



Identifying Gaps and Setting Priorities for Employment and Training Research

by

Carl E. Van Horn

Christopher T. King

Tara Smith

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JOHN J. HELDRICH CENTER FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
EDWARD J. BLOUSTEIN SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND PUBLIC POLICY

RUTGERS
THE STATE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW JERSEY

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Executive Summary

Purposes and Scope

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development prepared this report with support from a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's (USDOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Its purposes are to summarize recent research, to identify current gaps in employment and training research, and to make recommendations for future research processes and priorities that could better inform policymakers, practitioners, job seekers, and employers.

Given the major challenges facing the U.S. economy and workforce in the early 21st century knowledge economy, it is imperative that federal, state, and local workforce policymakers and practitioners have access to rigorous, timely, and credible research about the programs and strategies that are most effective in helping American job seekers prepare to obtain and retain employment, as well as advance in their careers.

This report reviews workforce and related research funded by several federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and other federal entities. It also reviews research and evaluation projects undertaken by regional, state, and local workforce agencies and research supported by several national and regional foundations, including Annie E. Casey, Ford, Bill and Melinda Gates, Hitachi, Robert Wood Johnson, Charles Stewart Mott, Alfred E. Sloan, Joyce, and others, as well as research that has been or is being conducted independently by leading researchers *without* substantial public or private support. Finally, this report identifies high-priority research topic areas to examine over the next five years.

Consultation Process for Developing Recommendations

The process used to develop the recommendations included:

- A survey of some 665 stakeholders representing state and local workforce agencies, professional and labor associations, and community organizations;
- Interviews and meetings with a 20-member National Expert Advisory Panel (listed in Appendix A); and
- Interviews with USDOL senior staff from the National Office (including the Chief Evaluation Officer) and ETA national and regional offices.

Although a wide variety of stakeholders offered their views about the criteria for selecting research projects for funding, the overall state of the employment and training research enterprise, and essential research priorities for the remainder of the decade, the conclusions presented in the report are those of the authors alone.

The Context: Labor Market Upheaval and Constraints on Research Budgets

With the onset of what is now referred to as the Great Recession in December 2007, labor market distress increased and unemployment levels rose dramatically. While the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew substantially and financial market indices rose over the past year-and-a-half, employment growth was modest, and unemployment remained well above 9% and the ranks of long-term unemployed workers reached the highest levels in more than 60 years. The hardest hit groups in the latest U.S. recession and recovery have been males (who have lost jobs in manufacturing and construction), minorities, youth, and older workers. While those with advanced degrees continue to experience better labor market situations than others, all have been affected by tough times since late 2007. While job growth has resumed in recent quarters, it remains to be seen whether or to what extent U.S. labor markets will improve substantially over the next five years and produce real wage gains for workers.

ETA research budgets fell sharply from over \$140 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 to just under \$20 million in FY 2007, before increasing dramatically to nearly \$100 million in FYs 2009 and 2010 due to monies supplied by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). However, they are unlikely to remain high in the future as increasing attention is given to reducing federal deficits. Other federal agencies — especially the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, as well as NSF — are expected to play a larger role in labor market and workforce education research in the near future, as they have in recent years. Foundation-funded research may also need to play a more substantial role to help offset expected reductions in federal research support.

Improving the USDOL/ETA Research Process

During the 2000s, researchers, stakeholders, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and reports from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) pointed out major shortcomings with ETA's research processes, including the way ETA selected and funded projects and published and disseminated its research findings. Concerns were raised about delays in approving and then publishing research, diverting funds for other non-research projects, and inadequate strategies for disseminating research to policymakers, program managers, and the research community.

These issues have largely been addressed since 2008, but access to and dissemination of USDOL/ETA-funded research remains a concern to stakeholders across the nation as well as many members of the National Expert Advisory Panel convened for this project. These groups and individuals recommended that the process for funding the research, selecting the contractors, and publishing results should be far more transparent and depoliticized. They also urged that the results of the research be disseminated more rapidly to stakeholders at all levels in ways that are more effective for policymakers, program managers, and frontline staff.

Recently Completed Research, 2005 to present

The review of the literature from January 2005 through late 2010 shows that a range of federal agencies, state and local governments, as well as foundations, international organizations, and others are engaged in research related to the field of employment and training. The research published during this timeframe included demonstrations and analyses for specific populations of workers (e.g., youth, low-wage, immigrants, ex-offenders, unemployed individuals, older), as well as evaluations of services, training, and support strategies within the workforce development system.

Throughout most of the first decade of the 21st century, ETA shifted from a broad-based research agenda to one that focused more on the demand side of the labor market and on opportunities for private and nonprofit organizations to more actively engage in workforce development. Most of ETA's funded research efforts during this period were not random-assignment evaluations, or even impact evaluations, and some of the studies using quasi-experimental methodologies lacked adequate comparison group data. As noted by GAO (2011), "WIA [Workforce Investment Act] required that the Secretary of Labor conduct at least one multi-site control-group evaluation of the services and programs under WIA by the end of fiscal year 2005. ETA, however, delayed executing such a study, finally soliciting proposals in November 2007 and awarding the contract in June 2008" (p. 25). The initial results from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation, being conducted by MDRC, will not be available until 2014.

The majority — approximately 60% — of the reports released by ETA from 2005 to 2010 examined non-program-related pilot, demonstration, and research initiatives, including research on specific segments of workers (e.g., low-wage, disabled, youth, ex-offender, Hispanic); labor market and strategies for meeting employer demands (e.g., the High Growth Job Training Initiative, Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development); partnerships with intermediaries, faith-based and community organizations, and community colleges (e.g., the Community-Based Job Training Initiative); opportunities to extend individual choice (e.g., Personal Reemployment Accounts, entrepreneurship); and studies of research and analytic methods, performance measures, and data.

The remaining 40% of ETA reports released between 2005 and 2010 were evaluations or analyses of authorized federal programs, such as WIA, Unemployment Insurance (UI), Employment Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Job Corps, and Registered Apprenticeship. Individual training account strategies were the subject of more than a dozen studies.

Current and Ongoing Research

This report also summarizes ongoing research, demonstration, and evaluation projects funded by USDOL/ETA and other federal agencies and foundations in seven high-priority topic areas identified in ETA's research, demonstration, and evaluation strategic plan for 2007 to 2012:

1. Integration of workforce and regional economic development,
2. Methods of expanding U.S. workforce skills,
3. Increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations,
4. Using state-level administrative data to measure progress and outcomes,
5. Postsecondary education and job training,
6. Unemployment Insurance, and
7. Miscellaneous topics.

Many of these studies are ongoing, including studies to evaluate workforce system investments from ARRA.

Criteria for Research and Dissemination Strategies

There was a broad consensus by the Expert Advisory Panel that *rigor and timeliness should be seen as necessary for all research supported by ETA and other federal agencies and thus should be presumed before considering other criteria*. That said, the standards for assessing “rigor” and “timeliness” will vary with the type of research in question. A rigorous impact evaluation of a program utilizing an experimental design would take several years to complete. Such an evaluation might not be timely from the perspective of program managers seeking answers to immediate concerns. However, impact evaluations are essential for judging the long-term benefits of various strategies and informing policymakers as they allocate resources among different options. Evaluations using quasi-experimental designs and administrative data and field research methods are also rigorous in different ways and typically can be produced more quickly. Such studies are essential for providing evidence that can help guide program managers as they go about the immediate task of effectively delivering services.

Opinion on the overall state of employment and training research is well summarized by the comment of an Expert Advisory Panel member:

Employment and training research is generally good, but there isn’t enough of it and it isn’t disseminated well, whether to Congress or to program administrators at all levels. It should be conducted independent of political pressures.

These main points — good quality, insufficient quantity, inadequate dissemination, and the importance of a more transparent, independent research process — were voiced by Expert Advisory Panel members and echoed by other stakeholders.

The Expert Advisory Panel and a number of stakeholders urged much greater transparency and far more effective dissemination of research and evaluation results than has been the case in recent years, including the development of findings, prepared by contractors, with implications for managers and program design. These recommendations directly parallel recommendations offered by GAO reports in 2010 and 2011.

Congress and the federal government should consider establishing at ETA a “What Works Clearinghouse” similar to the one now operated by the Institute for Education

Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education. Perhaps a Workforce Development Institute should be authorized in WIA when it is amended. As proposed by members of the Expert Advisory Panel and others, it would address issues relating not just to WIA-funded programs but also relating to all titles of the next iteration of workforce development legislation. Under one proposal, it would focus on the following areas of research:

- Basic Research and Longitudinal Studies
- Study of the Needs of Industry Sectors
- Study and Support of a Skilled Workforce
- Career Development and Guidance
- Program and System Improvement and Accountability

Considerable improvement is also necessary to effectively disseminate research findings about strategies and programs throughout the workforce system, including ways to replicate effective approaches for discretionary programs within the larger, formula-based programs. A promising option for addressing this would be to re-establish a regional network of university-based institutes, such as the Manpower Institutional Grantees, which provided technical assistance and training and conducted and disseminated research to key actors in the workforce system from the late 1960s to the early 1980s when funding for the network was eliminated from the federal budget.

Conclusions and Recommended Research Priorities

Several principles should guide ETA's actions as it moves ahead to develop the next generation of workforce development research.

First, there should be *greater transparency in its research funding, contracting, and publication processes to avoid even the appearance of political influence and to build back the trust it lost in the research and policy community in large parts of the previous decade.*

Second, *given the considerable role that other federal agencies and philanthropic organizations play in supporting research related to labor markets and workforce strategies, and given expected future constraints on research funding, ETA should increase its collaboration with other research initiatives while inviting greater collaboration from these same organizations in its own efforts.* The challenges for job seekers, employers, and the economy are so significant that effective use of pooled resources demands closer collaboration within the federal government, between state and federal agencies, and, where possible, with private foundations.

Third, Congress and the federal government should establish at USDOL/ETA *a Workforce Development Institute, similar to the Institute for Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. This institute will set priorities, administer funding and evaluation initiatives, and disseminate results. This can be accomplished either through WIA's reauthorization or by administrative restructuring along these lines.* Additional dissemination mechanisms should be considered as well, including reestablishing the interdisciplinary regional network of academic research, training, and technical

assistance institutes that existed across the nation in the 1970s and early 1980s before national funding for them was withdrawn.

To meet the challenges of improving the design, effectiveness, and implementation of workforce development strategies and programs, there is broad consensus on the need for greater, strategic research investments by USDOL/ETA, by federal partner agencies, and by foundations. The list of priority topics is long and varied, but there was considerable consensus on several broad areas that should receive the highest priority in the next five or so years.

The recommended high priorities for research investments are categorized into five topic areas:

1. **Understanding Changing Labor Markets.** ETA should support more research on understanding the *changing dynamics of labor markets* and the *program and service needs that result from them*, rather than simply conducting more program-specific studies. Problems caused by the severity of difficulties in the labor market and the increased share of long-term unemployed need to receive greater attention, and it should be determined if the mix of services currently being offered in One-Stop Career Centers appropriately reflect these labor market changes. Sorting out the changing structural versus demand-deficient causes of labor market distress is essential. There is also a need for strategies to better understand and anticipate employer workforce needs, especially relating to energy and green jobs. Additional research is needed in order to better understand the workings of various labor sub-markets, such as those on and around tribal reservations.
2. **Identifying Effective Strategies.** ETA also needs to fund more research that is geared to the needs of the *workforce system broadly considered*, rather than research organized by program or title within WIA. Thus far, insufficient attention has been paid to the need to link research across the various titles of WIA and to other workforce and income support programs operating within USDOL and other federal agencies. Future research should put much greater emphasis on *identifying variations in programs and strategies and the underlying reasons for those variations and their effectiveness. In carrying out these projects, multi-disciplinary, cross-state, cross-site analysis that takes full advantage of ongoing, multi-state research partnerships should be used.* More specifically, high priority should be given to four key strategies:
 - The economic impact of UI and strategies for assisting workers to adjust to ongoing labor market difficulties, such as the Labor Exchange and Reemployment Services.
 - The effectiveness and return on investment from various training strategies, using both quasi-experimental and experimental design.

- The value of credentials, training certifications, and apprenticeships in the labor market, as well as strategies for teaching adult education and language skills through contextualized learning.
 - The value of workforce intermediaries and sectoral strategies, such as those implemented by the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership,¹ Project Quest,² Capital IDEA,³ and other organizations, including their impact on small businesses.
3. **Improving Workforce System Infrastructure.** More research into effective management approaches and tools (e.g., the Frontline Decision Support System, E-tools) and continued work to develop performance adjustment mechanisms was also suggested by several groups, as was a review of the effectiveness of waivers in allowing states and local areas the flexibility to manage their workforce systems based on local circumstances. In particular, research on how to accomplish “knowledge transfer” within the system is needed so that ETA can go beyond the simple dissemination of promising practices in order to achieve their adaptation and implementation by program managers at the state and local levels.
 4. **Addressing the Needs of Special Populations.** A number of special populations merit greater attention from ETA research efforts. Among the most important ones are: long-term unemployed workers, dislocated workers, youth and older workers, low-wage workers, ex-offenders, English-language learners, persons with disabilities, and veterans. Specifically, more research is needed into strategies for effective serving of low-skill, disconnected men, a group that has severe problems with long-term consequences. Another recommendation is to research the labor market problems of Native Americans as well as of Hispanic and other immigrant populations who face distinctive challenges that are often neglected in research. Research is also needed on the types of incentives that would improve the employment and training outcomes for different populations of job seekers.
 5. **Building Research Infrastructure and Support.** Overall, ETA should improve access, use, and confidentiality of administrative records for research and evaluation and create and distribute more public-use datasets for analysis. For example, ETA’s three-year Workforce Data Quality Improvement Initiative that began in December 2010 is a key opportunity, paralleling the much larger data quality efforts supported by the U.S. Department of Education across the nation. These significant initiatives to improve the quality of administrative data must be matched with concerted efforts to make those datasets available for research and analysis. It should be noted that ETA is also currently working to make public-use datasets available on the federal government’s Web site, <http://www.data.gov>. Recent increases in ETA research budgets, though temporary, and greater emphasis on researching labor market issues among other federal agencies and foundations, create opportunities to advance knowledge about workforce development investments. There is a need to better understand the relationship between education and workforce systems and the

outcomes and impacts associated with coordination between these systems, particularly for low-skill, low-wage populations and dislocated workers, among others. In addition, problems relating to variations in definitions and data elements across federal reporting systems should be addressed.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Report Scope

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development has developed this report to identify current gaps in employment and training research and to make recommendations for future research processes and priorities that could better inform policymakers, practitioners, job seekers, and employers. The report's co-authors are Carl Van Horn, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Heldrich Center; Christopher King, Director of the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas at Austin; and Tara Smith, Research Associate at the Marshall Center. Research assistance was also provided by Maria Heidkamp, Senior Project Manager at the Heldrich Center. Robb C. Sewell of the Heldrich Center edited the report.

In these deeply challenging economic times, and given the changing skill needs necessary in the 21st century knowledge economy, it is imperative that federal, state, and local workforce policymakers and practitioners have access to timely and credible research about the programs and practices that are most effective in helping American job seekers prepare for, obtain, and retain employment, as well as advance in their careers. The goal of the Heldrich Center's effort was to better understand the employment and training research that is currently being conducted by a range of sponsors in order to help inform future efforts by researchers and to provide guidance to federal agencies, including USDOL, state workforce agencies, and foundations as they make critical research investments. Although a wide variety of stakeholders offered their views about the state of the employment and training research enterprise and essential research priorities for the remainder of the decade, the conclusions presented in the report are those of the authors alone.

This analysis has a broader, more expansive scope than previous ETA research plans in several respects. First, this report reviews workforce and related research supported by other federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development, as well as NSF and other federal entities. This expansion, in part, recognizes the fact that in recent years, these agencies also have been actively supporting important research and evaluation initiatives with noteworthy workforce development dimensions. It also acknowledges the important role these other organizations are playing in employment and training research in an era of reduced USDOL/ETA budgets for research and evaluation.

Second, the report also reviews related research and evaluation efforts that have been supported and undertaken by regional, state, and local workforce agencies and groups. Several USDOL regions, as well as states and localities within them, have actively engaged in important research in recent years that was overlooked in earlier USDOL plans.

Third, this analysis looks beyond federal, state, and local research to that supported by key national and regional foundations. National foundations such as Annie E. Casey, Ford, Bill and Melinda Gates, Hitachi, Robert Wood Johnson, Charles Stewart Mott,

Alfred E. Sloan, and others have been actively engaged in workforce-related research in recent years. Moreover, a number of regional foundations, such as the Joyce Foundation, have been important supporters of workforce research.

Finally, the report also attempts to incorporate research that has been or is being conducted independently by leading researchers *without* substantial public or private support.

Process for Developing this Analysis

The process used to develop this strategic research analysis involved six major steps, which are described below. The research team:

- Held a number of discussions with key ETA staff to identify major ETA stakeholders, gain information about both completed and ongoing ETA and UI research, and secure their input about recommendations for future research priorities;
- Embarked on a review of *recently completed* research on labor market operations and trends, workforce development, UI, and related issues funded by key public and private, philanthropic, and other organizations;
- Reviewed *ongoing* research funded by federal and other organizations;
- Reviewed *rapporteur's summary*, prepared by Professor Carl Van Horn, from the USDOL/ETA Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference held in September 2009 (see Appendix C), which emphasized evidence-based decision making, accountability, and transparency among its critical themes.
- Surveyed major stakeholders to elicit their input and advice on both important gaps and key priorities for workforce research over the next five years; and
- Held discussions and conducted in-depth follow-up interviews with members of the National Research Expert Advisory Panel co-chaired by Professors Carl Van Horn and William Rodgers of the Heldrich Center (the full membership is listed in Appendix A) regarding research gaps and priorities.

Information resulting from each of these steps was then assimilated into this report.

Report Organization

This report is organized into five chapters. Following this introduction (chapter 1), the next section (chapter 2) establishes the context for the report, discussing recent labor market trends, previous recommendations for priority research topics based on ETA strategic plans, sources of support for research, budget constraints, and other issues. Chapter 3 provides a review of recently completed research, largely focusing on research and evaluation projects completed since the most recently issued ETA research

plan. The period covered is primarily 2006 to 2010. Chapter 4 discusses both current and ongoing research. Chapter 5 identifies major research gaps and lists key research priorities that emerged from the research team's analysis of the relevant data and discussions with stakeholders, leading researchers, and the National Expert Advisory Panel. Five appendices complete the report: the first is a list of National Expert Advisory Panel members. The second is a comprehensive bibliography of recent research that informed the development of this report. The third is the rapporteur's summary of the 2009 ETA Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference. The fourth is the table of priority research topics by stakeholder group. The fifth is a summary of the 665 responses to the stakeholder input survey.

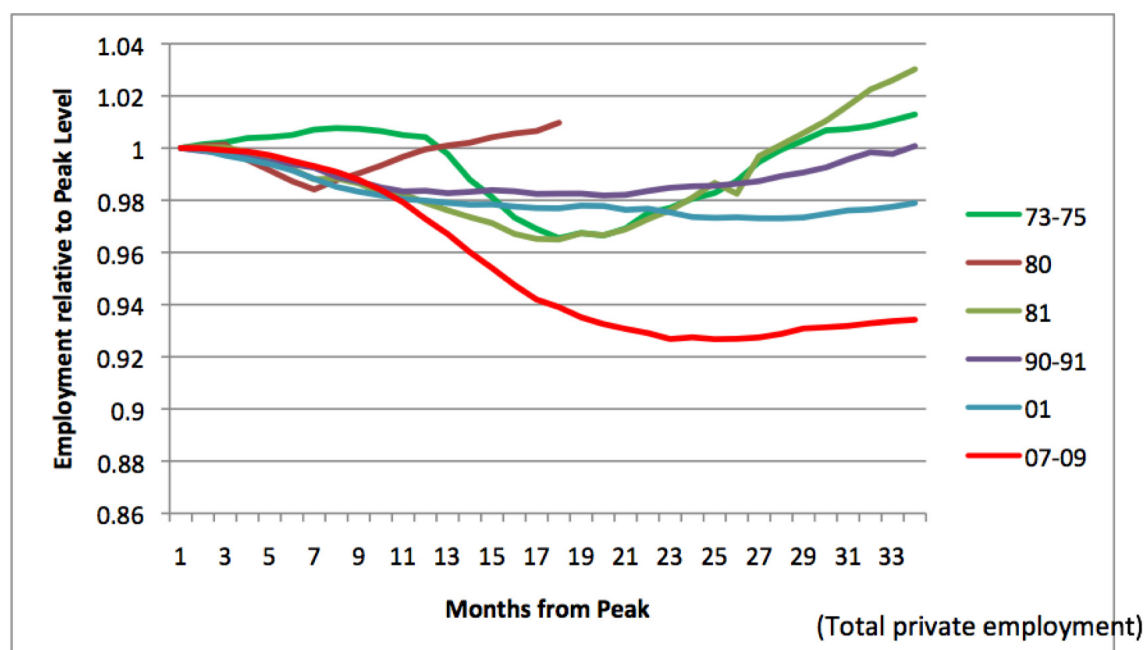
Chapter 2. Context

Recent and Continuing Labor Market Upheaval

After experiencing robust growth throughout much of the 1990s, U.S. labor markets began to encounter substantial headwinds beginning with the 2001 recession and the subsequent recovery, which some economists termed a “jobless recovery”.⁴ With the onset of the Great Recession in December 2007, labor market distress became far greater. The National Bureau of Economic Research officially declared the end of the recession in June 2009. While GDP has grown substantially and financial market indices have risen dramatically over the intervening months, employment growth has been modest, and the rate of unemployment has remained at or above 9%, sticking at 9.4% to 9.6% for months. These trends suggest considerable upheaval in U.S. labor markets that may continue for several more years. A closer look at these data is warranted.

After rising steadily following the end of the last recession (November 2001), real GDP fell by more than 4% from the last quarter of 2007 to the second quarter of 2009 and then began to increase again, rising by around 2.6% from the second quarter of 2009 to the first quarter of 2010.⁵ However, employment fell more sharply than GDP during the recession and rebounded much more slowly in the recovery, far more so than in previous post-war recoveries as shown in Figure 1. At the recession’s trough in December 2009, U.S. payrolls had shed some 8.5 million jobs.

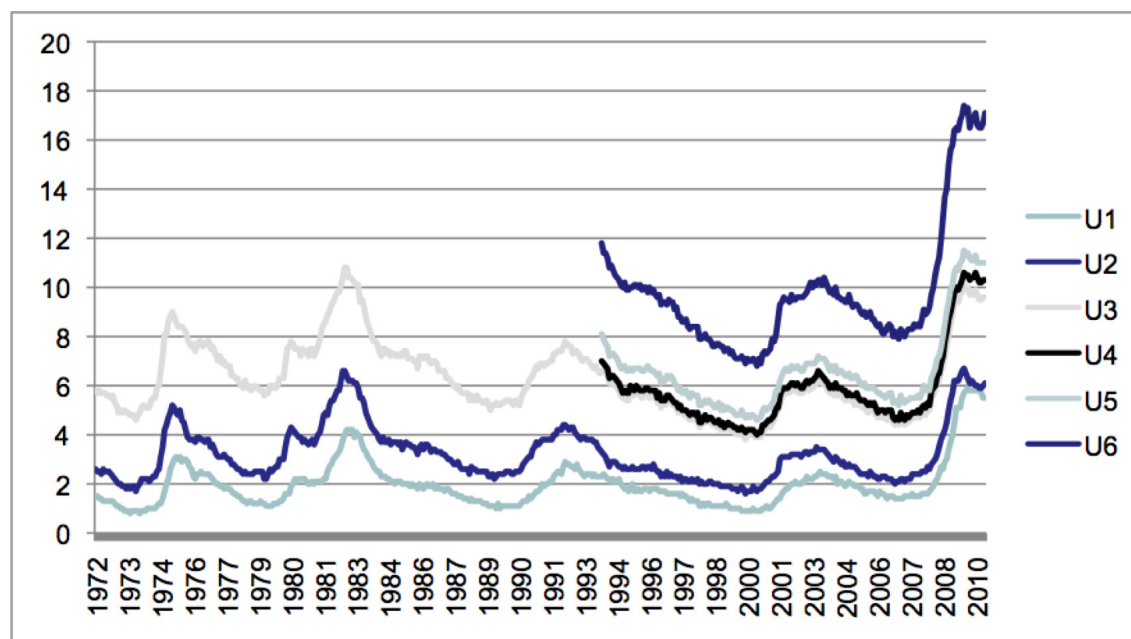
Figure 1. U.S. Employment Relative to Peak Levels in Six Post-war Recessions and Recoveries



Source: Eberts, 2010.

By all available measures, unemployment in the 2007 to 2009 recession has been high, whether looking at the overall rate, rates for the long-term unemployed, or rates including discouraged workers and others (Figure 2). Moreover, using these same measures, unemployment has remained persistently high, with the overall rate remaining at 9.6% more than a year into the recovery.⁶

Figure 2. Unemployment Rates



Source: Eberts (2010).

