

ActionBrief

Finding and Using Labor Market Information for Economic and Workforce Development

Background

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) envisions major changes in how workforce development services are provided and how workforce development and economic development are connected. For this to happen, Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), One Stops, and labor leaders need to do more than simply bring a set of programs under one roof. They need to develop service delivery strategies that are based on the needs of workers and employers in their local area. The workforce development programs of the WIA partners can then be seen as tools in the WIB's toolkit for solving labor market problems.

In order to develop service delivery strategies, WIBs need to know something about both sides of their labor market: the “supply side” (the workers) and the “demand side” (the employers). This Action Brief describes how labor leaders and WIBs can conduct a basic economic “audit” of its area using available labor market information (and relying on available labor market intermediaries). Step two of this Brief then looks at how these data can be used to devise service delivery strategies, economic development strategies, and labor market information “products” that job seekers and employers can use.



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What can the WIB and Labor Representatives do to Address this Issue?

A. Step One: Getting a Basic Lay of the Land

Before a local WIB can begin to shape service delivery strategies, it needs to have a fairly sophisticated picture of its own economic geography, looking at both the demand and the supply sides of the labor market.

1. What are the questions?

On the supply side, a WIB would want to know answers to the following kinds of questions:

Supply Side Questions

- **What are the current and projected demographic characteristics of the workforce?** Is the workforce becoming older or younger? What are the educational levels of the workforce? Are educational levels growing or declining (or both simultaneously)? What is the traditional skill base of the workforce and how is this changing? What is the racial mix? Has it changed over time? Have there been new waves of immigrant populations? Is greater immigration projected? Is the labor market participation rate of different segments of the population changing (for example, are more women working? fewer men?)
- **Which populations are having trouble finding or keeping jobs that pay family-sustaining wages?** Are there many such groups in the local area? Do they have shared characteristics or very different kinds of characteristics (as for example, new immigrants and older white collar workers)? Is the at-risk population a minority or majority of the area's citizens?
- **Given the local cost-of-living, what wage levels are required to sustain a family?** Does this vary by kind and size of family?
- **How are workers geographically distributed across the region?** Are there pockets of at-risk populations and other pockets of high skill populations? Are some labor market problems concentrated and others dispersed? Is there a mis-match between where the jobs are and where the workers are? Do some workers have serious transportation problems?

On the demand side of the labor market, WIBs would have a similar set of questions they would want answers to such as:

Demand Side Questions

- **What are the major industries in the area (emerging, growing, stable, and declining)?** Are they service or manufacturing? Are there connections among them (i.e. are there industry "clusters")? What is the relative balance between growth and decline?

A Very Useful Resource

The data section of this *Action Brief* was largely drawn from an excellent guidebook, *Socioeconomic Data for Understanding Your Regional Economy: A User's Guide*, developed by Joseph Cortright and Andrew Reamer under a contract with the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

There is an accompanying web site that links many, many data sources. It can be reached at: www.econdata.net.

- **Who are the major firms?** Are they large or small? Is ownership local or are they “branch” locations of national or multi-national firms? Do they have a historic commitment to the area? Are they active in the area’s civic life (including participation on the WIB)?
- **What are the current and projected labor needs of those firms?** Is labor demand growing or declining (and in each case, why)? What does the occupational structure of each industry look like? What kinds of skill needs does it have (and how many workers in each skill level)? Is this structure changing (because of new forms of work organization or new technologies)?
- **What are the labor market problems of those firms?** Are there specific skills shortages? Are some firms having real problems with turnover?
- **What are their hiring standards and what hiring mechanisms do they tend to use?** Do firms hire by word of mouth (referrals from their own workers especially)? Do they have particular screening protocols? Do they require a specific credential or level of education?
- **What does the wage structure of each firm/industry look like?** Are there lots of decently paid jobs or only a few?
- **Which firms/industries have internal career paths?** Does the industry have natural career ladders that workers can ascend through on-the-job experience? Alternatively, do workers have to leave the industry if they want to get ahead? Do they have to return to school?
- **Are there regular labor “flows” from some firms/industries to other firms/industries?** Do some firms or industries serve as informal training grounds for others?
- **What are the labor practices of these firms/industries?** Do firms provide full-time work? Benefits? Do they give workers some control over their work and voice in the firm? Do they observe health and safety practices? Do they provide workers adequate warning prior to layoffs?
- **Which industries/firms are unionized?** And what are the relationships between the firm/industry and its union(s)? Are there union-initiated workforce development programs within the firm/industry?
- **If the local area is having trouble attracting industry, is the reason because of perceived problems with the labor force?** If so, what are those perceived problems?

2. How would labor leaders or a WIB get this basic lay of the land?

How would a WIB begin to sketch out this basic economic geography? There are numbers of sources—both public and private of labor market information. However, before embarking on a local labor market audit it is important to know that many of the available data sets have serious flaws.

Principal Data Sources

- **Census Bureau** for data on population and business activity.
- **Bureau of Labor Statistics** for information on the labor force, jobs, and wages.
- **Bureau of Economic Analysis** for information on national income, gross domestic product and industry wealth data.
- **America’s Labor Market Information System** for labor market and occupational information.
- **State and Local Government Agencies** which use these federal data to produce custom reports and often conduct their own LMI surveys.
- **Private Data Sources**, particularly for information on specific firms.

Principal Labor Market Information “Intermediaries”

- **State Data Center**
- **State Labor Market Information Agency**
- **Federal Depository Libraries**
- **College and University Business and Economic Research Centers**
- **Chambers of Commerce**
- **Industry and Joint Labor-Management Associations**

First and foremost, it is very hard to get information on small areas. Also, some of the most important data sources are no longer a very accurate reflection of our economy. The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system is a good example. It classifies occupations by industry but it was developed when most Americans worked in manufacturing. As such, it does not provide an adequate understanding of what is now a largely service-based economy. Also, some of the best data (such as that from the Census) is not collected often enough. Finally, our data collection system is decentralized and therefore somewhat chaotic. Each agency has set its system up for a different purpose and, as a result, the different agencies often measure the same variable slightly differently and therefore come up with different results, which can be very confusing to those of us who are not economists.

a. What are the principal data sources? Much of the public data used to analyze regional labor markets is actually produced at the federal level. The three major federal data sources are: the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).

