

Workforce information grant performance report

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Introduction

This is Washington state's performance report on the Workforce and Labor Market Information Grant to States (WIGS) for Program Year (PY) 2023. Grantees are required to submit this report under [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) No. 20-22](#). This report summarizes accomplishments and challenges and recommends improvements to workforce information and services.

Workforce Information Database (WID)

Description of activity

The Washington State Employment Security Department improved work management and tracking for the Workforce Information Database (WID) and other data projects.

1. Employment Security implemented a new portfolio-driven approach to surface and prioritize work. This method is helping surface technical resourcing constraints and more effectively prioritize WID items on the product roadmap.
2. Employment Security implemented agile methodology to align and prioritize WID technical development and maintenance work. These changes aligned WID support processes with other agency software development efforts and supplied a structured approach for implementing enhancements and improvements prioritized through the portfolio.

During PY 2019, Washington state moved to version 2.8 of the WID. During PY 2021, Washington updated the 2.8 core tables. During PY 2023, Washington maintained WID 2.8 in its current form and began planning and identifying resources for migration to WID 3.0 during PY 2024.

Customer consultation

Because the WID is an internal technical resource, ESD does not discuss it with external customers.

Customer needs

Employment Security is planning a customer value proposition where one of the primary goals is to learn how to better meet customer needs through Washington's [labor market information \(LMI\) website](#). Insights will inform how the WID can be expanded and improved to serve LMI website improvements.

Collaborations or leveraged funding

In PY 2023, Washington state attended Analyst Resource Center workgroup meetings and plans to continue this collaboration in 2024.

Industry and occupational employment projections

Description of activity

[Employment projections](#) provide a general outlook for industry and occupational employment in Washington state. They give job seekers, policy makers and training providers an idea of how much an industry or occupation is projected to change over time and show the future demand for workers.

Every year Employment Security produces industry employment projections for two, five and 10 years from a base period. This grant requires the two-year and 10-year projections. Washington's state law requires the five-year projections.

The base period for the two-year projections is second quarter 2023. The base period for the five-year and 10-year projections is 2022. Staffing patterns for each industry are used to convert industry projections into occupational projections.

Employment Security completed two-year industry and occupational [employment projections](#) for Washington state and its 12 local workforce development areas (WDAs) and submitted them to the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in February 2024. Ten-year industry and occupational employment projections are submitted to ETA in even years only. The last 10-year submission was in July 2024. The next submission will be in July 2026.

Customer consultation

Employment Security seeks agency partner and regional labor economist feedback on detailed and aggregated industry forecasts. The projections use statistically valid methods. The Projections Managing Partnership (PMP) methodology recommends that forecasters combine alternative economic forecasting methods and choose the best model based on performance

measures over the observed periods. Washington state employed this methodological approach, which can be found in the [2019 employment projections technical report](#).

Customer needs

Short-term, mid-term and long-term industry and occupational employment projections data are heavily used by local workforce boards, workforce development professionals, planners, businesses, higher education institutions and other customers. The data are the foundation for workforce development discussions and higher education planning in Washington state.

Collaborations or leveraged funding

Stakeholders throughout the statewide and local workforce systems use occupational and industry projections. Local workforce development boards, public K-12 systems, community and technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs frequently consult the list and work with regional economists to ensure alignment of programs. Many educational partners are required to demonstrate demand for annual Perkins funding. ESD partnered with Washington STEM, an education-focused nonprofit, to create and support a data visualization based on occupational projections to support Perkins grant applications. Various stakeholders internal and external to the educational system also rely on projections for business and community planning purposes. Projections can be accessed at esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo, the [annual economic report](#), and through regional economists.