Legend:

- U1 = persons unemployed 15 weeks or longer
- U2 = job losers and persons who completed temporary jobs
- U3 = total unemployed (the official unemployment rate)
- U4 = total unemployed plus discouraged workers
- U5 = total unemployed plus discouraged workers plus all other marginally attached workers
- U6 = total unemployed plus all marginally attached workers, plus total employed part time for economic reasons

It is important to note that with the sharp reductions in employment and hours and the resumption of GDP growth, worker productivity, measured as output per man-hour, has increased sharply. But these gains have not been realized by workers for the most part but rather have translated into disproportionate gains for companies. According to one estimate, more than 85% of the gain in combined wages, salaries, and pre-tax corporate profits from these productivity gains have gone to corporations, not workers.⁷

The hardest hit groups in the latest U.S. recession and recovery have been males (who have lost jobs in manufacturing and construction), minorities, and youth.⁸ While those with advanced degrees continue to experience better conditions than others, all have been affected since late 2007. It remains to be seen whether U.S. labor markets will improve substantially over the next five years and produce real wage gains for workers.

Experience with recent recessions and recoveries strongly suggest that U.S. labor markets are becoming increasingly dynamic and difficult for many groups of workers to navigate successfully and that some groups are suffering much more than others, through higher unemployment levels, reduced real wages, and other impacts. Policymakers, practitioners, stakeholders, and researchers alike need to know about and understand these changes and their effects so that they can devise and implement policies and programs that will effectively address them.

Previous ETA Strategic Research Plans in Brief

ETA has issued three earlier five-year research plans since WIA's passage in 1998. These plans responded primarily to the mandate of WIA section 171 and thus focused largely upon research, demonstration, and evaluation projects funded by ETA. Acknowledging the importance of work that was taking place under the auspices of other federal agencies or supported by state and local governments or private philanthropic sources, ETA suggested that this plan for 2010 to 2015 include a review of these non-ETA funded efforts as well.

The first strategic research plan, which was prepared by the Heldrich Center and colleagues, was for the period July 2000 through June 2005.⁹ It examined important trends in U.S. labor markets and recent changes in employment and training policies brought about by WIA, which had just been enacted two years previously. It then reviewed recent research and evaluation initiatives conducted under WIA for key population groups of interest and alternative methodologies for employment and training research before presenting nine high-priority topics to guide ETA research over the 2000 to 2005 period:

1. Understanding the role of intermediaries in the labor market;
2. Identifying effective training strategies;
3. Developing appropriate assessment tools;
4. Evaluating and improving job retention programs;
5. Developing strategies to promote career advancement;
6. Identifying effective support services;
7. Understanding the impact of self-directed employment services;
8. Improving interventions to assist the hardest-to-serve, including welfare recipients and the homeless; and
9. Developing the potential of telecommuting.

The second plan, which was prepared by the Heldrich Center and colleagues, was for the period 2002 to 2007.¹⁰ This plan began with a review of prior ETA research on WIA, Internet UI claims, Personal Reemployment Accounts, and youth programs. It then described current USDOL-funded research on the labor market and the global economy, workforce investment system improvements, existing and emerging labor pools, and program evaluation. The 2002 to 2007 plan established the following priority areas for research:

1. Integration of workforce and regional economic development,
2. Methods of expanding U.S. workforce skills,

3. Increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations,
4. Using state-level administrative data to measure progress and outcomes,
5. Postsecondary education and job training, and
6. Unemployment insurance.

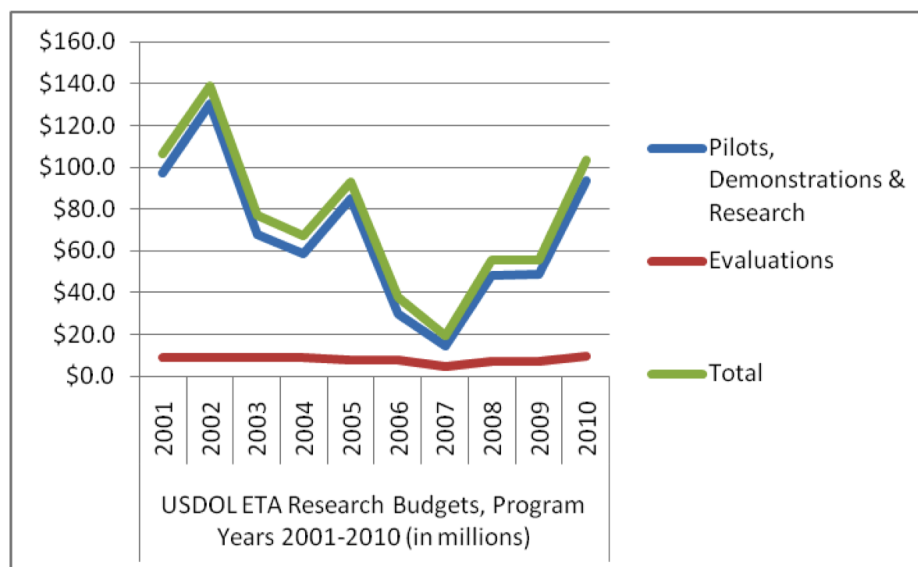
The third plan, which was for the period 2007 to 2012, identified the same set of priority areas for research as in the second plan.

Research, Demonstration, and Evaluation Funding: Budget Constraints and Diffusion

As Figure 3 shows, ETA research, demonstration, and evaluation budgets fell sharply from Program Year (PY) 2002 through PY 2007, reaching a low of just \$19.6 million in that year. While ETA's research funding increased dramatically in PYs 2009 and 2010 with infusions from ARRA, they are unlikely to remain high in the future as increasing attention is given to reducing federal deficits.

Moreover, there is an important subtext to the ETA funding story for pilots, demonstrations, and research (but not evaluation): Congressional earmarks. In most years from PY 2003 through PY 2010, well over half of ETA funding for pilots, demonstrations, and research was earmarked by Congress for specific uses. Congressional earmarks ranged from a low of around 48% in 2004 to a high of almost 90% in 2009. (There were no earmarks in 2006 and 2007.) In addition to the Congressional earmarks, in PYs 2008 to 2010, Congress set aside additional amounts for competitive grants for young parents (\$5 million to \$5.5 million annually) as well as \$30 million for Transitional Jobs Demonstration activities. ETA has had little discretion in the way its pilots, demonstrations, and research funds have been used for much of the last decade.

In addition, other federal agencies — especially the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, as well as NSF — are expected to play a larger role in labor market and workforce education research in the near future, as they have in recent years because research budgets at Education and Health and Human Services have been much greater than that for ETA. Foundation-funded research may also play a substantial role.

Figure 3. ETA Research Budgets, Fiscal Years 2001 to 2010 (millions)

Source: ETA FY 2011 Budget.

Improving the Research and Dissemination Process

Over the 2000s, researchers, stakeholders, OMB, and GAO raised questions that pointed to shortcomings with ETA's research process, including the way it funded, published, and disseminated its research. Among the issues noted were that ETA officials:¹¹

- Delayed approval of its research plans, often by several years;
- In the absence of approved research plans, used research funds for other purposes;
- Did not publish completed research for several years; and
- When research was published, did not disseminate it in a manner that made it readily accessible by researchers, policymakers, and other interested parties.

Beginning with a national research conference held in September 2009 (see Appendix C for rapporteur's conference summary), USDOL has addressed many of these issues. Attended by over 400 workforce practitioners, researchers, state/local representatives and others, ETA's two-day Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference showcased findings from ETA research on a range of employment and training topics, including UI and reemployment services programs. (Prior to 2009, the most recent research conference was held in 2003.)

However, access to and dissemination of ETA-funded research remains a concern to stakeholders across the nation as well as many members of the Expert Advisory Panel. The main points made by these groups and individuals, discussed in greater detail later in this report, were that the process for funding the research, selecting the contractors,

and publishing the results needs to be made far more transparent and depoliticized and that the results of the research need to be disseminated to stakeholders at all levels in ways that are more effective for policymakers, program managers, and frontline staff.

Recent increases in ETA research budgets, though temporary, as well as greater interest in and emphasis on researching labor market issues among other federal agencies and foundations create opportunities. While ETA's research budget now stresses ARRA and related topics, there is growing interest in understanding the relationship between education and workforce systems and the outcomes and impacts associated with coordination between these systems, particularly for low-skill, low-wage populations and dislocated workers, among others. ETA's three-year Workforce Data Quality Improvement Initiative that began in December 2010 is a key opportunity,¹² paralleling the much-larger data quality efforts supported by the U.S. Department of Education across the nation.

Chapter 3. Recently Completed Research, 2005 to 2010

A review of the literature from January 2005 through late 2010 shows that a range of federal agencies, state and local governments, as well as foundations, international organizations, and others are engaged in research related to the field of employment and training. The research published during this time frame included demonstrations and analyses for specific populations of workers (e.g., youth, low-wage, immigrant, ex-offender, unemployed, older), as well as evaluations of service, training, and support strategies within the workforce development system.

In the summary below, research is first categorized by primary funder/publisher. Where recently completed research aligns with the knowledge gaps identified in ETA's two prior five-year research plans, this is noted. While the summary is not intended to be an exhaustive bibliography of workforce development-related research, it does capture the major research priorities and outputs from leading experts and organizations in the field.

A note on the scope of the literature review: the emphasis is on research funded by federal and philanthropic organizations, with the inclusion of other select research — whether publicly or privately funded — to a lesser degree. The breadth of emphasis necessitates a scan of recent research rather than a synthesis of findings, such as may be appropriate across an individual topic (e.g., youth, employment retention, performance measurement). There are acknowledged contributions to the employment and training field in peer-reviewed journals, as well as studies by university research centers, state agencies, and international organizations that are beyond the scope of this report.

Research Supported by the Employment and Training Administration

Throughout most of the first decade of the 21st century, ETA shifted from a broad-based research agenda to one that focused more on the demand side of the labor market and opportunities for private and nonprofit organizations to more actively engage in workforce development. Late in the Bush administration, ETA published a number of reports from previous research investments that had been held in the agency's clearance process, in some cases for more than five years. Since that body of research had previously been unavailable to the field, it and other USDOL publications during the 2005 to 2010 period are summarized below. It should be noted that little of ETA's funded research includes random-assignment evaluation and that even some of the quasi-experimental methodologies are limited by the lack of necessary comparison group data in many projects. Finally, it is unclear whether current dissemination strategies are getting research findings into the hands of the broad array of stakeholders invested in improving employment and training services around the nation.

ETA's Program-Related Research Investments

Approximately 40% of the reports released by ETA between 2005 and 2010 were related to standing programs, such as WIA, UI, Employment Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Job Corps, and Registered Apprenticeship. While the only standing program singled out for priority in either of the two prior five-year research plans is UI, research and evaluations of ETA's other major programs are generally considered to be of value to stakeholders.

Research Related to the Workforce Investment Act

A significant portion of ETA's budget is dedicated to programs funded under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) Title I. A number of recent or recently released ETA-funded studies have focused on various aspects of WIA. Of the 13 studies associated with WIA reviewed here, 6 were held in clearance for multiple years. Half of those held in clearance stemmed from the evaluation of early WIA implementation led by Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA), two studies on the new performance management and measurement systems (Pearlman et al., 2005; Dunham et al., 2006), and the analysis of sub-state allocation formulas (Wiegand, 2003). Two other reports that were also held in clearance — a study by Westat on the WIA allotment formula (Jacobson et al., 2002) and a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University that looked at how states might use ETA's then-recent demonstration research and evaluation projects to aid the implementation of WIA (Barnow and Gubits, 2003) — are now available to the stakeholder community. Other research examining how state and local areas implemented and adjusted to the WIA legislation includes SPRA's examination of workforce development in rural areas (Dunham et al., 2005), the Rockefeller Institute's study of *WIA in Eight States* (Barnow and King, 2005), and the *Anatomy of a One-Stop* project conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri (Mueser and Sharpe, 2006) and the Jacob France Institute (Stack and Stevens, 2006). These studies provide important examples of the breadth and variety of experiences and structures in the publicly funded workforce system.

Despite the 1998 legislation's directive for ETA to conduct a random-assignment evaluation of the WIA program, ETA did not fund any large-scale evaluation of WIA until 2005. In response to a poor rating for evaluation by OMB, ETA funded IMPAQ International to conduct a non-experimental, matched-comparison group evaluation of WIA in 12 states. The *Workforce Investment Act Non-Experimental Net Impact Evaluation* (Heinrich et al., 2008) found that participation impacts were greater in the Adult program than in the Dislocated Worker program, and that women received greater benefits from participation than did men. The researchers suggested a number of next steps, including a meta-analysis of the differences among state programs and a cost-benefit analysis of WIA services. Interestingly, ETA held in clearance an earlier quasi-experimental study of WIA employment and earnings impacts (Hollenbeck et al., 2005) that was conducted by researchers at the Upjohn Institute and the University of Texas at Austin's Ray Marshall Center associated with the *Administrative Data Research and Evaluation* (ADARE) project; that report was also released in 2008. The 2005 quasi-experimental analysis of employment and earnings impacts in seven large states similarly found that "WIA services, including training, are effective interventions for

adults and dislocated workers, when measured in terms of net impacts on employment, earnings, and receipt of TANF for participants” (Hollenbeck et al., 2005, p. 30).

Individual training accounts (ITAs), a new method for funding training under WIA, also were the subject of a series of studies in the review period. These studies were part of the proposed research agenda in ETA’s first Five-Year Research Plan, targeting identified priority areas, including understanding the impact of self-directed employment services. Between 2000 and 2005, ETA funded a 13-state demonstration of ITAs and the use of Eligible Training Provider (ETP) lists. Preliminary findings from the demonstration helped inform the design of the random-assignment evaluation on ITAs, which examined ITA take-up rates under various frameworks, such as maximum customer choice or structured/guided choice, and included an impacts and benefit-cost analysis. The mixed-methods evaluation of the demonstration, which was conducted by Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica), documented how states developed their ITA/ETP policies and procedures (McConnell et al., 2006). ETA extended the evaluation period in 2008 and funded a second round of participant follow-up surveys to identify longer-term impacts; the final report is expected in 2011.

Research on Unemployment Insurance and Employment Services

ETA released nine reports on a broad range of UI program topics between 2005 and 2010, including one by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (2004) titled, *Unemployment Insurance: Assessment of the Impact of the 2002 Reed Act Distribution*. The study found that states had largely used the special Reed Act distribution to cut taxes, resolve insolvency issues, and address technology and infrastructure in their UI systems. In *Systemic Disincentive Effects of the Unemployment Insurance Program*, Vroman (2005) identified priorities for future research, including a need to better understand long-term unemployment and the effect of UI benefits on individual behavior. Coffey Communications evaluated state models used in the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services system and highlighted best practices (Sullivan et al., 2007).

A series of reports by IMPAQ International and the Urban Institute and released between 2008 and 2010 evolved from an intended large-scale UI program evaluation that ETA ultimately modified into a series of reports on narrowly defined topics. The reports examined state implementation of the State Unemployment Tax Act Dumping Act of 2004 (Coffey et al., 2008), analyzed UI non-filers using supplemental Current Population Survey (CPS) data (Vroman, 2008), and identified both recent changes in characteristics of unemployed workers and trends in the structure of the labor market (Michaelides and Mueser, 2009; Burtless, 2008). The latest report in the series is *The Role of Unemployment Insurance as an Automatic Stabilizer During a Recession*, which concludes, “On average, the UI program closed 0.183 of the gap in real GDP caused by the recession. For this particular recession, the UI program has provided stronger stabilization of real output than in many past recessions” (Vroman, 2010, p. 70).

In 2005, ETA sponsored the first round of 21 Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) demonstration grants to encourage states to provide more active reemployment services to targeted UI claimants. An implementation study of 9 first-round states by Benus and Poe-Yamagata et al. (2008) highlighted a common concern in employment

and training research: “While the REA Initiative was successfully implemented in most states, many states experienced challenges in establishing a valid treatment and comparison group and providing data via the required...reports” (p. iv). The authors recommend further evaluation using experimental methods to assess the true impact of the promising REA demonstration.

ETA also funded research to examine the interaction between UI and Employment Services. A report by the Upjohn Institute, *Trend and Cycle Analysis of Unemployment Insurance and Employment Service*, found that “the use of job orders from employers as the route to reemployment seems destined to continue declining while ES support of self service and other reemployment support services seems destined to continue growing” (Vroman and Woodbury, 2004, p. 126). Berkeley Policy Associates reported the findings from an evaluation of a pilot program in Wisconsin to strengthen connections between UI and the One-Stop delivery system (Almandsmith et al., 2006). The matched-comparison group evaluation found that participants who received core (often funded by Employment Services) and other services in the One-Stop Career Centers were more likely to enter and retain employment. Also important, the study found that connecting UI recipients more directly with the One-Stop Career Centers generally spurred communication and collaboration between the state’s Employment Services and UI systems, which had been lost when the UI claims process was transferred to telephone call centers.

The ADARE alliance provides access to nine state databases capturing workforce investment, UI, training, labor market outcomes, and other data. The most recent ADARE study was published by the Upjohn Institute, *Use of Unemployment Insurance and Employment Services by Newly Unemployed Leavers of TANF* (O’Leary and Kline, 2009). This quasi-experimental study found that TANF-leavers were less likely than other UI applicants to qualify for UI benefits based on their reason for leaving employment. It also found that TANF-leavers who applied for UI benefits were more likely to enroll in Employment Services than other TANF-leavers.

ETA released two reports by Westat on Employment Services during the 2005 to 2010 period. The first report examined the effect of core labor exchange functions (job referrals and placements) in Washington and Oregon (Jacobson and Petta, 2000). The second report, *Evaluation of Labor Exchange Services in a One-Stop Delivery System Environment*, was a five-year study that examined the role states had developed for Employment Services under WIA and included a benefit-cost analysis of job referrals for UI claimants. Jacobsen et al. (2004) concluded that “Even under highly conservative assumptions, benefits outstripped costs by more than 20 percent in every state. Because per-person costs were low, small reductions in joblessness produced high benefit-cost ratios” (p. 5).

Research on Other Major ETA Programs

Another set of ETA program-related research involves the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act of 2002 (TAA). A study by researchers at the University of Michigan examined the labor market effects of globalization in relation to TAA (Johnson, 2005). As part of a large quasi-experimental impact evaluation, SPRA and its subcontractor, Mathematica

Policy Research, have completed six occasional papers, including papers on the initial implementation of the Trade Act amendments of 2002 (D'Amico et al., 2009); a study on the use of assessment, case management, and post-training services with TAA participants (Mack, 2009); and a report examining the characteristics of eligible workers and documenting the early experiences of TAA participants (Dolfin and Berk, 2010). The final report from the evaluation is due to be completed in September 2011.

Finally, two other standing ETA programs were evaluated during this time period — Registered Apprenticeship and Jobs Corps. In *Registered Apprenticeship: Findings from Site Visits in Five States* (Gunn and De Silva, 2008), researchers with Planmatics, Inc. identified strong support among current sponsors, but weak coordination with the One-Stop system, difficulties in finding qualified instructors, and participant concerns regarding the long duration of training and relatively low starting pay. The Urban Institute's 2009 report, *The Benefits and Challenges of Registered Apprenticeship: The Sponsors' Perspective*, found that "Over 80 percent of sponsors particularly valued registered apprenticeship's role in helping them meet their demand for skilled workers, while over 65 percent thought that registered apprenticeship provided important benefits in raising productivity, strengthening the morale and pride of workers, and improving worker safety" (Lerman et al., 2009, p. 42).

Three reports released in 2006 and 2007 were related to the Job Corps program. *An Examination of the Delivery of Literacy Services at Job Corps Centers* (KPMG, 2006) looked for opportunities to improve literacy services through the Job Corps program, but found that limited student-level data prevented a comprehensive review of current literacy offerings. HMA Associates' *Study of Hispanics in Job Corps 2004-2005* (Garcia, 2007) examined English language services, participation levels, the role of culture, and employment outcomes in relation to the success of Hispanic participants. The researchers identified opportunities for program improvements to assist these youth in connecting with higher-wage and career path-linked employment upon completion of Job Corps. Finally, the *National Job Corps Study and Longer-Term Follow-Up* report prepared by Mathematica (Schochet et al., 2006) has been widely noted as a leading-edge study for its use of a random-assignment evaluation methodology. Researchers found that "the statistically significant short-term earnings gains experienced by program participants makes Job Corps the only large-scale education and training program that has been shown to increase the earnings of disadvantaged youths" (Schochet et al., 2006, p. 53).

ETA's Initiative-Related Investments

The majority of the publications released by ETA from 2005 to 2010 were from non-program-related pilot, demonstration, and research initiatives.¹³ This research focused on:

- Specific segments of workers (e.g., low-wage, disabled, youth, ex-offender, Hispanic);

- The labor market and strategies for meeting employer demands (e.g., the High Growth Job Training Initiative, Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development);
- Partnerships with intermediaries, faith-based and community organizations, and community colleges (e.g., the Community-Based Job Training Initiative);
- Opportunities to extend individual choice (e.g., Personal Reemployment Accounts, entrepreneurship); and
- Studies of research and analytic methods, performance measures, and data.

Only one of the publications included in the following review was held in clearance — the final process evaluation report from the second round of the *Youth Offender Demonstration* (MacGillivray et al., 2004) by Research and Evaluation Associates.

Research Related to Specific Segments of Workers

The research priorities detailed in the 2000 to 2005 research plan primarily relate to how the workforce development system serves specific segments of workers, especially those who are disadvantaged, low-skilled, or hardest to serve. In the 2007 to 2012 plan, increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations is identified as a research priority. A number of ETA's research investments served to address this knowledge gap as evidenced by the body of research on youth, immigrants, ex-offenders, Hispanic, and low-wage/low-skill workers detailed in the following section.

One of the hardest segments of the labor force to serve is ex-offenders, though connecting these individuals with stable employment is often considered to be essential for reducing recidivism. ETA has invested in three initiatives specifically targeting this group in recent years. The *Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative* (PRI) funded 30 demonstration projects led by faith-based and community organizations in 2005. The process evaluation by Coffey Consulting and Mathematica “provides rich information on the experiences of PRI grantees as they implemented the demonstration and on PRI participants' characteristics and [self-reported] outcomes as they worked to successfully reintegrate into society” (Holl et al., 2009b, p. xvi).

Another initiative, *Ready4Work*, was developed in partnership with Public/Private Ventures. The demonstration sought to test if faith-based and community organizations could develop training, wraparound support services, and mentoring programs to help ex-offenders find and retain employment. The assessment of the demonstration project (Bauldry and McClanahan, 2008) documented the implementation process, participant experiences, and outcomes. While the report does make comparisons between participants and other ex-offenders, no quasi-experimental research methods were used in the evaluation.

The *Youth Offender Demonstration* tested strategies to help youth with criminal records enter into career training and find and retain employment. This large-scale demonstration project included three rounds of grants to 39 organizations, as well as

process and outcomes evaluations. A process evaluation of second-round grantees by MacGillivray et al. was completed in 2004 but not cleared for release until 2008. The study highlighted cross-agency partnerships, route management,¹⁴ and the importance of stable jobs, stable housing, and caring adults in helping youth offenders find and retain employment. SPRA reported findings from a process and outcomes evaluation of the *YouthBuild Youth Offender* grants operating in 34 sites nationwide (Abrazaldo et al., 2009). The evaluation found that many participants experienced positive outcomes, with more than one-third obtaining a GED or high school diploma, more than one-half obtaining an occupational certificate, two-thirds entering unsubsidized employment, and three-fourths avoiding further involvement with the criminal justice system.

The *Beneficiary Choice* demonstration was another effort to connect with youth offenders. In this demonstration, grants were awarded to faith-based and community organizations in five communities to provide work readiness training, career counseling, and six months of follow-up support services. Youth could select among providers, at least one of which was non-religious, that were funded through a performance-based contract. In 2008, Mathematica released the first report from its evaluation of the demonstration, *Giving Ex-Offenders a Choice in Life: First Findings from the Beneficiary Choice Demonstration* (Bellotti et al., 2008). The report found that while ex-offenders were connected with workforce services at a higher rate than they would normally have been, providers found that the lack of certainty driven by both customer choice and the performance contracts made it difficult to plan for service provision. A final evaluation report is forthcoming.

Beyond the subset of youth who are ex-offenders, ETA also released research studies related to the *Youth Opportunity (YO!)* grants and programs for out-of-school youth. The 2007 quasi-experimental evaluation of the YO! grants by Decision Information Resources found that “Overall, YO had a significant positive effect on reducing the number of disconnected youths — those who were both out of school and out of work” (Jackson et al., 2007, p. 100). A study by Lerman (2005) reviewed the literature on out-of-school youth and urged ETA and others to apply identified best practices in long-term initiatives to connect these youth with education and employment opportunities.

Hispanic, limited English proficient, and recent immigrant workers were the focus of four ETA research investments in the review period. *Immigration and the Effects on the United States Labor Market* (Borjas, 2005) provided a historical analysis of immigration between 1960 and 2000. As part of the *New Americans Centers Demonstration*, the Urban Institute prepared two implementation and outcome evaluation reports on how Arkansas and Iowa integrated New American Centers in their One-Stop systems to help recent immigrants connect with employment opportunities and American life (Koralek et al., 2010; Koralek and Parnes, 2008).

The *Evaluation of the Limited English Proficiency and Hispanic Worker Initiative* (Holl et al., 2009a) included both a process and outcomes analysis of vocational English as a Second Language programs implemented in five demonstration sites. Researchers found that workplace programs, those that actively built on employer demands, and those that were flexible and helped participants in meeting the scheduling and other challenges faced by working adults, were the most successful. *An Evaluation of the Latino Coalition's Reclamando Nuestro Futuro Program* (Monsma and Smidt, 2009) examined the

intermediary role of the Latino Coalition and its efforts to connect Hispanic and other minority youth with education and employment, helping them to steer clear of involvement with the criminal justice system. This research also addressed a key research priority of ETA's original five-year research plan: understanding and connecting with intermediary organizations.

