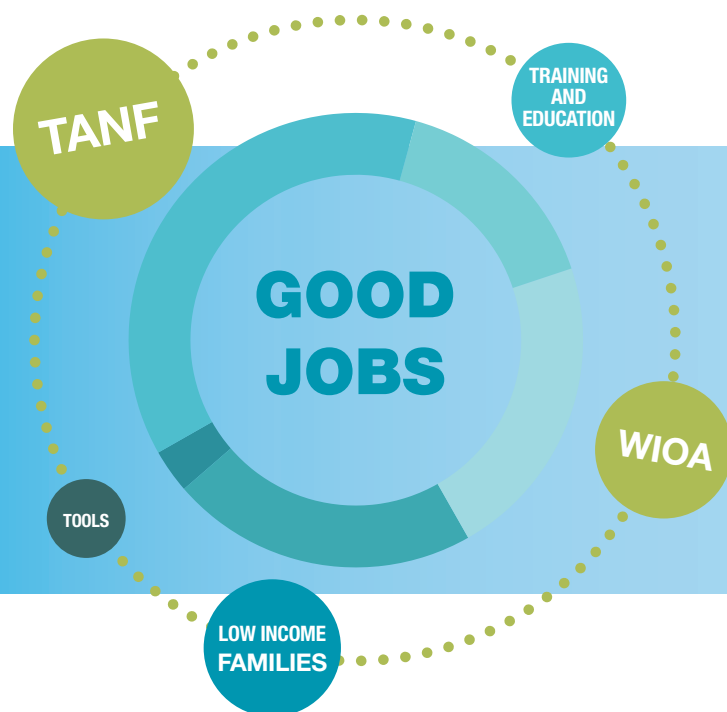


Using Data to Connect TANF Clients to Good Jobs: An Opportunity to Foster WIOA Partnerships

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I. INTRODUCTION

TANF practitioners aim to build a bridge between clients and good jobs, which can be thought of as those characterized by plentiful job openings, sufficient hours, living wages, job security, and the potential for promotion and career advancement. Connecting clients to such jobs is no easy task, but having the right tools and resources can make it easier. Labor market information (LMI) is one tool that can be used to improve TANF agencies' ability to match clients to in-demand jobs requiring levels of education and training that TANF clients can achieve. LMI data provide information about good jobs available locally and the training and education requirements for those jobs. This information is useful for assisting clients making important decisions such as which jobs to apply for and whether to seek more training and education to prepare for existing job opportunities.

This report aims to provide TANF practitioners with basic information about LMI—including what LMI is, what it can be used for, who produces LMI data, and key distinctions between types of LMI—to help them identify opportunities in which LMI can support their work and be useful to TANF clients. It also aims to provide TANF practitioners with the language necessary for communicating clearly with labor agency staff. This knowledge can be deployed to increase the use of LMI in-house or to build strong partnerships with labor agency staff that will support TANF job development and placement.

In each section of this report, we provide different information about LMI. In Section II, we provide a definition of LMI and describe some of the major types of LMI. Section III describes the tools and services informed by LMI that can be used to benefit TANF clients, and Section IV offers concrete suggestions for building TANF-labor agency partnerships. The conclusion summarizes challenges and benefits associated with using LMI.

BOX 1. WIOA AND LMI

In July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) became law, giving state labor agency staff new incentives to collaborate with TANF agencies and serve TANF clients. Under the law, labor agency staff must collaborate across state agencies to serve vulnerable workers, including low-income adults who face barriers to economic success.

TANF agencies can take advantage of this policy change to gain assistance in using LMI to help their clients find good jobs. These data provide information about wages; unemployment levels; and the education, training, and credential requirements of various occupations. Practitioners in the workforce system have long relied on this type of data to assist clients who make decisions about employment and training. TANF service providers, however, have used LMI much less frequently.

Because of limited time and resources, it can be challenging for TANF agency staff to take full advantage of LMI, but labor agency staff can help fill the gaps. When resources allow, collaboration can streamline and strengthen efforts to more efficiently help TANF clients connect with good jobs.

II. AN INTRODUCTION TO LMI

As TANF practitioners strive to connect TANF clients to good jobs in their geographic area, they can benefit from many types of LMI. LMI can be used to generate information about a range of subjects including: local economic conditions and how those conditions are predicted to change; the entry-level jobs available in the areas where clients live; and the gains in earnings associated with additional training, all of which can help shape agency practices to benefit TANF clients.

