STATE OF WISCONSIN

DWD

Department of Workforce Development

DWD Learning Agenda 2021-2025

Wisconsin DWD Learning Agenda July 2021 to June 2025

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Contents

Learning Agenda Overview and Summary

Agency: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD)

Agency Mission: DWD efficiently delivers effective and inclusive services to meet Wisconsin's diverse workforce needs, and advocates for the protection and economic advancement of all Wisconsin workers, employers, and job seekers.

Timeline: July 2021 to June 2025; This is a working draft that can be updated with changes to learning priorities, goals, and questions

Overview

DWD is establishing a learning agenda to meet DWD's Workforce Data Integration System's (WDIS) goal to increase evidence-based decision-making for both policy and practice. To meet this aim DWD will:

1. Base programs, policies, and service delivery on evidence as defined in the Federal *Foundations for Evidence Based Policy Making Act 2018* and the approved federal implementation plan (Vought, 2019).
    1.1 Evidence is defined broadly and includes information obtained from foundational fact finding, performance measurement, policy analysis, and program evaluation activities.
    1.2 *Foundational fact finding* includes literature reviews and "foundational research and analysis such as aggregate indicators, exploratory studies, descriptive statistics, and basic research".
    1.3 *Performance measurement* includes "ongoing, systematic tracking of information relevant to policies, strategies, programs, project, goals, objectives, and/or activities".
    1.4 *Policy analysis* includes "analysis of data, such as general purpose survey or program specific data, to generate and inform policy".
    1.5 *Program evaluation* includes "systematic analysis of a program, policy, organization, or component of these to assess effectiveness and efficiency".
2. Aim to understand the impact of DWD trainings, programs, and service offerings as a system of support.
3. Work as a team leveraging and managing collective data assets and build evidence efficiently to improve person and family centered outcomes.
4. Build evidence, with the expressed goal of making data available for use, internally and externally, to define and implement better service delivery in the communities DWD serves.

To ensure evidence-based policy and practice, implementation of the learning agenda needs to be timely. More specifically, learning priority questions should be answered in time for evidence to be available during decision-making periods. Evaluation findings should be shared, translated, and incorporated into DWD practices and policies. To serve this need the learning agenda outlines what are the goals and questions we should focus our collective effort on building evidence around.

Agency Strategic Goal Areas List:

1. Improving Employment Service and Training Outcomes
2. Using Labor Market Information (LMI) to Promote Sector Based Learning
3. Improving Customer Service and Service Alignment
4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Agency Strategic Goal Areas and Learning Questions List:

1. Improving Employment Service and Training Outcomes
   1.1 Are DWD program services, specifically training (such as career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment), followed by positive employment outcomes for clients?
   1.2 What new skills do DWD employment and training services, including career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment, teach job seekers and workers? Do these new skills increase employment rates and wages?
   1.3 How can DWD employment staff development and training improve service delivery, specifically in the areas of career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment, and subsequent outcomes?
   1.4 Are DWD employment and training programs cost-effective? How does the cost compare to the benefit of the program (e.g., filling job openings, faster employment placement, higher wages, better job match, etc.)?
   1.5 What combination of service delivery has the biggest impact on employment outcomes (in different areas of the state)? Are businesses more successful at retaining an employee if they were enrolled in more than one program?

2. Using Labor Market Information (LMI) to Help Job Seekers and Businesses Make Informed Decisions
   2.1 How do hiring and layoffs vary in different parts of the state? For example: What sectors are most impacted by an economic change? What types of workers are impacted by an economic change?
   2.2 What industry or occupational areas are looking for a higher number of workers? What employee skills are in high demand?
   2.3 What employment and training services (including career pathways, work-based learning and credential attainment) teach high demand skills, knowledge, and ability? How do employment and training services address changes in industry and sectors?
   2.4 How are career, training, education, and regional economic strategies aligned? How is worker self-sufficiency defined? Is alignment and self-sufficiency correlated?
   2.5 How are wages changing in industries and occupations?

