

U.S. Department of Labor  
Employment and Training Administration

# Five-Year Research and Evaluation Strategic Plan Program Years 2012-2017





## Assistant Secretary's Message

Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis articulated a clear vision to guide our work – “good jobs for everyone.” The workforce investment system plays a vital role towards achieving the Secretary’s goal by assisting workers who are facing significant challenges in gaining new skills and re-establishing themselves in viable career paths.

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA), as the steward of the public workforce investment system, recognizes the importance of identifying effective new strategies, finding ways to improve existing programs with promising practices, and creating models or blueprints for replication to continuously improve the workforce investment system. ETA is committed to a rigorous and transparent research and evaluation process to identify and build the evidence for sound practices to support jobseekers with getting the skills and services they need to earn living wages.

The need for timely, evidence-based research and evaluation is critical to support data-driven program management and policymaking, and to inform strategic decisions on income support, reemployment efforts, and training investments. ETA has much to improve upon from the past decade in its research processes, and we are committed to reinvigorating and refocusing ETA’s research agenda to emphasize our agency’s commitment to the critical role of workforce research and dissemination.

As part of ETA’s commitment, I am pleased to introduce ETA’s *Five-Year Research and Evaluation Strategic Plan for 2012-2017*. This Research Plan sets the research agenda; it is the first step in an iterative process to identify, prioritize, and carry out research and evaluations over the next five years. Broad input from a range of stakeholders was used to develop the Research Plan.

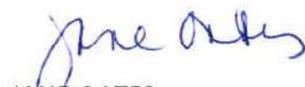
Unlike past Research Plans, this plan includes both significant ETA and non-ETA funded research that can improve the way we do business. I would like to recognize and thank those who have contributed to our body of knowledge, such as regional, state, and local agencies; foundations; universities; non-profits and associations; businesses; independent researchers; and Federal agencies that have collaborated, shared findings, and continue to conduct and evaluate important employment and training initiatives. Collaboration and leveraging of funds will be an important part of our ability to maximize limited resources to continue the expansion of our evidence-based knowledge. We must continue to support collaboration throughout all levels of the local, state, and Federal governments, as well as with other important partners and stakeholders in the workforce community.

I would also like to thank those in the workforce community who have participated in past and current pilots, demonstrations, research, and evaluations. Whether providing vital data for analysis or often serving as pioneers to test new ideas and innovations, our body of knowledge could not exist without the tremendous efforts and participation of the local and state agencies and service providers who are on the front line providing essential services to America's jobseekers.

I would like to thank the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University for their interest and support in conducting an extensive literature review of workforce-related activity that was funded not only by ETA but across other Federal agencies and our important stakeholders. The Heldrich Center also coordinated the effort to identify the research gaps described in this plan based on its literature review and a broad outreach effort and consultative process, which included working closely with a National Advisory Expert Panel and soliciting and synthesizing feedback from our stakeholders to ultimately develop a list of high priority topic areas.

Finally, I would like to thank the over 600 individuals who provided feedback to the Heldrich Center, the 20 members of the National Research Advisory Panel for volunteering their time and expertise, and the contributions made from ETA staff across the regions and in the national office, the Department of Labor Chief Evaluation Officer, and the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.

As Secretary Solis has stated, "By using data and evidence to drive our budget development and program planning while constantly evaluating the impact and outcomes of our work, we ensure that our collective efforts are as effective as possible." This Research Plan helps us in this process as we continue to find better ways to get America's workers back to work.



JANE OATES

Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training

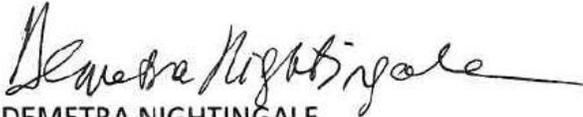
## *Chief Evaluation Officer's Message*

Evidence-based policy and programming is of critical importance. Tight budget climates have coincided with more demand for the services of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and our responsibility to provide effective and efficient programs for our nation's workforce is paramount. It is critical that we encourage rigorous and relevant research and evaluation studies that will identify which of our programmatic activities effectively achieve their impacts and discover what new and innovative activities can improve the outcomes DOL is tasked with achieving. The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) works collaboratively with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and all the DOL agencies, to implement, manage, and coordinate the Department's evaluation program to achieve these goals.

The Department's research and evaluation studies are going beyond simply tracking program outputs or describing program activities to investigating how our programs change people's futures by conducting rigorous research when programs appear to warrant this type of investigation. At the same time, to continue to be good stewards of taxpayer money, our research also seeks to identify reliable performance measures that do relate to impacts. Program staff can use these measures on an on-going basis to improve and innovate programs and the Department can fund the most efficient strategies.