In this section, we describe what LMI is and how TANF agencies can use it to support TANF activities. We provide information on how to locate helpful sources of LMI, and the terminology necessary to communicate clearly with state departments of labor about LMI and build WIOA partnerships. After defining LMI, we describe different types of LMI that are available. Finally, we close the section with a discussion of how state labor agency staff can assist TANF staff in accessing and using LMI.

Defining LMI

Labor market information, or LMI, is data and predictions related to the supply of and demand for workers; the wages and training associated with specific occupations and industries; and unemployment levels, often broken down by education level, geographic location, industry, or specific occupation. More formally LMI is defined as “the publicly available collections of facts, data, or analysis related to a particular labor market, including economic and business trends that can be used by information users to make decisions.”¹ Less formally, “it’s basically any data or analysis that relates to the workforce.”²

LMI includes a wide range of information and can vary in these characteristics:

- **The part of the labor market described.** Some data describe current workers and their occupation or industry; others describe job openings.
- **The source of the data.** Some LMI is based on surveys of workers, employers, or both; other LMI comes from online databases of job postings or résumés; and some incorporates economic modeling.
- **The geographic focus.** Some LMI is representative of the whole U.S. economy and other data are available only for specific states or cities. The most widely used data are structured to provide information at the national, state, metropolitan area, and sometimes even the county or town levels.
- **The time frame.** LMI can describe the very recent past, capture real-time information, or make projections into the future.

¹ Manhattan Strategy Group. “Introduction to LMI.” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2011, p. 9. Available at winwin.workforce3one.org/view/2001124244305694193/info.

² “Introduction to LMI,” p. 10.

Taken together, these distinctions mean that there are many kinds of LMI available that can be used to answer different kinds of questions. In Table 1, we present examples of the types of questions that LMI can help answer and the data sets that can be used to find answers. (For more information on these and other specific data sets, see our companion resource guide, “Resources for Connecting TANF Recipients and Other Low-Income Families to Good Jobs,” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/resources-for-connecting-tanf-recipients-and-other-low-income-families-to-good-jobs>). Following the table, we discuss two key distinctions between types of LMI: (1) traditional versus real-time and (2) pre-tabulated versus individual-level.

Table 1. Common questions about jobs and the data that can answer them

Question	Data source
Which industries and occupations have job openings in our state and where are they located?	Burning Glass Technologies’ Labor Insight
What are the skills and abilities required for specific jobs?	Occupational Information Network Database (O*NET)
What wages could TANF clients expect to receive depending on the line of work they pursue?	Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)
How has the number of job openings been changing recently in my region?	Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS)
What is the average earning level of a high school graduate living in the same area as our clients?	American FactFinder
Which local employers are hiring right now?	Help Wanted Online
What occupations are expected to grow in our state over the next 10 years?	Long Term Occupational Employment Projections

LMI can be traditional or real-time

The type of LMI available has changed along with technology. In the past, analysts had to rely exclusively on survey and administrative data—which take time to process—to describe prevailing economic conditions. Analysts can use this type of data in combination with economic models to create predictions about the future. This type of data and projections are referred to as traditional LMI.

Traditional LMI uses surveys and administrative data. Traditional LMI is based on employer and worker surveys or on administrative data such as tax or wage records. This is the most widely available and comprehensive kind of LMI. The main drawback of traditional LMI is that it takes time, often months, to prepare accurately. However, these data are carefully compiled and weighted to ensure that they are representative of the U.S. labor market (and smaller geographical units) and as accurate as possible. State and federal government agencies, most notably the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), publish such information on their websites, where it is available free of charge.

Employment projections are another type of traditional LMI. To create projections, labor market experts use economic modeling and information about current labor market conditions to develop predictions of how they expect the labor market to look in the future. The complex models used to create projections have been adjusted over time to match actual trends as well as possible. Unforeseen events can influence the economy in ways that no model can predict, but projections facilitate making informed guesses about the future. Projections developed by the BLS in collaboration with state LMI agencies are available for free at CareerInfoNet.org and ProjectionsCentral.com.³

Traditional LMI can help frontline TANF staff identify training and credentials that will help connect their clients to jobs with good future prospects. Projections identify occupations that are expected to have the most openings in a given state in the years to come and can also offer information for smaller geographic areas within a state. By combining this information with other LMI (for example, information about occupational entry requirements), TANF agencies can identify promising occupations that require only short-term education or training, which their clients will have time to complete. See our companion brief “Promising Occupations Achievable through Short-term Education and Training for Low-Income Families” (available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/promising-occupations-achievable-through-short-term-education-or-training-for-low-income-families-introduction>) for examples of this strategy.