Low-wage/low-skill workers often need to build basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as college readiness skills, in order to succeed in employment and training programs. In *Flexible Learning Options for Adult Students*, Choitz and Prince (2008) reviewed recent trends in adult and postsecondary education and documented the need for improved dissemination and collaborative sharing strategies so that promising practices may be shared and tested. In *Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies to Improve Results* (Kazis et al., 2007), Jobs for the Future documented the need for improved accessibility, affordability, and accountability measures to better serve working, low-skill, and other disadvantaged adults in the nation's community college and workforce training systems. These research investments were prioritized in ETA's 2007 to 2012 research plan, which highlighted gaps in the knowledge base around lifelong learning, how adult students learn, and how to train diverse populations quickly.

Research Related to Specific Workforce Development Strategies

ETA also invested in demonstrations and assessments of various employment and training strategies, including: demand-driven workforce services, collaboration in regional economic development, support for small business development, leveraged training and support services through community colleges and faith-based/community organizations, and facilitated individual choice in reemployment and training pathways. This body of research addresses some of the knowledge gaps identified in ETA's earlier research plans, such as a need to understand the workforce system's role in economic development and a need to identify services that support improved employment and training outcomes. This research includes: a 2003 study by Dickerson, *Navigating the U.S. Labor Market*, which looked at income inequality for American workers, and an Upjohn Institute report simulating possible individual responses to a proposed personal reemployment account pilot project (O'Leary and Eberts, 2004).

In the *High Growth Job Training Initiative* (HGJTI), ETA sought to demonstrate the value of demand-driven workforce services that prioritized the employer as the primary customer. Two reports are available on the implementation and sustainability of this initiative (Trutko et al., 2007; Nightingale et al., 2008). Researchers noted that the flexibility ETA allowed in the design and implementation of the HGJTI grants provides an opportunity to study a variety of training strategies to prepare workers with the skills employers demand.

Another ETA initiative designed to address the demand side of the labor market is *Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development* (WIRED). Berkeley Policy Associates' interim evaluation reports examined three core issues in the first round of implementation: alliance-building and the development of a regional identity, incorporation of specific design and service strategies, and measuring progress toward

economic growth (Almandsmith et al., 2008 and 2009). A study by Public Policy Associates (Hewat and Hollenbeck, 2009) examined the implementation of the second and third round of WIRED projects.

The *Community Based Job Training Grants* (CBJTG) program is a capacity-building program designed to help community colleges train workers for high-growth industries. The Urban Institute is conducting an implementation study of the CBJTG program. The first report (Eyster et al., 2009) documented the characteristics of the grantees.

ETA also invested in a demonstration of small business development, *Project GATE* (Growing America through Entrepreneurship). Based on a random-assignment model, participants in Project GATE — those interested in starting a small business, including some small business owners who were seeking the services — could choose any or all of three core services: a needs assessment, training in business procedures and applications, or business counseling sessions to work through plans, loan applications, and other issues. An early project report by IMPAQ International and Mathematica (Benus and McConnell et al., 2008) presented findings from the implementation study of the seven demonstration sites and initial outcomes. The final report (Benus et al., 2009) presented findings from the five-year impact study. Project GATE had an immediate, but not lasting, impact on business ownership. On average, participants started a business earlier and maintained a business longer than the control group. Also important, participants who were UI recipients at the time they started Project GATE experienced greater impacts than non-recipients.

Leveraging investments by and services through faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) became a priority for ETA during the review period. Multiple reports explored opportunities for the publicly funded workforce system to partner with FBCOs, particularly for the delivery of wraparound and support services. Mathematica and SPRA reviewed the literature on FBCOs (Soukamneuth et al., 2006), their partnerships with businesses (Soukamneuth, 2007), and opportunities for collaboration with workforce intermediaries (Soukamneuth and Harvey, 2008). The final report on the FBCO demonstration was *Collaborating with Faith- and Community-Based Organizations: Lessons Learned from 12 Workforce Investment Boards* (Paulsell et al., 2007). The findings identified four areas for potential collaborations between the workforce system and FBCOs: “(1) extending the workforce system’s reach to underserved populations, (2) providing services tailored to the needs of hard-to-serve job seekers, (3) helping job seekers with significant barriers to employment find jobs, and (4) leveraging other community resources” (Paulsell et al., 2007, pp. 127-128). Recommendations for productive collaborations include careful selection of experienced partners, clear definition of roles based on partner strengths, active grant monitoring and support for capacity building as indicated, and linkages between the FBCOs and the One-Stop Career Centers.

Finally, ETA funded a pilot study of *Personal Reemployment Accounts* (PRAs) as a potential strategy to improve customer choice, support skill development, and limit the duration of unemployment. The implementation study presented the structure of the accounts and individual choice in each state (Kirby, 2006). Outcomes were found to be highly dependent on those two factors. The authors noted that the PRA study contained

lessons learned that were likely applicable to other customer-managed accounts, such as the *Career Advancement Account* demonstration (Kirby et al., 2008).

Research Related to Issues of Performance Management, Research Methodologies, and Data

A final strand of ETA research investments during the review period focused more on the process of research in the field of employment and training, and includes studies of system performance unrelated to a specific program and other analyses. One study, the *Review of Alternative Methodologies for Employment and Training Research* (Bell, 2003), examined the role of research in policy-making, detailed different research approaches applicable to a range of workforce development topics, and explored how random-assignment evaluations might be structured for existing employment and training programs.

Two reports looked at various design aspects of workforce program evaluations. *Use of Experimental Methods in Workforce Evaluation* (Burtless and Greenberg, 2005) explored how random-assignment research might be used to improve workforce development policies and programs. *On the Use of Administrative Data for Workforce Development Program Evaluation* (Hollenbeck, 2005) is a guide to help policymakers and program administrators better understand the use of administrative data in net impact evaluations, process studies, and related research. The continued need for more research on the use of states' administrative data to measure progress and outcomes was highlighted in ETA's 2007 to 2012 research plan.

Estimating Public and Private Expenditures on Occupational Training (Mikelson and Nightingale, 2004) underscored the significant investment private entities make in skills training for American workers. *What's Known About the Effects of Publicly-Funded Employment and Training* (D'Amico, 2006) summarized the literature to date on the effectiveness of workforce development services, emphasizing the disparate outcomes achieved for specific segments of workers. In response to a new requirement from OMB, ETA funded a study to identify how efficiency measures could be developed for employment and training programs, and the data and analyses required to accurately portray program efficiency (Trutko and Barnow, 2010).

Other U.S. Department of Labor Research

Beyond ETA, other agencies within USDOL, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Office of Disability Employment Policy, and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, among others, all sponsor research on employment and training issues.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Research

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is charged with "measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy" ("About the Bureau," 2010). BLS routinely releases data and provides public use databases on employment and unemployment that form the foundation of numerous research studies. Researchers,

labor market analysts, and others also make extensive use of BLS tools to understand employment issues around the nation. In addition, BLS regularly publishes research on topics of interest to the workforce development community in the *Monthly Labor Review*, the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, and *Issues in Labor Statistics* (“BLS Publications,” 2011).

The Office of Survey Methods Research within BLS produces numerous reports on technical and statistical research topics that are particularly relevant to labor economists and other researchers in the workforce field. The *Statistical Survey Papers* are reports written by BLS researchers exploring technical issues on data sources, collection methods, reliability, and statistical analysis procedures. While these reports are beyond the scope of this literature review, it is important to acknowledge this body of work when documenting workforce-related research (“BLS Statistical,” 2011).

The *Economic Working Papers* is a series produced by BLS research scientists and others as a vehicle for generating discussion on a wide range of topics. Recent titles in this series include a number of reports focusing on employment experiences of older workers. *Employment Patterns and Determinants Among Older Individuals with a History of Short-Duration Jobs* (Cahill et al., 2010) “compares the demographic and economic characteristics of individuals who have never had a full-time career job with those who have, and compares the timing and types of job switches that both groups make later in life” (p. 2). Researchers found that job changes, declining earnings, and churning between private and self-employment are common among older workers regardless of prior career employment. *The Role of Re-Entry in the Retirement Process* (Giandrea et al., 2010) explored the churn of older workers between retirement and workforce participation following their initial episode of retirement. The researchers concluded that, “among those who exited the labor force directly from career employment, retirement is often not a one-time, permanent event” (Giandrea et al., 2010, p. 15). Factors strongly associated with re-entry include having an employer-provided pension, being younger or in better health, and holding a college degree. An additional report in this set is *Self-Employment Transitions Among Older American Workers with Career Jobs* (Giandrea et al., 2008). This study found that self-employment increases as workers get older. Among individuals in the *Health and Retirement Study* (HRS), approximately one-third of men who worked were self-employed, as well as about 15% of women.

Two other reports examine the “bridge job” phenomenon — where individuals enter short-duration or part-time employment after leaving a full-time career before permanently retiring from the workforce. *Are Traditional Retirements a Thing of the Past? New Evidence on Retirement Patterns and Bridge Jobs* (Cahill et al., 2005) used cross-sectional and longitudinal HRS data to explore retirement and bridge-job patterns. Researchers found that approximately one-half to two-thirds of older individuals who worked full time prior to their first retirement episode were employed in at least one bridge job prior to permanent retirement. *An Update on Bridge Jobs: The HRS War Babies* (Giandrea et al., 2007) built on the 2005 research by examining another cohort of retirees, those who were born between 1942 and 1947 (i.e., war babies). This supported the earlier findings that traditional retirement no longer accurately reflects the experiences of older individuals. The majority of workers leaving full-time employment

hold bridge jobs, by choice or by necessity, prior to completely withdrawing from the workforce.

Beyond older workers, BLS Economic Working Papers also feature topics such as Hurricane Katrina evacuees, employed students, and the use of survey and other data to explore unemployment, job skills, and human capital. A working paper by Groen and Polivka (2008), *The Effect of Hurricane Katrina on the Labor Market Outcomes of Evacuees*, used CPS data to develop impact estimates. Researchers found that, “Among evacuees, those who did not return to their pre-Katrina areas have fared much worse in the labor market than have those who returned...More than one year after the storm (in October 2006), the unemployment rate of non-returnees was still 9.9 percentage points higher than that of comparable returnees” (p. 17).

A working paper by Kalenkoski and Pabilonia (2008), *Parental Transfers, Student Achievement, and the Labor Supply of College Students*, used National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 data to explore the financial motivations for student employment while in college. The researchers found that the cost of education has a positive correlation both on hours of student employment and monetary transfers by parents. Students at both two- and four-year colleges responded to higher education costs by increasing work hours. Students enrolled in four-year colleges were more responsive, in terms of work hours, to a decline in parental transfers than were students in two-year colleges. The study also identified a negative effect of student employment on first-semester GPA.

Occupational skills are another important topic in the BLS working papers series. *Occupation-Specific Human Capital and Local Labor Markets* (Groen, 2005) “explores the relationship between the size of the local market for an occupation-specific skill and job-training outcomes” (p. 1). The research tested theoretical models that hypothesize that market growth increases employment turnover and shifts training from occupation-specific to general. Groen’s results supported the theoretical model, finding that where there are a small number of firms, turnover and training orientation are tightly linked to shifts in the market.

In *The Strength of Occupation Indicators as a Proxy for Skill*, Levenson and Zoghi (2007) used National Compensation Survey data to explore “whether inter-occupational wage differentials that are unexplained by measured human capital are indeed due to differences in often-unmeasured skill” (p. 2). The researchers found that occupation controls did not fully account for wage differentials and concluded that intra-occupation skill variations and other unmeasured factors must also be considered.

Finally, BLS working papers also routinely explore topics and issues related to ongoing survey research such as the CPS and the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), which is a monthly survey of establishments. A 2005 report by Faberman, *Studying the Labor Market with the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey*, provided an introduction to researchers and others on how to use the JOLTS data. The author highlighted three key strengths in the dataset: micro-level vacancy postings, separations by quit or layoff status, and breadth of worker flow data by establishment.

Measures of Labor Underutilization from the Current Population Survey (Haugen, 2009) explored the history of the unemployment rate as produced by the CPS since 1940. It also examined alternative measures of labor utilization introduced in 1995. The author “concludes that while the five alternatives to the official unemployment rate...may represent varying views of labor resource underutilization, they show very similar patterns of change across the business cycle” (“Measures,” 2011).

Office of Disability Employment Policy

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) sponsors research “to promote evidence-based practices and systems change that increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities” (“ODEP – Research,” 2011). Topics of interest include employer attitudes, opportunities for customized employment, workforce service provisions and job search accommodations at One-Stop Career Centers, and an evaluation of disability policies.

In 2005, ODEP released *Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs: Task 10: Interim Report on ODEP Demonstration Programs: Accomplishments and Issues Identified by the Independent Evaluation* (Elinson and Frey, 2005), as part of a series of reports by Westat on ODEP pilot projects. The report synthesized findings to date on three types of projects: WIA youth demonstrations, customized employment for adults, and technical assistance supports for pilot projects and other programs serving individuals with disabilities. The interim findings indicated that the pilot projects had strong employment outcomes (95% employed) and related declines in reliance on public benefits for participants. The process study and technical assistance reports also provided valuable detail on how pilot projects develop and change over time.

Two other reports released by ODEP were related to the *Workforce Development Case Study* project. This 12-site study sought to demonstrate how individuals with disabilities could be served through WIA programs and One-Stop Career Centers. In *Analysis of Change: A Longitudinal Study of Six One-Stop Systems Serving Individuals with Disabilities, Year Three Report*, Hall et al. (2005) presented findings from the midpoint of the demonstration. They concluded that “many sites took a more holistic approach towards addressing disability within the context of good customer service. The universality improves services for all job seekers, including those that traditionally experienced barriers to employment” (p. 122). The second report, *How Youth with Disabilities are Served Through the Workforce Development System: Case Study Research Across Six Sites – Year 3* (Kaufman et al., 2005), is also a midpoint summary. In this case, researchers noted the need for more refined performance measures for programs serving youth with disabilities, as current structures do not acknowledge the wraparound services and other outcomes required prior to connecting these youth with employment. Longer-term investments to enable engagement with clients over an extended period of time and the use of Disability Program Navigators in One-Stop Career Centers were identified as key strategies for improving outcomes and customer satisfaction.

The *Customized Employment and Workforce Action* grant initiative was a 26-site demonstration project to “increase employment options for job seekers with complex

needs through the voluntary negotiation of the employment relationship with an employer” (National Center, 2007, p. 5) launched by ODEP in 2001. The summary report *Customized Employment Employers and Workers: Creating a Competitive Edge* described the initiative, provided cross-site analysis, and identified lessons learned. The report also included recommendations for improving workforce system policies, processes, and outcomes for individuals with disabilities and other job seekers with significant employment barriers.

Survey of Employer Perspectives on the Employment of People with Disabilities (Domzal et al., 2008) is being used by ODEP to develop targeted strategies for increasing employment opportunities. Key findings of the survey included that 19% of employers overall hired individuals with disabilities, but that those numbers are primarily driven by large employers, 53% of whom employed such individuals. Employers reported a variety of real and perceived barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities such as the nature of the work, costs associated with accommodating a disability, health care costs, and Workers Compensation concerns. Researchers identified a need to target education efforts at small- and medium-sized employers, particularly those in the private sector that were least likely to employ an individual with disabilities.

Veterans’ Employment and Training Service

USDOL’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) is responsible for helping current service members transition to the civilian workforce and providing targeted workforce development programs to veterans. Recent VETS research includes three reports by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. *Report on Task 1: The Labor Market Trajectories of 20-24 Year Old Veterans* (Black and Lane, 2007) examined National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data to identify factors in unemployment and employment among young veterans at several points in time immediately following discharge. The research found that, over time, employment increased as a result of active job search. *Report on Task 2: Developing a Deeper Understanding of the Labor Market Dynamics of Recently Discharged Veterans* (Black et al., 2007) built on the first report to statistically compare the labor market experiences of recent veterans to three groups of civilian-workforce counterparts. Researchers found that veterans are more likely to be employed and less likely to be out of the labor force than their civilian counterparts. In addition, veterans had higher earnings than their civilian counterparts (Black et al., 2007, pp. 2-3).

The Labor Market Outcomes of Young Veterans (Black et al., 2008) expanded the earlier research to examine veterans’ outcomes by military branch and explored measures beyond employment and earnings, such as receipt of UI benefits and participation in postsecondary education or public workforce services. One key finding is that “veterans are more likely to be employed in large firms, and are more likely to work in jobs that offer benefits, such as pensions and health care than are comparable civilians” (Black et al., 2008, p. 17).

Related Federally Supported Research

Beyond USDOL, other federal agencies also fund research on employment and training, particularly: the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation; the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences and Office of Vocational and Adult Education; the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Agency and the U.S. Census Bureau; the U.S. Department of Energy; the Social Security Administration; the Small Business Administration; and the National Academies' National Research Council. The following sections summarize some of their research investments related to workforce issues.

Department of Health and Human Services

Two things are notable about HHS and ACF. First, most of their employment and training demonstration projects have multiple iterations over long periods of time. This allows for later sites to apply lessons learned from the pilot sites, as well as sufficient time for outcomes and impacts to be evaluated. Second, the agency's Web site, project descriptions, and related publications are well organized and easy to navigate. This, in turn, facilitates research access and dissemination to stakeholders, issues that were highlighted in ETA's 2000 to 2005 research plan.

ACF funded the random-assignment *Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA)* demonstration project from 1998 to 2009, partially supported by ETA. Beginning in April 2005 through November 2009, MDRC released 15 reports on the findings from individual or small groups of ERA sites ("ACF OPRE: Employment," 2011). In 2010, MDRC reported final impacts for the 12 ERA models: participants in three of the test sites experienced significant, positive economic impacts. Researchers noted the opportunity to build on the components and strategies involved in those three sites to test future retention and advancement initiatives (Hendra et al., 2010). Also in 2010, MDRC produced a cost-benefit analysis of three ERA projects. The study found returns to participants of more than one dollar for every dollar invested by ACF and a positive financial impact for society as a whole, though projects did not result in sufficient welfare or other savings to offset costs (Redcross et al., 2010).

In addition to the ERA initiative, ACF has also funded other workforce development research, including both long- and short-term initiatives. The long-running *Rural Welfare to Work Strategies Demonstration (2000-2008)* included process and implementation studies, as well as random-assignment impact studies and a benefit-cost analysis of specific projects ("ACF OPRE: Rural," 2011). Mathematica found that the *Building Nebraska Families* model, which focused on job readiness and life skills development, produced positive impacts on employment and income as well as reduced poverty (Meckstroth et al., 2008a). The *Illinois Future Steps* model, which took a case-management approach emphasizing employment, had few positive impacts ("Rural," 2010; Meckstroth et al., 2006, 2008b).

In *Understanding the Demand Side of the Low-Wage Labor Market* (Acs and Loprest, 2008), researchers presented the findings of a national survey of employers to identify the

opportunities and barriers faced by TANF participants and other disadvantaged workers in obtaining entry- and non-college-level jobs. The *Innovative Employment Strategies (2005-2007)* project analyzed employment and training programs designed to help TANF recipients (and other low-wage workers) enter and retain employment. Focusing on innovative practices and programs, researchers established definitional and conditional criteria, and explored possible random-assignment or other tests to validate program benefits. Importantly, the researchers also identified “methods for measuring impacts on a range of outcomes including employment, retention and advancement, and child well-being” (“Innovative,” 2010).

Identifying Promising Practices for Helping TANF Recipients with Disabilities Enter and Sustain Employment (2006-2008) is an ACF-funded project exploring how to better provide employment services to TANF recipients with disabilities. The final report by Mathematica (Kauff, 2008) identified four promising practices: forging partnerships between TANF and vocational rehabilitation agencies, conducting innovative and intensive assessment and triage, creating work opportunities, and providing work supports (p. 13).

HHS’ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) also supports employment and training-related research. Recently released reports by ASPE include *Progress Toward Self-Sufficiency for Low-Wage Workers* (Acs et al., 2010), which found that the size of the low-wage labor market has been stable over time and identified population groups who are disproportionately employed in low-wage jobs: unmarried mothers, less-educated African American men, and those from low-income families (p. 81).

Within ASPE, the Office of Disability, Aging, and Long-Term Care Policy has produced and supported several studies on the long-term care workforce. Most recently, *Examining Competencies for the Long-Term Care Workforce: A Status Report and Next Steps* (Harahan et al., 2009) examined the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for long-term care positions, making careful distinction between long-term versus geriatric care. Several recommendations for strengthening long-term nursing care include training, certification, and facilities standards. The report is in part a response to the Institute of Medicine report, *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce* (2008), which identified a need for expanded coursework and training in geriatric care for all health care workers and called for demonstrated competencies in basic care for older adults required for all health care licenses and certifications. Another recent study on this topic is *Ensuring a Qualified Long-Term Care Workforce: From Pre-Employment Screenings to On-the-Job Monitoring* (The Lewin Group, 2006). In 2006, ASPE delivered two related reports to Congress: *Supply and Demand of Professional Social Workers Providing Long-Term Care Services* and *The Supply of Direct Support Professionals Serving Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Other Developmental Disabilities* (ASPE, 2006a, 2006b).

Two other ASPE-sponsored research studies on the health care workforce are also of note. *An Exploratory Study of Certified Nursing Assistants’ Intent to Leave* (Squillace et al., 2008) examined data from a national survey of certified nursing assistants to look at factors in high turnover rates and opportunities for improving retention. *Nationwide Health Information Network Workforce Study: Final Report* (Altarum, 2007) provided

preliminary estimates on the number and types of health care informatics specialists that will be needed to build and manage electronic health records.

In a series of brief reports for ASPE, Mathematica identified *Strategies for Increasing TANF Work Participation Rates* drawn from state and local case studies. Individual report topics included *Achieving Higher TANF Work Participation Rates* (Kauff and Derr, 2008); *Providing Paid Employment Opportunities* (Person et al., 2008); *Providing Unpaid Work Experience Opportunities* (Derr, 2008b); and *Using Data to Monitor and Improve Work Participation* (Max and Kirby, 2008). The summary report (Pavetti et al., 2008) compared policy and program responses across states and examined how changes in workforce participation have shifted the TANF composition in some states. The welfare population was also the focus in another recent study funded by ASPE, *UI as a Safety Net for Former TANF Recipients Final Report* (O'Leary and Kline, 2008).

Finally, two ASPE-sponsored projects on individuals with high barriers to employment, low-income noncustodial TANF parents, and youth in foster care are: *Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration Projects: Employment and Child Support Outcomes and Trends* (Martinson et al., 2007), which found modest employment outcomes and more consistent child support payments associated with participation; and *Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties* (Macomber et al., 2008), which examined labor market trajectories for foster care youth who aged out-of-state care at different points between ages 17 to 21, finding that foster youth have lower outcomes across a variety of measures when compared with other low-income youth.

U.S. Department of Education

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education, has sponsored significant research on education and employment outcomes, instructional strategies, and other issues. IES focuses on rigorous research methods to identify core issues, evaluate initiatives, and identify best practices so that stakeholders can have sufficient confidence in the findings to act upon them.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of IES, has released a number of materials related to the 2003 *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (NAAL), including public- and restricted-use datasets and analyses (to which ETA also contributed). In 2005, NCES produced a report of initial findings, as well as an information guide on the features and key concepts of the NAAL survey. Initial analyses suggested that the percentage of adults performing below basic literacy and numeracy levels had fallen slightly between the survey's 1992 and 2003 administrations (White and Dillow, 2005). In 2007, NCES released *Literacy in Everyday Life*, which found that "adults with higher literacy levels were more likely to be employed full-time and less likely to be out of the labor force than adults with lower literacy levels. Adults with lower literacy levels also generally earned lower incomes" (Kutner et al., 2007, p. vi). Findings of the *Adult Literacy Prison Survey* were released in 2007, revealing that prisoners in 2003 had higher levels of literacy than their counterparts in 1992, though their levels remained below that of non-incarcerated adults (Greenberg et al., 2007). The most recent report from the study is *Basic Reading Skills and the Literacy of America's*

Least-Literate Adults (Baer et al., 2009). Related research products include state- and county-level estimates of the percentage of adults functioning at the lowest levels of literacy.

Other reports released by NCES during the review period include a longitudinal analysis of findings from 11 NCES surveys on career and technical education (CTE) between 1990 and 2005 (Levesque et al., 2008). Researchers found that while there was no change overall in participation in CTE programs over that time, there was a shift from business-related coursework to health care and information technology courses. In 2005, NCES released a statistical analysis of the work-related adult education participation in 2002-03 finding that 40% of the nation's adult population engaged in a formal program (O'Donnell and Chapman, 2005). The report *Adult Education Participation in 2004-05* (O'Donnell and Chapman, 2006) presented descriptive findings from the *National Household Education Surveys Program*. Notably, researchers found that "Among participants in work-related courses or training, more adults cited a private business, company, or hospital (52%) as the instructional provider than any other provider type" (O'Donnell and Chapman, 2006, p. 3).