3. Improving Customer Service and Service Alignment
   3.1 How can services be modified to increase the **accessibility** and **engagement** in available employment and training services, including career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment?
   3.2 How can technology help improve customer service and service alignment? Does this vary by region?
   3.3 Does DWD outreach and subsequent services increase Wisconsin workforce participation rates? Does DWD outreach and subsequent services help those unemployed to return to the workforce quicker with improved employment rates and wages?
   3.4 How do program training needs and staff training align? How does Human Resources (HR) obtain feedback from program staff on training needs? Is there any evidence that staff training improves customer service and service alignment?
   3.5 How often does inter-agency data sharing occur? Are there barriers to inter-agency data sharing?

4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
   4.1 Are programs reaching and serving clients from diverse backgrounds? What is the proportion of clients from different diverse backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, disability, and gender? What are participation rates and cancellation rates of underrepresented populations? How do service outcomes vary by race, ethnicity, disability, and gender?
   4.2 Are DWD staff proportionally diverse to reflect the clientele?

Agency Strategic Goal Details
Goal Area 1: Improving Employment Service and Training Outcomes

Learning Question(s)

1.1 Are DWD program services, specifically training (such as career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment), followed by positive employment outcomes for clients?

1.2 What new skills do DWD employment and training services, including career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment, teach job seekers and workers? Do these new skills increase employment rates and wages?

1.3 How can DWD employment staff development and training improve service delivery, specifically in the areas of career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment, and subsequent outcomes?

1.4 Are DWD employment and training programs cost-effective? How does the cost compare to the benefit of the program (e.g., filling job openings, faster employment placement, higher wages, better job match, etc.)?

1.5 What combination of service delivery has the biggest impact on employment outcomes (in different areas of the state)? Are businesses more successful at retaining an employee if they were enrolled in more than one program?

Addressing the Learning Question(s)

Background: Wisconsin's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state plan specifically focuses on using career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment training strategies to improve the economic advancement of Wisconsin employees and job seekers to better match job seekers to Wisconsin employer job vacancies. Evaluation of DWD training programs will help determine the effectiveness of these training services and inform service delivery, capacity development, and resource decisions.

Addressing the question(s):
Stage One: The main component is an *evaluation*, more specifically a longitudinal data analysis, to study the relationship between training services and employment outcomes, controlling for demographics and employment influencers. We will use the Workforce Data Integration System (WDIS) Longitudinal Workforce Database (LWD) as a main data source, and evaluators will pull and analyze data using a regression analysis, like a hierarchical logistic regression analysis or similar analysis, to measure the strength of the relationship. The three specific areas of interest for training services are career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment. Depending on the structure of the training programs and data analysis, we may have to study these as separate research questions.

Challenges and Partnerships: Anticipated data challenges include a) agreeing on and defining the training programs to include in data analysis, b) data sharing across agencies, c) obtaining and matching educational attainment data, and d) defining a living wage as an employment outcome measure. The statement of work process will lead to a more defined focus of the training programs included. We may need to secure a project and data partnership with Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and to establish this partnership we may want to utilize a secure cloud technology such as joining the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) sponsored Administrative Research Data Facility (ADRF) with our educational partners. This solution is designed to provide appropriate levels of security and governance to allow for the computational access to data required for this type of analysis. Additionally or alternatively, to access other post-secondary data needed for analysis we need

to expand our contract with National Student Clearing House. The Bureau of Workforce Information and Technical Services (BWITS) can provide support in defining living wage for data analysis purposes.

Stage Two: Subsequent *policy analyses and foundational fact finding* will be used to better understand what skills are being taught to clients, which skills are associated with higher employment outcomes, staff development and training influencers, and ways to calculate cost and benefits of services. The focus of investigation will be for the service period included in the stage one longitudinal data analysis.