Real-time LMI uses job postings to provide the most current information. Technological advances have allowed for the creation of more immediately available LMI. Real-time LMI comes from pulling up-to-the-minute information from online sources. Using job postings and résumés and other online information, the creators of real-time LMI gauge the number of available opportunities in specific areas, industries, and occupations. Real-time information can also include information on educational and training levels associated with different occupations. Our companion resource guide (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/resources-for-connecting-tanf-recipients-and-other-low-income-families-to-good-jobs>) lists sources of real-time labor market information in Appendix F.

Although it can be helpful to use the most up-to-date information available, real-time LMI has several potential drawbacks. First, real-time LMI is not typically free. Vendors require users to purchase licenses, although some TANF agencies might be able to access real-time data through subscriptions purchased by state labor agencies. Second, real-time information might not be as accurate as traditional LMI. For instance, it could double-count jobs or résumés posted multiple times in different sources. Third, because it is based on online data sources, real-time LMI is not representative of the whole labor market; for example, it does not capture job openings filled by word of mouth, through temporary agencies, or through union halls. Online postings are likely to be most accurate for occupations that require bachelor’s degrees or higher levels of education, because these are the jobs most often advertised online.⁴

³ West Virginia differs from other states in that it does not list projections on centralized websites. Employment projections for the state are published at www.workforcewv.org/lmi/.

⁴ Carnevale, A., Jayasundera, T, and Repnikov, D. “Understanding Online Job Ads Data: A Technical Report.” Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2014.

Given the benefits and limitations of both traditional and real-time LMI, it is typically a good strategy to use a combination of both types. Traditional LMI provides an accurate and relatively up-to-date picture of current labor market trends at low or no cost, and real-time data can alert TANF staff to fast-occurring changes.

LMI can be pre-tabulated or individual-level

The distinction between traditional and real-time LMI refers to the way LMI is prepared, but LMI can also vary in how it is presented and analyzed. Some data are made available in prepared, ready-to-use tables, whereas other data come in large files that require analysis. The most useful type of data depends on the specific information needed.

Pre-tabulated LMI is ready to use. When TANF staff seek information on the specific populations they serve, they can turn to various sources of LMI that present information in prepared tables already organized by education level, for specific demographic groups, or by geographic area. For example, the BLS presents Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data in prepared tables so that a data user can easily look up information for a specific region or demographic group (such as Latinos or women). For an example of a pre-tabulated LAUS table, see <http://www.bls.gov/lau/table14full14.pdf>.

When pre-tabulated data speak to the questions that TANF agencies are interested in asking (for example, have low-educated workers regained employment following the Great Recession?), it is efficient to turn to these data sources. Pre-tabulated data are analyzed by experts and no time is required to manipulate them, though it might take time to find the relevant information or to translate the information into a format that suits the needs of the TANF agency.

Individual-level LMI can be analyzed to answer specific TANF questions. LMI can also be accessed as individual-level data that TANF or labor agency staff could use directly to create breakdowns and reports tailored to their agency's needs. Available individual-level sources of LMI include the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and the American Community Survey (ACS), all of which are nationally representative and randomly sampled. Much of these individual-level data have to be analyzed with statistical software packages like SAS, SPSS, Stata, or R. However, user-friendly tools, such as American FactFinder and CPS Table Creator (<http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>), which are described in the resource guide's Appendix F, can also be used to pull useful information from some of these individual-level data sources.

Individual-level sources of LMI are particularly powerful because they can be tailored to answer very specific questions. For example, TANF administrators might be interested in understanding differences in the employment trajectories of young single mothers who enter different occupations in their state: in which occupations do young single mothers continue working for at least a year, and in which do they stop work earlier? To answer this question, it could be more efficient to analyze individual-level data than to search for prepared data, which might not exist.

State labor agencies can help TANF agencies access LMI

State labor agencies employ LMI experts and may be prepared to offer assistance in accessing and using these data. One way state labor agencies make LMI more accessible is by providing links to state and local LMI on their websites. At a minimum, each state labor agency provides state-level data on the number and average wages of workers in each occupation and industry, as well as projections on the number of job openings for each occupation and industry 10 years into the future. LMI available from state labor websites is described in more detail in Box 2.

BOX 2. LMI AVAILABLE ON STATE LABOR WEBSITES

You can find a variety of types of LMI on your state labor agency website.

Current Employment Statistics (CES). CES is compiled from monthly surveys of businesses and government agencies on earnings, hours worked, and employment levels. The CES can be broken down by state, metropolitan statistical area, and employment “super-sectors” such as “manufacturing” and “financial activities.” Data are released monthly.