► **Census Bureau.** The Census Bureau produces data series on:

- **Population:** including population size, personal characteristics (e.g., race, sex, age, educational attainment, occupation), and household characteristics (e.g., composition, income). Population data series include: *Decennial Census of Population and Housing*, *Population Estimates Program*; *Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program*, *Annual Demographic Survey of the Current Population Survey*, *American Community Survey*.
- **Business Activity:** including the total size of each industry, the number of companies and establishments, measures of various aspects of business operation. Key business activity data series include: *Economic Census*, *County Business Patterns*, *Annual Survey of Manufacturers*, *Export Statistics*.

► **Bureau of Labor Statistics.** The BLS produces data series on:

- **Labor Force:** including employment, unemployment, unemployment rate, labor force participation.
- **Jobs and Wages:** including the following data series: *Covered Employment and Wages (ES-202)* which is a quarterly collection of jobs and wage data from all employers participating in the state unemployment insurance program; *Current Employment Statistics* which estimates job levels and hourly wages by industry; *Occupational Employment Statistics* which estimates the number of positions and average hourly wage by occupation by industry; *National Compensation Wage Survey* which presents wages and benefit data by

occupation; and *Mass Layoff Statistics* which reports on mass layoff events, dislocated workers, and persons filing for UI claims.

- ▶ **Bureau of Economic Analysis:** Much of the BEA data are too sophisticated for use by most WIBs. But WIBs may want to look at the Regional Economic Information System (REIS) which is the most comprehensive of the federal income and employment data series. REIS provides income data broken out by sources other than jobs earnings (including investment income and transfer payments).

In addition to these major federal sources of data, there are state and local public agencies that produce LMI data as well as private sources. Some of these include:

- ▶ **State and Local Government Agencies.** Many states and local areas undertake surveys of their own. To learn what is available for your state and region, a good place to start is your lead State Data Center or LMI agency (listed in Appendices A and B). In addition to formal LMI surveys of one kind or another, state agencies can provide another important kind of data as well: these are the outcome data on employment and training programs. As *Action Brief: Setting Priorities for Service* suggests, some of the questions WIBs want to answer are not addressed adequately by any of the data sources just named. The best source of information on what kinds of workers are having trouble finding and keeping good jobs, for example, is probably from the data of employment and training agencies. As the oversight boards for these programs, WIBs should be able to request and receive this information from the various state agencies.
- ▶ **Private Data Sources.** Public data sources do not provide information on specific businesses in a local area. To get this firm data,

Mapping the Supply Side of the Labor Market

- Population size, change, and characteristics
- Employment and unemployment
- Income and earnings
- At-risk populations

Mapping the Demand Side of the Labor Market

- Industrial structure of the region
- Employment by industry
- Occupational structure of the region and by industry
- Earnings by industry and occupation

America's Labor Market Information System: A Different Kind of LMI Resource

America's Labor Market Information System (ALMIS) is both a source of data and a labor market information intermediary. ALMIS is a joint venture of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and the fifty states. Its mission is to support the emerging One Stop Career Center system with useful labor market and occupational information. But it is intended to be more than an analytic tool. It also will provide information directly to workers and employers, facilitating their access to jobs, labor, training, and career services information.

Currently ALMIS includes information on the following: projected employment, wage information, training information, employer information, population and demographic data, economic data, and area cost of living profiles. Unlike other public LMI sources, ALMIS provides some firm-level information on over ten million employers.

ALMIS is still very much in the development stage and will develop more sophisticated capabilities in the next few years.

it is necessary to turn to private data sources. There are some relatively inexpensive commercial business directories available on CD. These include: *Listings Deluxe* by ProCD (www.procd.com); *Phone Disc Business Pro* by Digital Directory Assistance (www.phonedisc.com); and *Phone Search USA 4.0* by DeLorme (www.delorme.com).

b. Where would the WIB go to get labor market information? Most WIBs are not large enough to employ economists or other data analysts. Therefore it makes sense for WIBs to take advantage of the various labor market information intermediaries in their state.

There are three major depositories of public labor market information: the state labor market information (LMI) agency; the State Data Center; and the Federal Depository reference library. These three sources in combination will have the publicly available data that are most commonly used to analyze labor markets.

► **State Data Center.** The SDCs are sponsored by the Census Bureau, and so they make Census data and related services available to users. Each state has a SDC program, with a lead agency and several coordinating agencies. The staff at the SDCs are knowledgeable in the use of the data and can often refer you to other resources throughout the state. To find the closest SDC call the lead SDC listed in Appendix A or visit this Web site: <http://www.census.gov/sdc/www/sdctxt.html>.

► **State Labor Market Information Agency.** Every state also has a labor market information (LMI) agency that is linked to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and produces a wide range of LMI products. Many also employ economists knowledgeable about particular industries and regions in its state. LMI agency contacts are listed in Appendix B (which is also available at <http://www.bls.gov/ofolist.htm>).

► **Federal Depository Libraries.** These libraries receive data from multiple federal agencies and many have special librarians familiar with using statistical data sources. Not all libraries receive all data, so you should call ahead. The nearest Federal Depository library can be found by calling a local reference librarian or checking: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/libpro.html.

States and local areas usually have lots of other data intermediaries including:

► **College and University Business and Economic Research Centers.** Usually at least one college or university in a state will perform this function. Many are members of the Association for University Business and Economic Research (AUBER) which can be reached at: <http://www.auber.org/docs/mail1.htm>.