ETA's five-year research and evaluation strategic plan addresses these challenges head on, focusing efforts on priority areas of need and on cross-cutting learning opportunities. Building on previous studies that both DOL and others have conducted, the plan also identifies crucial areas where improvements could be made to facilitate rigorous research and evaluation efforts. The results of this research and evaluation agenda will allow for strategic modifications to ETA's programs, but will also inform agencies across DOL and the Federal government.

We are excited to partner with ETA in their research and evaluation agenda and look forward to the insights and lessons that will result.

  
DEMETRA NIGHTINGALE  
Chief Evaluation Officer





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## I. INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) is to contribute to the more efficient functioning of the U.S. labor market by providing high quality job training, employment, labor market information, and income maintenance services primarily through state and local workforce development systems. On behalf of American taxpayers, ETA administers programs that have at their core the goals of enhanced employment opportunities and business prosperity.

The purpose of the *Five-Year Research and Evaluation Strategic Plan for 2012-2017* (Research Plan) is to provide assistance to ETA in identifying high priority topic areas when planning research and evaluation over the next five years. Under Section 171 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), after consultation with States, localities, and other interested parties, the Secretary of Labor is to prepare a plan that describes demonstration and pilot, multi-service, research, and multistate projects that focus on employment and training priorities for the five-year period following the plan. The plan is to contain strategies to address national employment and training problems and take into account factors such as the availability of existing research; the need to ensure results that have interstate validity; the benefits of economies of scale and the efficiency of proposed projects; and the likelihood that the results of the projects will be useful to policymakers and stakeholders in addressing employment and training problems. The plan is to be transmitted to the appropriate Committees of the Congress. While not required, but to better coordinate ETA's efforts, ETA has consistently included evaluations under Section 172 in the Research Plan.

In the development of the plan, WIA also calls for the consultation of interested parties to address national employment and training problems. This Research Plan has been developed in accordance with the requirements of WIA. Under a grant from ETA, the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (Heldrich Center) took part in an effort aimed at identifying research gaps and high priority topics for workforce systems. The Heldrich Center produced a paper summarizing these efforts entitled *Identifying Gaps and Setting Priorities for Employment and Training Research*. Information has been taken directly from this paper and adopted as core parts of Chapters II, III, and IV of this plan, which sets an agenda for research and evaluation.

This Research Plan is comprised of five chapters:

- Chapter I introduces the role of the plan in informing the decision-making process for carrying out research and evaluation.
- Chapter II identifies significant recently completed research and evaluation projects conducted in the years from 2005-2010.
- Chapter III identifies current and ongoing research and evaluation efforts.
- Chapter IV recommends five high priority topic areas for research.
- Chapter V summarizes the role of the plan.

Through the Research Plan, ETA will be able to identify specific projects under the priority areas, in accordance with available resources, mandates, and other criteria. In addition to ETA, the information in this plan can also be used by other Federal agencies and stakeholders of the workforce community interested in identifying research priorities for their own organizations that can contribute to the overall body of workforce-related research.

## Research Plan Overview

**T**he Research Plan sets an agenda to provide guidance for ETA when planning projects for research, evaluation, demonstration, pilot, multiservice, and multistate projects.<sup>1</sup> The Research Plan provides ETA with an array of information on research that should be taken into consideration over the next five years, from program years 2012–2017, based on consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> ETA will continue to fund projects in accordance with the WIA statute.

### *Process for Developing the Research Plan*

To develop the plan, ETA utilized feedback that the Heldrich Center obtained from a range of external stakeholders who provided unique perspectives of potential research and policy issues that could be addressed. Specifically, the Heldrich Center utilized a 20-member National Research Advisory Panel (Advisory Panel) that was comprised of individuals from state agencies, national associations, for-profit research organizations, non-profit policy research organizations, business, and academia. The Heldrich Center held discussions and in-depth follow-up interviews with the members, as well as convened three Advisory Panel meetings throughout September 2010 to December 2010, to discuss and identify key research and evaluation priority areas. (See Appendix B for a list of the National Advisory Panel members.)

In addition to the Advisory Panel, the Heldrich Center received feedback through a survey of over 660 stakeholders representing state and local workforce agencies, professional and labor associations, and community organizations; held discussions with ETA senior and program staff from across the regions and in the national office; and held discussions with other Department of Labor (DOL) officials.

In conjunction with the consultation process, the Heldrich Center conducted an extensive review of recently completed research on labor market operations and trends, workforce development, unemployment insurance (UI), and related issues funded by key public and private, philanthropic, and other organizations; and reviewed ongoing research funded by Federal and other organizations.

