Workforce Data Quality Initiative

Organization: Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) administers federal government job training and worker dislocation programs, federal grants to states for public employment service programs, and unemployment insurance benefits.[1]

Purpose and Uses: The Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) aims to:

> [support] the development of, or enhancements to, longitudinal administrative databases that will integrate workforce data and create linkages to education data. States will incorporate workforce information into longitudinal data systems to expand the scope and depth of data from programs, such as the Workforce Investment Act programs, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Unemployment Insurance. The long-term WDQI and SLDS goal for States is to use their longitudinal data systems to follow individuals through school and into and through their work life. The WDQI also emphasizes promoting improvements and the level of quality of these systems, in addition to increasing the accessibility of performance data, including data reported by employment services and training providers.

Data Elements Relevant to Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development:

Each WDQI grantee is expected to develop or expand state workforce longitudinal administrative data systems that integrates education data. The state-level workforce data sources include (but are not limited to):

- Wage record data from employers reporting through the Unemployment Insurance (UI) payroll tax system.
- Benefit and demographic data from claims processed through UI.
- Data from the employment and training services authorized under the Workforce Investment Act and the Wagner-Peyser Act employment services.
- Trade Adjustment Assistance.
- Federal employment data from the Federal Employment Data Exchange System.[2]

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[1] ETA Home Page, http://www.doleta.gov/etainfo/eta_default.cfm

[2] Workforce Data Quality Initiative Technical Assistance http://www.doleta.gov/performance/workforcetechnicalassist.cfm

History and Status: The WDQI was introduced in the Obama Administration's Fiscal Year 2010 budget proposal . The program was intended to supplement the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) in the Department of Education, providing workforce data to go along with the SLDS's education data. The Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (Title II of P.L. 107-279) authorized awarding competitive, cooperative agreement grants to states for up to $20 million per grantee for the SLDS program. Currently in its fourth round of funding, 33 states have received WDQI grants.

Methodology: WDQI grants give considerable leeway in the construction of state systems, with certain guidelines. The grant solicitation mandates that state longitudinal systems must, "at a minimum, include information on programs that provide training, employment services, and unemployment insurance; connect with education data contained in Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) databases; be linked longitudinally at the individual level to allow for enhanced opportunity for evaluation of federally and State-supported education and workforce programs; be capable of generating workforce training provider performance information and outcomes in a standardized, easy to understand format (e.g. scorecards), consistent with all applicable Federal and State privacy laws; and, lead to better information for customers and stakeholders of the workforce system." The Department of Labor provides technical assistance to grantees in the form of events, webinars, publications, and a collaborative workspace. In addition, the Data Quality Campaign and the Workforce Data Quality Campaign are nonprofit organizations that provide assistance to WDQI grants.

Data Products and Tools: WDQI grants are used for a variety of purposes with the ultimate goal of developing or enhancing the state's workforce longitudinal databases and linking to education data . Information about grantee projects can be found on the WDQI's Grantee Information page on the Department of Labor website.

Annual Cost: The Department of Labor authorized nearly $6 million in funding for Round 4 of WDQI grants.[3] As of 2014, roughly $36 million in grant funding has been awarded to 34 states.

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[3] ETA News Release. http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/ETA20141130.htm