LMI training for service delivery

Description of activity

Washington's state and regional economists engaged in a number of training events throughout the year. Many trainings and educational meetings were conducted virtually, although demand for in-person meetings increased in 2023-2024 compared to during the COVID-19 pandemic. In all, state and regional economists responded to more than 1,000 requests involving LMI education and training. Activities took the form of training presentations and workshops, media interviews, consultations with various stakeholders, and various reports. Customers included federal, state, local and tribal governments; local and statewide workforce training boards; workforce system partners; K-12 and postsecondary education institutions; economic development, business and industry associations; businesses and more. Some examples follow:

- Out-stationed regional economists are invited to speak at local workforce board meetings during the year. Presentations cover information on trainings and up-to-date labor market trends, bringing board members up to speed on labor market conditions and available resources. Select examples:
 - Eastern Partnership WDA, 4/25/2024 (18)
 - Future Workforce Alliance, 12/5/2023 (20)
- Economists delivered presentations and training to staff and partners in Washington’s Career One-Stop centers (called WorkSource in Washington state). In-person presentations highlighted local economic conditions and trends. Online classroom-style trainings focused on how to find, use, and interpret labor market information for working with job seekers, employers and partners in local workforce development systems. Select examples:
 - WorkSource Spokane, 5/6/2024 (10)
 - WorkSource King County, 5/6/2024 (25)
 - WorkSource Columbia Basin, 3/13/24 (40), 4/3/2024 (45)
- Economists provided training and presentations for K-12 career and technical education programs, community and technical colleges and universities, and local educational service districts throughout the state, as well as other state agencies involved in workforce development. Trainings involved analysis and communication about supply and demand of local industry and occupational employment to inform programming, as required by programs such as the federal Perkins Act, Worker Retraining, and Basic Food, Employment and Training (BFET). Select examples:
 - Western Washington University Economics Club 2/29/2024 (25)
 - Central Washington University Economic Outlook Conference, 5/6/2024 (50)
 - Eastern Washington University, 4/22/24 (3)
 - Gonzaga University, 4/3/2024 (15)
 - Yakima Valley College, 4/12/24 (10)
 - State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, 5/9/2024 (80)
 - Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2/21/2024 (20)
 - DSHS DVR, 5/29/24 (unknown)
 - DSHS /Community Services Division, 6/4/2024 (35)
 - Department of Labor & Industries (LNI), 5/14/2024 (50)
- Economists delivered training presentations to local and state business and economic development audiences, including economic development associations, chambers of commerce, industry associations, Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) affiliates, membership organizations, conferences, and statewide organizations including the Washington Economic Development Association (WEDA), the Association of Washington Businesses (AWB) and the Washington Workforce Association (WWA).

Presentations teach local and state labor market conditions, including industry trends and characteristics of the labor force. Select presentations/organizations:

- National Association of State Workforce Agencies, 9/13/2023 (30)
 - ALTSSEA (Seattle and Portland area alternative investments group) 9/19/2023 (200)
 - Women in Commercial Real Estate 1/11/2024 (100)
 - Institute for Supply Management, Western Washington, 1/11/2024 (50)
 - Pacific Northwest Regional Economic Conference, 5/21-23/2024 (50)
 - Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County, 9/20/2023 and 2/15/2024 (300)
 - Economic Alliance Snohomish County, 2/21/2024 (300)
 - Snohomish County Public Utility District, 9/20/2023 (30)
 - GSBA, 4/12/2024 (30)
 - U.S. Census Bureau LEHD Partnership meeting, 5/15/2024 (75)
 - Local women CEO group, 5/17/2024 (5)
 - Spokane EDC, 3/28/2024 (3)
 - Northwest Aerospace Association, 5/14/24 (15)
 - Washington Trust, 5/16/24 (10)
 - Real Estate Research, 5/23/24 (50)
 - Leadership Tri-Cities, 3/20/24 (50)
 - Linkup2us, 3/8/2024 (50)
 - LEHD partnership presentation, 5/15/24 (107)
 - Century 21 Tri-Cities, 6/26/24 (50)
 - TRIDEC, 5/7/24 (60)
- Economists took part in workgroups that include public and private sector participation focused on specific workforce and data issues. Workgroups included the Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee (CETWAC), the Washington State Nursing Workforce Research Committee, Washington STEM/STEM Alliance, and a Department of Equity workgroup focused on demographic and geographic data collection across state agencies.
 - Washington State Nursing Workforce Research Group, 12/18/2023 (25)
 - Washington Center for Nursing, 3/11/2024 (15)
 - Economists worked extensively with news media, providing interviews, consultations, and trainings to dozens of reporters from newspapers, radio, television, and online publications.
 - Economists proactively engaged with their local customers by writing and distributing local labor area summary publications and newsletters, often on a monthly or quarterly basis.

