. New Tools and Resources

R&A conducts 50+ presentations a year to a variety of audiences. Although many of the presentations have common elements, each is customized by the economist conducting the presentation. This updated information — foundational economic metrics such as job numbers by industry and occupation, occupational and industry projections, etc. — is one of the principal new "tools or resources" that WIGS funding helps make possible every year.

WIGS funding also supports ongoing development and maintenance of R&A's online "Alaska Training Clearinghouse," which attempts to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on job training available in the state: live.laborstats.alaska.gov/atc/index.cfm.

R&A purchased the data visualization product Tableau during the program year and has developed test products to demonstrate career pathways, among other things.

VII. Efforts to Create and Support Partnerships and Collaborations

R&A works regularly with the AWIB and other partners to provide presentations, reports, and customized data. R&A has worked closely with the AWIB throughout the program year

to identify priority occupations for training purposes. Occupations have been sorted by a number of variables including growth, wages, percent nonresident, age, gender, and connection to key industry sectors such as oil and gas, construction, and maritime.

R&A also collaborates with other state agencies and the University of Alaska to conduct surveys and analyses. Examples from PY 2014 include:

- A partnership with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to produce data on housing prices, rental statistics, housing affordability, and new home building;
- Work on a health care workforce profile that included a survey of health care employers to determine which occupations they had the most difficulty filling;
- A successful application for a Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant to improve R&A's existing capacity to work with cross-agency data, including K-12 and postsecondary institutions such as the University of Alaska system.

VIII. Activities to Leverage LMI-WI Funding

Though many of the work products referenced in this report benefit from WIGS funding, either in the production or use of data or the resources used for dissemination, the WIGS funding alone is not sufficient to cover the costs of developing and disseminating these products.

R&A leverages funding from data users and its public and private partners to conduct the more in-depth analysis used in *Trends* and its other deliverables. Most of the partnerships referenced in Section VII have funding agreements that are used to help leverage WIGS funding and produce the best information possible.

R&A received a Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant to modernize its cross-agency data management system and produce special reports on nonresident employment in the state and on the gender gap in earnings. The grant application was strengthened by being able to point to WIGS funded projects and data production as examples of capacity and competency.

IX. Recommendations to the ETA for Changes and Improvements to WIGS Requirements

R&A does not recommend any specific changes or improvements to WIGS requirements. The WIDb and projections that WIGS funding supports are worthwhile, and the flexibility to use the remaining funds for projects that are most in-demand within the state is an effective way to maximize the value of WIGS funding.