► **Chambers of Commerce.** Some chambers of commerce have a research arm. These researches are members of the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association which can be reached at: http://www.accra.org/networking_comm/Search_criteria.cfm.

► **Industry Associations.** For the analysis of particular industries, specific industry associations can often provide a wealth of information.

c. **Using these resources, how does the WIB begin to describe its local economy?** First, it is worth suggesting that the WIB think regionally, rather than locally, when it begins its labor market audit. Most actual labor markets cut across WIB areas (and sometimes across states). In addition, the WIB needs to break its search down into categories. Some of the principal ones a WIB would care about are the following:

1. Supply Side of the Labor Market

► **Population size, change, and characteristics.** WIBs need to know the basic demographics of the population in its region. Good sources for getting this data are:

- **Population Estimates Program, Bureau of the Census,** which measures population and components of change including births, deaths and migration in and out. This program also provides annual population estimates by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin for all states and counties. It is easily accessible via the Web.
- **Current Population Reports, Bureau of the Census** (report series P20) provides data on educational attainment for states and larger metro areas.
- **Decennial Census, Bureau of the Census** that measures population by age, sex, ethnicity, race, marital and family status, veterans status, years of school completed, geographic mobility, journey to work, and other variables. The data are broken down into geographic areas as small as census tracts and zip codes.
- **State Governments:** Also many state governments conduct or contract for their own population surveys. Again, check with your State Data Center.

► **Employment and Unemployment:** WIBs also want to know the general level of employment and unemployment in their region. The most important source of this information is the *Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Program*, run by the states' labor market information agencies using BLS guidelines.

- ▶ **Income and Earnings:** WIBs principal concern is the economic health and welfare its region. Thus it is critical to know about the incomes of residents, and especially how many are living in poverty. Only two data sources provide information on income at the local level, the *Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program* of the BLS and the *Decennial Census*. Neither survey is conducted frequently enough although the former is done every few years. Data from the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program can be obtained on-line at the following: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saie.html>.

- ▶ **At Risk Populations.** As discussed in *Action Brief, Setting Priorities for Service*, WIBs need to know which populations in their area are at-risk of being unable to find or keep good jobs. This is not a question traditional data sources are designed to answer. Although some of the data just discussed can provide important clues to this question (and the Census data is particularly helpful when it is fairly current), perhaps the best information for this purpose are the outcome reports from employment and training programs.

2. Demand Side of the Labor Market

- ▶ **Industrial Structure of the Region.** The other side of the labor market is also critical. To start, WIBs need a basic understanding of the industrial structure of their region. There are several data sources that can help give a picture:
 - **Economic Census**, Bureau of the Census which measures number of establishments (or companies), number of employees, payroll, measure of out put (sales, etc.), and other data. It is conducted every five years and is broken down into areas as small as counties, cities, and zip codes. Detailed data can be obtained on CD-ROM or in print.
 - **Annual Survey of Manufacturers**, Bureau of the Census which is less useful because it is conducted only at the state level and only for manufacturing establishments.

- ▶ **Employment by Industry.** Clearly one of the key questions about local industry is how many and what kind of jobs does each offer. Here there are four major data sources:
 - **Covered Employment and Wages (ES-202), BLS and state LMI agencies:** This data source provides the highest level of industry and geographic detail but is sometimes very hard to access. Available from each state's LMI agency. Depending on state, detailed data also available on CB-ROM from BLS at (312) 353-1880. BLS will also do customized data runs at (202) 606-6567.

- **County Business Patterns, Bureau of the Census:** This data also provides a great deal of industry and geographic detail (down to the zip code level). Available on CD-ROM by calling (301) 457-4100.
 - **Current Employment Statistics (BLS-790), BLS and State LMI agencies, and Regional Economic Information System (REIS) employment data, Bureau of Economic Analysis:** Neither of these data sources provides the same level of industry detail and the CES is broken down only by state and metropolitan area.
- **Occupational Structure of the Region and by Industry:** Since WIBs are in the business of matching people and jobs—and of preparing people for jobs—they want to know more than which industries are hiring and which are not. WIBs also want to know in detail what kinds of jobs each industry offers. The best data sources to obtain this information are:
- **Occupational Employment Statistics, BLS** provides a full picture of the occupational structure of each industry by state and metro area. OES is available from each state's LMI agency or on-line at: http://www.bls.gov/oes/oes_data.htm.
- **Earnings by Industry and Occupation:** All industries and all occupations are not the same in terms of the contribution they make to the welfare of a region. In general, WIBs want to target industries that pay decent wages. How do you know what each industry pays? The best data source for this information is again the *Occupational Employment Statistics* series from the BLS. If you want an overview look of average weekly pay by industry the *ES-202* data discussed earlier can provide this information.

d. Who should develop this economic map for the WIB? Around the country there are a few WIBs that are big enough and have sufficient resources to do this kind of economic mapping themselves. NOVA PIC in California's Santa Clara County has done some amazingly sophisticated economic analysis of its region. But most WIBs are simply too small to mount such an effort. WIB staff can tackle some pieces of the overall project, but for much of it, they would do better to hire expert help, either on their own for a relatively modest project or by joining together with other WIBs and/or with the state.

B. Step Two: Using the Data to Develop Strategies and Products

Once the WIB has sketched a basic economic map of its region, it is ready to go to the next step using what it has learned to develop service delivery strategies, economic development strategies, and informational products tailored to the needs of its residents and busi-

nesses. As it develops these strategies and products, the WIB will find that it needs additional kinds of labor market information.