- Economists worked closely with local workforce development boards and partner agencies to train staff on how to use the [Occupations in Demand list](#), analyze local occupational supply and demand, and advise on status changes (supply, demand, balanced) for administration of workforce programs.

Customer consultation

Employment Security contributed to Washington's workforce system by attending meetings, giving presentations, providing data and consulting. Through consultations, staff shared information and met customer needs with customized reports, and data and website design plans.

Out-stationed economists provided services to local workforce development boards and the statewide Workforce Training Board. Select examples:

- Regional economists maintain close working relationships with local workforce boards.
- Economists attend workforce board meetings by request to provide information to help decision making.
- Economists provide in-depth analysis, consultation, and a critical communication link between central office and local workforce development boards for decisions affecting 12 local occupational training eligibility lists ([Occupations in Demand lists](#)).
- The chief economist met with local workforce development board staff in focused conversations about regionally and organizationally specific labor market and workforce data needs.
- Employment Security worked closely with a human centered design firm to explore customer data needs and uses to inform a forthcoming LMI website redesign project.

Economists met with a variety of workforce, education, training, and economic development customers, contributing LMI expertise and resources for policy, resource, and other decision-making activities. Select examples:

- Staff conducted a focus group with the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and representatives from all 34 colleges about how labor market information is used and what improvements they would like to see for data products and delivery. This is a continuation of work from the previous year and expanded to include an in-person meeting with college workforce leaders across the state.
- Regional economists answered questions from WorkSource offices, partner agencies, businesses, media, and the public.
- Contact information for regional economists and the chief economist are published on the public-facing LMI web page [ESDWAGOV - Labor Market contact page](#) and on many reports and press releases.

Customer needs

ESD was heavily involved in assisting local workforce boards, sharing labor market information with training providers, businesses, economic development boards and other partners throughout the state. Select examples:

- Regional economists worked directly with businesses, local governments, and non-profit organizations by preparing reports and analysis addressing specific challenges and questions ranging from general scans of the economic environment to questions about accessing occupational wage range data.
- Regional economists conducted research focused on occupational supply and demand in specific industries and for specific locations to assist in Perkins grant compliance by local K-12, and postsecondary institutions. Many economists serve on workforce training advisory committees at local educational institutions to maintain relationships. Ongoing labor market analysis is necessary for various state and federal funding streams.

Customers throughout Washington state, regardless of sector, are also important to our mission.

- Out-stationed economists regularly supply information to local media, providing interviews, analysis and consultation for locally relevant questions about labor market conditions. We also deliver high profile and routine publications such as the monthly employment report.
- Economists worked with economic development partners to build economic context for business attraction and retention efforts.
- Economists worked with businesses interested in expansion and relocation possibilities. They also helped businesses with wage analysis and market research.
- Economists worked with students and educators who reached out with questions about data and products.

Collaborations or leveraged funding

Staff took part in a collaborative workshop with the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program. The Census Bureau hosted two presentations highlighting research that combined Washington Employment Security data with LEHD data to glean greater insight including race, ethnicity, educational attainment, and turnover dynamics. One hosted presentation supplied a high-level overview, and the second focused on how to combine data to tell a more complete story.

Employment Security economists and data analysts collaborated with the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to conduct a focus group with participation from all 34 community and technical colleges around labor market information from ESD.

Employment Security and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) filed a joint application for the [Data User Insights Academy](#) – a program designed to improve strategic collaboration between state LMI offices and data users. Washington was accepted for the second cohort, scheduled to kick off in winter 2025.