Finally, ETA requested feedback from the DOL Chief Evaluation Office and ETA research and program offices, as well as public comments through an announcement in the *Federal Register*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “research” and “evaluation” are used interchangeably throughout the report to refer to all pilots, demonstrations, research, and evaluations, including those with multistate and multiservice characteristics.

<sup>2</sup> Program Year 2012 begins July 1, 2012 and ends June 30, 2013. Program Year 2017 begins July 1, 2017 and ends June 30, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The *Federal Register* notice was published on October 28, 2011.

<http://webapps.dol.gov/federalregister/HtmlDisplay.aspx?DocId=25434&Month=10&Year=2011>

## Role of the Research Plan

The Research Plan is part of the first of five key phases of a sound research process, which the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identifies below:<sup>4</sup>

**Agenda Setting.** Agencies should establish a structured process for developing their research priorities. The process should identify how agencies set research priority areas and provide for updating the areas on a regular basis. The process should also allow for the consideration of critical issues and state how internal and external stakeholders will be included in developing the plan.

**Selecting research.** At this phase, the process should identify how the research programs' staff identifies and selects studies to fund, including the criteria it uses to make those decisions. Steps might describe how the staff assembles a list of potential studies, works with internal program offices, and makes final decisions.

**Designing research.** During the design phase, the process should identify steps taken to select appropriate research approaches and methods and the safeguards in place to ensure appropriate tradeoffs are made between what is desirable and what is practical and between the relative strengths and weakness of different methods.

**Conducting research.** At this stage, the process should include policies and procedures to guide the conduct of research. The process should ensure that key events, activities, and time frames are specified and that knowledgeable staff in the sponsoring agency monitor the implementation of the research.

**Disseminating research.** This process should describe how research findings are made available to the public and disseminated to all potential users. These dissemination methods should include safeguards to ensure research findings are disseminated in a timely manner and are accessible through the Internet with user friendly search and retrieval technologies.

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<sup>4</sup> GAO cites the American Evaluation Association and the National Academy of Sciences as sources in the identification of these key phases (GAO-11-285).

## ***Agenda Setting and Selecting Research***

To set this agenda and select research projects, the ETA Research Plan is based on a process that included feedback from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and a set of criteria to make final investment decisions. In addition to using the Research Plan to identify and address critical gaps in workforce-related research, other criteria that is used to prioritize and select research proposals for each program year include: (1) Congressional mandates that stipulate the conduct of research and evaluation<sup>5</sup>; (2) strategic priorities from ETA, DOL and the Administration; (3) requests from other Federal agencies to partner, leverage resources, and/or co-fund workforce initiatives; (4) program-level topic areas identified by ETA, other Federal agencies and/or oversight entities such as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and GAO; (5) unforeseen developments (such as the recent economic recession and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which require a refocusing of resources); (6) timing of appropriations bills that may have implications on ETA's ability to fund and execute research<sup>6</sup>; and (7) the feasibility of conducting a rigorous study, which takes into consideration the practicality and interest of sites implementing the research and carrying out data collection efforts, program and policy relevance, availability of data, timing, and total cost of the research effort.

Finally, it is important to note that planning for and funding long-term rigorous research and evaluation initiatives, such as outcome and impact studies to answer questions about what happens to individuals in the long-term, are further constrained due to the lack of appropriation and procurement language in legislation that would allow ETA to conduct these multi-year research initiatives in a more efficient and effective manner. Important research questions may include: Did individuals find a job? What type of job did they find? Did they remain employed, and for how long? Did they earn sufficient wages? Did they complete their training and/or credential certification? Did they find a job after participating in training? Examining any one or combination of these types of questions requires sufficient time to elapse that would allow for the individual to experience these possible outcomes. That is, outcomes of individuals are not immediately known; rather, it often takes years for individuals to go through the process. However, appropriations law restricts ETA's ability to enter into multiyear research due to: (1) the requirement for upfront funding of the evaluation in its entirety; and (2) limited life of funds. Further, access to microdata from states and security issues related to microdata continue to be challenges.

Once ETA reviews priorities against ETA's budget, as well as takes into consideration the challenges related to long-term studies, short descriptions are prepared typically by research and program staff, in collaboration with DOL's Chief Evaluation Officer (CEO), and are submitted to the Assistant Secretary for approval. As part of ETA's review of potential studies to recommend, and working closely with the Chief Evaluation Office, ETA may consider other important criteria such as:

- Would the research be undertaken in the absence of ETA funding?
- Would the research add to ETA's understanding of promising but understudied workforce development innovations?
- If research is focused on a particular group, did that group in fact experience significant labor market problems?

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<sup>5</sup> GAO recognizes that, "The Congress influences an agency's program evaluation choices through legislating evaluation authority, mandating studies, making appropriations, and conducting oversight" (GAO-11-176).