- *Policy analyses* will include a review of the policy and implementation of training services. The aim is to discover the existing policy guidance dictating service implementation, the measuring of how services are implemented, and interpreting the service outcomes within these contexts.
- *Foundational fact finding* will be used to better understand the staff trainings and staff development. The aim is to systematically review staff trainings, specifically counting the number and types of each staff training, date of training(s), and any outcome measures of trainings (e.g., pre and posttest comparisons, training evaluations, etc.)
- Further *foundational fact finding and policy analyses* will be used to understand how to quantify both the costs and benefits of the DWD training programs. The aim is to systematically review literature, employment and training or other social services reports, and existing policy documentation and/or program data to identify the best way to quantify.

Challenges and Partnerships: Policy analyses and foundational fact-finding efforts may be limited by the amount and type of data available. For example, there may be limited data on the implementation of services, and staff trainings (especially regarding "effectiveness" of training). Even if data exist, data access may be limited to specific personnel. Limited data may make it especially difficult to measure the relationship between staff training, service implementation, and employment outcomes. Further, it may be hard to quantify both costs and benefits from existing data. The current analysis should focus on discovering available data through internal partnerships (e.g., working with HR and/or training staff to determine how to access data regarding staff training), learn from existing data, and provide recommendations for data collection efforts for further research projects in these areas. The fact-finding efforts should also include literature reviews and reaching out to experts and external research partners to learn better ways to collect and analyze data to answer these research questions.

When: From a high-level perspective, our goal would be to write a statement of work for this longitudinal analysis in the spring of 2021, subsequently define, pull, and analyze data from July 2021 to June 2022, to share results in June of 2022. Subsequent analyses in 2023 or 2024 would focus on the impact of combining services has on employment outcomes.

Goal Area 2: Using Labor Market Information (LMI) to Promote Sector Based Learning

Learning Question(s)

2.1 How do hiring and layoffs vary in different parts of the state? For example: What sectors are most impacted by an economic change? What types of workers are impacted by an economic change?
2.2 What industry or occupational areas are looking for a higher number of workers? What employee skills are in high demand?

2.3 What employment and training services (including career pathways, work-based learning and credential attainment) teach high demand skills, knowledge, and ability? How do employment and training services address changes in industry and sectors?

2.4 How are career, training, education, and regional economic strategies **aligned**? How is worker self-sufficiency defined? Is **alignment** and self-sufficiency correlated?

2.5 How are wages changing in industries and occupations?

Addressing the Learning Question(s)

*Background***:** Using LMI to promote sector-based training is one way to engage in evidence-based decision making and aligns with Wisconsin WIOA state plan strategy. "Sector programs train people for high-quality jobs in industries and occupational clusters that have strong local demand and offer the opportunity for career advancement" (Schaberg, 2020). LMI provides information on how to better connect job seekers to the Wisconsin workforce, with a focus on local economies, workforce needs, and financial stability. Aligning career, training, education, and regional economic strategies means employment and training services are based on regional economics. Alignment also means employment and training services are consistent with Workforce Development Area (WDA), technical college, and business development goals.

Addressing the question(s):
DWD's BWITS already engages in *foundational fact finding* to answer these questions on an ongoing and/or ad hoc basis. The learning agenda focus provides structure for staff to enhance this work and engage in a proactive strategy including a plan to refine the process to identify and share relevant data on an on-going basis. This may include partnership staff strategizing how to get information sooner, by region, by industry and by demographics. Relevant data include UI claims data, Job Center of Wisconsin (JCW) job listings, data in LWD on current employment and training programs and services, and program record review. The goal with this learning agenda area is to systematically tackle each priority question (one or two questions per year), by developing a statement of work to identify how to systematically answer each question on a regular basis, how to share data on a regular basis (e.g., via a public dashboard), and identify how the information can inform improved job searches, job matches, and local area and employer workforce development activities.