***Possible uses.** Because the CES is the most up-to-date data set on employment and wages for a local area, it can be used to access timely information about the overall health of a local economy and short-term changes in the demand for workers, including in super-sectors likely to employ TANF clients.*

Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS). The LAUS data set combines census data, survey data, and data from Unemployment Insurance records to estimate the size of the labor force and the unemployment rate at the national, state, county, and city levels. Regional- and state-level data are available about three to four weeks after the reference month; metropolitan-level data are available four to five weeks after the reference month.

***Possible uses.** LAUS data can be used to compare unemployment rates across geographic areas, providing a picture of competition for jobs relative to available job openings in states and local areas.*

Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections. Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections use information about anticipated population and economic changes in an area over time to predict how occupations are expected to grow or contract and which will have job openings in the future.

***Possible uses.** Projections can be useful when making plans for the future. This information can be used to identify occupations that are expected to grow in order to develop training programs or suggest where clients apply for jobs.*

(Continued)

BOX 2 (Continued). LMI AVAILABLE ON STATE LABOR WEBSITES

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). OES uses a semiannual survey of 1.2 million business establishments to estimate the number of workers and average wages in each occupation. OES data can be organized by state, metropolitan area, nonmetropolitan region, and industry.

***Possible uses.** Unlike other data sources that group workers together by industry, which can conflate data on different occupations (for example, the health care sector includes both nursing assistants and doctors in the same category), OES groups people by occupation. For example, it groups together all administrative assistants who work across a variety of industries. Its user-friendly tools can help staff inform clients about the wages that various occupations pay in a region.*

Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). Available on most state LMI websites, QCEW is a “near census” of wages and employment based on Unemployment Insurance data. QCEW can be organized by industry and by state, county or county-equivalent, and metropolitan statistical areas. Quarterly data are available six to seven months after the end of a given quarter.

***Possible uses.** QCEW is the most accurate nationwide data source on employment and wages. It can provide information on what industries employ the most workers and on how wages have changed over time in your area.*

In addition to the standard LMI data sets available on all state labor websites, some state labor agencies offer other data and resources that could prove helpful to TANF agencies in their state, as in these examples:

- Florida provides links to real-time LMI purchased from Help Wanted Online and compiled into monthly reports by region that include occupations in demand and top employers based on job postings (<http://www.floridajobs.org/labor-market-information/products-and-services/help-wanted-online>).
- Minnesota offers data from its biannual job vacancy survey of 10,000 firms in 13 regions. The data can be analyzed at the state level or by region using a tool that provides information about job vacancies, wages, and education requirements by occupation and industry (<http://mn.gov/deed/data/data-tools/job-vacancy/index.jsp>).

State labor agencies could be a TANF agency’s most useful resource for accessing LMI-related data, getting training in how to use them, and creating useful analyses. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and state departments of labor are already routinely producing LMI and related

resources. Because these resources are tailored to a labor audience, TANF administrators might consider collaborating with labor agency staff to learn about these resources and how to use them. By directly working with state labor agencies, TANF agencies may be able to receive step-by-step instructions for data analysis. For example, the Florida Department of Economic Development offers customized, in-person training on how to use LMI. Similarly, Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry posts video tutorials on how to use LMI on PAWorkStats, the same website where it posts the state's LMI (<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1465393&mode=2>). For additional ideas about how to reach out and form partnerships with labor staff, see Section IV of this report.

III. TOOLS AND SERVICES THAT USE LMI

LMI can play an important role in the provision of services and development of resources to help connect TANF recipients to good jobs. The previous section described how LMI can be useful at the agency level, but TANF clients and frontline staff can also benefit from using these data. TANF clients can use tools informed by LMI to assess how their skills and interests match the opportunities available in their local labor market and to make decisions about their own next steps. TANF frontline staff can use LMI to target job development efforts and TANF administrators can use it to develop training programs for their clients.

In this section, we first describe readily available resources that TANF clients can use today. We then describe how LMI can be used to (1) target specific economic sectors for job development, (2) identify promising short-term training programs for TANF clients, and (3) develop career pathways initiatives. To close, we discuss opportunities to create customized tools, either in-house within TANF agencies or in partnership with labor agencies.

Use immediately available tools to help TANF clients identify high-growth jobs and short-term training

Evidence from research suggests that when case managers provide guidance and support to clients that is informed by LMI, clients have more positive outcomes compared to clients who do not receive any guidance.⁵ Fortunately, TANF case managers can use readily available tools to help clients integrate LMI into their job search activities in a user-friendly way. For example, they can use career exploration tools, which enable clients and case managers to browse information about the average wages and growth rates of specific occupations. Here are some examples of career exploration tools:

- Virtual Career Network provides resources for pursuing jobs in fields that LMI suggests are growing, such as green jobs or health-related professions. Using Virtual Career Network, clients can choose a growing field, enter their zip code and education level, and see a tailored list of the occupations available in their area, including the number of jobs and associated salary ranges.
- Using DOL's Skills Profiler, clients can match their interests to a variety of occupations. Clients first identify the skills that they have and rate their strengths in each area. They can then compare their skills to those required for a variety of jobs to see (1) where they have matches, (2) which jobs would require them to obtain more skills, and (3) the average wages for jobs located in their zip code. Clients can also start with a job they are interested in and find out which of the necessary skills they have and the other jobs that match their skills.