NCES also conducts research that addresses the identified gap in the knowledge base around effective training strategies and the need to improve knowledge about postsecondary education and training. Three reports by NCES examine outcomes for community college and university students. *On Track to Complete?* (Horn and Weko, 2009) looked at three-year outcomes for first-time community college students who enrolled in the 2003-04 school year based on a taxonomy of how strongly engaged a student was in completing their course of study (e.g., vocational certificate, associate's degree, university transfer). Approximately half of all students were still enrolled in postsecondary education, while 5% had earned a vocational certificate, and 10% had earned an associate's degree. Students who were identified as strongly motivated to complete persisted in their education and earned certificates and degrees at higher rates than those with less focus on completion (Horn and Weko, 2009, pp. ix-x).

Persistence and Attainment of 2003-04 Beginning Postsecondary Students: After Six Years "provides information about the rates at which students completed degrees or certificates, transferred to other institutions, and left postsecondary education without attaining degrees or certificates" (Radford et al., 2010, p. 1). Among the key findings: almost half of the students (49%) who started postsecondary education or training programs in the 2003-04 academic year had completed a certificate (9%), associate's (9%), or bachelor's degree program (31%) by June 2009. More than one-third of the students in that 2003-04 cohort were not enrolled and had not completed a credential program within those six years.

In Ten Years After College: Comparing the Employment Experiences of 1992-93 Bachelor's Degree Recipients with Academic and Career-Oriented Majors (Choy et al., 2008), NCES analyzed the work experiences of individuals who graduated from college in the 1992-93 school year in 1994, 1997, and 2003. This study found that "By 2003, some 46 percent of graduates had never been unemployed (not working, but looking for work) since they had graduated.... The average length of time unemployed was 9 months, which could have been one long period of unemployment or multiple short ones" (Choy et al., 2008, p. vi-vii). Further, individuals with career-oriented majors were less likely to

experience unemployment, or more likely to have a shorter duration of unemployment, than those with academic majors.

Particularly relevant for dissemination to a range of stakeholders is IES' *What Works Clearinghouse* (WWC), which:

- Produces user-friendly practice guides for educators that address instructional challenges with research-based recommendations for schools and classrooms;
- Assesses the rigor of research evidence on the effectiveness of interventions (programs, products, practices, and policies), giving educators the tools to make informed decisions;
- Develops and implements standards for reviewing and synthesizing education research; and
- Provides a public and easily accessible registry of education evaluation researchers to assist schools, school districts, and program developers with designing and carrying out rigorous evaluations ("What," 2010).

During the review period, WWC (2008a, 2008b) released two intervention reports related to employment and training. One examined *New Chance*, an education and training program for mothers on TANF. The other, a 2008 review of the literature on Job Corps focused only on education outcomes and hence did not, unfortunately, include Mathematica's 2006 impact analysis, which examined employment outcomes.

A second agency within the U.S. Department of Education that sponsors research on employment and training topics is the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). A recent report to the President, *Bridges to Opportunity: Federal Adult Education Programs for the 21st Century* (OVAE, 2008), presented the findings of the Interagency Adult Education Working Group, which was created by Executive Order. The group found that the lack of coordination of programs for adult education at the federal level was replicated throughout the system. The report recommended improved coordination of services across programs to improve efficiency and expand access. In another recent study, researchers examined the use of workforce education and training to reduce recidivism and develop lessons learned from interviews with prison and community college administrators (OVAE, 2009).

U.S. Department of Commerce

Research related to employment and training issues is sponsored by several agencies within the U.S. Department of Commerce, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the Economic Development Administration. The Census Bureau's *Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics* (LEHD) initiative tests the use of state-provided UI wage records and Census-provided employment and wage data to improve the censuses, surveys, and estimates produced by the Bureau. In return, "States receive three key products from the Census Bureau: (1) quarterly workforce indicators about the state economy at detailed industry and geography, (2) enhanced UI wage records, and (3) information

about successor/predecessor firms” (*Filling Data Gaps*, p. 2). The 27 quarterly workforce indicators tracked by the LEHD provide data to inform state and local Workforce Investment Boards, economic development agencies, and transportation planners, as well as career counselors and job seekers. These research products also meet some of the gaps identified in prior ETA research plans, including self-directed employment activities, development of a data clearinghouse, and using state and other administrative data to measure progress and outcomes.

One line of LEHD research is *Older Worker Profiles*. The 2007-08 series examined the status of older workers in 30 states at the state, metropolitan, and county levels, as well as industrial data by North American Industry Classification System code (“U.S. Census,” 2009). Another line of research produces technical papers exploring the use of LEHD data to understand characteristics of the workforce and labor market. In 2005 and 2007, LEHD researchers explored long-term effects of job dislocations (Bjelland, 2005); job allocation across and within industries (Golan et al., 2005); and characteristics of the self-employed (Ong and Graham, 2007b), informal job holders (Graham and Ong, 2007), and dual job holders (Ong and Graham, 2007a). One technical paper that is particularly relevant to research based on UI wage records is *Employment That Is Not Covered by State Unemployment Insurance Laws*. The report included analysis of state UI laws, and noted “non-coverage is an open-ended residual — including all employment circumstances that are not covered in a particular state UI law at a specified time” (Stevens, 2007, p. 3). Finally, the report examined definitions and estimation issues for self-employment and independent contracting.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) has sponsored research and demonstration projects to test strategies for improving economic development activities, including workforce training and the development and use of labor market information. This research also fills an identified knowledge gap on integrating regional workforce and economic development priorities. Regional innovation, including rural economic development, was the topic of several reports released during the review period. *Measuring Regional Innovation: A Guidebook for Conducting Regional Innovation Assessments* (2005) provided a “framework for measuring regional innovation that will help economic development leaders strengthen regional prosperity” (p. 36). EDA also released *Regionalism and Clusters for Local Development Needs Assessment Results* (2007), which identified a need to more actively engage practitioners in their own knowledge and skill development around best practices and new concepts in economic development. Also in 2007, *Unlocking Rural Competitiveness: The Role of Regional Clusters* developed a database on rural economies and analyzed regional cluster structures. *Crossing the Next Regional Frontier* (2009) presented data on occupation clusters at the county level and details analyses generated by two pilot studies using the data.

In 2008, the *Construction Grants Program Impact Assessment Report* presented an analysis of EDA’s investments in the construction industry, including road, park, and community infrastructure projects, construction of commercial structures, and innovative business incubation projects. Researchers found that “EDA investments in rural areas have a statistically significant impact on employment levels in the communities in which they are made” (Arena et al., 2008, p. i), with business incubation projects having the greatest impact on jobs created.

Another line of EDA research relates to the green economy. In *Green, Local, and Growing: Findings from a Survey of Green Businesses in California* (Chapple et al., 2010), researchers focused on identifying how green businesses differ. The report also documented innovation strategies and the growth of green businesses in regional economies. A second study, *Innovating the Green Economy in California* (Chapple and Hutson, 2010) took a closer look at green businesses to identify job creation opportunities and presents regional case studies, identifying the Los Angeles and East Bay as leading regions in the green economy.

U.S. Small Business Administration

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) funds a range of economic research on small businesses, entrepreneurship, self-employment, and other topics of interest to workforce development stakeholders. Particularly noteworthy are the brief research summaries available on each report, which aid dissemination of research findings, a need highlighted in ETA's first five-year research plan. SBA's investments in self-employment research include analyses of self-employment by veterans and service-disabled veterans (Open, 2007), individuals with bachelor's degrees (Moutray, 2008 and 2009), and youth (Abe et al., 2010). The study *Small Business and Self-Employment As Income Mobility Mechanisms* (Schiller, 2010) found that income mobility remained fairly steady across decades, and that self-employed individuals experienced more mobility than other individuals. In a 2007 working paper, SBA used panel data to examine educational attainment and other characteristics of self-employed individuals. *A Real Options Model of Stepwise Entry into Self-Employment* found that "Individuals using part-time entry as a means of testing the validity of their opportunities are more likely to enter full-time self-employment (after a successful trial run), and they are also more likely to exit than full-time entrants" (A Real, 2007).

Entrepreneurship is a significant line of SBA research, particularly its place in economic development initiatives as well as entrepreneurial activity by various segments of the population. In 2006, SBA released *Entrepreneurship and Education: What is Known and Not Known about the Links Between Education and Entrepreneurial Activity* (Weaver et al., 2006). This study spurred additional research investments, including the recent report *Toward Effective Education of Innovative Entrepreneurs in Small Business* (2009), which explored the relationship between course-taking in entrepreneurship and actual entrepreneurial activities. SBA has also sponsored a series of analyses of entrepreneurship, including studies on minority individuals (Fairlie, 2005), veterans/service-disabled veterans (Waldman Associates, 2005), gender differences (Kepler and Shane, 2007), and immigrants (Hart et al., 2009). A synthesis report, *Determinants of Growth in Entrepreneurship Across U.S. Labor Markets* (Gurley-Calvez, et al., 2010), found "substantial shifts in the share of proprietorships in LMAs [labor market areas] across regions during the 1970-2006 period" (*Determinants*, 2010, p. 2).

Other research investments by SBA related to expanding the labor market include: an analysis of business clustering between 1990 and 2006 (Plummer, 2010), and *Human Capital and Women's Business Ownership* (Hackler et al, 2008). The March 2010 report, *An Analysis of Small Business and Jobs*, presented moment-in-time snapshots of the shares of

jobs in large and small firms. In addition, the author explored job growth/decline and net job change (Headd, 2010).

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

While a considerable amount of the employment-related research funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is related to the Davis-Bacon Act and prevailing wages, there have been recently released reports on HUD-funded employment and training programs. The *Bridges to Work Demonstration* sought to link inner-city job seekers with suburban employers. In *Seeking a Sustainable Journey to Work: Findings from the National Bridges to Work Demonstration*, the results of the random-assignment evaluation showed no impact on employment and earnings. Researchers concluded that “The Bridges experience makes clear that future mobility efforts must gauge whether the wages and benefits available at the targeted jobs will justify the costs in time and complexity to program participants” (Roder and Scrivner, 2005, p. viii).

Research related to the linkage between regional economic and workforce development includes HUD’s *State of the Cities Data Systems*, which has tracked employment and unemployment data on metropolitan areas, cities, and suburbs since 1990. A review of the literature by Abt Associates, *A Review of Regulatory Barriers to Employer Ability to Recruit and Retain Employees* (Carliner et al., 2008), made the connection between land use regulations, labor supply, and economic development.

HUD has also funded research on issues around homelessness and employment. Homeless individuals are among the hardest to serve in workforce development programs. *Employment and Income Supports for Homeless People* (Long et al., 2007) explored what is known about mainstream programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), WIA, Social Security Disability Insurance/Supplemental Security Income (SSDI/SSI), and targeted initiatives to improve employment outcomes for the homeless. The researchers disaggregated the homeless population into four groups — families or individuals, with or without severe disabilities — noting that appropriate mainstream programs and the array of available services differ for each. While the review identified some promising practices, particularly for working with certain segments of the homeless population (e.g., veterans), little rigorous research has been done to further test these strategies or identify impacts.

U.S. Department of Energy

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) supports basic, advanced, and applied research across a number of science, engineering, and technical fields. This investment has also led DOE to recognize the critical need for workforce development at all levels of the education pipeline. Recently funded research by DOE in employment and training topics has focused on forecasting future labor force needs, including knowledge and skills gaps, as well as strategies for attracting more women and minority individuals into science, mathematics, and engineering fields. *Geothermal Industry Employment: Survey Results and Analysis* (Hance, 2005) presented the findings from a survey conducted by the Geothermal Energy Association to estimate direct, indirect, induced, and construction employment based on DOE’s projections for Megawatts of power

produced in 2026 by geothermal plants. The survey found that most geothermal companies have fewer than 20 employees, and that the largest employers were the power plants themselves, often located in rural and remote areas. Similarly, *SEADS 3.0: Sectoral Energy/Employment Analysis and Data System* (Roop et al., 2007) presented the updated SEADS program for analyzing preliminary employment and energy impacts of increased energy output, research, and development.

In *Effects of a Transition to a Hydrogen Economy on Employment in the United States* (2008), a report to Congress, DOE estimated the impact of hydrogen technologies on employment between 2020 and 2050 based on three transition scenarios of the shift from gasoline-fueled transportation/power production to hydrogen-fueled transportation/power production. The report estimated that every region in the nation will experience related job growth, though changing skill demands will likely result in local labor shortages necessitating targeted training and retraining programs.

Impact of the FY2009 Building Technologies Program on United States Employment and Earned Income (Livingston et al., 2008) found that energy savings associated with the Building Technologies Program and “other outputs resulting from these activities have the potential of creating nearly 281,000 jobs and about \$3.8 billion in earned income (2007 dollars) by the year 2025” (p. v). As the demand for energy efficient services has grown over the past decade, including demand spurred by ARRA in 2009, there has been considerable discussion about the rising need for workers in “green jobs.” Two reports by Berkeley National Laboratory looked at workforce issues facing the energy efficiency services sector. The first report examined the workforce education and training needs of the sector (Goldman and Peters et al., 2010), while the second estimated the size of the workforce and its projected growth through 2020 (Goldman and Fuller et al., 2010). Researchers found that while the number of workers engaged fully in green jobs is expected to double or quadruple over this time period, the number of workers who are partially engaged in green job functions will grow at a faster rate. To support growth in the energy efficiency services sector, training and education programs will need to be developed, and current workforce participants will need skills upgrading to keep pace with new technologies.

DOE and the National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA) are working together to identify opportunities to bring more individuals into careers in national security through the *National Security Preparedness Project*. A series of four reports produced by the Arrowhead Center at New Mexico State University (2007-08) identified barriers, opportunities, and challenges in developing the workforce of the future. *Student Experiential Opportunities in National Security Careers* (2007) documented opportunities for internships, co-op jobs, and other student employment in national security careers as a strategy to expose individuals to career pathways, build entry-level competencies, and encourage engagement in further education and training. In *Strategies for Overcoming Key Barriers to Development of a National Security Workforce* (2008), researchers noted the critical need for better partnership between government agencies, private organizations, and the education and training community to meet the national security workforce challenges. *Status of the National Security Workforce* (2008) confirmed the critical need to develop the workforce pipeline for NNSA. The average age of NNSA workers is 49, and one-third of the workforce is eligible for retirement in the next five years. In several critical occupations, the situation is dire: more than 40% of the science

and engineering workforce is over age 40, and more than 75% of the nuclear engineering workforce will reach retirement age by 2014.

Another pipeline development project was presented in *FAST and National Laboratories: Expanding the Reach of Research Opportunities and Workforce Development* (Blackburn et al., 2009). The Faculty and Student Team (FAST) program began in 2003 at the Brookhaven National Laboratory as a way to encourage research partnerships with minority- and rural-serving institutions that do not traditionally compete for DOE Office of Science research funding. This report provided an overview of outcomes achieved to date and calls for an expansion of the program throughout the Department's national laboratories.

Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration (SSA) sponsors demonstration and other research projects focused on how to better connect individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities. The *Benefit Offset 4-State Pilot*, launched in 2005, examined outcomes of SSDI recipients in the gradual loss of SSDI benefits when employment earnings and other work supports exceed a certain level. In the pilot, recipients lost one dollar of SSDI for every two dollars earned over the established Substantial Gainful Activity level, but kept health and other benefits related to the SSDI program. Published reports from the project include final state evaluation reports on projects in Connecticut (Armstrong, 2009), Utah (Chambless et al., 2009), Wisconsin (Delin et al., 2010), and Vermont (Porter et al., 2009).

The *Ticket to Work Initiative* was intended to connect SSA beneficiaries with employment and training services by connecting individuals with an Employment Network, which provides labor exchange and other employment services. Mathematica released an implementation and early impacts study in 2007, *Evaluation of the Ticket to Work Program: Assessment of Post-Rollout Implementation and Early Impacts* (Thornton et al.). The primary difficulties identified in the implementation study related to the inability to recruit Employment Network organizations to participate, the relatively low take-up rates by beneficiaries, and insufficient earnings by participants to reduce SSA benefit payments.

The *Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA)* initiative began in 2006 as a way to provide SSDI and SSI recipients with information on how to take advantage of SSA work incentives. The initiative provides recipients with opportunities to maximize work incentives while maintaining long-term employment and other supports. The Mathematica implementation study found that "SSA has established clear goals for the WIPA program but its program budget implies a much lower intensity of service" (O'Day et al., 2009, p. xv). In the final evaluation report, researchers concluded "that the level of contact for an average beneficiary does not seem entirely consistent with the WIPA model" (Schimmel et al., 2010, p. 11).

State Partnership Initiative: Selection of Comparison Groups for the Evaluation and Selected Impact Estimates (Peikes et al., 2005) provided details on the 2001 to 2004 initiative conducted in coordination with the Rehabilitative Services Administration to connect individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities and reduce their dependence

on SSDI and SSI benefits. Eleven states targeted services at adult beneficiaries, three of which used a random-assignment process to identify participants. Short-term outcomes indicated that the partnership initiative in those three states had a significant impact on employment, but no impact on earnings. A synthesis of impact estimates from individual state projects was also released (Peikes and Sarin, 2005).

The National Academies' National Research Council

The National Research Council, part of the National Academies, conducts research “to inform policies and actions that have the power to improve the lives of people in the U.S. and around the world” (“Welcome,” 2010). Research is conducted by 6,000 scientists and other experts who volunteer to serve on committees. The Council has conducted work on behalf of ETA, as well as other federal agencies, exploring employment and training topics. In a study for USDOL, the National Research Council reviewed the Occupational Information Network (O*Net), finding that a broad number of stakeholders use the system and feel that the information it provides is valuable. Recommendations in *A Database for a Changing Economy: Review of the Occupational Information Network* (National Research Council, 2010a) include suggestions that USDOL establish a scientific advisory panel to set goals and develop requests for proposals, as well as a panel of users to review O*Net products and functionality.

Several other recent studies have focused on data sources and research tools used in employment and training research and other applications, issues highlighted in prior ETA five-year research plans. In *Expanding Access to Research Data: Reconciling Risks and Opportunities* (National Research Council, 2005a), the Council explored how to balance policymakers’ need for relevant data with the risks of disclosure of an individual’s identifying information. The committee concluded that:

To meet society’s needs for high-quality research and statistics, the nation’s statistical and research agencies must provide both unrestricted access to anonymized public-use files and restricted access to detailed, individually identifiable confidential data for researchers under carefully specified conditions (National Research Council, 2005a, p. 2).

In 2007, the Council released a usability study it had conducted for the Census Bureau on the new American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS replaced the decennial long-form census sample, last used in 2000. Data from these surveys are used by a range of stakeholders, including policymakers and workforce researchers. *Using the American Community Survey: Benefits and Challenges* (National Research Council, 2007) provided information for researchers and others who are using Census data across both surveys. Issues such as sampling errors, three- and five-year estimates for smaller communities, and dollar amounts adjusted to the most recent year in the estimate adjustments for inflation have important implications for how the data are used and interpreted.

Another survey commonly used by employment and training researchers is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). A 2009 study for the Census Bureau, *Reengineering the Survey of Income and Program Participation*, explored issues for consideration in a proposed redesign by the Census Bureau, focusing specifically on

information not available from administrative data sources. The research committee also recommended that any innovations in the SIPP redesign should be evaluated “on the extent to which a feature contributes to the survey’s ability to measure short-term changes in economic well-being with improved quality and timeliness” (National Research Council, 2009, p. 3).

Two studies produced by the National Research Council’s Board on Science Education focus on the science and engineering workforce pipeline. In *Research on Future Skills Demands: A Workshop Summary* (2008), participants noted that skills forecasts rely on a number of assumptions and that there is a tension between researchers on how to interpret skills demands based on available data. There are researchers who view the wage differential “between high school-educated and college-educated workers as evidence of rising demand for higher skills” (National Research Council, 2008, p. 2), while others believe that the relationship between wages, skills, and job activities is complex and reflective of an employer’s human resources and management practices, the presence or strength of labor unions, local economic conditions, and other factors. Reflecting at the end of the workshop, one participant noted that across a wide range of occupations at every level, there is a common core of essential skills, including strong interpersonal skills, clear written communication skills, the ability to work well with diverse individuals, and “knowing how to give and receive advice constructively” (National Research Council, 2008, pp. 84-85). The challenge is to get schools to embrace teaching these skills, which cannot be assessed on a multiple-choice exam, in an environment of high-stakes accountability testing. The 2010 workshop, *Exploring the Intersection of Science Education and 21st Century Skills* (National Research Council, 2010b), focused on how five skills — adaptability, complex communication/social skills, nonroutine problem solving, self-management/self-development, and systems thinking — identified by employers as essential workforce skills for the current and future labor force are developed through engaging classroom science instruction.

Research Supported by State and Local Governments

While the federal government is a major sponsor of both workforce development programs and employment and training research, state and local governments throughout the United States have also invested in these areas, often in partnership with private, philanthropic, or community-based organizations. The following discussion is not intended to be comprehensive; however, it does highlight regional research interests and the roles that sub-federal entities play in shaping the workforce investment system.

State-level Research on Employment and Training Issues

California’s Workforce Investment Board sponsors research on the public workforce system. One recent publication is *California One-Stop System Cost Study Report* (Moore et al., 2007). Researchers from California State University examined resources within the One-Stop system, partner organization contributions, types and varieties of services available across the system, and the costs associated with those services. The study found that while One-Stop Career Centers in California were customized to address the local labor market, the service models were largely structured around WIA, with costs

and performance measures aligned along funding streams. Recommendations for further research include the formation of a voluntary group of One-Stops to develop unit-cost measures for services and support comparative benchmarking. In *California Integrated Service Delivery Evaluation Report Phase I*, Moore et al. (2010) presented the findings from a formative evaluation of four One-Stop Career Centers participating in a state initiative launched in 2008-09 to integrate Employment Services with WIA programs. The second phase of the research will be a summative impact evaluation.

The Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore has conducted a number of research studies in recent years on employment and training impacts from Maryland's workforce and economic development investments. One study for the Maryland Department of Human Resources compared employment and earnings outcomes for temporary cash assistance recipients to others who also received WIA services (Staveley, 2005). While assistance recipients had poorer labor market outcomes than non-recipients, pre-/post-WIA service outcomes did show gains for recipients. In *The Impact of Local Labor Market Conditions on Work and Welfare Decisions: Revisiting an Old Question Using New Data* (Herbst and Stevens, 2007), researchers examined the Census Bureau's Quarterly Workforce Indicators data to explore employment among TANF recipients under changing local economic conditions.

Two studies by the Maryland Higher Education Commission are also noteworthy. The state's 2006 community college graduate follow-up survey of education and employment outcomes included a secondary survey of employers of graduates from community college workforce training programs. Both graduates and employers reported high rates of satisfaction with the community college's training delivery (Maryland, 2007). The second report examined WIA-funded training in Maryland for FY 2005-09 participants, presenting enrollment tabulations by industry/occupational area, type of training provider, level of credential, and local workforce board area. The state's eligible training provider list mandates a minimum of 61% post-graduation employment for a provider to remain on the list; in FY 2009, 94% of providers training at least six WIA participants met or exceeded that standard (Maryland, 2010, p. 21).

The New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission sponsored a considerable number of research studies in recent years, particularly in association with its *Ready for the Job* initiative launched in 2002 in partnership with other state agencies. The initiative sought "to collect and disseminate information on the workforce challenges and skill needs of the state's key industries and to identify education and training strategies to address these needs" (Heidkamp et al., 2008). Workforce analyses were prepared by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University for a number of key state industries, including: public health and disaster management (Kauder et al., 2007); retail (Cleary et al., 2007); pharmaceutical and medical technology (Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2007); life sciences (Heidkamp et al., 2008); and energy (Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2009).

Researchers at Rutgers also evaluated state workforce and training programs. In *Evaluation of the New Jersey Workforce Development Partnership Program: Customized Training Program* (Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2008), researchers explored outcomes from 10 grants distributed by the state to support customized training, including training in customer service, process improvements, and English as

a second language/adult basic skills. The study highlighted four promising practices for customized training: industry/higher education partnerships, training for small companies organized by consortia, training leading to college credit or industry-recognized credential, and support for English as a second language training (Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2008, pp. 2-4).

In 2010, the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) and the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation released *Building a 21st Century Workforce*, a report by the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission. The Commission concluded that Rhode Island needs to establish a formal career pathways structure, including a fully funded community college system, and transparent performance management. Key to the career pathways approach is curriculum alignment to support transitions from high school or adult basic education programs into postsecondary workforce or academic programs followed by employment at a range of occupation levels (*Building*, 2010, p. 5). Rhode Island's Department of Labor and Training recently released *Rhode Island Employment Trends and Workforce Issues* (Labor, 2010), which analyzed current labor market trends and identifies future job growth and implications for education and workforce training. These reports are similar to the type of research activities conducted in recent years by a number of states.

The Texas Workforce Commission, its Labor Market and Career Information department, and the state's Workforce Investment Council all sponsor employment- and training-related research. In *Working Texas Style: Think Globally, Plan Regionally* (Froeschle and Normington, 2010), the authors presented an environmental scan of employer demands and workforce skills required for long-term economic growth. The Texas Workforce Investment Council released a series of reports on adult education, including *Adult Education Providers: Instructional Approaches and Service Delivery Methods* (Texas, 2010b) and *Identifying Current and Future Populations in Need of Adult Education* (Texas, 2010a). The *Providers* report identified a need for better collaboration across adult education programs and improved alignment between adult education, developmental education, and workforce training and postsecondary education programs. The *Populations* report revealed that the demand for adult education services is growing, while the capacity of the system to provide those services has remained virtually unchanged.