Challenges and Partnerships: We will have challenges with combining the data needed, finding a working, agreed upon definition of self-sufficiency, and calculating wages by occupation. The LWD may not have all the data needed to answer these questions. We will need to consider options to expand our capacities to combine data. This may include expanding the functionality of the LWD, building warehousing/dashboard tools that aid in the process and/or utilizing secure cloud technology such as joining the Midwest Collaborative: Data for Evidence-Based Policy Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF) as a mechanism and platform to feed and pull regular data for the purpose of answering these questions on a regular basis in a secure environment. Future work regarding self-sufficiency will be informed by past work in this area. Staff may need to determine assumptions to calculate a proxy or average self-sufficiency for most situations and discuss future data collection changes to improve the ability to calculate self-sufficiency in the future. Occupational employment Statistics (OES) data provides robust information about wages. However, these data are not timely enough to keep with changes in occupations that are changing rapidly and cannot be used to measure change over time. Because of its importance, we will need to work on providing additional resources to help employers understand how much then need to pay to retain and attract workers while still maintaining a profitable bottom line.

Agency Strategic Goal 3: Improving Customer Service and Service Alignment

Learning Question(s)

3.1 How can services be modified to increase the **accessibility** and **engagement** in available employment and training services, including career pathways, work-based learning, and credential attainment?

3.2 How can technology help improve customer service and service alignment? Does this vary by region and demographics?

3.3 Does DWD outreach and subsequent services increase Wisconsin workforce participation rates? Does DWD outreach and subsequent services help those unemployed to return to the workforce quicker with improved employment rates and wages?

3.4 How do program training needs and staff training align? How does Human Resources (HR) obtain feedback from program staff on training needs? Is there any evidence that staff training improves customer service and service alignment?

3.5 How often does inter-agency data sharing occur? Are there barriers to inter-agency data sharing?

Addressing the Learning Question(s)

Background: Wisconsin's WIOA state plan has a focus on improving customer service and engagement in services in part by better aligning services and supports across systems. For this reason, DWD aims to learn more about current customer service and service alignment, and what factors may improve both. One goal in the WIOA state plan is to increase participation in the labor market through improved engagement with Wisconsin residents not currently in the workforce, increasing their interest in work and subsequently helping them find a job in the local workforce.

Addressing the question(s):

These questions require us a significant amount of foundational fact finding and policy analyses prior to us doing any impact evaluations. We will use the following types of evidence building staged over the next four years. At each stage, we will learn information and build understanding that not only informs the next stage, but also other future research and learning related to this topic.

- *Policy analysis and foundational fact finding* to systemically explore existing data, program records and research literature to:
  - Identify what is known about outreach, engagement and alignment efforts, aimed to increase service participation, engagement and outcomes. (Year One)
  - Explore information regarding current outreach, engagement, alignment efforts and correlated these efforts with employment outcomes when/if possible. (Year Two)
  - Systemically identify ways to measure outreach and correlate these efforts to workforce participation rates. Exploring service alignment depends on data-sharing activities. We will do an analysis of the data, frequency, partnerships, availability and/or barriers impacting the required interagency data sharing. (Year Three)
- *Foundational fact finding* to:
  - Identify staff training efforts to improve customer outreach, engagement, and service alignment and once identified, explore the *evaluation* of these training efforts. (Year Four)
  - Explore DWD user testing to be conducted by members of the general public. In order to have systems that function intuitively, efficiently, and accurately, user

testing by a board or set of external stakeholders would result in improved systems, including online systems. (Year 4)

- *Evaluation* resulting from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) mandated program evaluation. We expect to complete an impact and process evaluation of RESEA. This population represents a significant proportion of our workforce clients and will be invaluable information during our investigation of these learning questions.

Challenges and Partnerships: A key challenge is the lack of clarity on what measures are available for outreach, customer service, engagement, service alignment, technology supports and accessibility. We will address this using fact-finding efforts to explore existing measures, and review research literature to explore different ways to track and measure these activities and this will help inform future evaluation or research needed in this area. We will consider using staff and client interviews to learn more about different types of outreach, customer service sand service alignment activities, as well as staff and client interviews or surveys to solicit information on different ways to increase accessibility and engagement through technology or other means or methods. These fact-finding activities will consider regional and socio-economic variables that may impact outreach, engagement, and service alignment. For example, the effectiveness of technological customer service supports may vary based on internet access, and reason for lack of internet access may vary by region (e.g., rural vs. urban).