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "What Works in Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2014. Available at <http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/jdt/jdt.pdf>.

- My Next Move provides information about which jobs are high-growth and the level of training, skills, and aptitudes that jobs require (see Box 3).

These same tools can be used to help clients choose the right training. Tools such as Virtual Career Network provide links to local training opportunities alongside information about jobs. There are also tools designed specifically to help clients seeking out training opportunities. For example, after a client has used Skills Profiler, My Next Move, or a similar tool to identify additional skills or training he or she will need to get a desired job, DOL's Local Training Finder can help the client locate a training program. Other tools, such as Indiana's Hoosier Hot 50 Jobs (described in Box 4), provide locally tailored information about which jobs have openings and their training requirements. Depending on a client's needs, these tools can be used independently by clients or case managers can provide assistance in navigating them. For more information about these and other resources, see our companion resource guide.

Use LMI to target job development

Job developers within TANF agencies typically use a variety of strategies to locate good jobs for their clients—they search web postings, talk to local employers, and pay attention to which businesses are opening and closing in their area. They could also use LMI to focus their efforts on industries and occupations that offer strong employment prospects for TANF clients.

Data analysts in TANF or labor agencies could use LMI to determine industries, occupations, and specific employers that are most likely to have job openings for which TANF clients will be competitive applicants. They could further identify job openings that are likely to provide workers with sufficient hours, living wages, job security, and the potential for promotion and career advancement. TANF job developers and administrators could use this information to make

BOX 3. DOL'S MY NEXT MOVE

My Next Move is a useful resource for learning about career options and high-growth jobs. It packages job data for about 900 careers from O*NET into a user-friendly format. Users can search for careers by keyword or industry or by completing an online assessment that matches users to careers based on their interests. Users can also sort careers by the level of education required, ranging from little to no preparation to high or extensive preparation. The medium preparation level—requiring vocational school training, on-the-job experience, or an associate's degree—might be of most interest to TANF recipients thinking of pursuing additional training.

When a career is selected, users can find out what a person in the occupation typically does day to day; what knowledge, skills, and abilities the occupation requires; what personality type fits best for the occupation; and what technology a worker would use on the job. Users can also link directly to available training programs in their local area. Importantly, users can access information about the expected job growth of selected careers; those expected to have growing opportunities in the future are highlighted as “bright outlook” occupations.

BOX 4. INDIANA'S HOOSIER HOT 50 JOBS

Indiana's Hoosier Hot 50 Jobs website (<https://netsolutions.dwd.in.gov/hh50/jobList.aspx>) ranks promising occupations based on current openings, projected growth, and median wages. It also flags those occupations with current openings and high short-term projected growth as being "hot now." The list presents other important information about each job, including required education or training and median salary, in an accessible and engaging format. A photo and short video of an Indiana worker currently in the occupation accompany each job listing. In the video, workers describe pros and cons of the occupations and how they prepared for them. When users identify occupations of interest, they can use links to connect to relevant training resources and online job postings.

Although Hoosier Hot 50 Jobs was not designed exclusively for a TANF audience, filtering by required education would enable TANF frontline staff and recipients to navigate a range of promising career options that require short-term training and education.

strategic choices regarding which possibilities to pursue when developing subsidized job programs or relationships with employers.

Use LMI to identify short-term training programs with long-term payoff

LMI can also be used to help TANF agencies decide how to invest in training programs and partnerships. LMI can help identify programs that are likely to lead to good jobs for training participants. Employment projections can help determine which jobs are likely to have available openings in the future. LMI can also indicate growing jobs that require entry-level employees to have completed short-term training or earned a credential. Finally, LMI can indicate what these jobs will pay, which is important for moving TANF clients toward self-sufficiency. Taken together, this information can help TANF administrators and frontline staff make informed decisions about which training programs to invest in or encourage their clients to pursue.

Some agencies prepurchase spaces in a local training program to guarantee that TANF recipients can participate. Others run training programs in-house or contract with external training providers. No matter how a given TANF agency invests its training dollars, LMI can help ensure that the investment is a good one.