<sup>6</sup> Many of these criteria were also identified in the GAO report (2011) on *Program Evaluation: Experienced Agencies Follow a Similar Model for Prioritizing Research* (GAO-11-176).

## ***Designing and Conducting Research***

Upon the selection of research projects, ETA is responsible for the design of Statement of Works (SOW), Requests for Proposals (RFP), and Solicitations for Grant Applications (SGA). ETA works closely with the CEO in designing SOWs, RFPs, and SGAs. Working with the Office of Grants Management and the Office of Contracts Management, contractors and grantees are selected to carry out research and evaluation projects.

Once contracts and grants are awarded, meetings to discuss the study objectives and evaluation design are held with the contractor or grantee, ETA research and program staff, the DOL Chief Evaluation Officer, as well as other relevant Federal agency staff. Based upon the information gathered at the meetings, the contractors develop an implementation plan and/or evaluation design report. Generally, the Division of Research and Evaluation within the Office of Policy Development and Research of ETA is responsible for assigning staff to provide ongoing project monitoring, including overseeing the project implementation and data collection efforts of the research and evaluation projects, and completion of the study reports and other deliverables.

## ***Disseminating Research***

ETA is responsible for the review and dissemination of the research and evaluation deliverables, such as interim and final reports. When reports are finalized and approved by the Assistant Secretary, they are posted on the ETA Web site [www.doleta.gov/research](http://www.doleta.gov/research)<sup>7</sup> and announced through a Training and Employment Notice (TEN) to an email list of more than 50,000 subscribers.<sup>8</sup> As part of the dissemination process, an ETA briefing is typically held, with authors presenting findings from recently completed studies to an audience that has included ETA staff, other Federal staff, Congressional staff, and other stakeholders.

In addition, ETA highlights the research findings through other avenues, such as through research conferences and research forums. ETA-sponsored research conferences and forums explore new strategies, evaluate promising practices, and highlight evidence-based research that can promote innovation and improve practice in the workforce system. These events also examine issues related to trends, challenges, and impacts of the macroeconomy on the workforce system. They are an opportunity for ETA, other Federal agencies, policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other interested parties to learn about new research in the field of workforce development. In 2009, ETA convened a two-day Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference to showcase research findings, and to provide a unique opportunity to hear from and engage in discussions with authors of influential workforce studies and practitioners who were in the forefront of testing and implementing innovative services in their state or local area and in employing evolving research and survey methods. Attended by over 400 workforce stakeholders, the conference convened ten plenary and special presentations; and 30 workshops covering a range of workforce topics, including unemployment insurance and reemployment services programs. Prior research conferences took place in 2001 and 2003, with more limited research showcased at annual ETA workforce conferences held between 2005-2008.

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<sup>7</sup> DOL's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy 's (OASP) Web site also posts information about ETA research and evaluation (see [www.dol.gov/asp/programs/REIDL/index.htm](http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/REIDL/index.htm) for the OASP Research and Evaluation Inventory and Documents Library, and [www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation](http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation) for the OASP, Office of the Chief Evaluation Officer Web site).

<sup>8</sup> Number of subscribers for the TEN, as of April 2011.

ETA encourages authors to present findings at other ETA-sponsored conferences, as well as other conferences sponsored by Federal agencies and associations, such as the Office of Policy, Research, and Evaluation within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF); the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management; the American Evaluation Association; and others. ETA also supports emerging Research Scholars, through rounds of grant awards to individuals conducting research on pertinent workforce topics. Further, ETA acknowledges the important contributions of research funded by other agencies and organizations and encourages authors' participations in ETA-related conferences and meetings, such as with prior ETA Research Conferences and future ETA Research Forums and briefings.

## A Forward-Looking Agenda

The consultation process used by the Heldrich Center, as part of a grant with DOL, is an important component in setting the research and evaluation agenda. Their extensive literature review is also critical in identifying gaps in employment and training research. Building on the findings from the consultation process and literature review, the following high priority research topic areas were identified:

1. Understanding Changing Labor Markets;
2. Identifying Effective Strategies;
3. Improving Workforce System Infrastructure;
4. Addressing the Needs of Special Populations; and
5. Building Research Infrastructure and Support.

The public workforce investment system continues to face challenges resulting from the economic downturn and changing needs of the system in order to better respond to jobseekers and employers. Research and evaluation of workforce programs and initiatives has a significant role in identifying effective workforce services, and the partnerships, collaborations, and participation of internal and external stakeholders are critical components in understanding what works and what does not work.

Beyond ETA's use of this Research Plan, ETA encourages other workforce stakeholders to refer to *Identifying Gaps and Setting Priorities for Employment and Training Research* as a source of information in their process for developing their own priorities for carrying out critical research and evaluation projects to improve the public workforce system.

