

Report to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees FY 2008 Evaluation Operating Plan

This report provides the Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Operating Plan for Evaluations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008. The Operating Plan outlines ETA's planned allocation by major priority areas and activities. The Evaluation funds are used for Program Year (PY) 2008, which begins on July 1, 2008, and ends on June 30, 2009. The FY 2008 appropriation for Evaluation is \$4,835,000.

Investment decisions in PY 2008 will be guided by the following six priority areas in the Five-Year Pilots, Demonstrations and Evaluation Strategic Plan for 2007-2012. It is important to note that the specific projects identified under each priority area will be planned in accordance with the limited resources available in PY 2008. This plan covers new projects that will begin in PY 2008 as well as significant projects that will be continuing from prior years.

1) Integration of Workforce and Regional Economic Development

This priority area focuses on measuring the success of integrating regional workforce investment and economic development, examining regional differences in economic performance and effectiveness, determining the drivers of "innovation hot spots" and job creation, and examining the effects of immigration on the economy and the labor force.

Under this priority area, ETA plans to:

- Continue evaluating how Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) manage their Workforce Investment Act (WIA) formula funds, particularly the LWIAs that receive an allocation of less than \$1 million combined from the WIA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker funding streams. Through a survey methodology, the study would determine how the funds are managed; what percentages are allocated to infrastructure, services, and training; the number of people that go into training; and if these local areas leverage resources outside their WIA allocations to provide a full suite of services to participants. The study will compare the 100 smallest workforce investment areas to the 100 largest.

2) Methods of Expanding U.S. Workforce Skills

This priority area focuses on increasing the skills of the workforce so that America retains its competitive edge. This research area is intended to measure the effectiveness of credentialing, research occupation projections, examine career ladders, explore the limitations on the capacity to train in certain occupational areas, and expand learning opportunities through the use of technology.

Under this priority area, ETA plans to:

- Continue conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the Community-Based Job Training Grants Initiative (CBJTI). The evaluation will: 1) document and assess how the demonstration grants were designed and implemented, 2) assess the effectiveness of CBJTI-funded training programs in raising the skills, employment, and earnings of individuals participating in the programs, and 3) calculate the return on investment for the programs funded. The first phase of the evaluation began at the end of PY 2007 and is examining the extent to which the CBJTI grants addressed the stated workforce

objectives and challenges, as well as documenting the role of business and the workforce investment system in the overall success of the grants. This phase will also include an examination of the feasibility of performing an impact evaluation. Depending on the results of this phase, the initial steps of an impact evaluation will begin in PY 2008.

- Continue evaluating the High Growth Job Training Initiative. The evaluation is: 1) documenting and describing the various models and projects that are operating with grant support; 2) identifying innovative features and potentially promising strategies; 3) assessing the implementation and outcomes to date; and 4) considering the feasibility of alternatives for further analysis and ongoing evaluation in subsequent years by conducting a formal evaluability assessment, including review of program and administrative data.

3) Increasing the Labor Market Participation of Underutilized Populations

To meet the needs of the 21st century job market, every available segment of the populations will need to be engaged, skilled, and prepared to enter or advance in the high-growth job opportunities afforded by the global economy. This priority area focuses on integrating underutilized segments of the population into the labor market and identifying successful strategies focused on increased participation and productivity.

Under this priority area, ETA plans to:

- Begin the Young Parent's Demonstration grant program evaluation. The demonstration uses an experimental approach to provide educational and occupational skills training that fosters family economic self-sufficiency to young parents (both mothers and fathers) and expectant mothers ages 16 to 24. The evaluation will examine whether the experimental approach led to improved outcomes and self-sufficiency for the program participants.
- Begin evaluating the Mentoring, Education, and Employment Grants to Persistently Dangerous Schools. The purpose of the evaluation will be to develop an in-depth understanding of key differences and similarities across grantees. To accomplish this, the contractor will examine the design, implementation, and outcomes of grantees through an analysis of administrative data submitted by grantees and data collected from site visits to grantees. In addition, the evaluation will identify program practices that appear to lead to successful outcomes.
- Continue evaluating the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to determine the program's success in meeting its dual goals of fostering useful part-time employment opportunities in community service for low-income older Americans and fostering individual economic self-sufficiency. The study will evaluate the impact of SCSEP on participants' post-program earnings, employment and other outcomes, as well as the program's cost-effectiveness. This impact evaluation will use a random assignment methodology.
- Continue evaluating the Priority of Service Provision of the Jobs for Veterans Act to determine if the workforce investment system is providing priority of service to veterans. The evaluation will provide a qualitative analysis of how the priority of service provision is being implemented by the workforce investment system and include a survey of veterans recently returning from combat.
- Continue to evaluate the H-2A alien labor certification program to assess the current performance of the labor certification process and project future system needs in the

context of the U.S. farm labor market. The evaluation will examine the various steps in the certification process and identify opportunities, absent changes in legislation, for streamlining the process while preserving protections for American workers. The evaluation will also examine the need for a revised program, identify the essential elements of a revised program, and examine the distributions of the burden and benefits of a revised program between employers and immigrants and domestic workers.