1. Developing Service Delivery Strategies.

Service delivery strategies should vary as much as regions do. That is to say, services should be designed to address local needs. If the primary labor market problem in a region is severe skills shortages—that is there is a lot of demand for skilled workers but not enough workers with the right skills—it calls for a very different strategy than if the problem is too few employers and jobs. Historically, most WIBs' greatest weakness in designing service delivery strategies has been a failure to understand the demand (or employers') side of the equation. This is true in the case of even relatively simple strategies, such as targeting “high road” employers for placements and services.

Let us take an example to illustrate how WIBs might approach the problem of designing a service delivery strategy using economic data.

Example: Designing a strategy to help TANF recipients succeed in your local labor market. In this example, the labor market issue to be addressed is on the supply side. There are welfare recipients—women with little labor market experience and serious barriers to employment—who need to find jobs and learn how to achieve self-sufficiency. The recognition of this issue probably may not have emerged from a labor market audit. It is the result of a major public policy of which the WIB would have been aware. However, a very similar kind of problem could have emerged from an economic audit. For example, the WIB could have identified a particular community or set of communities in which there are lots of low skilled, low-income residents who are out of work.

Given this information, what does a WIB need to know to develop a strategy for employing TANF recipients? First, it needs to know a lot about the demographics of the particular group of welfare mothers. Where do they live? What is their educational level? How much labor market experience do they have? What other kinds of barriers to employment do they have? This information is best gotten from the TANF agency itself.

Then the WIB needs to know which industries and individual firms are likely to hire workers with these particular characteristics. Most likely this would mean that the WIB would want to target industries that have relatively large numbers of entry-level jobs, particularly those with family-sustaining wages and career paths. How would it know which industries these are? For starters, the WIB should refer back to the part of the audit that described the occupational structure of industries. The WIB would also want to look for entry level jobs that pay decent wages. These data could also have been obtained from its economic audit.

Mapping a Career Path: An Example

The NOVA Private Industry Council in California's Santa Clara County puts out numbers of booklets describing industries and the jobs within them. One is on the hospitality industry. It outlines numbers of career paths within the various segments of the industry including one in the Food and Beverage segment.

- ▲ Director of Food and Beverage
- ▲ Catering Manager (larger property)
- ▲ Banquet Manager
- ▲ Banquet Captain
- ▲ Banquet Wait Staff
- ▲ Food Server

The guide also suggests alternative career ladders in other industries, such as food service management companies and education.

Once it identified likely industries, the WIB would then need to find the actual firms within its region. This could be done informally (using a phone book, for example, or by drawing on the expertise of job developers) or if the WIB wanted more detailed information on the firms, it could utilize one of the private data sources described in the previous section. Ask local unions too? Where are the good jobs? Who are unionized employers hiring? Who might they be willing to hire?

There are other things a WIB would want to know that it is not so easy to get from the kind of data described earlier. These include the following:

- Which firms have job openings?
- Which firms would be willing to hire former TANF recipients?
- What are the labor practices of these firms?
- Which firms are unionized?
- Which industries offer career paths, where the entry level job is the first rung on a career ladder that could lead to self-sufficiency?
- Which entry-level jobs actually provide workers with training that can help them get another better job?
- How do employers in the industry hire?

Also, the volatility of current labor markets means that traditional data sources—and even local surveys—can become dated extremely fast. Therefore WIBs need to rely on close relationships with employers to understand the ways in which the demand for labor and for particular skills are changing.

Insights into the answers to these questions can be gotten from the public data sources. For example, the OES provides some information on career paths and BLS publishes numbers of special bulletins that provide relatively detailed discussions about occupations and career ladders. Also the WIB can find materials that its state or other states have developed; chambers of commerce; other industry associations; or other WIBs. For specific industries, industry associations can be extremely rich sources of information.

But really useful answers to these questions in many cases also require unions as well as the WIB (or its contractor) to do some survey work or more intensive engagement of employers, such as focus groups. In some cases, a simple survey of targeted employers can be the first step (for example, to determine who has job openings and would be willing to hire TANF recipients). In other cases, it may be necessary to interview HR professionals to understand how career patterns work (or don't work) within an industry and which jobs provide real training.

So, as this example illustrates, the more complex the service

How Does an Industry Actually Recruit Labor?

The same guide on the hospitality industry from NOVA PIC described on the last page, provides an analysis of how that industry actually recruits labor in Santa Clara County. This is not the kind of information you would get from traditional data sources; you have to interview the employers themselves.

Primary Recruiting Sources

(for the hospitality industry in Santa Clara County, California)

- Schools that offer hospitality and food service degrees and certificates.
- Referrals from staff.
- Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employee International Union
- Jobs Corps
- CallJobs (the California employment service hot line)
- Newspaper advertising (which isn't very effective, but still used)

delivery strategy, the more a WIB needs to know about both its customer groups: job seekers and employers. This information usually has to be current and local.

2. Developing Economic Development Strategies.

Strictly speaking, WIBs are not in the business of developing economic development strategies; their mission is workforce development. But, increasingly, that mission and the mission of economic development are colliding, as the nature of the labor force becomes more and more central to the economic fate of a region. Therefore, it is likely that WIBs will find themselves working with economic development agencies at the state and local level on broad regional strategies.

The “lay of the land” economic audit WIB’s conduct should, in fact, begin to uncover some key economic development issues. For example, it could point to the fact that the traditional economic base of the region is declining and the emerging industries are having trouble finding suitable labor because of a skill mis-match. It could indicate that whole sectors of the population are being left behind because they don’t have the skills needed by the regional economy. And so on.

The approach WIBs could take to developing strategies for addressing these problems is very similar to the one just described for developing strategies to serve TANF recipients. And again, some of the data they need could have been put together when they did their basic economic audit. But special research, including firm surveys and interviews, would also be necessary.