Use LMI to create long-term career pathways initiatives

Similarly, LMI can help TANF administrators think about whether and how to create career pathways or sector-based strategies. Career pathway programs help clients of diverse ability levels access education, training, support services, and credentials in lines of work that will help them succeed and progress over time.⁶ A sector strategy is a workforce development approach that targets the needs of a specific industry sector and may involve education and training providers, businesses, community organizations, state agencies, and others as collaborative partners.

⁶ Alliance for Quality Career Pathways. "Shared vision, strong systems." Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2014, p. 12.

LMI can be used when developing career pathway or sector strategy initiatives to ensure that the targeted industries and occupations are in demand, are growing, and offer self-sufficient wages and advancement potential. LMI can help determine which industries and employers are best positioned to hire TANF recipients and help them progress in their careers, thereby helping TANF administrators decide with whom to partner. LMI can also be used to determine what training and education is required of the targeted occupations and should be offered as part of a career pathway. In Box 5, we describe how Arkansas used LMI to develop its Career Pathways Initiative.

Creating career pathways and sector strategies can offer other opportunities for collaboration between TANF and labor agency staff. The workforce system is currently shifting toward expanded use of employer- and industry-focused training approaches.⁷ This means there might be more labor-sponsored sector-based initiatives in which TANF recipients could participate. Or there could be opportunities for TANF administrators to contribute to discussions that shape new programs in ways that benefit the TANF population. WIOA also encourages the creation of career pathways. Given this change, local workforce agencies might have an increased interest in partnering with TANF agencies to develop career pathways that are exclusively or partly targeted to TANF recipients.

BOX 5. ARKANSAS' CAREER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

Arkansas has used LMI to shape a career pathways initiative for TANF recipients and other low-income workers. The state began its TANF-funded Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) in 2003. A 2007 law mandated that the CPI career pathways lead to high-paying, high-skilled jobs that meet the needs of local employers. To determine which jobs were high-paying and high-skilled, community colleges in the state hired outside consultants, Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) and the Workforce Strategy Center. Using LMI, these consultants identified three high-growth industries: health care, general business administration, and manufacturing.⁸ Most of Arkansas' 400 CPI programs train students to be placed into one of these three industries. CPI administrators have also collaborated with Arkansas' LMI agency to gather data on job openings for the initiative. The agency publishes information on the top 25 employers (based on job openings) and includes information on the salaries and locations of available jobs. Community colleges and CPI participants can use this information to learn about available opportunities. Using LMI in the design of the CPI has enabled Arkansas to develop a labor pool that meets the needs of local employers.

⁷ See "Ready to work: Job-driven training and American opportunity." Washington, DC: The White House, 2014.

⁸ Note that the frequency of monitoring LMI varies by state. In Arkansas, the target industries for the Career Pathways Initiative have not changed over the ten years that the program has been operating. Staff have continued to monitor the LMI but changes to the career pathways target industries have not been needed. On the other hand, other state economies, like Florida, have changed more rapidly and could require more frequent checks. Determining how often staff should review the LMI could be an important topic to discuss with state labor staff.

Use LMI to develop customized tools that meet TANF needs

Although existing tools can be useful, TANF agencies might be interested in tools that are tailored to and address the specific needs of their clients. Using LMI, they might be able to develop such tools independently or with the help of labor agency staff.

TANF agencies could create tools in-house. If a TANF agency has the capacity and interest, LMI could be used in-house to create tools that help match TANF recipients to good jobs. LMI can be used to identify jobs in a given area that are projected to grow in the future, have available job openings, and pay self-sufficient wages. This analysis could be used to create lists of promising jobs for TANF recipients that are readily available in a given area and that they could access with only short-term training. For an example of this approach, see the companion brief “Promising Occupations Achievable through Short-term Education or Training for Low-Income Families.”

This approach could be extended to help clients identify programs in their local area that offer the training and education required for promising careers. An example of this type of tool developed by DOL is Local Training Finder (<http://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-local-training.aspx>), which allows users to search for training programs in a given geographic area by occupation, school, or program. Once identified, the training and education programs could be added to the list of promising jobs. Frontline staff and clients could then use this tool to help determine if there is a promising career opportunity that is a good match for their interests and where they may be able to pursue additional training or education to meet the job requirements.

Use WIOA partnerships to create new tools or adapt existing ones. Although TANF staff might have the skills necessary to use LMI to create new tools specifically tailored to the needs of TANF clients, some TANF agencies might not have the fiscal resources to invest in creating such tools. Fortunately, labor agency staff in some states have already created tools that could be tailored to fit the needs of the TANF population. For example, the Hoosier Hot 50 Jobs tool described in Box 4 could be modified to focus only on jobs that require short-term training but no bachelor’s degree. If a state does not have these types of tools and there are sufficient resources available, labor agency staff might be able to replicate those from other states, adapt one of their existing tools for a TANF audience, or partner with TANF to create something new from scratch.

