


TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 3-12
	DATE August 3, 2012

TO: COMPREHENSIVE ONE-STOPS
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STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE ADMIN WIA
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WIB LOCAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

FROM: JANE OATES
Assistant Secretary 

SUBJECT: New Research Reports: Release and Availability of Three Papers from the 2010 Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Research Papers Program

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of three papers prepared by individual researchers or researchers from independent or small firms competitively awarded funding as part of the 2010 ETA Research Papers Program.

2. Background. The ETA Research Papers Program was reestablished in 2009. The program has maintained two objectives: 1) to provide relevant and evidence-based information to stimulate discussion and action among individuals working on the front-line of service delivery in the public workforce investment system and partner organizations, and 2) to simultaneously support innovative and scholarly investigation in the field of employment and training among individuals currently employed or preparing for employment in workforce training, economics, and/or research.

3. Publication Description. Under the 2010 ETA Research Papers Program, individual researchers or researchers from independent or small research firms competed for funding to conduct research and develop papers examining a variety of workforce-related topics such as the utilization of detailed work activities in career exploration, development, and planning; understanding the role of local Employment Services offices in North Carolina rural communities using qualitative and quantitative methods; and lessons learned about the use of career pathways models in two of the green jobs training grants. Below are brief summaries of each completed research paper.

Job Content and Skill Requirements in an Era of Accelerated Diffusion of Innovation: Modeling Skills at the Detailed Work Activity (DWA) Level for Operational Decision Support,
prepared by Marc Anderberg, SkillsNET Foundation, Waxahachie, Texas.

This paper discusses the pace of technological advancement and innovation, and the need for both the demand and supply sides of the labor market to evolve to remain economically relevant. The research conducted examines the labor market at the macro and micro levels to describe an understanding about helping employers, job seekers, workforce intermediaries, and education and training providers better align and meet required skills needs of occupations. To make the needs of the labor market understandable for each of these stakeholders and address the problems of reemployment and employability, the paper explains how utilizing detailed work activities (DWAs) required by occupations address labor market needs. DWAs are the discrete and precise activities required of and critical to an occupation. DWAs are described in a common language for comprehension of the content of the work and the context in which it is performed. Further, the specificity of DWAs enhances skills-gap analyses and processes for recognizing transferable skills. Occupations compared against an individual's acquired attributes can be matched more easily on the basis of these activities. For example, making revenue forecasts is one of several DWAs for the occupations of Budget Analyst, Accountants, and Treasurers and Comptrollers. The use of several DWAs provides the specificity needed to appropriately and effectively understand an occupation. When DWAs are used, whether the purpose is for job announcements, resumes, interviews, position descriptions, curriculum development, counseling and job development, all parties in the workforce system and labor market will be speaking and comprehending a similar language. Proper use of DWAs helps employers and human resources staff to develop clearer job descriptions and announcements to more effectively attract and hire, or promote highly qualified workers. In the same context, education and training providers and workforce intermediaries at One-Stops or community-based organizations are also better able to prepare and assist job seekers. Ultimately, the individual job seekers are appropriately trained in the necessary activities required of occupations. Employment opportunities are better aligned with jobseeker interests and specific skill-sets acquired through previous performance of and education and training identified in DWAs. This study also describes the important role of labor market tools in understanding and identifying DWAs necessary for occupations.

The Employment Service in Rural North Carolina: Insights from the "Great Recession,"
prepared by John Quintero, South by North Strategies, Ltd., Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Established in 1935, the North Carolina State Employment Service (ES) provides publicly-funded labor exchange services to all interested workers—both those with and without jobs—and to all interested firms in North Carolina. Services are delivered remotely and through a network of 90 local offices. Besides providing labor exchange services, the ES, a division of the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina (ESC), manages unemployment insurance claims at the local level, administers the "work test" required of insurance claimants, and serves as a mandated partner in the state's network of JobLink Career Centers, 63 percent of which are housed in ES offices. This study explores the role of the local offices of the ES in rural communities during the Great Recession (2007-2010). Attention centers on the argument, as

advanced by state policymakers, that local ES offices ensure equal access to workforce investment services in rural communities. To that end, the study breaks down the argument into six distinct hypotheses and examines them quantitatively and qualitatively. The hypotheses are that:

- rural residents, particularly the rural unemployed, are a “hard-to-serve” population;
- most individuals establish ties to the public workforce investment system through the ES;
- compared to their urban counterparts, rural residents prefer in-person services;
- because rural residents prefer in-person services, the existence of local offices boosts enrollment rates in related public workforce programs relative to those in metro areas;
- rural residents who use local ES offices develop deeper ties to the public workforce investment system; and
- local ES offices compensate for the “thin” workforce networks in many communities.

Specifically, the project documents the evolution of North Carolina’s service model, analyzes administrative data pertaining to service usage, and solicits stakeholder perspectives through semi-structured interviews. The study concludes by offering program recommendations and suggesting avenues for future inquiry. In particular, the ES and ESC might consider reexamining the current arrangement of the local office network and whether it is currently over-represented in rural areas. Further, the ES and ESC might consider adopting a regional approach to rural service delivery over a “one-size-fits-all” rural service strategy. Additional research into state-level differences in the organization of labor exchange services could help address programmatic gaps that have troubled the workforce investment system for some time.

Green Jobs and Career Pathways: An Arranged Marriage in Service to a 21st-Century Workforce Development System, prepared by Ellen Scully-Russ, Ed.D., The Center for the Study of Learning, The George Washington University, Washington, DC.

This qualitative study examines the early start-up experiences of two U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration energy training partnership grant recipients, Vermont Green and Renewable Northwest (ReNW) of Oregon, applying different career pathways models. The paper explores the proposition that green job career pathways will modernize the education system and build new opportunity structures into the labor market. It begins with a review of the literature on green jobs, exploring the number of ways green jobs are defined, the dynamics of the green jobs labor market, and the debates and implications for government policy and intervention into the green economy. This paper also includes a historical review of the career pathways model and an analysis of the literature on how the model is used by practitioners to improve education and job training programs and develop new curricula, skills certifications and credentials. Findings about applying the career pathways model to prepare workers for green jobs from the two grant recipients included in the study are noted. For each grant studied, the paper also explains how the early start-up of each partnership was affected by the context of each case; whether and how stakeholders experienced a need to make systemic changes; and the numerous challenges each faced. The findings affirm and challenge propositions about green jobs career pathways in the literature and provide lessons for policy and practice. For instance,

the experiences of both the Vermont Green and ReNW grantees affirm that green jobs are skilled jobs that require skills in short supply and offer meaningful work with advancement opportunities. At the same time, the experiences of the grants challenge that green jobs have low barriers to entry or that there are shortages of workers in the core industries that are becoming green. In another case, the experiences of both Vermont Green and ReNW affirm that the green industry can be unstable, creating an uncertainty in the number of workers and types of skills needed. At the time of the interviews with Vermont Green, solutions to this challenge were still in development. ReNW's strategy is to sync the supply and demand sides of local green jobs by holding listening panels for employers and workers.

4. Availability. To view or download abstracts of reports or full publications, visit the ETA Research Publication Database Web site at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.

5. Inquiries. Please contact Michelle Ennis in the Office of Policy Development and Research's Division of Research and Evaluation at ennis.michelle@dol.gov.