Employment Security staff worked collaboratively with the Workforce Education and Training Board (WTB) and the Washington State Department of Commerce to lay the groundwork for a forthcoming collaborative report focused on the clean energy workforce in Washington state.

The [Labor Market and Credential Data Dashboard](#) is the product of an ongoing collaboration between Employment Security and Washington STEM, an education-focused nonprofit organization.

Annual economic analysis and other reports

Description of activity

Over the course of this evaluation period, staff wrote and published the [2023 Labor Market and Economic Report](#). It is produced using guidance from the [Revised Code of Washington, section 50.38.40](#) and by several teams at Employment Security. The report provides a comprehensive snapshot in time, with comparisons over the past five years. It covers:

- The U.S. labor market
- Washington's economy and labor market
- Seasonal, structural, and cyclical industry employment
- Unemployment
- Employment projections
- Income
- Wages

In addition to the annual report, Employment Security produced the following reports over the evaluation period:

- [Facts and Figures Report](#), published monthly. A quick reference card that provides high-level summary data on unemployment rates, monthly job growth or loss, data for unemployment claims and benefits, long term unemployed data, average

wage/minimum wage, unemployment taxes/trust fund, WorkSource services, ESD employee data, and toll-free numbers to resources for UI claimants, employers, job seekers and others.

- [Monthly Employment Report](#), published monthly. A summary of one-month and 12-month changes in industry employment, labor force and unemployment rates. It references BLS Current Employment Statistics (CES) and Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS).
- [Labor Area Summaries](#), refreshed monthly. County and metropolitan area labor market snapshots of unemployment and labor force information, nonfarm industry employment, and labor force participation rate. They reference LAUS, Washington Quarterly Benchmarked Employment Statistics (WA-QB), and BLS, Current Population Survey (CPS).
- [County Profiles](#), published annually. Narrative publications detailing economic and social characteristics and trends for each of Washington's 39 counties. They reference several public datasets published by ESD, BLS, Census, BEA, and the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM).
- [Business Employment Dynamics \(BED\)](#), published quarterly. Covers job gains and losses at private sector firms and identifies whether the change is due to businesses opening or closing, or due to increases and decreases in employment at existing firms. References QCEW.
- [Agricultural Employment and Wages](#), published annually. Provides information on agricultural employment, wage rates and H-2A prevailing wages and employment practices. References QCEW, ESD UI Wage File, Department of Labor Foreign Labor Certification.
- [Supply/Demand Report](#), refreshed monthly. Compares supply and demand of 2- and 3-digit occupations based on UI claims data (supply) and job postings (demand) statewide and by Workforce Development Area (WDA). References ESD UI data and Burning Glass® job postings data. The annual version also references IPEDs educational data.
- [Employer Demand](#), refreshed monthly. County and state level summaries of the top 20 occupations, employers, skill clusters and certifications as gleaned from The Conference Board® Burning Glass® Help Wanted OnLine™ data series.
- [Occupations in Demand](#), published annually and refreshed by request. Occupational statistics used to determine eligibility for the Training Benefits program and other training and support programs. Derived from several inputs including Employment Security occupational projections, Lightcast® job postings data, UI claims, and extensive customer input. Includes SOC number, title, and description, BLS education and training, OEWS average wage, Employment Security projections, and links to educational and WorkSource partners.

- [Labor Market and Credential Data Dashboard](#), refreshed annually. A collaboration with Washington STEM to provide a reference dashboard for educational programs and students. References Employment Security occupational projections and OEWS occupational wages, self-sufficiency wage calculator, and BLS educational attainment modified to include apprenticeship, STEM, and STEM literacy categories.

Customer consultation

The Annual Labor Market and Economic Report is guided by the [Revised Code of Washington, section 50.38.40](#). The publication is peer reviewed and edited across Employment Security for accuracy, style, and accessibility before a final edit by the statewide Office of Financial Management. Direct customer consultation is minimal.