Oregon’s Career Explorer is another example of a tool created by labor staff that is useful for TANF clients. Developed by Oregon’s Employment Department and available at QualityInfo.org, this tool incorporates occupational projections, employment and wage data, and job postings to highlight jobs that require relatively little formal education or training. Information can be filtered by region within the state, and the tool provides links to Oregon institutions that provide the training necessary for listed positions. This tool, which department staff update regularly, is useful for matching TANF clients to jobs that are available locally and require skills they already have or can quickly develop. Labor agency staff in other states might be able to develop similar tools tailored to their states’ TANF population.

IV. LMI PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD WIOA PARTNERSHIPS

LMI is a valuable resource for matching TANF clients to good jobs, but it requires the investment of time and money to use effectively. Building a partnership with labor agency staff can help to maximize the benefit to clients that will come from the investment TANF agencies are able to make. The state labor agencies that collect and publish local LMI can be a valuable resource for identifying useful data and learning how to use them most effectively. They could also be a valuable resource in developing new tools and information to address TANF agencies' needs.

Labor agency staff could provide a variety of services that could serve as building blocks for longer-term partnerships between them and TANF agencies:

- Developing or adapting state-specific, user-friendly job search tools to be used by TANF staff or clients (as discussed in section III)
- Training TANF administrators, frontline staff, or data analysts on how to access and use LMI (discussed below)
- Using LMI to create and present tailored analyses about the labor market in a given state (discussed below)
- Creating ad hoc reports or providing specific data that can be useful in considering training and job opportunities for TANF clients (discussed below)

There are many ways to connect with state labor agency staff, most of which involve receiving assistance with data or partnering for mutually beneficial efforts. In the following discussion, we describe four possible ways to get connected: (1) using WIOA as a starting point, (2) requesting training, (3) inviting labor agency staff to present to TANF agencies on labor market trends, and (4) asking for ad hoc reports based on LMI.

Use WIOA as a starting point

Passage of WIOA provides an opportunity to start a conversation with labor agency staff about LMI and resources that could help connect TANF recipients to good jobs. WIOA mandates greater coordination between TANF and workforce agencies and makes TANF a required partner of the workforce system (unless governors decide to opt out). It also requires workforce agencies to prioritize service to public assistance recipients and other low-income people. Further, it encourages the implementation of career pathways by making them an allowable activity and a function of state and local workforce boards. Finally, it requires that individual employment plans identify career pathways for youth, adults, and dislocated workers.

These changes provide a useful framework for TANF and labor agency staff to work more closely and share resources and expertise. State departments of labor have access to—and expertise in—LMI, career exploration and assessment tools, and relationships with employers. TANF agencies have direct contact with priority populations that the workforce system aims

to serve. For example, WIOA increases the percentage of youth funding to be spent on out-of-school youth (defined as young people ages 16-24), and TANF agencies could help workforce agencies meet their out-of-school youth service goals through referrals of TANF recipients ages 16 to 24 to WIOA-funded programs. Together, TANF and labor agencies might be able to develop employment and training opportunities in promising occupations for TANF and other disadvantaged clients and help link these clients to the available opportunities. For example, workforce programs offer services—including career counseling, job search assistance, and training programs—that TANF recipients may qualify for and benefit from. Collaboration could also benefit local workforce agencies—for example, by tapping into TANF agencies’ understanding of the needs and circumstances of disadvantaged populations.

Discussing some of these specific opportunities could facilitate conversations about how TANF and labor agencies can work more closely together. If conversations along these lines have not yet started, they can provide a useful jumping-off point for discussing opportunities for collaboration under WIOA. In Box 6, we provide guidance on how to get in touch with labor staff. In Box 7, we present examples of the types of questions TANF administrators and staff may ask labor agency staff in order to start building a partnership.

Request training

LMI agency staff might have the capacity to provide training to TANF staff. This could include training for data analysts on available LMI data sets and the analysis or programming required to answer specific questions. It could also include training of frontline staff on how to integrate LMI and related tools into their service delivery. For example, in Florida, the state’s Bureau of Labor Market Statistics uses a case study approach to train frontline labor agency staff on how to use LMI with their clients. During the training, staff complete the O*NET Interest Profiler—an assessment tool for determining a person’s career interests—posing as a typical client receiving labor services. They are then taught how to use LMI and tools available online to see how their skills and interests align with local, in-demand job opportunities. Labor agency staff could provide

BOX 6. CONTACTING A STATE LABOR AGENCY

One good way for TANF agency staff to start partnering with labor agency staff is to reach out to its LMI agency. Each state has an LMI agency that produces its LMI. These agencies can also produce data analyses and tools based on these data that can be useful to TANF agencies.