- Continue evaluating the Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative (PRI) Demonstration. The Initiative seeks to strengthen communities affected by large numbers of returning, formerly incarcerated individuals through employment-centered projects that incorporate education, job training, housing referrals, mentoring, and other comprehensive transitional services. To evaluate the PRI's 30 demonstration sites, the evaluation will examine the implementation and outputs of the PRI and produce an analysis of costs to participating communities for their provision of services to the formerly incarcerated individuals returning to their communities.

4) Using State-Level Administrative Data to Measure Progress and Outcomes

This priority area focuses on tapping into state-level administrative data for cost-effective research and evaluation purposes. Using administrative databases, rather than surveys, provides more longitudinal information; therefore, administrative data presents numerous advantages for conducting research.

Under this priority area, ETA plans to:

- Continue the evaluation component of the extended Individual Training Account experiment. The evaluation components include: 1) leveraging state administrative records and Unemployment Insurance wage records through data sharing agreements to add to the statistical analysis; 2) identifying an appropriate comparison group to conduct enhanced net-impact analysis including all six states (pending data availability); and 3) developing a final report covering the long-run impacts of the treatment groups.
- Continue the evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, which includes a qualitative analysis focusing on activities at the state and local level and a non-experimental net impact study. The evaluation is examining participant characteristics, program practices and management issues, as well as outcomes and impact of TAA participation, including a quasi-experimental impact analysis using a matched comparison group.
- Continue conducting the net-impact evaluation of the WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. This experimental, random-assignment evaluation will target multiple treatment and control groups. Each treatment group will be statistically measured against the others to generate cross-treatment comparisons. Through this evaluation, ETA will be able to gather specific impact and efficiency program element measurements in the aggregate, as well as incrementally. The complete evaluation will be conducted over the course of seven years, and represents a major leap forward in the specificity and quality of WIA evaluation.

5) Post-Secondary Education and Job Training

The 21st century knowledge economy demands a highly educated and skilled workforce. The fastest growing jobs, on average, require a post-secondary credential – a vocational

certificate or other credential, or an associates or higher degree. This priority area focuses on expanding access to post-secondary education and job training for workers.

Under this priority area, ETA plans to:

- Begin evaluating the Collaborative Online Workforce Education and Training Demonstration. This project seeks to make existing online training programs for specific disciplines or industries available in a single location so that individuals across the demonstration states can access training at any time or any place. The evaluation will determine participant outcomes and take-up of the new training programs when they are made available to them in a single on-line portal.
- Begin evaluating the Technology-Based Learning (TBL) demonstration grants program. The purpose of the demonstration is to expand the vital role technology can play in helping workers quickly acquire the training and skills they need to be successful in today's global economy. The evaluation will determine if the grantees were able to increase the amount of workforce training available online and/or enhanced with technology, and increase the number of people trained in high-growth jobs through the use of TBL methods.
- Continue evaluating the Limited English Proficient and Hispanic Worker Initiative demonstration grants to determine if contextualized learning methodologies accelerate participant's occupational and language skills attainment.
- Continue evaluating the Career Advancement Accounts demonstration. The implementation evaluation of the eight demonstration sites is examining the extent to which both individual projects and the overall grant program objectives were achieved, documenting project activities undertaken for possible replication in other states, and measuring changes in outcomes relative to a baseline period prior to the funding of the grantees' projects.
- Continue the Lifelong Learning Accounts evaluation, which is examining how these employer-matched individual asset accounts are used to finance lifelong learning so that workers can achieve their career goals and job advancement. The evaluation looks at the implementation of accounts and the outcomes for program participants to determine whether participants build financial assets and whether investment in training affects job progression and wage increases.

6) Unemployment Insurance (UI)

This priority area focuses on the efficacy of the current UI system for the 21st century workforce and economy, examines the incentives and disincentives to work, and looks at workers covered and not covered by UI.

Under this priority area, ETA plans to:

- Continue evaluating the Reemployment Eligibility Assessment Initiative, which provides grants to states to conduct one-on-one in person interviews with UI beneficiaries to review UI eligibility, provide current labor market information, develop a work-search plan, and refer beneficiaries to training and/or other reemployment services when necessary. The study is examining whether the interviews speed a return to employment and reduce the duration of UI, resulting in cost savings to the UI trust fund.