The Texas Association of Workforce Boards sponsored a return-on-investment analysis of public workforce services delivered through the state's 28 local Workforce Investment Boards. Building on separate impact estimates for low- and high-intensity services (e.g., job search assistance versus training) delivered between October 2003 and September 2005, researchers at the Ray Marshall Center found an annual earnings impact of about \$1,850 for training services over a 10-year period compared to an impact of \$564 for two quarters following low-intensity services. Five-year analyses suggest that for every dollar invested in workforce services through Texas workforce boards, positive returns range from a low of \$1.17 for taxpayers to a high of \$1.63 for participants; 10-year returns range from \$2.08 for taxpayers to \$2.74 for participants (King et al., 2008).

The Texas Attorney General's Office and the Texas Workforce Commission have partnered on the noncustodial parents *Choices* project since 2005. The program provides

“employment services linked to enhanced child support monitoring to low-income noncustodial parents (NCPs) who have fallen behind on their child support payments” (Schroeder and Doughty, 2009, p. vi). One key aspect of the project is that participants have a strong motivation to remain engaged: those who do not could be sent to jail. The quasi-experimental impacts evaluation by the Ray Marshall Center found that participants paid more child support, more often, and more consistently than did comparison group members. Participants also showed much higher rates of employment than the comparison group, with impacts lasting two to four years after completing the program.

Washington State’s Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board also sponsors significant research that has been recognized outside of the state. *Evaluating Industry Skills Panels: A Model Framework* (Cheney et al., 2008) provided a dashboard to use in understanding the impacts, outcomes, services, and products produced by regional skill panels. *Reconnecting Young Adults, 18-24: A Report to the Washington Legislature* (2008) identified 13 recommendations for improving workforce and training services for young adults, particularly those transitioning from high school into the workforce and postsecondary education. Among the recommendations are suggestions for improving WIA youth services, connecting youth with summer employment and service-learning opportunities, and expanding outreach to youth of all backgrounds. The Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board has produced a series of reports examining the skills of the state’s workforce. In *A Skilled and Educated Workforce: An Assessment of Higher Education and Training Credentials Required to Meet Employer Demand* (2009), researchers forecast a shortfall through 2016 in workers prepared at the mid-level (sub-baccalaureate), baccalaureate, and graduate levels. The forecasted gap is particularly significant in health occupations (mid-level) and engineering, computer sciences, and medical professions (baccalaureate and above).

One study released by Washington’s Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board and the Community College Research Center at Columbia University has generated significant interest around the nation: *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students* (Prince and Jenkins, 2005). The results indicate a “tipping point” — short-term training helps low-income workers access employment but does not affect their earnings over time; workers who undertake longer-term training (of at least a year) leading to a credential not only gain access to higher-paying employment initially, over time their earnings continue to increase.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has a long history of research and policy development in the arenas of economic and workforce development for the state. Recent publications include an analysis of lessons learned from incumbent and dislocated worker training in health care and manufacturing occupations in the *Industry Partnerships Project* (COWS, 2005), which focused on the use of public investments to spur longer-term connections between employers and training providers. *When Work Doesn’t Pay: The Hidden Cost of Low-Wage Jobs in Wisconsin* (Dresser, 2006), found that 45% of the state’s medical aid, child care support, food stamp, and TANF dollars went to families with at least one year-round working individual. Looking at the industries in which those individuals work, the study found that “the health care sector has the highest number of workers receiving public benefits” (Dresser, 2006, p. 2).

Career ladders, particularly those stemming from entry-level occupations and focused on adults with limited basic skills, have been the focus of a number of recent studies in Wisconsin. *From Bad Jobs to Good Jobs?* (Mitnik and Zeidenberg, 2007) looked at opportunities to build career ladders in the service industry. *Stronger Ladders, Stronger Floors* (Dresser, 2007) examined the employment structure of several low-wage industries and identified a need for better workforce supports to improve access to career ladder opportunities. Other research by COWS focused on improving adult education outcomes, most recently in *Building Bridges in Wisconsin: Connecting Working Adults with College Credentials and Career Advancement* (Valentine and Pagac, 2010). A 2008 report by COWS, *Skilled Workers, Quality Jobs: Meeting the Needs of Wisconsin's Workers and Businesses*, was part of the Working Poor Families Project.¹⁵

Local-level Research on Employment and Training Issues

A growing number of city and county governments across the nation have recognized the need to invest local tax dollars in employment and training programs, particularly for their most disadvantaged citizens. Many of these investments have remained steady or grown over the past decade, even as communities have faced declining tax revenues and budget shortfalls. Other local governments have facilitated, partnered, or coordinated investments by foundations, community-based organizations, and others. A handful of studies are mentioned below for illustrative purposes.

Brevard Workforce, the Workforce Investment Board for Brevard County, Florida, is an area with employment driven largely by the space program. The end of the Space Shuttle Program will have a significant impact on the local economy and Brevard Workforce invested in research to identify workforce skills, applications to other industries, and requirements for retraining in the NASA and contractor workforce. *Aerospace Workforce Outlook Report – Phase III* (Brevard, 2010) identified uncertainty over the future of the space program as a key challenge in planning for workforce, education, and economic development coordination.

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and numerous local foundations have partnered in the *Opportunity NYC – Family Rewards Demonstration*, "an experimental, privately-funded, conditional cash transfer program to help families break the cycle of poverty...Family Rewards ties cash rewards to pre-specified activities and outcomes in children's education, families' preventive health care, and parents' employment" (Riccio et al., 2010, p. iii). In a report on early findings, families earned on average \$6,000 in cash incentives over the first two years. Of particular note to those interested in workforce development research may be the finding that Family Rewards "increased employment in jobs that are not covered by the unemployment insurance (UI) system but reduced employment in UI-covered jobs" (Riccio et al., 2010, p. iii). The Workforce Strategy Center has conducted a number of initiatives focused on the city, building from its 2006 report *Strength in Partnership: Building a New Approach to Workforce Development in New York City*.

In Austin, Texas, Travis County's Health and Human Services Department and the City of Austin invest about \$3 million annually in workforce development services for disadvantaged residents. The county has also made an ongoing investment in an

outcomes and quasi-experimental impact analysis of the services it funds. In *Evaluating Local Workforce Investments: Results for Short- and Long-Term Training in Austin (TX)*, King et al. (2009) presented outcome and impact findings from two county-funded workforce programs, one with short-term (six-week) training and the other with long-term (associate's degree-level) training. The long-term training investment demonstrates strong, significant, and lasting impacts on participants' employment, earnings, and opportunity to access benefits such as unemployment insurance. It should be noted that the short-term training program participants did experience significant initial employment and earnings gains over their pre-program history; however, these gains were not sustained over time. This study is part of an ongoing evaluation of local workforce investments (Smith et al., 2007, 2008, 2010).

Also in Austin, Texas, the local Workforce Investment Board has sponsored a research series to examine critical skills shortages in two key industries: wireless technology and biosciences/biotechnology. Researchers with the Ray Marshall Center first examined root causes of skills shortages in these areas (Glover et al., 2005a, 2005b). Next, researchers developed potential solutions to the identified skills shortages with recommendations for improved partnerships between the workforce system, employers, and the education and training community as well as the need for demonstration projects to test new training strategies (Glover et al., 2005c; Hershey et al., 2005).

Another source for locally funded research on employment and training is the National League of Cities. In collaboration with the National Employment Law Project, the National League of Cities published *Cities Pave the Way: Promising Reentry Policies that Promote Local Hiring of People with Criminal Records* (2010). This strategy guide highlighted local policies and hiring strategies to remove barriers within city government for hiring ex-offenders. In *Publicly Funded Jobs: An Essential Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Economic Distress Throughout the Business Cycle* (Johnson et al., 2010), researchers looked at the use of public service employment and transitional jobs to address current widespread unemployment.

Two recent research briefs focused on the annual *State of America's Cities* survey. The May 2010 brief looked at jobs and the economy (McFarland, 2010). The January 2011 brief reported on a special survey section on workforce development. Approximately one-third of the cities responding reported that they had increased investment in workforce development projects since the start of the recession. Interestingly, "According to the survey, the second highest city workforce development activity is attending and participating in meetings of the local workforce investment board (42 percent). On the other hand, workforce investment boards were the second-least reported partner for cities for collaboration on workforce development activities (24 percent)" (McConnell, 2011, p. 1).

Foundation-supported Work

Foundations and philanthropic organizations play an important role in sponsoring workforce investment initiatives around the nation. From national players like the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford

Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, to regional organizations like the Joyce Foundation, these foundations are sponsoring pilot and demonstration projects, often over multiple years, to help improve economic opportunity, increase family well-being, and prepare the workforce that the economy needs. A number of philanthropic organizations have also acknowledged the importance of tracking and sharing project outcomes to help improve the knowledge base and spur further investigations. Key employment and training research funded primarily by foundations is detailed below.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is an active national funder, with significant investments targeting research and demonstrations of strategies to increase family economic success. The foundation released a series of reports by Abt Associates on the *Jobs Initiative*, “an eight-year effort in six cities to connect inner-city young men and women to family-supporting jobs in the regional economy and to improve the way urban labor market systems work for low-income, low-skilled workers” (“The Jobs Initiative,” 2010). Reports focused on topics such as engaging employers (Taylor and Rubin, 2005); measuring and tracking career advancement (*A Jobs*, 2005); case studies (Hebert et al., 2005); and *Cultural Competence in Workforce Development* (2006). The Jobs Initiative evaluation found that job readiness skills were an important link to short-term job retention, while skills training was necessary to achieve longer-term retention. Employer-provided benefits and wage increases soon after starting a new position were also found to play a factor in job retention. A final report related to the project was *Strengthening Workforce Policy: Applying the Lessons of the Jobs Initiative to Five Key Challenges* (Hebert and Waldron, 2007). The challenges this report identified — demographic changes, siloed workforce programs, meeting the needs of employers and job seekers, insufficient measures of performance, and funding policies not aligned with actual needs — are addressed through policy recommendations developed through an analysis of Jobs Initiative projects.

Hebert’s 2010 publication, *Changing Systems is Like Moving a Mountain and Other Insights from Successful Workforce Leaders*, is a follow-up to the Jobs Initiative, an effort to define the characteristics needed in future leaders to drive the systems change needed to transform workforce development for the 21st century. The conclusions suggest a new role for workforce project funders in actively acknowledging and supporting the development of change leader. Project leaders and core staff are critical elements in any workforce development initiative; there is a need for training and professional development, mentorship programs, and career pathway opportunities to build the skills of these individuals and promote better outcomes from such initiatives.

The foundation recently sponsored research that resulted in the book *Mistakes to Success: Learning and Adapting When Things Go Wrong* (Giloith and Austin, 2010). In a collection of essays about failures in social innovation, leading researchers explored how community economic development activities fail and what could be done to better disseminate knowledge about obstacles and barriers to improve future endeavors. In the concluding chapter, Giloith and Austin argued that the current process for identifying and replicating best practices fails to provide sufficient information on necessary conditions

and actors to ensure successful transfer. They recommended that researchers thoroughly document and analyze mistakes, that research sponsors develop a new focus on filling narrowly defined knowledge gaps rather than launch large-scale initiatives, and that policymakers support research and data clearinghouses to share information about both successful and unsuccessful practices.

A joint project of the Annie E. Casey and Ford Foundations, the *Investing in Workforce Intermediaries Initiative*, sought to identify key components of effective workforce intermediary initiatives and develop new intermediary organizations to bridge the divide between employers and education and training providers.¹⁶ This project laid the foundation for the *National Fund for Workforce Solutions* (NFWS), involving almost 200 foundations. Casey and Ford are part of the fund's steering committee comprised of nine large, national funders. Two reports are available on NFWS, a baseline evaluation (Baran et al., 2009) and an annual evaluation (Baran et al., 2010). Also, ETA funded a report on NFWS, *Implementing the National Fund for Workforce Solutions EQ: The Baseline Evaluation Report* (2009).

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

The Gates Foundation, in its U.S. programs, is primarily focused on efforts to increase college readiness and improve postsecondary education outcomes. Particularly relevant to the field of employment and training research is the foundation's *Postsecondary Success Strategy*, which "aims to dramatically increase the number of young adults who complete their postsecondary education, setting them up for success in the workplace and in life" ("Postsecondary Education," 2010).

A Gates-funded report by the Workforce Strategy Center, *Employers, Low-Income Young Adults, and Postsecondary Credentials*, examined programs around the nation that get low-income youth and young adults postsecondary credentials, work with employers in key regional industry sectors, maximize employer roles and commitments, and demonstrate portability, scalability, and replicability. Researchers identified 14 model programs, each of which offers students support services and case management, direct connections to the labor market, and a relationship with employers that adds value (Bozell and Goldberg, 2009, pp. 1-3).

Another line of research applicable to the employment and training field is the Gates Foundation's interest in *Today's College Student*. In the *New Community College Initiative*, the Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation are supporting the City University of New York (CUNY)'s development of the City's first new community college in four decades. In May 2009, CUNY released the second round of research determining which majors will be offered when the new college opens in 2011. The college has decided to pursue 12 majors across four areas of study: health sciences, business and information studies, education and human services, and liberal arts and sciences (Summary, 2009). A 2009 report funded by the Gates Foundation, *With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them*, presented findings from a survey of young adults aged 22 to 30 with at least some postsecondary education experience. The results suggest that postsecondary completion rates could be improved through strategies that make part-time attendance more viable through better financial aid and support service practices, such as child care and

partnerships with employers that offer part-time opportunities around class schedules (With, 2009).

The Gates Foundation, along with the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Ford Foundation, has a standing partnership with Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. A June 2010 report, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, highlighted a need for better educational and career planning to help address two key challenges of the 21st century: unemployment and skills shortages. The authors forecast a shortfall of approximately three million college graduates in the United States by 2018 (Carnevale et al., 2010, p. 8).

Finally, the Gates Foundation recently sponsored two studies that were published by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, both on Washington State's Integrated-Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program. Zeidenberg et al. (2010) presented new evidence on the effectiveness of the program, finding that "I-BEST students earned substantially more college credits (both total and CTE) than their peers, were much more likely to earn an award, and were moderately more likely to achieve a basic skills gain" (p. 28). In a companion report, Wachen et al. (2010) presented evidence from a field study of I-BEST programs, including interviews with administrators at each of the state's 34 community / technical colleges and in-depth observations and interviews with I-BEST instructors at four colleges. The report concluded with lessons learned for other states and colleges considering the I-BEST model and outlines topics for future research.

The Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation's approach to grant making is highly refined. The foundation supports grants across a range of activities, purposes, issues, and countries. In the United States, several of the foundation's defined interests and initiatives focus on employment and training opportunities, particularly for low-wage workers.

The *Corporate Involvement Initiative* (1995 to 2003) "sought to demonstrate how business and communities could collaborate to generate "win-win" outcomes — creating competitive advantage for business and gains in income, assets, and wealth for low-income people through private sector investment in communities" (*Part of the Solution*, 2005, p. 4). In a summary of the findings from this initiative, researchers presented examples from grantees that crossed four types of economic development, including building individual financial assets, building workforce skills, promoting new business growth, and supporting diverse communities through smart growth policies.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is dedicated to supporting "efforts that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society" ("About Mott," 2010). One of the foundation's core investment strands is its *Pathways out of Poverty* program, with grant activities in four areas: improving community education, expanding economic opportunity, building organized communities, and special initiatives. Mott funds a number of grants each year on issues within those interest areas, such as reducing barriers to

employment, supporting job retention and wage progression, and encouraging micro-enterprise.

The Mott Foundation launched the *Fathers at Work* initiative in 2000 in partnership with Public/Private Ventures (P/PV). The project funded six sites testing strategies to “help noncustodial fathers achieve three principle goals: increase their employment and earnings; become more involved in their children’s lives; and increase their financial support of their children” (Spaulding et al., 2009, p. 2). The evaluation by P/PV included benchmarking to matched comparison groups of noncustodial fathers participating in two other research projects, the *Parents’ Fair Share* demonstration by MDRC and the *Fragile Families* survey by the Center for Research on Child Well Being at Princeton University. The evaluation found significant impacts on participants’ earnings and court-ordered child support payments, but no impacts on fathers’ engagement with their children or informal support payments.

Another initiative by Mott and P/PV is the *Sectoral Employment Initiative*. Roder et al.’s 2008 final report *Targeting Industries, Training Workers, and Improving Opportunities* found that successful sectoral projects targeting disadvantaged workers were those that carefully screened candidates to fully understand potential barriers to success and then implemented support services and programs to address those barriers. In a follow-up report, Maguire et al. (2010) found strong positive impacts from three random-assignment sectoral training programs. In assessing implications for future research, the authors question if the approaches are scalable and applicable to a range of job seekers, and wonder if impacts will be sustained beyond the 24-month period examined for the report.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ) is dedicated to improving the health and health care of Americans. Toward that end, the foundation has a number of initiatives aimed at improving human capital in the health care industry, including multiple programs targeting nurses, frontline health care workers, and a pipeline development program for community-based dentists. Along with the Hitachi Foundation, ETA, and Jobs for the Future, RWJ launched the *Jobs to Careers Initiative* in 2005. The demonstration seeks to demonstrate the value of work-based learning and career advancement opportunities for improving the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the frontline health care workforce. *RX for the Health Care Workforce* (Wilson, 2010) identified promising practices and effective projects from the initiative, highlighting the need for policy development at the federal and state level to bring potential solutions to scale.

In the *Future of Nursing Initiative*, RWJ partnered with the Institute of Medicine to identify strategies for improving the scope of practice, professional development, and work experience of nurses. Among the report’s recommendations are: removing barriers that prevent advanced practice nurses from reaching their full potential, expanding the participation of nurses in collaborative improvement projects, implementing nursing residency programs, shifting nursing credentials toward baccalaureate programs and improving the numbers of nursing professionals with

doctorates, investing in lifelong education opportunities for nurses, and building a health care workforce data and analysis structure (Institute of Medicine, 2010).

The Joyce Foundation

The Joyce Foundation, based in Chicago, primarily invests in projects in the Midwest and Great Lakes region. The foundation's *Employment Program* "supports policy analysis and development, research, and advocacy that help low-income, low-skilled individuals connect to the labor market and advance to higher-paying jobs" ("Guidelines: Employment Programs," 2010). The Joyce Foundation recently funded two multi-year demonstrations that have yielded best-practices information for serving ex-offenders and other disadvantaged adults. The *Shifting Gears* initiative was launched in 2007 to help five Midwest states change and align workforce and education policy in order to improve adult and postsecondary education opportunities, including workforce training, for disadvantaged residents. The foundation released *The Shifting Gears Approach to Systems Change* (Price and Roberts, 2009), detailing the strategic activities, logic model, and action plan incorporated into the initiative, and the lessons learned as each state began to implement the project.

The second initiative, launched by the Joyce Foundation in 2006 and funded in part by ETA, is the *Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration*. The foundation's \$6 million investment, including an evaluation by MDRC and other research partners, is testing transitional jobs (temporary, subsidized employment connected to training and support services) to help ex-offenders build a stable, post-incarceration life and reduce recidivism. One-year findings revealed mixed outcomes from the employment efforts and provided insights and spurred questions for future research (Bloom, 2009). One strategy that appeared to encourage employment retention was the use of a retention bonus; the initial finding has highlighted a need to further test the approach. The National Transitional Jobs Networks released a brief titled *Advancing the Field of Transitional Jobs* (2010), which highlighted potential next steps, including research on screening potential participants, contextualizing adult basic education in sector-based training, improving job quality, and enhancing job retention and advancement services.

Beyond these initiatives, the Joyce Foundation also funded a series of reports on career pathways by the Workforce Strategy Center. *Steps for Evaluating (and Continuously Improving) Career Pathways Programs* (Jenkins, 2005) described the evaluation process as a method for maintaining the training's relevance to employer needs over time and improving student performance. Successful career pathway programs require significant collaboration and coordination across a variety of programs and partner organizations, including the active engagement of employers and industry associations. These issues are explored in two descriptively titled reports, *Career Pathways: Aligning Public Resources to Support Individual and Regional Economic Advancement in the Knowledge Economy* (Jenkins, 2006) and *Working Together: Aligning State Systems and Policies for Individual and Regional Prosperity* (Mazzeo et al., 2006). To support the growth and development of effective projects, *The Career Pathways How-to Guide* (Jenkins and Spence, 2006) included lessons learned from around the nation.

More recently, the foundation funded the *Bridge Connect National Survey* to understand the composition and size of bridge programs that “assist students in obtaining academic, employability, and technical skills they need to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training and the labor market” (Alssid et al., 2010, p. i). Of the 515 bridge programs responding to the survey, 75% targeted allied health careers, followed by office skills (40%) and construction/building trades (35%). Survey findings indicate the need to share promising practices, implement demonstration and evaluation projects to test scale-up and replication issues, and develop common standards for expanding bridge programs.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

The Sloan Foundation primarily focuses its investments on science and technology-related research; two major programs, *Science Education* and *Economic Performance and the Quality of Life*, contribute to the field of workforce development research. The *Sloan Career Cornerstone Center* launched in 2003 and currently provides career pathways information for more than 185 degreed fields in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (“About the Sloan Career Cornerstone,” 2010).

The Sloan Foundation also sponsored the *Science and Engineering Workforce Project* at the National Bureau of Economic Research. The project brought together a broad research network to analyze issues around the science, technical, and engineering workforce. Research topics included the globalization of the highly skilled scientific workforce (Borjas, 2006), challenges facing women and minorities in technical fields (Ginther and Kahn, 2006), and issues related to achieving better outcomes in education and training at the doctorate level (Davis, 2006).

The Sloan Foundation and ETA are jointly funding the *Collaborative Online Workforce Education and Training Portal*, a demonstration initiated in June 2008 and concluding in June 2011. The demonstration tests the idea that online and hybrid training options offered through a state’s public workforce investment system can be centralized on a single portal, *Workforce Online Learning Information Portal* (WOLIP). The demonstration is designed to centralize access to online certificate programs on a single Web portal, to provide easy accessibility to coursework for clients, including non-traditional populations, and workforce staff, and to foster sharing of online credentialing/certificate programs in high-demand industries within each state and between states. Participating states include Colorado, Maine, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania. The Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University is conducting an evaluation, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection, that will conclude in September 2011. WOLIP is housed by the Southern Regional Education Board, which is developing the portal’s technological platform and customizing it for each state. Other partners include the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce and Pennsylvania State University, which are providing technical assistance, and sharing expertise on online learning within the different state workforce development systems.

Research Funded by International Organizations

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a leading international funder of workforce development research. One of the major topics of interest to OECD is employment; work in this area includes analyses of employment and unemployment, labor markets, economic development, education, and social policy. The *LEED Programme (Local Economic and Employment Development)*, which has received support from ETA, began in the 1980s and continues to support “the design, implementation and evaluation of development strategies to help grow local economies” (“OECD LEED,” 2010). LEED has resulted in a number of publications, including: *Designing Local Skills Strategies* (Froy et al., 2009), which draws on case studies to identify best practices in local workforce development projects; *Clusters, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship* (2009), which analyzes seven communities internationally recognized for clustered economic development and local entrepreneurship; *More Than Just Jobs: Workforce Development in a Skills-Based Economy* (Giguère, 2008), which draws from studies in seven OECD countries to recommend strategies for improving workforce development policy; and *Skills Upgrading: New Policy Perspectives* (2006), which details lessons learned from “initiatives that...fill the gap between labour market policy and vocational training, and workers’ weaknesses and employers’ evolving needs” (“Skills Upgrading,” 2010).

The Directorate for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs at OECD supports employment and social policy development to address issues such as unemployment and poverty. The *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers* series “is designed to make available to a wider readership selected labour market, social policy and migration studies prepared for use within the OECD” (“List of Social,” 2010). Recent papers addressing employment and training topics include several looking at the experiences of youth: *Rising Youth Unemployment During the Crisis: How to Prevent Negative Long-Term Consequences on a Generation?* (Scarpetta et al., 2010); *Starting Well or Losing Their Way? The Position of Youth in the Labor Market in OECD Countries* (Quintini and Martin, 2006); and *Going Separate Ways? School to Work Transitions in the United States and Europe* (Quintini and Manfredi, 2009).

The second edition of *Active Labour Market Policies Around the World* (Auer et al., 2008) adds a discussion on financing. The researchers highlighted a need to consider several issues when comparing labor market policies, such as whether policies support specific workers or all workers, whether activities are supported by specific tax/wage/other collections or through general revenues, and the ratio of funding for active (e.g., training) versus passive policies (e.g., unemployment insurance). They conclude, “there is no escape: those who care about workers’ welfare and decent work, and believe that there is no trade off between social and economic goals, must seek credible [labor market] security solutions that necessarily include active labor market policies” (Auer et al., 2008, p. 95).

Other Recent Employment and Training Research

Several books published in the review period are particularly relevant to workforce development research and worth noting.

The 2005 book *Moving Up or Moving On: Who Advances in the Low-Wage Labor Market?* used the Census Bureau's LEHD data to examine low-wage workers in five states. Among the key findings, researchers discovered that "those who change jobs transition out of low earnings much more frequently than those who stay in jobs" (Andersson et al., 2005, p. 143). The authors note implications for public policy, including the need for investments targeting good jobs through sectoral training and workforce intermediaries.