3. Creating Labor Market Information Products.

Finally, one of the responsibilities of the WIB is to provide its job-seeker and employer customers with as much information as possible about the local labor market. One way to do this is through the development of specific labor market information products—e.g. brochures, databases, presentations—that address a variety of questions and problems. Examples include: useful reports describing key industries and the kind of job opportunities they offer; on-line versions of the same thing; industry briefings for job seekers, that include background information on an industry and presentations by managers and workers; focused reports on specific problems (such as poverty or welfare reform); evaluations of the overall economic health of the region (from the perspective of both employers and job seekers). Again, some WIBs will only have the resources to produce such products in very limited form and will have to look to the state or to the private sector to do anything more sophisticated. But all WIBs will want to begin to use labor market information to help their customers meet their labor market goals.

Appendix A

Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

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Arkansas State Library

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Little Rock, AR 72201
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Appendix A Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

California

State Census Data Center

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Association of Bay Area Governments

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San Diego Association of Governments

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State Data Center Program

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Colorado

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Business Research Division

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of Colorado-Boulder
Boulder, CO 80309
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Documents Department

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Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
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Connecticut

Office of Policy and Management

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Hartford, CT 06106-1308
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Connecticut State Library

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Delaware (BIDC)

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Florida (BIDC)

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Appendix A Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

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Gilbert Memorial Library

Government Information Department
Georgia Institute of Technology
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Library/Documents Section

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Library/Documents Section

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Guam

Guam Department of Commerce

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Hawaii

Hawaii State Data Center

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Information and Communication Services Division

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University of Hawaii at Manoa

Governments Documents
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Honolulu, HI 96822-2233
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Illinois (BIDC)

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Appendix A Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

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Division of Business Research

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The Louisiana Population Data Center

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Enoch Pratt Free Library

State Library Resource Center
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McKeldin Library, Government Documents

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Massachusetts (BIDC)

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Minnesota (BIDC)

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Appendix A Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

Machine Readable Data Center

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Mississippi (BIDC)

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Industry Resource Bureau

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Appendix A Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

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New Jersey (BIDC)

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Rutgers Regional Report

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Appendix A Census State Data Centers-Lead Agencies

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Austin, TX 78753
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Fax: (512) 491-4904

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Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0249
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Fax: (802) 828-4022

Virgin Islands

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Virginia

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Wyoming

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Appendix C

Bookshelf for Economic Analysts*

While the Internet is an extraordinarily important tool for gathering socioeconomic data, not all data are available through that means. Moreover, if you don't know what you are looking for, the Internet is not very helpful. Certain data sources and narrative guides are very valuable to have close at hand for easy reference. Here is a list of publications (and CDs) you should consider adding to your library if you don't already have them.

6.1 Data Reference Books and CDs

Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998

If you are building your reference library from scratch, begin here. The *Statistical Abstract* is a compendium of the most frequently used data series produced by the federal government, and includes data from all the major statistical agencies. The book is very helpful in getting a sense of the kinds of data the federal government produces. Chapter introductions provide key concepts and definitions. While the primary focus of the *Statistical Abstract* is national data, it has state and metro area breakouts of key data series. Though the Abstract

is available on the Web in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format, at <http://www.census.gov/prod/3/98pubs/98statab/cc98stab.htm>, in our opinion, it is handy to have a bookshelf or CD-ROM within arm's reach. You can order this publication from the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) at 202-512-1800 or from National Technical Information Service (NTIS) at 800 553-6847.

Regional Economic Information System

Maybe the best buy you can make in getting regional economic data is to spend \$35 on the REIS CD-ROM issued annually by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). This single CD-ROM contains more than 25 years worth of income and employment data for every county, metropolitan area, and state. Also, it is loaded with digital versions of much of the background information and reports that explain the methodology of BEA publications. While you can find much of the data contained in this CD-ROM on the Web, having the CD-ROM is the fastest, easiest way to track down data for any particular area. To order, call BEA at (800) 704-0415.

State and Metropolitan Area Data Book: 1997-98

USA Counties: 1996

County and City Data Book: 1994

The Census Bureau publishes three statistical compendia that focus on specific levels of sub-national geography—the *State and Metropolitan Area Data Book*, *USA Counties*, and *County and City Data Book*. As with the *Statistical Abstract*, these compendia bring together a wide variety of socioeconomic data from the Census Bureau and other federal and private data sources. Each of these sources is full of rankings by various categories, which can help you quickly compare your area to others. Each publication does carry state data (despite titles that might lead you to think otherwise). The *State and Metropolitan Area Data Book* covers 273 metro areas; *USA Counties* covers 3,100 counties; and the *County and City Data Book* covers the same number of counties, 1,100 cities, and 11,000 places. *USA Counties* actually is a compendium of compendia; available only on CD-ROM, the publication provides county data from all editions of *State and Metropolitan Area Data Book* and *County and City Data Book* since 1982, as well as data avail-

* Source: *Socioeconomic Data for Understanding Your Regional Economy A User's Guide* by Joseph Cortright and Andrew Reamer, 1998; written for the Economic Development Administration U.S. Department of Commerce. Chapter 6

able at the time of publication.⁸

Unfortunately, the *State and Metro* book and the *County and City* book come out only every four to six years; there is no regular schedule. Moreover, as the data come from existing sources, they usually are one to two years behind the date on the cover of the compendium. The USA Counties CD-ROM came out for the first time in 1996. Even though the data may not be current, these compendia are an excellent way to understand the range of data available. With the help of the compendium, you can track more recent data.

These publications are available in print (except for USA Counties) and CD-ROM. Print publications can be ordered from the GPR at (202) 512-1800 and NTIS at (800) 553-6847. CD-ROMs can be ordered from the Census Bureau at (310) 457-4100. Also, the *State and Metropolitan Area Data Book* is available for download at <http://www.census.gov/statab/www/smadb.html>.