## II. COMPLETED RESEARCH (2000-2010)\*

A review of the literature from 2000 through 2010 shows that a range of Federal agencies, state and local governments, as well as foundations, international organizations, and others are engaged in research related to the field of employment and training. The research published during this timeframe included demonstrations and analyses for specific populations of workers (e.g., youth, low-wage, immigrant, ex-offender, unemployed, older), as well as evaluations of services, training, and support strategies within the workforce investment system.

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

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

### Employment and Training Administration

#### *Workforce Investment Act*

A number of ETA-funded studies have focused on various aspects of WIA, such as an evaluation of early WIA implementation led by Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA), two studies on the new performance management and measurement systems (Pearlman et al., 2005; Dunham et al., 2006), and the analysis of sub-state allocation formulas (Wiegand, 2003). Two other reports— a study by Westat on the WIA allotment formula (Jacobson et al., 2002) and a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University looked at how states might use ETA's then-recent demonstration research and evaluation projects to aid the implementation of WIA (Barnow and Gubits, 2003). Other research examining how state and local areas implemented and adjusted to the WIA legislation includes SPRA's examination of workforce development in rural areas (Dunham et al., 2005), the Rockefeller Institute's study of *WIA in Eight States* (Barnow and King, 2005), and the *Anatomy of a One-Stop* project conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri (Mueser and Sharpe, 2006) and the Jacob France Institute (Stack and Stevens, 2006). These studies provide important examples of the breadth and variety of experiences and structures in the publicly-funded workforce system.

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\* This section utilizes and cites the literature review in *Identifying Gaps and Setting Priorities for Employment and Training Research* (Van Horn, King, and Smith, 2011). Updates and edits have been made in the organization of the content.

ETA funded IMPAQ International to conduct a non-experimental, matched-comparison group evaluation of WIA in 12 states. The *Workforce Investment Act Non-Experimental Net Impact Evaluation* (Heinrich et al., 2008) found that participation impacts were greater in the Adult program than in the Dislocated Worker program, and that women received greater benefits from participation than did men. The researchers suggested a number of next steps, including a meta-analysis of the differences among state programs and a cost-benefit analysis of WIA services.

ETA also funded an earlier quasi-experimental study of WIA employment and earnings impacts (Hollenbeck et al., 2005) that was conducted by researchers at the Upjohn Institute and the University of Texas at Austin's Ray Marshall Center associated with the *Administrative Data Research and Evaluation* (ADARE) project. The 2005 quasi-experimental analysis of employment and earnings impacts in seven large states similarly found that "WIA services, including training, are effective interventions for adults and dislocated workers, when measured in terms of net impacts on employment, earnings, and receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for participants" (Hollenbeck et al., 2005, p. 30).

Individual training accounts (ITAs), a new method for funding training under WIA, also were the subject of a series of studies. These studies were part of the proposed research agenda in ETA's first Five-Year Research Plan, targeting identified priority areas, including understanding the impact of self-directed employment services. Between 2000 and 2010, ETA funded a 13-state demonstration of ITAs and the use of Eligible Training Provider (ETP) lists. Preliminary findings from the demonstration helped inform the design of the random assignment evaluation on ITAs, which examined ITA take-up rates under various frameworks, such as maximum customer choice or structured/guided choice, and included impact and benefit-cost analyses. The mixed-methods evaluation of the demonstration, which was conducted by Mathematica Policy Research (Mathematica), documented how states developed their ITA/ETP policies and procedures (McConnell et al., 2006). ETA extended the evaluation period in 2008 and funded a second round of participant follow-up surveys to identify longer-term impacts (Perez-Johnson et al., 2011).

### ***Unemployment Insurance and Employment Services***

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

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

In 2005, ETA sponsored the first round of 21 Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) demonstration grants to encourage states to provide more active reemployment services to targeted UI claimants. An implementation study of nine first-round states by Benus and Poe-Yamagata et al. (2008) highlights a common concern in employment and training research: “While the REA Initiative was successfully implemented in most states, many states experienced challenges in establishing a valid treatment and comparison group and providing data via the required...reports” (p. iv). The authors recommend further evaluation using experimental methods to assess the true impact of the promising REA demonstration.

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

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

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

### ***Other Major ETA Programs***

An area of ETA program research relates to the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. A study by researchers at the University of Michigan examined the labor market effects of globalization in relation to TAA (Johnson, 2005). Further, a larger evaluation of TAA involves a quasi-experimental impact analysis and a process study of the TAA program as it operated under the 2002 amendments. The contractor for the evaluation, SPRA and its subcontractor, Mathematica, have produced five occasional papers so far, covering such subjects as initial implementation of the Trade Act amendments of 2002

(D'Amico et al., 2009), case management (Mack, 2009), and characteristics of TAA-eligible workers and their early program experiences (Dolphin and Berk, 2010). Multiple reports from the process and impact studies will be released in 2013.