[Occupations in Demand lists](#) involve extensive customer consultation:

- Employment Security produces and publishes Occupations in Demand lists on its website. The local workforce development boards (LWDBs) own and manage the lists. Occupations in Demand lists are living documents that reflect changing labor market dynamics. They help determine access to training programs such as the Training Benefits program.
- Regional economists work closely with LWDBs and partners in the month prior to publication to adjust the list to reflect local conditions. Economists and management analysts are also available throughout the year to help with adjustments as local economic changes occur in real time.

Customer needs

The Washington State Legislature is the target audience for the [Annual Labor Market and Economic Report](#). The report provides members of the legislature and their staff an understanding of labor market conditions and key economic data points to inform policy decisions.

The Annual Labor Market and Economic Report is written and published with accessibility for the public in mind. Policymakers, businesses, job seekers, academics, the media and others can reference this report for various purposes.

Other reports detailed in this section meet a variety of customer needs:

- [Facts and Figures Report](#): The target audience is ESD executive leadership to inform policy and program decisions across the agency.

- [Monthly Employment Report](#) and accompanying press release: The target audience is the media, and it is written for consumption by the public. This report informs readers about current statewide economic conditions and is a good supplement to the Annual Report for this purpose.
- [Labor Area Summaries](#): The audience is decisionmakers who are interested in keeping track of changing local economic conditions. This is a local emphasis supplement to the Monthly Employment Report.
- [County Profiles](#): County profiles are written for a general audience to provide local context in a narrative summary. Businesses and other institutions use county profiles to contextualize decisions. Job seekers use them to explore their niche in the local economy. County profiles are also used extensively by college students writing term papers.
- [Business Employment Dynamics](#): The target audience is the public, especially businesses. This report helps private sector businesses evaluate statewide hiring trends and risk.
- [Agricultural Employment and Wages](#): This report is used by businesses, labor and others in the agriculture sector to evaluate changing labor conditions and wages. Every two years, this report is supplemented by the H2-A prevailing wage survey.
- [Supply/Demand Report](#): LMI clients in education and workforce development reference the supply/demand report to evaluate supply and demand conditions of various occupations. It is used to inform educational programming and training decisions.
- [Employer Demand Reports](#): WorkSource staff, training providers and job seekers use the employer demand tool to identify characteristics of job postings to tailor job search strategies, identify local opportunities, and consider training and education options.
- [Occupations in Demand lists](#): Used by job seekers, WorkSource staff, and education and training providers to find opportunities and determine eligibility for paid education and training opportunities.
- [Labor Market and Credential Dashboard](#): Used primarily by LMI clients in K-12 and higher education to identify growing occupations with livable wages in order to develop education and training programs that will create pathways to those opportunities.

Collaborations or leveraged funding

The Occupations in Demand list and other publications focused on education and training support collaborations with LWDBs and other workforce system partners, including educational institutions.

Helping the economy in the wake of COVID-19

Washington was the first state in the nation to experience COVID-19 first-hand. Policies and resulting employment impacts were swift and needed quick and creative LMI solutions for documenting the rapidly unfolding crisis.

While stay-at-home orders began in mid-March 2020, the timing of the crisis was effectively delayed in traditional labor market information until the April data release in mid-May. Like many states, Washington turned to unemployment insurance data to estimate potential impacts while waiting for traditional LMI measures to catch up.

A team of Employment Security economists and analysts worked together to generate publicly consumable unemployment insurance datasets as a temporary substitute for — and later supplement to — traditional LMI. Unemployment Insurance data was aggregated to illustrate employment impacts on different locations, industries, occupations, and demographics. Reports were refreshed weekly and published to the LMI website. We made customized reports with ZIP code level data available to municipalities, workforce development councils, public health districts and others by request. Publication of unemployment insurance reports continued until December 2021, after traditional LMI stabilized and the wave of unemployment insurance claims subsided.

Recommendations to ETA

We appreciate the opportunity to partner and collaborate with ETA on improving labor market information service and products. We encourage ETA to continue to work closely with states to understand the needs of customers and how grant funding and requirements do or do not align. New requirements, modernization costs, and other increasing costs without additional funding can create barriers to the development of meaningful labor market and workforce development information.

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