County Business Patterns

The Census Bureau's printed publication of *County Business Patterns* comes out annually, with one report for each state. In print, *County Business Patterns* provides state and county level information on private-sector, nonagricultural establishments, employment, and payroll by four digit SIC code with establishment by employment size class. The latest year avail-

able is 1996. You can purchase the print report for your state from the GPO at the above phone number or download it for free in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format at <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/cbptotal.html>.

Typing from printed publications or waiting for downloads from the Internet can be frustrating. You can get County Business Patterns data on CD and save the wait. The latest CD, with two year's worth of data for \$150, can be ordered by phone at 301 457-4100. You can also get a single year's worth of zip code level data (for 30,000 zip code areas) for \$90. Remember, though, because of confidentiality restrictions, much of the detailed information at the zip code level is suppressed.

Your State's Covered Employment & Payrolls (ES-202) Annual Report

Each year, each state prepares an annual compilation of ES-202 data. (See Section 3.3 for a description of these data.) While the contents vary from state to state, these publications typically include highly detailed data on employment, payrolls, and numbers of firms (often by the four-digit level of SIC detail for the state, and frequently by the two-digit level of detail for counties). Some states also include a variety of historical tables and narrative analyses. Pricing and availability vary from state to state. For more information, contact your state LMI agency listed in Appendix B.

Economic Census, Geographic Area Series

Conducted once every five years (in years ending in "2" and "7"), the Economic Census is an invaluable source of detailed information about investment, productivity, sales, and other characteristics of business in almost every industrial sector. For the 1997 Economic Census, the following sectors are covered: mining, utilities, construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, information, finance and insurance, real estate and rental and leasing, professional/scientific/ technical services, corporate management, administrative and support, waste management and remediation, educational services, health care and social assistance, arts/entertainment/recreation, accommodation and food services, and other services.

For each specific sector, the Census Bureau publishes a Geographic Area Series (one report for each state), containing up to four-digit SIC data for states, metro areas, counties, and places. Unfortunately, the latest data available are from the 1992 Economic Census; the 1997 data should be available in 1999-2000. The CD-ROM of the entire Economic Census, or individual state reports for sectors of interest, can be ordered from the GPO or NTIS at the numbers above. Also, you can download state reports in .pdf format by going to <http://>

www/census.gov/epcd/www/92results.html.

U.S. Industry and Trade Outlook

A one-time casualty of budget cuts, this publication has been resurrected by a partnership between the International Trade Administration and McGraw-Hill. Although most of the information in the book is national in scope, the *U.S. Industry and Trade Outlook* is an invaluable source of industry-by-industry analysis of recent trends in employment, productivity, investment, and exports. Organized by major industry, each section contains information on world market share by nation, U.S. import and export position, total output, and output by worker, as well as detailed data on recent trends and forecasts of future activity. Each subject area contains references including trade publications and industry associations, as well as contact information from Department of Commerce staff experts.

If you want to get a good handle on how an industry is performing and some insights into the competitive situation U.S. producers face in the world economy, this is the resource to get. At \$70 per copy, it is more expensive than the other publications listed here, but well worth it, in our opinion. Most of the chapters are authored by Commerce Department experts with others written by McGraw-Hill staff and independent

experts. You can order this publication by phone from the NTIS at (800)553-6847. It is also available in bookstores. Much of the statistical information from the publication is accessible at www.ita.doc.gov.outlook. And, for reference, the full text of the 1994 version of the *Outlook* is available at gopher://gopher.umsl.edu/11/library/govdocs/usio94

Digest of Education Statistics

Produced by the National Center for Education Statistics, an arm of the Department of Education, this helpful compilation provides data on educational institutions and programs, spending on schools and colleges, and educational attainment. A large number of data series are broken out on a state basis. This 530-page publication is available for free by calling (800) 424-1616 and is available for download at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/digest97/>.

Business Director CDs

Often, it's useful to get the names and addresses of specific businesses in an area. A problem with many public records sources-like payroll tax records-is that they can't be used to generate identifiable information about individual firms. With the advent of CD-based business directories, it is easy to get basic information about almost any business, including firm name, street address, city, state, metro area, zip code, and SIC code. Inexpensive commercial business directories are available on

CD. Many of these directories include latitude and longitude information about specific businesses, which are extremely useful for geographic information systems (GIS) and mapping applications. A representative list of products includes:

- *Listings Deluxe* by ProCD (see www.procd.com)
- *Phone Dis Business Pro* by Digital Directory Assistance (see www.phonedisc.com)
- *Phone Search USA 4.0* by DeLorme (see www.delorme.com)

6.2 Narrative Guides to Data Products, Methodology, and Analysis

Census Catalog & Guide

It is difficult to comprehend just how much information the Census Bureau does generate. This thumb-indexed 340-page document provides descriptions of a wide selection of Census publications, CDs, computer tapes, and diskettes, and also pinpoints information available over the Web. The *Census Catalog & Guide* can save hours of trying to find which publication or electronic resource is most likely to have the data you need. Its appendix is a useful resource itself, providing lists of Census data centers, federal Depository Libraries, federal statistical agencies, and an overview of data publications of eight agencies other than Census.

The most recent full version of the document was published in 1997; an update was issued

in 1998. You can order a copy of the catalog from the GPO at (202) 512-1800, or download it for free at <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/catalogs.html>. The most up-to-date listing of Census products can be found on-line at CenStore, <http://www.census.gov/mp/www/censtore.html>.

BLS Handbook of Methods

The *BLS Handbook of Methods*, provides detailed descriptions of the survey and statistical methods that the Bureau of Labor Statistics uses to compute everything from unemployment rates to the Consumer Price Index. It is a valuable resource for cor-

rectly interpreting very important and often misunderstood data series. The latest version was released in April 1997. You can get this publication on-line at www.bls.gov/opub/hom/homhome.htm or order the printed version from the GPO at (202) 512-1800.