The LMI Institute maintains a state LMI directory (<http://www.lmiontheweb.org/Directory/#cards>) that has the contact information for the LMI directors in each state, providing an excellent resource for locating these professionals. For more information on this resource, see our companion resource guide (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/resources-for-connecting-tanf-recipients-and-other-low-income-families-to-good-jobs>).

BOX 7. WHAT QUESTIONS WOULD BE USEFUL TO ASK MY LMI AGENCY?

1. Do you offer training on how to use LMI to inform service delivery?
2. Do you have tools or resources available for data analysts or frontline staff to use?
3. Do you have the capacity to conduct analyses of LMI for low-skilled workers?
4. Can you create other ad hoc reports and analyses?

other possible types of training to TANF administrators and frontline staff. LMI staff can provide training on the data analysis and other supports they can provide and explain how these data and support can help address TANF agency needs. Other labor agency staff might be able to conduct training on resources and tools they have available to help connect TANF recipients to good jobs and required training and education. Such training could cover career exploration tools, lists of promising occupations, or available training programs for clients.

Invite labor agency staff to present data on employment trends

Another opportunity to connect with labor agency staff is to invite LMI agency staff to present data on the local labor market at TANF meetings. For example, Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS) invites Employment Department and the Office of Economic Analysis staff to make presentations on economic trends at quarterly TANF meetings attended by field leadership and contracted providers. The information presented includes changes in employment by industry and county. DHS forecasters work with labor agency staff to tailor the presentation to a TANF audience. Local TANF leadership uses this information in planning and determining provider contracts.

Request ad hoc reports

State LMI agencies typically have the capacity to create ad hoc reports to answer specific questions about local labor markets. Instead of trying to analyze the available (individual-level) LMI in-house, TANF staff could ask their labor agency counterparts if they have the capacity to create customized reports to share. For instance, a TANF administrator could ask labor agency staff for a report on what entry-level, low-skill occupations are predicted to have large numbers of future job openings in his or her agency's area, focusing on jobs that require less than a bachelor's degree or provide on-the-job training.

For example, Florida's Bureau of Labor Market Statistics has the capacity to create these types of ad hoc reports. In the past, the bureau provided wage tables, occupational projections, and a custom report on occupations available for people with less than a high school diploma that labor agency frontline staff could use to guide clients with limited education to available jobs. Other states' labor agencies might be able to provide similar assistance, which could be used with TANF clients.

In addition, labor agency staff might be able to provide assistance to TANF agencies with analysis of LMI conducted in-house. If TANF analysts conduct their own analyses, they could work with labor agency staff to improve accuracy, avoid duplication, and identify new areas for collaboration.

V. CONCLUSION

TANF practitioners aim to connect TANF clients to good jobs that correspond with their skills and interests. This report has described how LMI and related resources, tools, and services can help TANF practitioners meet this goal. LMI and related resources can provide TANF staff and clients with helpful, concrete information, such as the wages and possibilities for promotion associated with potential jobs. LMI and related tools can help TANF agencies focus on the most promising lines of work and opportunities in their regions, determine the related training and education requirements, and identify or create training programs.

Although LMI can be useful, the resources necessary for identifying and correctly using LMI in the TANF context can be limited. A WIOA partnership can help state agencies address the scarcity of resources by streamlining separate agency efforts and in the process help to achieve a number of distinct goals. Labor agency staff can share existing resources, such as local LMI, to help TANF administrators make informed decisions about where to invest training funds. They can also provide customized information about jobs available in the local economy or provide training for TANF data analysts as they use traditional and real-time LMI to support the work of TANF agencies. Finally, LMI tools, perhaps borrowed from or developed in partnership with labor agency staff, can help frontline TANF staff connect their clients to good jobs.

Collaborating with state departments of labor to connect TANF recipients with good jobs is already happening in some parts of the country and is likely to increase given the passage of WIOA. Three state agencies that serve TANF clients described in this report—Arkansas, Florida, and Oregon—provide strong examples of successful collaboration. These are not the only states where such collaboration would be beneficial. Across the country, state TANF and workforce agencies hold complementary resources and knowledge that can help each agency meet its respective goals. Building relationships among these agencies can help connect TANF clients to good jobs that match their skills and interests and set them on a stronger path toward self-sufficiency.