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

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

### ***ETA's Initiative-Related Investments***

Other ETA research focused on:

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

### ***Specific Segments of Workers***

The research priorities detailed in the 2000 to 2005 research plan primarily relate to how the workforce investment system serves specific segments of workers, especially those who are disadvantaged, low-skilled, or hardest to serve. In the 2007 to 2012 research plan, increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations is identified as a research priority. A number of ETA's research investments served

to address this knowledge gap as evidenced by the body of research on youth, immigrants, formerly incarcerated individuals, Hispanics, and low-wage/low-skill workers detailed in the following section.

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

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

The *Youth Offender Demonstration* tested strategies to help youth with criminal records enter into career training and find and retain employment. This large-scale demonstration project included three rounds of grants to 39 organizations, as well as process and outcomes evaluations. A process evaluation of second-round grantees by MacGillivray et al. was released in 2008. The study highlighted cross-agency partnerships, route management,<sup>9</sup> and the importance of stable jobs, stable housing, and caring adults in helping youth offenders find and retain employment. SPRA reported findings from a process and outcomes evaluation of the *YouthBuild Youth Offender* grants operating in 34 sites nationwide (Abrazaldo et al., 2009). The evaluation found that many participants experienced positive outcomes, with more than one-third obtaining a GED or high school diploma, more than one-half obtaining an occupational certificate, two-thirds entering unsubsidized employment, and three-fourths avoiding further involvement with the criminal justice system.

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

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<sup>9</sup> “Route management” was a term coined in the Youth Offender demonstration. As these young adults resented the idea of being considered a “case” to manage, the service was redefined as helping someone to navigate their route out of criminal activity and into education/employment opportunities.

difficult to plan for service provision. The final evaluation report, *Examining a New Model for Prisoner Re-Entry Services: The Evaluation of Beneficiary Choice*, was completed in 2011 (Bellotti et al., 2011).

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

Hispanic, limited English proficient and recent immigrant workers were the focus of four ETA research investments. As part of the *New Americans Centers Demonstration*, the Urban Institute prepared two implementation and outcome evaluation reports on how Arkansas and Iowa integrated New American Centers in their American Job Center systems to help recent immigrants connect with employment opportunities and American life (Koralek et al., 2010; Koralek and Parnes, 2008).

*The Evaluation of the Limited English Proficiency and Hispanic Worker Initiative* (Holl et al., 2009a) included both a process and outcomes analysis of vocational English as a Second Language programs implemented in five demonstration sites. Researchers found that workplace programs, those that actively built on employer demands, and those that were flexible and helped participants in meeting the scheduling and other challenges faced by working adults, were the most successful. *An Evaluation of the Latino Coalition’s Reclamando Nuestro Futuro Program* (Monsma and Smidt, 2009) examined the intermediary role of the Latino Coalition and its efforts to connect Hispanic and other minority youth with education and employment, helping them to steer clear of involvement with the criminal justice system.

The Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts demonstration was a joint project with the Department of Defense; ETA funded a process evaluation of the effort to document implementation, types of expenditures from accounts, and employment outcomes. The evaluation report, *The Implementation Evaluation of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration (2009)*, was comprised of two parts: Part I was on *Early Implementation of the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration* (Zaveri, Pisciotta, and Rosenberg, 2009) and Part II was on *Additional Findings from the Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Demonstration: Implementation Progress and Participants’ Characteristics and Plans* (Needels and Zaveri, 2009).

Low-wage/low-skill workers often need to build basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as college readiness skills, in order to succeed in employment and training programs. In *Flexible Learning Options for Adult Students*, Choitz and Prince (2008) review recent trends in adult and postsecondary education and document the need for improved dissemination and collaborative sharing strategies so that promising practices may be shared and tested. In *Adult Learners in Higher Education: Barriers to Success and Strategies to Improve Results* (Kazis et al., 2007), Jobs for the Future documents the need for improved accessibility, affordability, and accountability measures to better serve working, low-skill, and other disadvantaged adults in the nation’s community college and workforce training systems.

### ***Specific Workforce Development Strategies***

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

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

Another ETA initiative designed to address the demand side of the labor market is *Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development* (WIRED). Berkeley Policy Associate's interim evaluation reports examined three core issues in the first round of implementation: alliance-building and the development of a regional identity, incorporation of specific design and service strategies, and measuring progress toward economic growth (Almandsmith et al., 2008 and 2009). A study by Public Policy Associates (Hewat and Hollenbeck, 2009) examined the implementation of the second and third round of WIRED projects, with a final report to be completed in 2012.