Agency Strategic Goal 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Learning Question(s)

4.1 Are programs reaching and serving clients and employers from diverse backgrounds? What is the proportion of clients and employers from different diverse backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, disability, and gender? What are participation rates and cancellation rates of underrepresented populations? How do service outcomes vary by race, ethnicity, disability, gender, and age?
4.2 Are DWD staff proportionally diverse to reflect the clientele?

Addressing the Learning Question(s)

Background: One of the goals of the WIOA state plan is to improve equity. Data from the 2018 WTCS Systemwide Equity Report show clients of color have been disproportionately enrolled in training programs that will have them earning less than their white counterparts. The goal is to increase the diversity, equity, and inclusion in employment and training programs by increasing engagement in training programs that lead to improved employment outcomes, including higher mean wages, for clients of color. Further, the aim is to expand the talent pipeline of workers and employers to be inclusive of age, gender, race, ethnicity, and disability to meet industry demands for a skilled workforce.

Addressing the question(s): The focus of the initial learning questions *foundational fact finding and policy analysis* to first better understand program participation rates by age, race, ethnicity, disability, and gender. Subsequent *performance* analysis will aim to calculate program completion rates and outcomes by age, race, ethnicity, disability, and gender. The goal is to complete these calculations once the LWD is built and ready for use with the aim to complete calculations by the end of 2022, and in the subsequent year look at DWD staff diversity by calculating proportion of staff demographics by race, ethnicity, disability, and gender and

comparing these proportions to client demographics on a statewide and regional basis. This information will inform future evaluation and research in this area.

Challenges and Partnerships: Programs vary how they collect race, ethnicity, disability, and gender information, so it will be important to determine a consistent way to define age, race, ethnicity, disability, and gender across programs. Discussions should consider future data collection of race, ethnicity, disability, and gender that can be more consistent and allow for answering questions regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition, evaluators should review different ways others have determined client base adequately represents potential clients from different demographic groups. A thorough literature review and cross state collaboration may help provide examples on how to better measure diversity, equity, and inclusion within employment and training programs.

References

Schaberg, K. (2020). Sector strategies for success: Meeting the needs of workers and employers. *Ideas and Evidence 2021*, mdrc, https://www.mdrc.org/publication/sector-strategies-success.

Vought, R.T. (2019). *Phase 1 implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018*: Learning agendas, personnel, and planning guidance. Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/M-19-23.pdf

Appendix

IT Management Board (ITMB) Feedback and Considerations
- Emphasize department-wide learning goals and questions.
  - Cross-divisional engagement is critical.
  - Learning agenda is a working document and should be updated with updates of department-wide learning goals as these changes and adjust with leadership and stakeholder feedback.
- Acknowledge skepticism. Learn from past initiatives aimed at addressing similar goals. The learning agenda is an opportunity to identify and address barriers to move an initiative forward.
- Look for opportunities to demonstrate relevance of data analytics and data sharing to different divisions and different levels of staff.
- DET Leadership learning goal follow-up questions/considerations:
  - *In learning goals 2 and 4, does DWD customer data validates/contradicts the wage gap by gender, ethnicity, local area? Sample Question: Is the wage gap in health care greater than the wage gap in advanced manufacturing in urban vs rural areas?*
  - *1.4 Can cost benefit analysis also compare traditional costs for credentials to address taxpayer investment, quantify return on investment?*
  - *Does co-enrollment measure the effectiveness/alignment/coordination with workforce boards and other state agencies; are we measuring whether we successfully practice coordinated service delivery as referenced in the WIOA State Plan?*
  - *Can we identify how our customers access our services and whether our outreach efforts are aligned with our customer base within any of these learning goals?*
  - *Coordinated service delivery is a cornerstone of WIOA. How will the learning agenda inform/address the customer impact of service offerings of DCF, DHS and DOC as referenced in the WIOA State combined plan?*
  - *How do we evaluate measure the alignment between us and the boards in meeting the needs of our consumers? Will the data demonstrate the correlation of positive working relationships? We reference the staff training but what about the alignment of the training we provide the WDBs boards?*
  - *Questions 3 and 4 attests to our priority of service delivery. The outreach and engagement measures should validate whether we are fulfilling our stated mission. Of particular interest is the corresponding literature review and foundational factfinding for questions 3 and 4.*