In *Economic Turbulence: Is a Volatile Economy Good for America?* Brown et al. (2006) examined labor market dynamics in five industries: financial services, semiconductors, software, retail food, and trucking. The analysis focused on understanding the impact of economic turbulence in each of those industries on job ladders, career paths, and job quality. The research also supports the conclusion that "in the long-run job change leads to improved jobs for most workers" (p. 122).

Vernon Briggs, Jr., a labor economist who is Emeritus Professor of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, inspired a volume of essays, *Human Resource Economics and Public Policy* (Whalen, 2010). Many of the authors are former students of Briggs, who taught at both The University of Texas at Austin and Cornell University. The essays, including one by former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall on *Tough Choices or Tough Times* and another by Ray Marshall Center researchers Bob Glover and Chris King on sectoral approaches to workforce development, provide extensive analyses on current topics in the field. Other topics include immigration and the workforce experiences of marginalized workers, including women and persons with disabilities.

Finally, Steve Wandner, a Visiting Fellow with the Urban Institute, recently authored *Solving the Reemployment Puzzle: From Research to Policy* (2010), which explored the lessons learned and policy impacts of eight experimental or demonstration research initiatives targeted at unemployed workers, all funded by ETA in the 1980s and 1990s under Labor Secretaries Bill Brock and Robert Reich. The book concludes that many of the reemployment projects tested by ETA worked, delivering job training and/or job transition assistance services (e.g., labor exchange, reemployment bonuses, self-employment assistance) "help workers shift from unemployment to new jobs smoothly, quickly, and efficiently" (Wandner, 2010, p. 439). Beyond this analysis, Wandner also explored the implications of politically driven research investments, particularly when these override more rigorous research and evaluation findings in determining policy and funding priorities.

Chapter 4. Current and Ongoing Research

Beyond the volume of research produced between 2005 and 2010, there are ongoing and current projects that should be considered prior to defining the knowledge gaps in employment and training research literature. ETA's current research and evaluation projects address the following six key interest priorities, developed partially in response to the 2007 to 2012 research plan: (1) integration of workforce and regional economic development, (2) methods of expanding U.S. workforce skills, (3) increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations, (4) using state-level administrative data to measure progress and outcomes, (5) postsecondary education and job training, and (6) Unemployment Insurance. The discussion of current research and evaluation projects below is organized by the aforementioned research strands, whether funded by ETA or another agency/organization. Many projects are acknowledged to address multiple research interests despite being mentioned under only one strand below (strands 2 and 5, for example, are highly correlated). The following is not intended as a comprehensive review of existing projects but is rather illustrative of current research interests and investments.¹⁷

Research Priority Area 1: Integration of Workforce and Regional Economic Development

ETA Research

ETA's primary investment in the first research strand is the implementation evaluation of *Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development* (WIRED), which concludes in 2011. In related research, IMPAQ International is conducting a process evaluation for the *National Reemployment Technical Assistance Initiative*. This study examines "reemployment practices currently being used by local workforce investment programs at six selected sites across the United States that have been recipients of either a WIRED or Regional Innovation Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor" ("Project Showcase – Process," 2009).

ETA also funded research and evaluation projects examining workforce system investments from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)¹⁸. The National Association of State Workforce Agencies is conducting a study of state and local policy, program, and service responses to ARRA funds across a number of ETA core programs: WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker, Employment Services, Reemployment Services, and Trade Adjustment Assistance. Mathematica is conducting qualitative research for ETA on the effects of ARRA funding on 2010 post-summer youth employment activities, summer youth employment initiatives for Indian and Native American programs, summer 2010 youth employment initiatives financed with TANF Recovery Act funds¹⁹, state labor market grants, and WIA waivers ("Summer," 2011).

Other Research

Many of the current projects funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) have specific economic and workforce development targets. The *Community Trade Adjustment Assistance* program “is aimed at helping to create and retain jobs by providing project grants to communities that have experienced, or are threatened by, job loss resulting from international trade impacts” (“New Investments,” 2010). EDA’s investments are often targeted at high-demand occupations such as nursing or infrastructure technician (e.g., water, wastewater, and storm systems; power generation and transmission). In addition, EDA funds business incubation and entrepreneurship projects.

The *National Fund for Workforce Solutions* (NFWS) is a large-scale demonstration of regional collaboration in workforce and economic development. Currently, there are 22 NFWS grant sites across the nation with a total investment by almost 200 foundations of approximately \$23 million; ETA has also invested in the initiative. The regional collaboratives steering the grant projects have leveraged an additional \$100 million to develop workforce intermediaries that bridge the gap between employers, training providers, and workers (“National Fund,” 2010).

The Ford Foundation’s *Connecting People to Opportunity* initiative launched the *Metropolitan Opportunity* project in 2010. The foundation is investing \$200 million over five years to help regions focus on economic and infrastructure development to help disadvantaged communities connect to opportunities for economic growth and stability. Touching on issues such as affordable housing, job creation, and transportation, Ford is making “strategic investments in key metropolitan areas to expand the most promising initiatives and develop models for other regions throughout the nation” (“News: Connecting People,” 2010, p. 2).

Research Priority Area 2: Methods of Expanding U.S. Workforce Skills

ETA Research

ETA has multiple current investments in research related to expanding U.S. workforce skills. The advancement or promotion of workforce competencies in mathematics and science is the focus of two studies. One investment by ETA in online programs is the *Preparing Rural Science and Math Teachers Through Distance Learning Demonstration Project* (2007 to 2011). The Western Governors University’s online program to train rural teachers combined “academic support, mentoring throughout the program, and professional development opportunities for up to one year following a student’s graduation from the program” (“Current,” 2010) and linkages with One-Stop Career Centers.

In 2008, ETA funded five *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Opportunities in the Workforce System Initiative* grants. The purpose of the initiative is to “expand and align current and new STEM workforce education and training strategies, activities, and resources in One-Stop Career Centers to promote, attract, and prepare disadvantaged youth and dislocated workers for STEM careers, while simultaneously

enhancing the competitive position of local and regional employers” (“STEM,” 2010). The initiative includes an implementation evaluation to be completed in 2012.

Between 2005 and 2009, ETA held the first four rounds of the Community-Based Job Training Grant (CBJTG) competition and awarded 279 grants, most of them to community colleges or community college systems. The CBJTG grants support the development and implementation of training programs designed to meet the needs of high-growth, high-demand industries, as well as recipients’ capacity-building activities. Currently, the Urban Institute is completing an implementation evaluation of the CBJTG initiative, based on a survey of all grantees in rounds one to four and site visits to nine. The final report is expected by the end of 2011.

As part of the research investments driven by ARRA, ETA has funded an implementation study of the Health Care, High Growth, and Green Jobs initiatives. IMPAQ International is conducting the implementation study as projects get under way in 2010. Selected projects will also participate in a random-assignment evaluation (“Project Showcase – Process,” 2009). In 2010, ETA awarded Abt Associates and Mathematica a contract to conduct an impact evaluation of the Green Jobs and Health Care ARRA investments (Projects: Evaluating, 2011).

As part of the second round of *Project GATE: Growing America Through Entrepreneurship*, announced in 2008, a random-assignment evaluation is being conducted in four states. This project builds on the success of the initial Project GATE effort, with projects targeting dislocated workers residing in rural areas or those who are over age 45 (“Project GATE,” 2010).

In 2011, ETA funded the *Self-Employment Training Demonstration* and is working with the Small Business Administration on understanding effective self-employment training strategies that can help dislocated workers become reemployed. Through a partnership with local One-Stop Career Centers and Small Business Development Centers, known as SBDCs, these individuals would receive training and other services to help them succeed in planning and starting their own business.

Other Research

Other federal agencies also have current investments in research on expanding the skills of the U.S. workforce. The Administration for Children and Families announced 23 *Health Profession Opportunity Grants to Serve TANF Recipients and Other Low-Income Individuals* in 2010. The grants will “support the establishment and maintenance of training, education, and career advancement programs to address health care professions workforce needs” (“Health Profession,” 2010). Also in 2010, the Department of Energy announced approximately \$100 million in ARRA grants for the *Workforce Training for the Electric Power Sector* initiative. Funded projects are split across two topics: developing and enhancing workforce training programs and smart grid workforce training. The 54 projects are expected to train 30,000 workers (“Workforce,” 2010).

There are some philanthropic investments in this research area as well. The Mott Foundation has made an ongoing investment in the Aspen Institute's *Sector Skills Academy*, which develops leaders for sectoral and industry-driven workforce development projects ("Sector," 2011). The foundation's *Pathways Out of Poverty* initiative has multiple ongoing investments in workforce development research. Grants announced in 2010 include one for the *Program for Automotive Labor and Education*, which supports the Center for Automotive Research in its intermediary role to translate technological changes within the industry into workforce training and other processes ("Programs," 2011).

The George Kaiser Family Foundation invests in a range of community health and early childhood programs to improve resident outcomes in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 2008, the foundation funded the *Career Advance* project, a cohort-based training program for parents of Head Start and Early Head Start students at two childcare centers. The project combines training in nursing careers with weekly group meetings to discuss academic, work/life balance, employment, and other issues while building a peer support network ("CareerAdvance," 2011). The project was recently awarded a *Health Profession Opportunity Grant* by the Administration for Children and Families to scale up throughout Tulsa and build evidence for potential replication in other communities.

Through the *Promoting the Next Generation Workforce Strategies* program, the Ford Foundation is working to improve opportunities for low-wage workers. The strategies include efforts to improve the workforce development system, increase the effectiveness of workforce training programs, and build the capacity of worker centers. Another strategy that the Ford Foundation is pursuing in this initiative is to fund other research and analysis on multiple aspects of the labor market and workforce development system to identify best practices for helping low-wage workers improve their financial security ("Promoting," 2010).

Research Priority Area 3: Increasing the Labor Market Participation of Underutilized Populations

ETA Research

A large number of current research investments at ETA are focused on increasing the labor participation of underutilized populations, with projects targeting older workers, youth, ex-offenders, and TANF/low-income parents. The *Evaluation of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)* began in 2007. The purpose of the SCSEP program is to foster "useful part-time employment opportunities in community service for low-income older Americans and fostering individual economic self-sufficiency" ("Current," 2010). The final evaluation report, focused on the program's processes and grantee outcomes, is expected in 2012. Another investment targeting older workers is the *Aging Worker Initiative (AWI)*, announced by ETA in 2009, which supports 10 projects exploring how best to provide training and related services to assist individuals age 55 and older in securing "employment and advancement opportunities in high-growth sectors" (Aging, n.d.). An ETA USDOL-funded evaluation of the AWI grants will identify key factors leading to success and implications for the larger workforce system; an interim report will be available in 2011 and a final report in

2012. ETA has also provided funding for technical assistance and peer learning institutes to share best practices. A process evaluation is being conducted by SPRA and Mathematica, with an interim and final report to be completed in 2012.

In 2007, ETA funded the *Performance-Based Job Training and Education Demonstration Project* in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Participants, primarily ex-offenders and those at risk of criminal/gang involvement, are offered “three program components that include a 13-month core program, and pre- and post-release transitional services. Central to the demonstration is that employers pay a placement and retention fee when they hire a participant, operating much like a private staffing agency” (“Current,” 2010). The final report is expected in 2011. ETA also funded a project to replicate the use of mentors and intensive employment and training services to ex-offenders in Newark, New Jersey as well as an evaluation of that project; a final report is expected in 2011.

The random-assignment evaluation of the *Reintegrating Ex-Offenders Initiative* is being conducted by SPRA and MDRC. The ETA initiative seeks to identify effective employment strategies for the hard-to-serve ex-offender population. Participants began enrolling in the program in spring 2010; the first implementation analysis report is due in 2011 (“MDRC-Project,” 2011).

Two projects target youth who are at risk of criminal involvement, ex-offenders, or otherwise disadvantaged. In 2008, ETA funded an implementation analysis, *Evaluation of Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathway Outcomes in Persistently Dangerous Schools*. The final report is expected in 2012 (“Current,” 2010). MDRC and Mathematica are conducting the *National Evaluation of YouthBuild*, which will “use a random assignment design to measure the impact of YouthBuild on employment, educational attainment, criminal justice involvement, and other important outcomes” (“MDRC – Announcement,” 2010).

Two additional projects target young or low-income parents and TANF recipients. The *Young Parents Demonstration Grants* program includes multiple projects in three rounds of funding. ETA’s investment includes interventions in mentoring, education, training, and employment for parenting and pregnant youth, ages 16 to 24; and an ongoing process evaluation, as well as a random-assignment impacts study of added services through the Young Parents project (“Evaluation,” 2010). ETA and HHS started the *Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration* in 2001. One-Stop Career Centers in the demonstration project help to address some of the employment barriers facing TANF recipients and other low-income parents. The evaluation is intended “to identify the impact of services on the employment and earnings of participants” (“Current,” 2010). ETA was one of many funders, and many of the related reports, such as *Alternative Welfare-to-Work Strategies for the Hard-to-Employ: Testing Transitional Jobs and Pre-Employment Services in Philadelphia* and *Four Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Employment: An Introduction to the Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project*, are posted on the MDRC Web site.

ETA also supported the *Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration* through 2011. The demonstration is continuing with foundation support, with studies such as *Strategies to Help Low-Wage Workers Advance: Implementation and Early Impacts of the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) Demonstration*, *Moving from Jobs to Careers*:

Engaging Low-Wage Workers in Career Advancement, From Getting By to Getting Ahead: Navigating Career Advancement for Low-Wage Workers, and A New Approach to Low-Wage Workers and Employers: Launching the Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration posted on the MDRC Web site.

ETA recently began the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration, an initiative designed to measure the impact of transitional jobs as tools for helping ex-offenders and noncustodial parents achieve self-sustaining unsubsidized employment. The initiative is designed to build on lessons learned from previous efforts to assist low-income individuals with transitioning into the workforce. Project funding supports efforts by seven local organizations to address the gaps that continue to exist in successfully implementing this strategy. A rigorous impact evaluation will be conducted by MDRC with final results expected in 2017.

In 2011, ETA funded an analytical overview of services that the public workforce system provides to youth with disabilities. The study is aimed both to document the existing state of services and to identify selected promising practices and discuss their implementation. The final report for the study, which will encompass a survey of local workforce investment areas and site visits, is expected in 2013.

Since 1989, USDOL has administered the *National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)*, an employment-based survey of the demographic, employment, and health characteristics of hired crop farm workers. ETA assumed responsibility for NAWS in 2006. In addition to providing labor market information for ETA's National Farmworker Jobs Program, NAWS findings are also being used to inform programs and/or help meet the Federal agency information collection needs of the Administration for Children and Families, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. To improve the statistical efficiency of the survey for continued use across the Federal government, Mathematica is evaluating the statistical methodology of the survey ("Current," 2011).

Finally, ETA funded the *Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations* grants. Through these projects, community-based organizations worked to place and retain women in apprenticeship programs for nontraditional occupations such as those in the construction industry ("Previous," 2011). A cost-benefit analysis will be completed by the end of 2011.

Other Research

Other agencies within USDOL also have significant ongoing research investments aimed at increasing labor market participation of underutilized groups. The Women's Bureau has a long-standing tradition of providing employment, training, and work-life services to women in the workforce. Several recent research investments specifically look at preparing women for nontraditional work. *A Woman's Guide to Green Jobs* is a joint effort by Public Policy Associates and Wider Opportunities for Women that will include curriculum development to support training programs ("Green Jobs for Women," 2011). The Women's Bureau has also sponsored nine *Green Jobs Training*

Projects to demonstrate how to engage and prepare women for high-skilled and technical jobs in green industries and occupations.

A current demonstration project is being administered jointly by USDOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service and ETA's Office of Job Corps. At Job Corps centers in Indiana, Kentucky, and Missouri, young veterans (20 to 24 years old) can participate in a customized and accelerated residential training program with others transitioning out of military service. After earning a career credential or certification, veteran graduates will receive up to 21 months of transition (e.g., job placement, housing, transportation) assistance ("VETS," 2011).

Beyond USDOL, other federal agencies are also engaged in current/ongoing research on increasing labor market participation of specific segments of the American population. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children & Families (ACF) has multiple current research investments in strategies to improve employment and training outcomes for TANF recipients and other low-income adults. The *Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse* is a Web site being created to disseminate research and evaluation on TANF and other low-income populations. The project period ends in 2011 ("ACF OPRE: Self," 2011). The *Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-Sufficiency* project (2007 to 2014) is evaluating "employment-focused strategies that build on previous approaches and are adapted to the current federal, state, and local policy environment" (The Innovative Strategies, 2010). The random-assignment evaluation project will include impact and cost-benefit studies.

In the ongoing *TANF/SSI Disability Transition Project (2008 to 2011)*, ACF and the Social Security Administration (SSA) are exploring opportunities to improve services to TANF recipients with disabilities, rather than the current practice of simply referring individuals to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Because of the narrow definition of disability used by the SSA, many TANF recipients fall through the cracks. The project will document current practices, and pilot new approaches for screening potential SSI applicants and better-serving recipients with disabilities ("ACF OPRE: TANF," 2011).

Other current investments by SSA are targeted at identifying and testing strategies to better connect individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities with appropriate supports. The *Benefit Offset National Demonstration* began in FY 2010 in nine states and six sub-state regions. A new component of the demonstration "will test early intervention strategies designed to help disability applicants return to work rather than continue through SSA's disability determination process. Participants in this component of the demonstration project will receive a wide range of employment supports closer to the onset of disability in an effort to maintain their connection to the workforce and prevent dependence on cash benefits" ("Benefit Offset," 2010).

Foundations and philanthropic organizations are also engaged in research on improving labor market participation. In the *Ensuring Good Jobs and Access to Services* initiative, the Ford Foundation is funding research and activities that look at how low-wage workers access workforce development services, including UI ("Ensuring," 2010). The initiative is also examining ways to improve job quality and ensure that poor families have ready access to the range of public benefits they need. The Ford

Foundation recently pledged \$80 million over five years to improve the administration of public benefits, including UI and Food Stamps, and advocate for improved job quality for low-income individuals. Ford will work with 5 to 10 states to identify policy, programmatic, and technical changes necessary to modernize and streamline services (Strom, 2009). A report by the National Employment Law Project (2010) analyzed job creation between December 2007 and July 2010, finding that “growth has been concentrated in mid-wage and lower-wage industries” (*Where the Jobs Are*, 2010, p. 1).

Research Priority Area 4: Using State-Level Administrative Data to Measure Progress and Outcomes

ETA Research

In 2010, ETA announced grants to 13 states for the *Workforce Data Quality Initiative*.²⁰ The purpose of these grants is to encourage and support state efforts to build longitudinal systems connecting education and workforce data (*Workforce Data*, n.d.). This project mirrors the larger U.S. Department of Education’s *Statewide Longitudinal Data System* grants, which are intended to help states manage, analyze, and use data to improve student achievement (“Statewide,” 2011).

A longer standing ETA investment in this research priority is the *Administrative Data Research and Evaluation* (ADARE) project, which supports university-based/private researchers and nine state workforce agencies in maintaining longitudinal databases for ETA- and other-funded research. “The databases consist of individual member states’ Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD), unemployment insurance wage and benefit records, labor exchange data, TANF records, Perkins/Vocational Education records, and community college records” (Training 9-04, 2004).

Other Research

An ongoing technical assistance and research project by the Administration for Children & Families is the *Federal-State Partnerships to Build Capacity in the Use of TANF and Related Administrative Data* (2008 to 2011). This project is working with four states to “improve their capacity to analyze and link databases” (“Federal-State,” 2010).

Research Priority Area 5: Postsecondary Education and Training

ETA Research

ETA has invested in research efforts to expand access to postsecondary education and job training for workers. Since late 2009, Mathematica has been conducting a study on the effectiveness of assessment and cost-benefit analysis of registered apprenticeship as a training option for workforce system clients. Using administrative data and interviews with federal and state program administrators, a final report will be completed in 2011. A subset of this study is examining women in apprenticeship programs.

Another area of ETA program research relates to the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. A study by researchers at the University of Michigan examined the labor market effects of globalization in relation to TAA (Johnson, 2005). Further, ETA is conducting a national evaluation of TAA that involves a quasi-experimental impact analysis and a process study of the TAA program as it operated under the 2002 amendments. The evaluation contractor, SPRA, and its subcontractor, Mathematica, have produced five occasional papers covering such subjects as initial implementation of the Trade Act amendments of 2002 (D'Amico et al., 2009), case management (Mack, 2009), and characteristics of TAA-eligible workers and their early program experiences (Dolfin and Berk, 2010). Multiple reports from the process and impact studies will be released in 2011 and 2012.

A long-term follow-up survey to the ITA random-assignment evaluation of nearly 8,000 individuals in eight sites between 2001 and 2004 is examining the impacts between the three different ITA strategies that practitioners used to offer ITAs to individuals. A final report is expected in 2011.

The *Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts* demonstration is a joint project with the Department of Defense; ETA funded a process evaluation of the effort to document implementation, types of expenditures from accounts, and employment outcomes ("Current," 2010). A final report is due in 2011.

In 2006, ETA launched the *Technology-Based Learning (TBL) Initiative* as an internal program to encourage a national strategy for advancing the use of technology for training within the workforce investment system. The initiative seeks to increase the number of people trained in high-growth jobs through the broadening of opportunities for skill and competency development, which is made available quickly and conveniently through the use of TBL methods. In 2008, ETA funded a two-year, four-state pilot project to develop and implement "an online portal...with information on nationally available online certificate and degree programs that respond to identified high-growth areas in each state" ("Current," 2010). The *Collaborative Online Workforce and Education Training Portal Demonstration* evaluation report is expected in 2011. A second study will examine the 20 TBL grants projects awarded in 2009 by using administrative data to determine participant demographics; TBL training completion rates; degree, certificate, and credential attainment in industry-recognized or educational certifications; and pre- and post-participation employment and wages. The final report will be delivered in 2012. A third effort under this initiative seeks to gain a fuller understanding of TBL parameters of the workforce investment system, states, local areas, and Workforce Investment Boards, with a report expected in 2013.

Mathematica is leading a large research team in the *WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation* for ETA. This random-assignment evaluation of intensive and training services is currently recruiting 30 sites to participate. Plans currently call for follow-up surveys of participants at 15 and 30 months after random assignment (*Training* 37-09, 2010). Mathematica is also conducting an impact evaluation of the Registered Apprenticeship program ("Current," 2010).

Other Research

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management within USDOL has invested in a process and implementation study by IMPAQ International, *Community Colleges as the Classroom for America's Workforce: Best Practices and Lessons Learned From the Field in Working with the Public Workforce System*. This study will include “qualitative and quantitative data analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between community colleges and local workforce development systems” (“Project Showcase: Process,” 2009).

The Ford Foundation funded the “Opening Doors to Student Success Demonstration,” and MDRC is conducting the evaluation. (ETA was one of the early contributors to this effort.) The demonstration, launched in 2003 with six community colleges, provides some of the first rigorous evidence that a range of interventions can improve educational outcomes for community college students. MDRC recently completed a paper on *A Synthesis of Findings from an Evaluation at Six Community Colleges Policy Brief* (Scrivener and Coghlan, 2011).

SSA is participating in a five-year (2007 to 2011) international project through OECD, *Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment*. Through this project, OECD is exploring how participating countries, including the United States, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Portugal, France, Estonia, and the Republic of Korea, prepare students with disabilities to make the transition from secondary education into higher education and the workforce. SSA hopes to identify strategies for helping these youth avoid dependency on SSDI benefits as adults (“Social,” 2011).

Two current studies by the National Academies are related to workforce development and postsecondary education: a workshop on the *Early Childhood Care and Education Workforce* and a pipeline study for *Naval Engineering in the 21st Century*. The workshop will “provide an adequate description of the Early Childhood Care and Education workforce outlining the parameters that define the population” (“Project Information: Early,” 2010). The engineering pipeline study will look at the Office of Naval Research’s efforts to meet its mandate under the National Naval Responsibility in Naval Engineering to “ensure that an adequate pipeline of new researchers, engineers, and faculty continues” (“Project Information: Naval,” 2010).

As part of the Ford Foundation’s *Advancing Higher Education Access and Success* initiative, the foundation partnered in 2009 with four other national foundations (Carnegie Corporation of New York, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education) to create *Complete College America*. The project aims to remove barriers to college completion, focusing particularly on strategies for working and disadvantaged students (“News: Advancing,” 2010). Twenty-four states are currently participating, having committed to: (1) Set state and campus-specific degree and credential completion goals; (2) Develop and implement aggressive action plans for meeting the completion goals, and (3) Collect and publicly report on common measures of progress in completion and in closing achievement gaps (“The Alliance of States,” 2010).

Two current investments by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are of particular relevance to the field of employment and training research. The foundation's technical assistance initiative, *Completion by Design*, "is a five-year community college reform effort focused on increasing the proportion of and pace by which low-income young adults progress to postsecondary credential and degree completion" ("Completion," 2010). The *Completion by Design Concept Paper* outlines a loss and momentum framework with four critical points of student engagement; grant projects will be expected to develop strategies for moving students beyond each of those points to graduation/certification. Grants will be announced in 2011.

The Gates Foundation's *Next Generation Learning Challenges* project, presented in an October 2010 white paper, seeks to answer four key questions: (1) How do we better engage young people in learning and demonstrate its relevance to real life and their aspirations? (2) How do we personalize learning to accelerate and deepen understanding and knowledge retention? (3) How do we encourage persistence and completion in spite of the competing demands of students' lives? (4) How can institutions and educational systems afford improvements in student success in light of flat or declining budgets? (Next, 2010, p. 4).