The *Community Based Job Training Grants* (CBJTG) are training grants designed to help community colleges train workers for high-growth industries. The Urban Institute is conducting an implementation study of the CBJTG initiative. The first report (Eyster et al., 2009) documented the characteristics of the grantees. A final report is anticipated in 2013.

ETA also invested in a demonstration of small business development, *Project GATE* (Growing America through Entrepreneurship). Based on a random-assignment model, participants in Project GATE — those interested in starting a small business, including some small business owners who were seeking the services — could choose any or all of three core services: a needs assessment, training in business procedures and applications, and business counseling sessions to work through plans, loan applications, and other issues. An early project report by IMPAQ International and Mathematica (Benus and McConnell et al., 2008) presented findings from the implementation study of the seven demonstration sites and initial outcomes. The final report (Benus et al., 2009) presented findings from the five-year impact study. On average, participants started a business earlier and maintained a business longer than the control group. Also important, participants who were UI recipients at the time they started Project GATE experienced greater impacts than non-recipients.

Leveraging investments by and services through faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) became a priority for ETA. Multiple reports explored opportunities for the publicly-funded workforce system to partner with FBCOs, particularly for the delivery of wrap around and support services.

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

Finally, ETA funded a pilot study of *Personal Reemployment Accounts* (PRAs) as a potential strategy to improve customer choice, support skill development, and limit the duration of unemployment. The implementation study presented the structure of the accounts and individual choice in each state (Kirby, 2006). Outcomes were found to be highly dependent on those two factors (structure and choice). The authors noted that the PRA study contained lessons learned that were likely applicable to other customer-managed accounts, such as the *Career Advancement Account* demonstration (Kirby et al., 2008).

### ***Issues of Performance Management, Research Methodologies, and Data***

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

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

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

## Other U.S. Department of Labor Agencies and Programs

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

### *Chief Evaluation Office*

The Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) was created in 2009 within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy to implement, manage, and coordinate the Department's evaluation program. CEO works closely with ETA and other DOL agency staff to design, fund, and implement program evaluations. The results from evaluations inform policy, advance DOL's mission, and improve its performance-based management initiatives in support of the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010. CEO's efforts also support the goal of building a transparent, high-performance government, as reflected in the President's Budget as well as the OMB memo (M-09-20) on Building a High-Performance Government.

### *Bureau of Labor Statistics Research*

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is charged with "measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy" ("About the Bureau," 2010). BLS routinely releases data and provides public use databases on employment and unemployment that form the foundation of numerous research studies. Researchers, labor market analysts, and others also make extensive use of BLS tools to understand employment issues around the nation. In addition, BLS regularly publishes research on topics of interest to the workforce development community in the *Monthly Labor Review*, the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, and *Issues in Labor Statistics* ("BLS Publications," 2011).

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

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

*American Workers with Career Jobs* (Giandrea et al., 2008). This study found that self-employment increases as workers get older. Among individuals in the *Health and Retirement Study* (HRS), approximately one-third of men who worked were self-employed, as well as about 15% of women.

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, BLS working papers also routinely explore topics and issues related to ongoing survey research such as the CPS and the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), which is a monthly survey of

establishments. A 2005 report by Faberman, *Studying the Labor Market with the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey*, provides an introduction to researchers and others on how to use the JOLTS data. The author highlights three key strengths in the dataset: micro-level vacancy postings, separations by quit or layoff status, and breadth of worker flow data by establishment.

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

### ***Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management***

The Center for Program Planning and Results within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management (OASAM) funded a study to explore the ways in which the public workforce system was collaborating with its community college partners to address the workforce and training needs of America’s workforce. *Improving America’s Workforce Through Enhanced Collaboration Between the Public Workforce System and Community Colleges* examined how collaborations between American Job Centers and community colleges can be enhanced to benefit workers, employers, and society at large. Findings were based on a series of 15 site visits to pairs of American Job Centers and community colleges.

### ***Office of the Chief Economist***

Starting in 2011, the Office of the Chief Economist has published a series of reports on the labor market experience of different sub-groups of the population. The first, published in March 2011, was titled *The Hispanic Labor Force in the Recovery*, and since then, the office has published similar reports for the African-American, Asian-American, Veteran’s, and Women’s communities.

These reports examine in detail the trends in employment, unemployment, earnings, and many other labor market characteristics for these communities. Supplementing new analyses with existing literature, these reports are designed to capture the complete labor market experience for each community with a snapshot of the current situation as well as documentation of longer-term trends. Each report also documents the wide range of program and enforcement activities that the Department is engaged in to address the unique needs of each community.