Stakeholder Learning Agenda Feedback
- Goal 1: Improving Employment Service and Training Outcomes
  - Focus on sharing and collaborating; impact of collaboration helps programs; look at ETPL – credentials; recruiting talent across partners
  - Hope and goal to establish example data points for career pathways; expansion of national student clearinghouse data (logistics?); will use data to inform decisions
- Goal 2: Using LMI to Promote Sector Based Learning
  - Answers will be very beneficial; for job seekers, employers, service providers, general public; simplify how data can be interacted with; more accessible for larger audiences; governance structure and long-term operations good for combining data to tell complete story in a secure environment; help better stories
  - LMI highlights available jobs; focus training dollars for demand occupations; connect people to growing occupations and connect with jobs based on wages; able to focus on a specific industry of interest (e.g., childcare); importance of knowing what data are available and how to access the data (knowledge brokering); Title 1 worked with University of Washington data to define self-sufficiency and provide a tool to determine self-sufficiency; based on federal, state, and local rules and information
- Goal 3: Improving Customer Services and Service Alignment (Slide 13)

- o Doing data collection; current data are more quantitative than qualitative; collect and keep to ourselves; not as much sharing across areas; What do current data measure? Right thing to measure?
    - o ERD: Started to explore this learning goal, but can learn more; good at measuring who comes in (number of customers), but less at who's not coming in the door and should be; data management struggle – data to divisions and opportunity to draw from title partners
    - o DET: Not always reaching target audiences (why? funding?); JCW business suite of contact management tools that helps measure customer engagement (assess internal participant tracking; measure touch points); outreach and customer service not measured; greater will to track this in post pandemic world; pandemic lowered participation so need for market analysis
    - o IRP: National research suggests disparity of access to UI/other benefits; Could uptake of services be a good measure for outreach? What is the outreach strategy? linking with other programs can help fill in gaps and answer question who we are not serving but should be
    - o DO: Provide support to program divisions; expand ability to gather data for decisions making internally; build upon and integrate findings from this group to support divisions
    - o DVR: What are we doing as a whole? consider automating data gathering; DVR gathers customer satisfaction information, but only applies to those who have completed services
    - o Big takeaway: Current data systems do not identify whom we are not serving; data sharing could be instrumental to answering that question, but need to be considerate about how we do this to protect clients' privacy rights
- Goal 4: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Slide 14)
    - o When making policy changes don't have a way to measure impact of DEI; look at data for we are not serving (denying)
- Questions and Answers
    - o What does "balancing" mean?
        - ▪ "Balancing" was the process the research and evaluation team used to make sure learning goals and questions addressed each the following areas:
            - • Short-term; long-term; strategic; operational; agency goals; divisions/bureau's; different types of evidence; geographical areas; and capacity needs
            - • With a "mix and balance appropriate for DWD's structure, priorities, and capacity"
            - • See https://oes.gsa.gov/toolkits/ Learning Agenda Toolkit Activity 2 Supplement)
    - o Is there an effort to seek collection of other or not currently available data that may help answer policy questions?
        - ▪ If existing data are not sufficient to answer a learning question, exploration of collecting new or accessing not currently available data will be considered. This effort depends on priority and building partnerships and may involve using secure data sharing tools and analytics that meet partners' needs, priorities, and data sharing policies.
    - o Where does information from Hot Jobs in WisConomy come from?
        - ▪ https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconomy/pub/hotjobs.htm#Viz
        - ▪ Source: Measures of education and training: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (bls.gov)
            - • https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/education/tech.htm
        - ▪ Information based on projections (2018 to 2028)

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