Partners in the *Next Generation Learning Challenges* project include the Council of Chief State School Officers, Educause, the League for Innovation in the Community College, and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning.

The Lumina Foundation's *Workforce Online Learning Information Portal* (WOLIP) is an online learning portal aimed at providing degree attainment to WIA clients. WOLIP involves four states to incorporate an online learning degree completion service mode into their workforce and education systems.

Research Priority Area 6: Unemployment Insurance

ETA Research

A random-assignment and process evaluation of the *Reemployment Eligibility Assessment* (REA) grant program is currently under way. ETA used recommendations and findings from the 2005 study to design and implement the experimental evaluation. The interim report was delivered to Congress in 2010; a final report, which was completed in 2011, was also delivered to Congress ("IMPAQ's," 2011).

In 2011, ETA funded the *UI-Workforce System Connectivity Study*, which is a three-year evaluation of state demonstration projects in providing reemployment services to Unemployment Insurance claimants. States will be competitively selected to implement the following elements of a national vision, previously elaborated by a workgroup of federal, state, and local officials: integrated workforce customer registration, real-time triage, transferability of skills, and leveraging social media tools for streamlined service delivery.

Other Research

In 2010, USDOL's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management awarded two contracts to Mathematica to study the ARRA provisions affecting UI compensation and the effects of the ARRA subsidy on the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) health benefit take ("Office of the Assistant," 2011).

Chapter 5. Major Research Gaps and Priorities

Considerable employment and training research has been completed recently or is under way and will be reported out in the near future. This research, reviewed in the earlier chapters, has been funded by ETA as well as by its partner federal agencies, and foundations, among others. This section discusses the criteria used to set priorities for future research and the perceived gaps in this research, as well as recommended priorities for new research to be funded.

Panel members, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders were asked to provide their input on questions ranging from their overall assessment of the research to their assessment of the major gaps, recommended priorities, and specific areas for future research. Members of the National Expert Advisory Panel were interviewed at length to elicit their views, and the Panel was convened several times to get feedback on earlier drafts of this report.²¹ The research team also held conference calls with ETA Regional Administrators²² and interviewed leadership and key staff in ETA's National Office, including Apprenticeship, Business Relations Group, Performance, Unemployment Insurance, and the Office of Workforce Investment, as well as the new USDOL Chief Evaluation Officer.²³

In addition, the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development conducted an online national stakeholder survey, which gathered the opinions of workforce development professionals across the nation to elicit their views about priority research topics and criteria. The Heldrich Center received assistance in disseminating the survey from a number of national organizations, including the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the National Association of Workforce Boards, the National Governors Association, and the *Employment and Training Reporter*. The Heldrich Center also made the survey available via various social networking sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook). Fully 665 survey responses were received by December 31, 2010.

A large majority of the survey respondents (66%) identified themselves as representing a state government agency. The remaining respondents were fairly evenly split (5% to 7% each) between federal government agencies, local government agencies, university or private research organizations, community-based organizations, and private for-profit businesses or business organizations. Other respondents (10%) represented state and local Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges, libraries, philanthropic organizations, and a range of national nonprofits representing Hispanic groups, tribal government and Alaska Natives, people with disabilities, Senior Community Service Employment Programs, and others.

The discussion that follows summarizes input received from all of these sources, indicating views about the overall state of the research and important areas of research needed, as well as highlighting noteworthy similarities and differences, where relevant.

Criteria for Prioritizing Research

All of the groups were asked to indicate how they would rank the importance of several criteria for research funded by ETA. The criteria suggested were as follows: importance for federal policymakers, importance for state and local policymakers, value for program managers/frontline staff, rigor, and timeliness.

Many respondents — researchers, policymakers, practitioners and others alike — felt that these criteria were very different qualitatively. *Rigor and timeliness should be seen as necessary for all research supported by ETA and thus should be presumed before considering other criteria.* Moreover, there was explicit recognition that, while all research should be conducted rigorously using the best techniques available, the standards for assessing rigor would vary according to the type of research in question. The same was often said about research and evaluation. For example, a rigorous impact evaluation for a given program utilizing an experimental design would likely take several years to produce the desired results. Such an evaluation might not be timely given the constraints inherent in impact evaluations. On the other hand, evaluations using quasi-experimental designs and administrative data would be less rigorous, but would likely be produced in a more timely manner. A field research study on the implementation of a new initiative would be considered rigorous if it applied an established research method (e.g., field network analysis) and the results could be available to policymakers and practitioners much sooner than an impact evaluation. That said, practitioners as a group were more likely to value timeliness and somewhat less concerned with rigor than were others.

Overall State of Employment and Training Research

Opinion on the overall state of employment and training research is best summarized with a quote from one of the Expert Advisory Panel members:

Employment and training research is generally good but there isn't enough of it and it isn't disseminated well, whether to Congress or to program administrators at all levels. It should be conducted independent of political pressures.

These main points — good quality, insufficient quantity, inadequate dissemination, and the importance of a more transparent, independent research process — were voiced by Expert Advisory Panel members and echoed as well by stakeholders and others.

Several Expert Advisory Panel members noted that in the past few years, the quality of the research has been improving, but that more rigorous (experimental) evaluation research was needed to enable “more evidence-based and less belief-based policymaking.” Some members commented that research was “weak, getting weaker,” had “lost traction with the field,” or had become “stale,” particularly regarding ways to improve career progress and wages over time. Others remarked that the research was overly “tilted to the programmatic and too little to underlying labor market problems.” Respondents from state agencies (66%), Workforce Investment Boards, community-

based organizations, business groups, and service providers tended to favor research that focused on improving program operations and management.

Research Process and Dissemination

The Expert Advisory Panel and a number of stakeholders also addressed the way in which ETA carries out its research and how well it disseminated its research to the various audiences of interest. Panel members recommended much greater transparency and far more effective dissemination of ETA's research and evaluation results than has been the case in recent years, including findings with implications for managers and program design. These recommendations directly parallel concerns raised and recommendations offered by GAO (2010) in its report on ETA. They are also related to an interest raised by ETA's Office of Policy Development and Research in having a process to evaluate or rate current and future ETA research based on what the motivation for the study is, whether it is likely to have policy implications, whether the methodology is sound, and whether the results are independent.

Expert Advisory Panel members also felt strongly that ETA should consider implementing a *What Works Clearinghouse* similar to the one now operated by the Institute for Education Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education. Along those lines, members have recommended amending WIA as part of reauthorization to create a Workforce Development Institute similar to the U.S. Department of Education's Institute on Education Sciences to "address issues embedded in all Titles of the next generation of workforce development legislation, not just WIA-funded programs."²⁴ It would be a mechanism to tie innovations, research, and evaluation together within the context of the broader workforce development system. As conceived, the institute would feature five centers, as follows:

- Basic Research and Longitudinal Studies,
- Study of the Needs of Industry Sectors,
- Study and Support of a Skilled Workforce,
- Career Development and Guidance, and
- Program and System Improvement and Accountability.

Innovation is central to the Workforce Development Institute concept, in no small part because resources are likely to be reduced substantially across all programs and funding streams in the near future. Each of the centers would need to find ways to become more effective with limited resources and to carry out research that is useful in the field.

Another option for addressing this would be to re-establish a regional network of university-based institutes, such as the Manpower Institutional Grantees. Manpower Institutional Grantees provided technical assistance and training and conducted and disseminated research to key actors in the workforce system from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, when funding for the network was eliminated from the federal budget.²⁵

National Office staff and survey respondents also indicated that work was needed on ways to effectively disseminate research findings about strategies and programs

throughout the workforce system, including ways to replicate effective approaches for discretionary programs within the larger, formula-based programs. Stakeholders tended to be more satisfied than others with the different ways in which information is currently shared throughout the system.

- Three-fourths (74%) of respondents indicated they currently find out about research reports through e-mails or other ETA announcements, including Training and Employment Guidance Letters and Training and Employment Notices.
- 71% responded that they also receive information from professional associations or other paid services (e.g., National Governors Association, National Association of Workforce Boards, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, *Employment and Training Reporter*).
- Roughly half of respondents cited the Workforce3one Web site or e-mails, and nearly as many cited conference or webinar presentations as a source for information.
- About 40% of respondents cited e-mail announcements from research centers, foundations, or think tanks as a key information source.

Stakeholders reported that they would prefer to receive information largely the same way they obtain it now. A slightly higher proportion of respondents would like to receive their information about research results directly from ETA, with fewer preferring to get it from Workforce3one, professional associations, or paid services (e.g., the *Employment and Training Reporter*).

Conclusions: Recommended Areas for Research

Given the increased emphasis on workforce development strategies to address the challenges of a volatile labor market, more ETA-supported research is needed, as well as more research funded or conducted collaboratively with federal partner agencies and foundations. Two important principles should guide ETA's actions as it moves ahead to develop the next generation of workforce development research. First, there should be greater transparency in its research funding, contracting, and publication processes to avoid even the appearance of political influence and to build back the trust it lost in the research and policy community in large parts of the previous decade. Second, given the considerable role that other federal agencies and philanthropic organizations play in supporting research related to labor markets and workforce strategies, and given expected future constraints on research funding, ETA should increase its collaboration with these research initiatives while inviting greater collaboration from these same organizations in its own efforts. The challenges for job seekers, employers, and the economy are so significant that effective use of pooled resources demands closer collaboration within the federal government, between state and federal agencies, and, where possible, with private foundations.

Expert Advisory Panel members, USDOL senior staff, and stakeholders recommended focusing on a number of important areas in future research. Appendix D presents the topics that were recommended for future research along with the groups that recommended them. The list of topics is long and varied, although there was considerable consensus on the broad areas needing more research. In undertaking such research, the focus should be on conducting rigorous quantitative and qualitative research and evaluations. The recommended areas for research are categorized into the following five main areas:

1. **Understanding Changing Labor Markets.** Expert Advisory Panel members, National Office staff, and many stakeholders recommended that ETA support more research on better understanding the *changing dynamics of labor markets* and the *program and service needs that result from them*, rather than simply conducting more program-specific studies. The severity of ongoing difficulties in the labor market was noted, in particular concerns about the increased share of long-term unemployed. Sorting out the changing structural versus demand-deficient causes of labor market distress was also mentioned. Many stakeholders also pointed to the need to conduct research to better understand the workings of sub-markets, such as those on and around tribal reservations. There was also interest in strategies to better understand and anticipate employer workforce needs, especially relating to energy and green jobs.
2. **Identifying Effective Strategies.** Panel members, National Office staff, and stakeholders indicated that ETA needed to conduct research that was geared much more to the needs of the *workforce system* broadly considered, not simply research program-by-program or title-by-title within WIA, for example. In the past, little or no effort was made to link research across the various titles of WIA, much less to other workforce and income support programs operating within USDOL. Research efforts should also focus on *identifying variations in programs and strategies, underlying reasons for the variations and their effectiveness through the use of multi-disciplinary, cross-state, cross-site analysis that takes full advantage of ongoing, multi-state research partnerships*.

Groups noted the size and economic impact of *Unemployment Insurance* relative to ETA's other programs and suggested that much more research should be conducted on UI in the future, especially including work on the related strategies for assisting workers adjust to ongoing labor market difficulties, such as the *Labor Exchange* and *Reemployment Services*, an area that was accorded the highest priority among survey respondents

Many of the groups recommended more research on the effectiveness and return on investment from *training strategies* and noted that ETA's research should estimate the impacts and returns from training, through quasi-experiments as well as experiments. Most called for increased attention to the value of credentials and training certifications including employer-specific ones in the labor market. *Apprenticeship* was also noted as an area needing additional work, as was researching more effective ways of teaching adult education and language skills through *contextualized learning*.

Expert Advisory Panel members and many survey respondents also recommended more research on *workforce intermediaries (including nonprofit temporary staffing agencies)* and *sectoral strategies*, such as those implemented by the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, Project Quest, Capital IDEA, and other organizations to examine whether their estimated impacts are enduring and whether these strategies can be successfully expanded and replicated.

3. **Workforce System Infrastructure.** More research into *effective management approaches and tools* (e.g., the Frontline Decision Support System, E-tools) and continued work to develop *performance adjustment mechanisms* was also suggested by several groups. One member suggested a need for more research on how to accomplish “knowledge transfer” within the system, going beyond the simple dissemination of promising practices to ways to encourage their adaptation and implementation by other practitioners. Another suggestion was to examine the effectiveness of waivers in terms of their ability to give states and local areas the flexibility to improve the workforce system.
4. **Special Populations.** Nearly all groups pointed to a number of *special populations* that merit greater attention from ETA research efforts. Among these were: long-term unemployed (including people who are still unemployed after they exhaust their unemployment benefits), dislocated workers, incumbent workers, youth, older workers, immigrants and low-wage workers generally, English-language learners, working families, persons with disabilities, and veterans. One specific recommendation was to conduct more research on the problems of *low-skilled, disconnected men*, a group that has severe problems with long-term consequences. Identifying strategies for effectively engaging and serving these disconnected men is important. Another recommendation was to research the labor market problems of *Native Americans* who tend to face very distinctive challenges and issues that tend to be largely ignored or overlooked in much of the research. One of the panel members also noted a need for additional research on issues relating to immigration and internal relocation of Hispanics, as well as the cultural and language barriers these populations face. Related to special populations was a suggestion by ETA research staff to examine the effectiveness of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, including what types of employers use it and what specific populations benefit most, and what other types of incentives might be offered to job seekers that would improve training and/or employment outcomes.

Special populations stressed by survey respondents included older workers, the long-term unemployed, dislocated workers, veterans, ex-offenders, at-risk youth, TANF recipients, limited English persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, and seasonal farm workers. Related to special populations was a suggestion by ETA research staff to examine the effectiveness of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, including what types of employers use it and what specific populations benefit most, and what other types of incentives might be offered to job seekers that would improve training and/or employment outcomes.

5. **Research Support.** Leadership in the National Office and other respondents noted that much more was needed in several areas, including *improved access*, use

and confidentiality of administrative records for research and evaluation, and *the creation of more public-use datasets* for analysis. The significant efforts that are under way to improve the quality of administrative data must be matched with concerted efforts to make those datasets available for research and analysis.

Appendices

- A. Members of the Expert Panel
- B. References and Selected Employment and Training Research Bibliography, 2005 to 2010
- C. Rapporteur's Summary of September 2009 Research Conference
- D. Table of Priority Research Topic Summary, by Stakeholder Group
- E. Summary of Stakeholder Input Surveys

Appendix A. Members of the National Expert Advisory Panel

Carl E. Van Horn and William Rodgers, Co-Chairs
Heldrich Center for Workforce Development
Rutgers University

Heather Boushey
Center for American Progress

Susanne Bruyere
ILR School, Cornell University

Gary Burtless
Brookings Institution

Norm Deweaver
Indian and Native American
Employment and Training Coalition
(1978 to 2004)

John Dorrer
Maine Department of Labor

Randall W. Eberts
W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment
Research

Michael Fix
Migration Policy Institute

Carolyn Heinrich
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Richard Hobbie
National Association of State
Workforce Agencies

Harry Holzer
Public Policy Institute, Georgetown
University and Urban Institute

William Kiernan
Institute for Community Inclusion
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Rakesh Kochhar
Pew Hispanic Center

Sheena McConnell
Mathematica Policy Research

Edwin Melendez
Center for Puerto Rican Studies,
Hunter College

Israel Mendoza
Washington State Board for
Community and Technical Colleges
(former)

Ron Mincy
Columbia University

Larry Mishel
Economic Policy Institute

Demetra Nightingale
Urban Institute

Martin Simon
Center for Best Practices,
National Governors Association

Joan Wills
Institute for Educational Leadership

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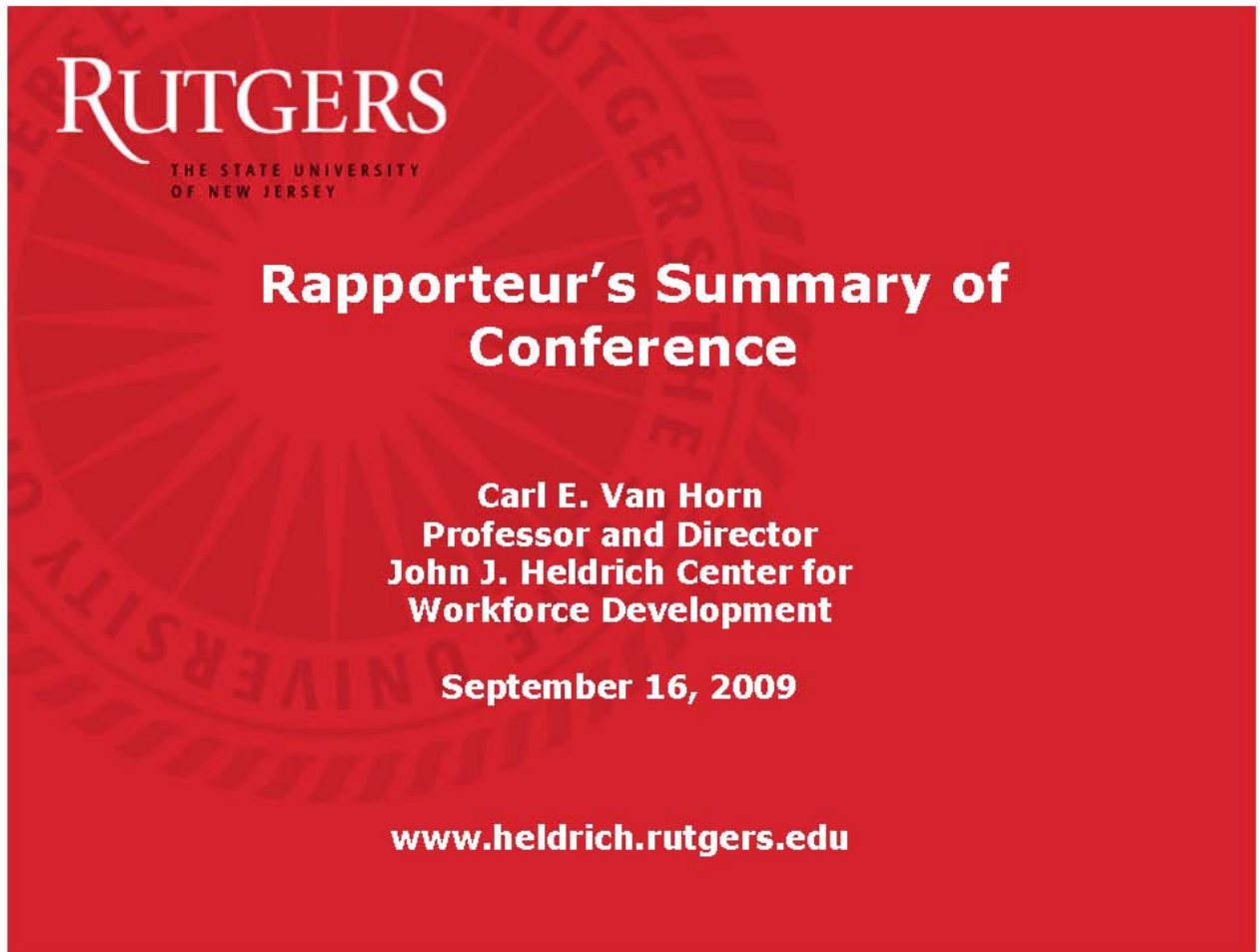
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Appendix C. Rapporteur's Summary of 2009 USDOL ETA Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference



Critical, Shared Values

- Insist on evidence-based decision making, accountability, and transparency.
- Apply third party, independent assessments of performance, effectiveness, and efficiency of resources.
- Invest available resources (additional?) to help jobseekers with approaches that are either proven to be successful or at least show promise of doing so.
- Better inform policy makers, workforce development professionals, employers, jobseekers and students when they make educational and labor market choices.

Balancing Expectations

- Build public, OMB and Congressional support for workforce development investments by providing rigorous, detailed and timely reports on performance and/or impacts.
- Deliver actionable recommendations for policy makers and practitioners.
- Provide practical advice and quality-assurance to job-seekers, students and employers.
- Balance the desire for timely, well grounded conclusions with the need for more rigorous, carefully researched studies on program outcomes and impacts.
 - Avoid the rush to judgment about the “success” or “failure” of programs and interventions.

Cross-Cutting Priorities

- Build infrastructure for regular performance reporting using reliable, regularly reported administrative data.
- Focus on key labor force and education outcomes rather than exclusively process and outputs.
- Develop research on the efficacy of policy levers and behaviors: incentives, regulation, information, decision-making.
- Develop better understanding of how institutions learn and adapt to a changing labor market.
 - Including the utility of different modes of communication, such as social networking and peer-to-peer advice.

Cross-Cutting Priorities (continued)

- Allocate limited resources to key priorities and encourage other federal agencies to support research around core issues.
- Support interdisciplinary research on the labor market.

Core Issues for Future Research

1. Determining and disseminating employers' education and skill needs in a dynamic fashion to educators, trainers, and students to create opportunities for informed choice.
2. Investing in research on interventions that could have impact on individuals who face significant barriers to labor market success.
3. Identifying effective strategies for assisting individuals to make transitions between education, training and work.
4. Creating incentives for experiential learning, including internships, co-op education and on-the-job training.

Core Issues for Future Research (continued)

5. Connecting workforce development services and the education establishments to increase access, attainment, alignment with demand and life-long learning.
6. Examining strategies for efficiently providing wrap-around services to E&T customers (e.g. mental health and financial counseling).

Appendix D. Priority Research Topic Summary, by Stakeholder Group

Topic/Issue	Expert Advisory Panel*	ETA Staff (National and Regional Offices*)	Stakeholders*
UNDERSTANDING CHANGING LABOR MARKETS			
Labor market dynamics	Program/service needs from ongoing labor market stress, changing nature of markets and sub-markets	Reassessment of One-Stop client and service mix to reflect the "new normal" Changing nature/effects of long-term unemployment	Strategies for navigating new, dynamic labor markets in global world
Credentials, career pathways and value in labor markets	Yes	Relative value by industry, sector; interim, stackable, career readiness and employer-specific credentials; bridge and career pathway programs	Yes
Credit vs. non-credit program barriers in community colleges		Yes	
IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES			
Effectiveness of the workforce system, programs, and strategies	Integrated, multidisciplinary, cross-site research beyond WIA titles	Use and efficacy of national E-tools Transitional jobs, strategies for older dislocated workers, and successful state/local WIB efforts	Estimating return on investment for various strategies
Unemployment Insurance, Labor Exchange, RES	Reemployment strategies for UI recipients	Workshare models and UI reforms	Reemployment strategies
Impact evaluations of training, including apprenticeship	Yes	Incumbent worker training, cost-effectiveness of short- vs. long-term training Incumbent and dislocated worker training, on-the-job training, and experiential learning	Training effectiveness

Program integration		Connecting WIA and TANF Effective strategies for One-Stop service Integration	Integration of training with postsecondary education and economic development
Workforce intermediaries and sectoral training strategies	Yes		Sectoral/regional strategies
Effective ways to teach adult education, English as a Second Language	Yes	Yes	
Employer engagement strategies and effectiveness	Yes	Effectiveness of employer consortia Effectiveness of business/entrepreneurial One-Stop services targeting small businesses and potential entrepreneurs	Obtaining employer input on current/future skill needs, sector/regional strategies, how to work better with medium/small business
WORKFORCE SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE			
Effective program management/measurement approaches and performance adjustment mechanisms	Yes	Correlation between short-term indicators and long-term impacts	Operational issues
SPECIAL POPULATIONS			
Populations of particular interest: incumbent workers; older workers, youth; immigrants; low-wage workers; English-language learners; working families; persons with disabilities; and veterans	Low-skilled, disconnected men and Native Americans	Impact of ETA investments in rural areas Employment outcomes of "99ers" Dislocated workers, older workers, veterans	Older workers, long-term unemployed, dislocated workers, veterans, ex-offenders, at-risk youth, TANF, LEP, persons with disabilities, migrant/seasonal farmworkers

RESEARCH SUPPORT			
Administrative records	Particularly focusing on increasing difficulty gaining access at the state level	Access, confidentiality, and use for research and evaluation and creation of public-use datasets Problems relating to variations in definitions and data elements across federal reporting systems Evaluation of Workforce Data Quality Initiative and the different models for state longitudinal databases	Investing in better labor market information and longitudinal data important

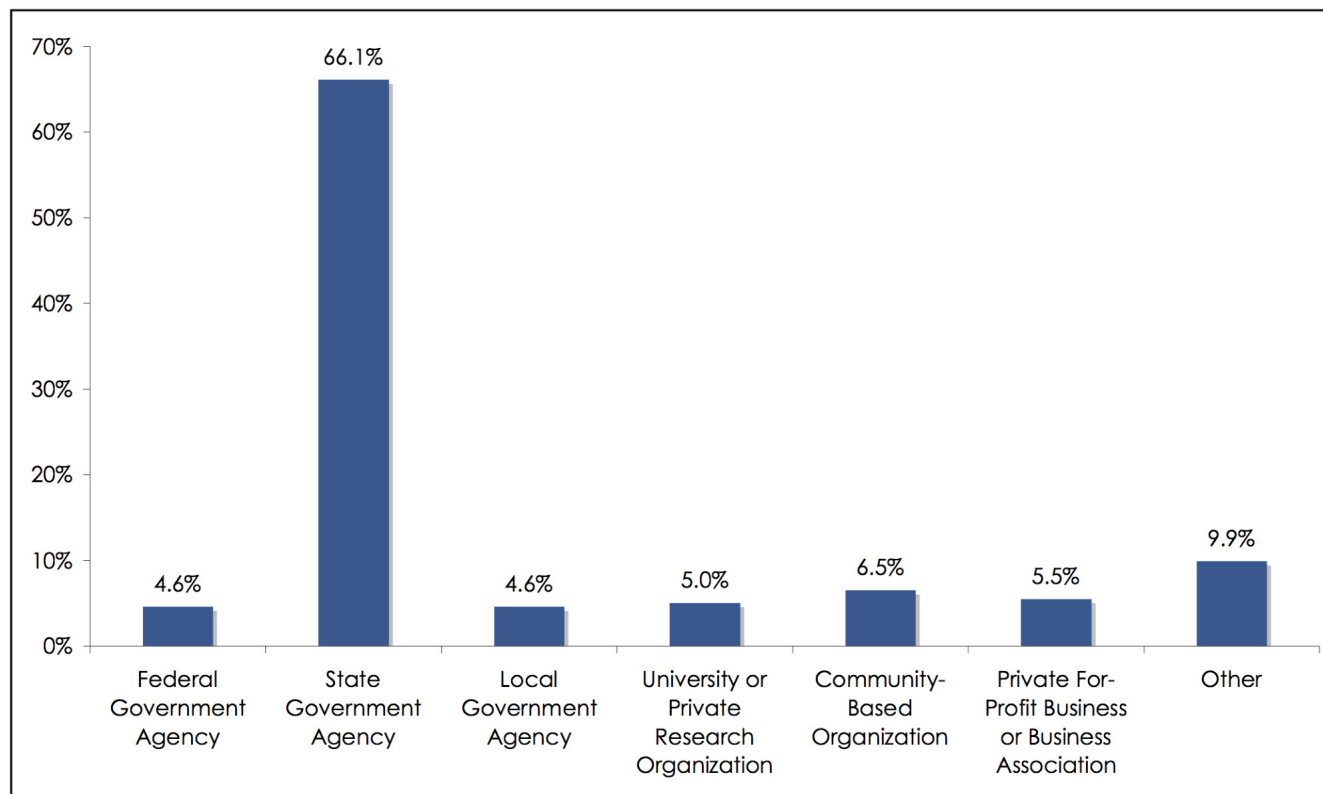
*The Expert Advisory Panel is a 20-member national panel of researchers, practitioners, and policy groups. Members are listed in the Appendix A. U.S. Department of Labor National Office senior staff included: Assistant Secretary Jane Oates, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, directors and staff of Apprenticeship, Business Relations Group, Unemployment Insurance, Office of Policy Development and Research, Office of Workforce Investments, Performance, Chief Evaluation Officer, ETA regional administrators and staff. Stakeholder input consisted of 665 survey responses (as of December 31, 2010) from federal, state and local government agencies; Workforce Investment Boards; colleges; libraries; foundations; national nonprofits; research organizations; community-based organizations; and business groups. A summary of the stakeholder input can be found in Appendix E.