BEA Catalog of Products

The Bureau of Economic Analysis annually produces a succinct guide to its data series and products—the *BEA Catalog of Products*. The Catalog is available from BEA at (202) 606-9900 and can be obtained on-line at www.bea.doc.gov/bea/uguide.htm.

Community Economic Analysis: a How To Manual

This book by Ronald Hustedde, Ron Shaffer, and Glen Pulver is a good introduction to many of the techniques of regional analysis. In a simple question-and-answer format this publication explains how to use economic data to analyze your local economy. You can order a copy for \$5.00 by calling the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Iowa State University at (515) 294-8321. The table of contents can be found at <http://www.ag.iaestate.edu/centers/rdev/comm.ec.analysis-cont.html>.

APPENDIX D

The Web's Twelve Best Sources for Regional Data*

As evident throughout this guide, the World Wide Web has become a very important means for directly accessing a wide variety of socioeconomic data. A data input process that just four years ago required a trip to the library, a photocopy machine, typing in data points one by one now can be accomplished with a few clicks of the mouse.

Picking the best of anything can be a difficult and subjective chore. It's quite challenging when the subject is as vast and fast-changing as data sites on the

world Wide Web. Our list is based on a combination of the highest vote-getters in our data users survey and our own experience. To make it simple, we had wanted to give you a list of the ten best, but, frankly, there are too many good sites to pass up, so we offer twelve. Below you will find the twelve sites that we think every regional economic analyst should know about.

These sites are divided into three major groups. The first group is made up of sites sponsored by the agencies that produce the data. If you know what

you want, this is the direct route to the source. The second group contains sites that provide access to a range of data from a variety of sources. They have user-friendly interfaces and often provide helpful advice about how to use the data. The third group is made up of Web site directories, ones that offer an encyclopedic listing of what's available on the Web, with hyperlinks and a minimum of narrative. These sites provide you with the broadest view of Web data sites. If you are not

* Source: Socioeconomic Data for Understanding Your Regional Economy A User's Guide by Joseph Cortright and Andrew Reamer, 1998; written for the Economic Development Administration U.S. Department of Commerce. Chapter 7 (pp. 63-67)

sure what data exist on a certain topic and where to find them, check out these sites.

7.1 Statistical Agency Sites

When we polled socioeconomic data users about the sites they use most frequently, the sites of the Big Three federal statistical agencies accounted for half of the votes. These sites are useful not only because they can take you to popular and frequently used data series, but they include contact information, descriptions of the methodology used to produce the data series, and calendars of upcoming data releases. (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the various data series described.)

Census Bureau

The Census Bureau site at <http://www.census.gov> will lead you to the full range of popular and obscure Census data series. The site has a comprehensive A-to-Z listing of data subjects, as well as an on-line search feature. Among the places you might visit are the following:

- **The Decennial Census of Population and Housing**, at <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen1990.html>, is the most comprehensive source of data about the nation's households. Through an easy-to-use lookup function, you can get a customized data printout on the characteristics of large and small areas including demographics, occupation, journey to work,

and economic status of families and households.

- **The Economic Census**, at http://www.census.gov/econ/www/econ_cen.html, is an invaluable source of detailed information about investment, productivity, sales, and other characteristics of business in almost every industrial sector. Collected and published for years ending "2" and "7," data are available by states, metro areas, counties, cities and places, and zip codes.
- **The Population Estimates Program**, at www.census.gov/pop/population/www/estimates/popest.html, gives you current estimates of population, components of population change, and characteristics such as age and race - for a full range of geographic levels.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), at <http://www.stats.bls.gov>, has a wealth of information available through its Web site and through the Web sites of its partner state LMI agencies. The BLS Selective Access feature makes choosing and downloading data points by area quite straightforward. Three major BLS data series are especially valuable to analysts of regional economies:

- **The Current Employment Statistics Program**, at <http://stats.bls.gov/790home.htm>, provides monthly employment estimates by industry for states and metro areas.

- **The Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program**, at <http://stats.bls.gov/lauhome.htm>, prepares monthly labor force data for 6,700 areas around the U.S., including states, metro areas, counties, and cities of more than 25,000.
- **The Consumer Price Index (CPI) Program**, at <http://www.bls.gov/cpihome.htm>, gives an overall price index and indices for specific components of consumer expenditures, e.g., housing, medical, and food. The CPI is available for 26 metropolitan areas and multi-state averages by city size (e.g., metro areas of over 1.5 million in population in the West).

Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Accounts Data

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) makes its Gross State Product and Regional Economic Information System (REIS) files available through its Web site at <http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/dr1.htm>. You can also use this site to access BEA's national income account data and its publication of record, the *Survey of Current Business*.

Unfortunately, BEA does not make substate REIS files available on the Web. However, you can access these through the Government Information Sharing Project (Oregon State University) or the Geospatial and Statistical Data Center (University of Virginia). Both are described below.

7.2 Cross-Source Data Guides and Repositories

The sites in this group offer access to a range of data series from a variety of sources. They help data users find and download just the data they want, and some offer guidance on their use.

Guide to On-Line Sources for Economic Development Data, University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota's State and Local Policy Program has developed an excellent site, at <http://www.hhh.umn.edu/Centers/SLP/edweb/>, to explain how to find and use economic data for economic development purposes. If you are just starting out to use economic data on the Web, this is a good place to begin. This site provides detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to find and use a variety of federal agency data and has a very good list of Web links to state-specific data sources. The site also has step-by-step how-to instructions on calculating location quotients, shift-share analysis, and other methods of analyzing the data. Unlike the sites listed just below, this one does not have data on its own server—it gives you the link to the source site. In that sense, this site is a high value-added directory of Web data sites.

Government Information Sharing Project, Oregon State University

Oregon State University hosts the Government Information Sharing Project at <http://gov>

info.kerr.orst.edu/. The government Information Sharing Project is one of the most straightforward and easy-to-use sites for accessing economic data. The site has a clickable map for zeroing in on the geographic area you are interested in and allows you to select and download data from the Economic Census, REIS, the *USA Counties* compendium, and the Decennial Census.

Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, University of Virginia

A data access service the complement to the Oregon State site is offered by the Geospatial and Statistical Data Center at the University of Virginia at <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/>. This site enable you to download data from REIA, County Business Patterns (at the two-digit level) and the County and City Data Book.

Dismal Scientist

Despite the tongue-in-cheek name, this well-designed commercial Web site, at <http://www.dismal.com/regions/regions.stm>, is an excellent resource for analysts. Billing itself as the “best free lunch on the Web,” Dismal Scientist provides an easy-to-use and frequently updated source of all kinds of economic data. The regional page enables you to easily produce state or metro-area rankings for dozens of socioeconomic variables such as job growth, unemployment, and migration. Also, this site is valuable for getting national data and

linking to articles, analysis, and projections.

7.3 Data Directories

The sites listed in the previous sections can help you obtain the most frequently used (and by consensus, most useful) data series on state and regional economies. But you may have a research question or interest that the well-known data sources don't address. The challenge becomes to find out what, if any, data can meet your needs. The sites listed in this third group provide comprehensive directories, with links, to help you find some of the most specialized data sources.

Resources for Economists on the Internet

Bill Goffe's Resources for Economists on the Internet (RFE), at www.rfe.org, is the granddaddy of Web guides to economic data. The regional data on the RFE site can be found at <http://rfe.wustl.edu/USMacro/index.html>. However, the site's scope is much broader than local and state economies, and includes links to everything from on-line journals and data sets to collections of working papers to economists jokes. This site provides a scholarly, well organized, and annotated index of Internet resources.

FedStats

The Federal Interagency Council on Statistical Policy maintains the FedStats Web site, at

<http://www.fedstats.gov/>, that provides links to the Web sites of over 70 federal data organizations. If you want to get a quick overview of what federal agencies provide what kinds of data, come here. You are best off checking out the Programs page, which gives a listing of agencies and data series by 14 data topics. Unfortunately, the Regional Statistics page does not provide a comprehensive listing of regional data series.

Government Information Locator Service

Government Information Locator Service (GILS)—available at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/gils/gils.html — is a Web-based search engine specifically designed to find federal government data resources available through the Internet. You can search by subjects and keywords to find relevant data sources. Maintained by the Government Printing Office, GILS is a great place to turn if you are looking for unusual or out-of-the-way information from the federal government.

AUBER's Guide to State Economic Information

Chances are, somebody in your state has gathered data you want on your economy. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in the majority of states, one or more colleges and universities operate research centers that compile data on and research the state economy. Most of these centers are members of the Association for University Business and Economic Research (AUBER). You can find a state-by-state list of Web data sites maintained by members of AUBER at <http://www.auber.org/htmls/leapcomp.html>.

Sources of Socioeconomic Data for Economic Development Analysis

This site, <http://www.econdata.net>, was compiled as part of the project that produced this User's Guide, and provides links to over 125 different federal, state, and private Web sites that provide regional socioeconomic data. Links are organized by source and topic.

⁸ For those wanting to obtain a more comprehensive set of data specific to one or more counties, the Census Bureau provides customized CD-ROM compendia, under the name CountyScope, that gather data from over a dozen Census data series. These series include demographic and housing data from the 1990 Decennial Census (including the fall set of PUMS records) down to the block and block group level; economic data from recent Economic Censuses (at the zip code level), County Business Patterns and Zip; Code Business Patterns data; a decade of Consolidated Federal Funds Reports (on federal expenditures and obligations); and geographic data from the Census Tract Street Index. The contents of County Scope can be found at <http://www.census.gov/ftp/pub/mp/www/rom/sumco.html>. Cost is \$400 for the first metro county (\$300 for non-metro), and \$100 for each additional metro county (\$60 for non-metro). CDs can be ordered at 301 457-4100.

APPENDIX E:

Worksheet for Manufacturer's Focus Group (Sample Tool)

Many employers throughout the country reported that they have substantial difficulty in hiring employees with the technical skills they desire. This survey is meant to develop a measure of job vacancies and labor turnover by occupation among key industries in your state labor market. Completing this form will help area education and training organizations identify employer skill needs and better organize their programs to meet the labor supply challenges in your state. The data you provide will be aggregated with other responses. Please mail or fax the completed form to: (Provide appropriate return address and fax information)

All individual company responses will be held in strict confidence.

Company Name _____ Your Name _____

Phone Number _____ Your Title _____

Occupations	Employment as of / /	Unfilled Job Openings as of / /*	Total New Hires Over the Past 90 Days**	Total Separations Over the Past 90 Days***
Managerial/Professional/Sales				
Executive managerial				
Software engineers				
Electrical engineers				
Mechanical engineers				
Progressive die designer				
Marketing and sales				
Information technology professionals				
Quality control assurance professionals				
All other professional/managerial				
Production/Technician				
Tool and die maker				
Machinist				
Welder				
CAD drafter/designer				
Machine tool cutting and forming				
Technical writer				
Skilled machine tool set-up and operator Numerical control machine tool operator				
All other skilled production/technical workers				
Assemblers/Fabricators and Handworkers				
Grinding machine setters/set-up				
Quality control inspectors and testers				
All other production workers				
Non-professional administrative support				
Accounting/bookkeeping				
All other administrative				
TOTAL				

* Include only job vacancies for which you are actively recruiting outside the firm.

** Include all new hires from outside the firm, including recalls from lay-off. Exclude any internal hires.

*** Include all separations from the firm including quits, fires, lay-offs and retirements.



The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute works with unions and their allies to create and retain good jobs and build strong communities through promoting high road economic strategies for individuals; employers and industrial sectors; and public economic and workforce development systems.

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