Appendix E. Summary of Stakeholder Input

The Heldrich Center solicited input from a wide range of employment and training system stakeholders about priority research topics and criteria through an online survey. The Heldrich Center received assistance in disseminating the survey from a number of national and regional organizations, including the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the National Association of Workforce Boards, the National Governors Association, and the *Employment and Training Reporter*. The Center also made the survey available via various social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook). As of December 31, 2010, the Heldrich Center received 665 responses.

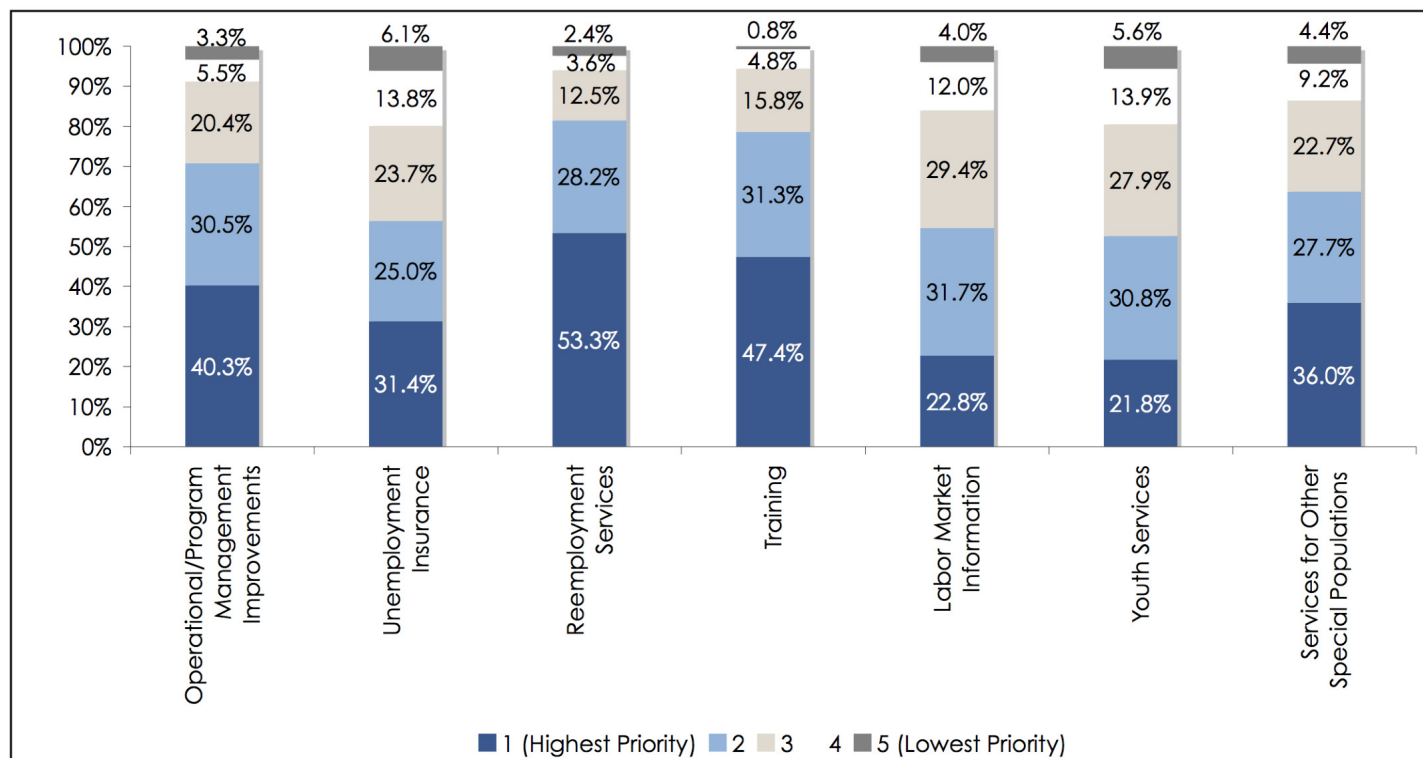
Breakdown of Respondents. A large majority of the 665 survey respondents (66%) identified themselves as representing a state government agency. The remaining respondents were fairly evenly split between (5% to 7% each) between federal government agencies, local government agencies, university or private research organizations, community-based organizations, and private for-profit businesses or business organizations. Other respondents (10%) represented state and local Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges, libraries, philanthropic organizations, and a range of national nonprofits representing Hispanic groups, tribal government and Alaska Natives, people with disabilities, Senior Community Service Employment Program, and others.

Chart 1. “I represent:



Priority Broad Research Topic Areas. Respondents were asked to rank seven broad research areas from highest to lowest priority. Reemployment Services was selected as a highest priority broad research area for 53% of respondents. Training followed closely behind, with almost half of respondents (47%) identifying it as a highest priority topic. Operational and Program Management Improvements was next in terms of number of respondents who designated this as the highest priority topic for research (40%), followed by research on Services for Special Populations (36%), Unemployment Insurance (31%), Labor Market Information (23%), and Youth Services (22%). Responses for those who identified specific populations included research on: older workers, long-term unemployed, dislocated workers, veterans, ex-offenders, at-risk youth, TANF recipients, limited English populations, people with disabilities, immigrants, and migrant and seasonal farm workers.

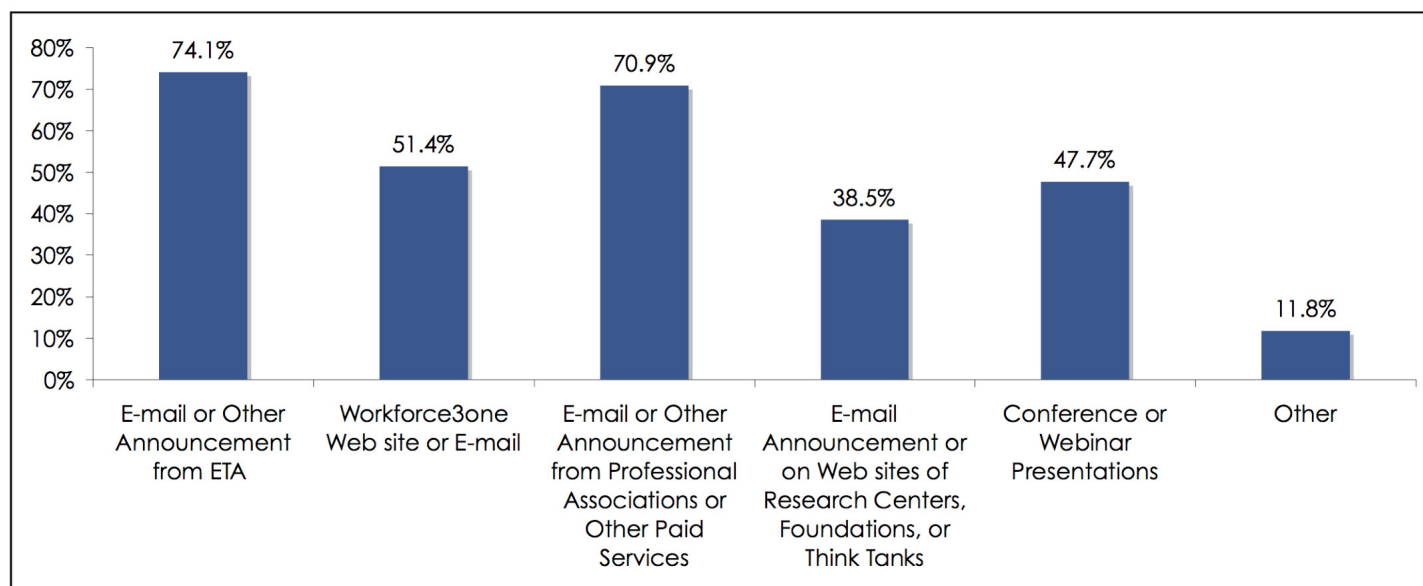
Chart 2. Priority Given to Following Broad Research Topics



Dissemination. Respondents were asked how they currently receive information about research reports on workforce issues, as well as how they would prefer to receive such information.

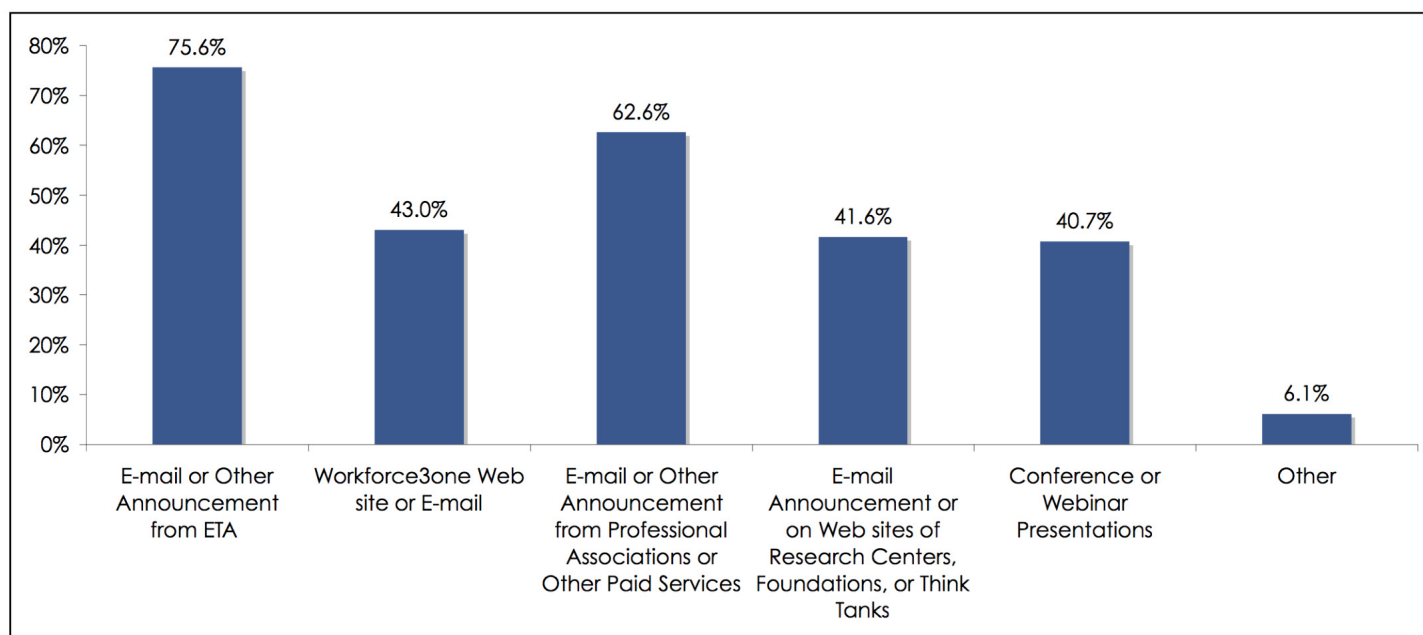
- Three-fourths (74%) of respondents indicated they currently find out about research reports through e-mails or other announcements from ETA, including through Training and Employment Guidance Letters and Training and Employment Notices.
- 71% responded that they receive information from professional associations or other paid services (National Governors Association, National Association of Workforce Boards, National Association of State Workforce Agencies, *Employment and Training Reporter*).
- Roughly half (51%) of respondents cited the Workforce3one Web site or e-mails, and close to the same number (48%) cited conference or webinar presentations as a source for information.
- E-mail announcements from research centers, foundations, or think tanks were cited as a source by about 39% of respondents.

Chart 3. Currently, How Do You Become Aware of Research Reports on Workforce Issues?



In the future, respondents reported they would prefer to receive information the same way they obtain it now. A slightly higher proportion of respondents would like to receive their information about research reports directly from ETA, with fewer preferring information from Workforce3one, professional associations, or paid services.

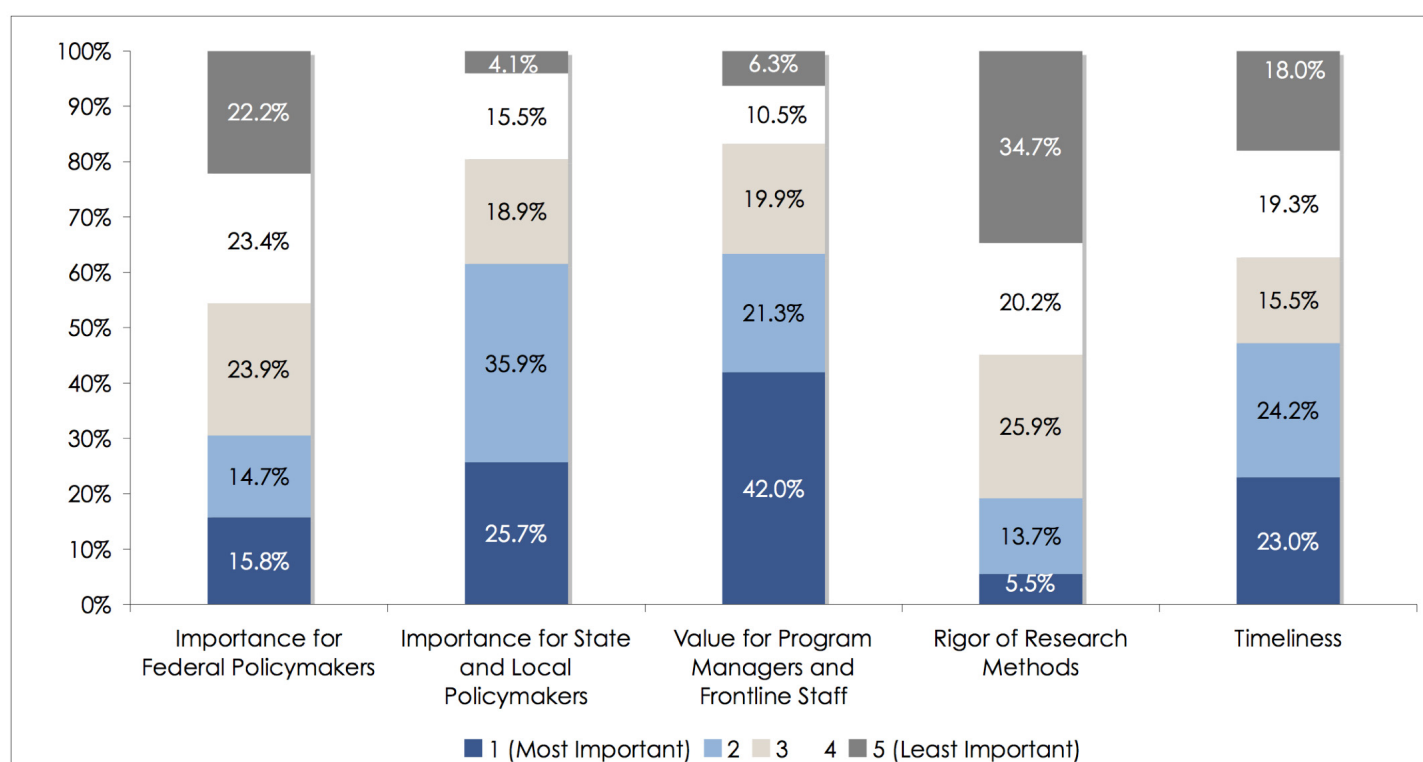
Chart 4. How Would You Prefer to Receive Research Reports on Workforce Issues?



Criteria for Setting Priorities. The survey asked respondents to rank several criteria for setting priorities for funding research on workforce development programs and policies, given resource limitations. In order, the respondents ranked these criteria:

1. Value for Program Managers
2. Importance for State and Local Policymakers (almost identical to Timeliness)
3. Timeliness
4. Importance for Federal Policymakers
5. Rigor of Research Methods

Chart 5. Ranking of Criteria in Order of Importance that Researchers Should Use when Setting Priorities for Funding Research on Workforce Development Programs and Policies



Specific Research Topics. Respondents were asked to recommend specific research topics they felt should be on the agenda in the next five years. Responses fell primarily into two very broad categories:

- Infrastructure improvements for the workforce development system, and
- Strategies on how to navigate the new and changing economy.

Many suggestions focused on a need to better understand and assess the efficacy of the workforce development system, as well as to increase investments in collecting better data and improving overall administration of the system. Respondents expressed the need to rigorously evaluate the current workforce development programs, including WIA, UI, and Wagner Peyser services through return on investment methods. There was also significant interest in research on how to develop better data systems, and especially better longitudinal data, with calls for technology improvements that will facilitate streamlined data collection and reporting.

A number of respondents suggested topics relating to improving labor market information, especially focusing on how to help disadvantaged job seekers and other special populations under and better navigate the labor market.

Several respondents suggested the need for research on how to improve service delivery at One-Stops and how to provide better professional training and credentials for One-Stop staff. Others would like to see research on job search techniques.

Many of the suggested research topics relate to concerns that the current workforce system was developed based on an economy that no longer exists. These topics reflect the need to better understand the current economic landscape shaped by the forces of globalization. Paramount among these concerns was the need for significant efforts to identify emerging industries and changing employer skill needs, as well as how to prepare workers to participate in the changing economy. Reflecting the continued depressed labor market and high long-term unemployment rates, respondents suggested a number of topics relating to improving prospects for reemployment, not just for low-skilled workers but also for higher-skilled workers who may need to upgrade their skills.

The integration and better alignment of postsecondary education, training, and economic development was a frequently recommended area for further research. Respondents expressed interest in strategies to make better use of labor market information to shape curricula and inform students and job seekers. Other related topics included research on lifelong learning, credentialing, on-the-job training, basic skills training, and moving away from “quick fix” solutions to more comprehensive training programs.

Research on strategies for employer engagement was frequently cited, especially on how to seek input from employers regarding the identification of current and future skill needs. Sector and regional strategies continue to be a topic of interest. Several respondents suggested research on how the workforce system can work better with small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs.

Endnotes

¹ The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is an “organization of Wisconsin companies and unions who are dedicated to developing family-supporting jobs in a highly competitive business environment” (<http://www.wrtpp.org/why-we-succeed.php>).

² Project Quest, based in San Antonio, Texas, “defines the skills required to succeed in targeted, hard-to-fill occupations, then recruits, trains and develops adults so that they are qualified and ready for employment” (<http://www.questsa.org/About/History.html>).

³ Capital IDEA, based in Austin, Texas, “lifts working families out of poverty by sponsoring educational services that lead to life-long financial stability” (http://www.capitalidea.org/about_us.html).

⁴ See Erica L. Groshen and Simon Potter, “Has Structural Change Contributed to a Jobless Recovery?” *Current Issues in Economics and Finance*, Volume 9, Number 8, Federal Reserve Bank of New York (August 2003).

⁵ Andrew Sum and Joseph McLaughlin, “The Massive Shedding of Jobs in America: The Case Against Deficit Hawks,” *Challenge*, Vol. 53, No. 6 (November-December, 2010).

⁶ Randall W. Eberts, “The Response of the U.S. Workforce System to the Needs of Workers During the Great Recession,” Presentation to *Policy Responses to the New Economy: A Symposium Celebrating the Ray Marshall Center’s 40th Anniversary*, October 19, 2010.

⁷ See Andrew Sum and Joseph McLaughlin, “The Massive Shedding of Jobs in America: The Case Against Deficit Hawks.”

⁸ Among other reports, see: Andrew Sum, et al., “The Great Recession of 2008-2009 and the Blue-Collar Depression: How Are We Doing?” *Challenge*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (July / August, 2010).

⁹ *Five-year Research, Demonstration and Evaluation Strategic Plan for July 2000-July 2005*, USDOL/ETA.

¹⁰ *Five-year Research, Demonstration and Evaluation Strategic Plan for 2002-2007*, USDOL/ETA, March 2004.

¹¹ Among these reports were three issued by GAO: a 2010 report on problems with ETA’s research processes (GAO-10-243, January 2010); a 2009 report on the need for USDOL to focus more on what works and what does not work in WIA (GAO-09-396T, February 26, 2009); and a 2005 report on the the lack of information about WIA outcomes (GAO-05-650, June 2005). The 2010 GAO report describes OMB’s concerns

and pressure it brought to bear on USDOL/ETA to be more transparent in its research and to disseminate its reports more expeditiously.

¹² On November 8, 2010, USDOL announced \$12.2 million in grants to 13 states through the Workforce Data Quality Initiative: Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Workforce Data Quality Initiative funds will enable states to build or expand longitudinal databases of workforce data that also link to education data and help them analyze the effectiveness of employment and training programs.

¹³ In this case, non-program related investments are those that are **not** focused specifically on ETA's primary funding streams (i.e., Workforce Investment Act, Unemployment Insurance, Employment Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Registered Apprenticeship, and Job Corps).

¹⁴ Route management was a term coined in the Youth Offender demonstration. As these young adults resented the idea of being considered a "case" to manage, the service was redefined as helping someone to navigate their route out of criminal activity and into education/employment opportunities.

¹⁵ The Working Poor Families Project is a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Charles Stewart Mott, Ford, and Joyce Foundations focusing on state workforce development policies affecting working families. For more information, see: <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/about.html>

¹⁶ The Rockefeller Foundation was an early participant in the IWI Initiative as well.

¹⁷ Current research in this section is research where an interim or final report is expected to be completed in 2011 or later.

¹⁸ This paper includes ARRA studies as they relate to workforce and regional economic development.

¹⁹ Study was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.

²⁰ The 13 Workforce Data Quality Initiative states funded by ETA are: Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

²¹ Panel members were convened by teleconference on September 27 and November 15, 2010, and met in person in Crystal City, Virginia on December 14, 2010.

²² A conference call was held with ETA Regional Administrators to solicit their input on October 28, 2010.

²³ Telephone and in-person interviews with ETA and other DOL senior staff were conducted from October 2010 through February 2011.

²⁴ Joan Wills and Curtis Richards, *Draft Concept Paper for IWD* (n.d.).

²⁵ The Secretary of Labor's 38-member Job Training Partnership Act Advisory Committee issued a report, *Working Capital: Investments for the 90's*, in March 1989 that specifically recommended creating a line item in the JTPA appropriation to "create and sustain a network of multi-regional training institutes and institutional grants for a small group of colleges and universities" for the purpose of conducting research and evaluation (p. 32).



JOHN J. HELDRICH CENTER FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
30 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
732.932.4100
www.heldrich.rutgers.edu