### ***Office of Disability Employment Policy***

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

In 2005, ODEP released *Evaluation of Disability Employment Policy Demonstration Programs: Task 10: Interim Report on ODEP Demonstration Programs: Accomplishments and Issues Identified by the Independent Evaluation* (Elinson and Frey, 2005), as part of a series of reports by Westat on ODEP pilot projects. The report synthesizes findings to date on three types of projects: WIA youth demonstrations, customized employment for adults, and technical assistance supports for pilot projects and other

programs serving individuals with disabilities. The study's findings indicate that the pilot projects had strong employment outcomes (95% employed) and related declines in reliance on public benefits for participants. The process study and technical assistance reports also provide valuable detail on how pilot projects develop and change over time.

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

The *Customized Employment and Workforce Action* grant initiative was a 26-site demonstration project to "increase employment options for job seekers with complex needs through the voluntary negotiation of the employment relationship with an employer" (National Center, 2007, p. 5) launched by ODEP in 2001. The summary report *Customized Employment Employers and Workers: Creating a Competitive Edge* describes the initiative, provides cross-site analysis, and identifies lessons learned. The report also includes recommendations for improving workforce system policies, processes, and outcomes for individuals with disabilities and other job seekers with significant employment barriers.

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

### ***Veterans' Employment and Training Service***

DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is responsible for helping current service members transition to the civilian workforce and providing targeted workforce development programs to veterans. VETS research includes three reports by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. *Report on Task 1: The Labor Market Trajectories of 20-24 Year Old Veterans* (Black and Lane, 2007) examines National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data to identify factors in unemployment and employment among young veterans at several points in time immediately following discharge. The research found that, over time, employment increased as a result of active job search. *Report on Task 2:*

*Developing a Deeper Understanding of the Labor Market Dynamics of Recently Discharged Veterans* (Black et al., 2007) builds on the first report to statistically compare the labor market experiences of recent veterans to three groups of civilian-workforce counterparts. Researchers found that veterans are more likely to be employed and less likely to be out of the labor force than their civilian counterparts. In addition, veterans had higher earnings than their civilian counterparts (Black et al., 2007, pp. 2-3).

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

## **Other Federal Agencies**

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

### ***U.S. Department of Health and Human Services***

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

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

In *Understanding the Demand Side of the Low-Wage Labor Market* (Acs and Loprest, 2008), researchers present the findings of a national survey of employers to identify the opportunities and barriers faced by TANF participants and other disadvantaged workers in obtaining entry- and non-college-level jobs. The *Innovative Employment Strategies (2005-2007)* project analyzed employment and training programs designed to help TANF recipients (and other low-wage workers) enter and retain employment. Focusing on innovative practices and programs, researchers established definitional and conditional criteria, and explored possible random-assignment or other tests to validate program benefits. Importantly, the researchers also identified “methods for measuring impacts on a range of outcomes including employment, retention and advancement, and child well-being” (“Innovative,” 2010).

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

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

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

Two other ASPE-sponsored research studies on the health care workforce are also of note. *An Exploratory Study of Certified Nursing Assistants’ Intent to Leave* (Squillace et al., 2008) examines data from a national survey of certified nursing assistants to look at factors in high turnover rates and opportunities for improving retention. *Nationwide Health Information Network Workforce Study: Final Report* (Altarum, 2007) provides preliminary estimates on the number and types of health care informatics specialists that will be needed to build and manage electronic health records.

In a series of brief reports for ASPE, Mathematica identifies *Strategies for Increasing TANF Work Participation Rates* drawn from state and local case studies. Individual report topics included *Achieving Higher TANF Work Participation Rates* (Kauff and Derr, 2008); *Providing Paid Employment Opportunities* (Person et al., 2008); *Providing Unpaid Work Experience Opportunities* (Derr, 2008b); and *Using Data to*

*Monitor and Improve Work Participation* (Max and Kirby, 2008). The summary report (Pavetti et al., 2008) compares policy and program responses across states and examines how changes in workforce participation have shifted the TANF composition in some states. The welfare population was also the focus in another study funded by ASPE, *UI as a Safety Net for Former TANF Recipients Final Report* (O’Leary and Kline, 2008).

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

### ***U.S. Department of Education***

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

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of IES, has released a number of materials related to the 2003 *National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (NAAL), including public- and restricted-use datasets and analyses (to which ETA also contributed). In 2005, NCES produced a report of initial findings, as well as an information guide on the features and key concepts of the NAAL survey. Initial analyses suggested that the percentage of adults performing below basic literacy and numeracy levels had fallen slightly between the survey’s 1992 and 2003 administrations (White and Dillow, 2005). In 2007, NCES released *Literacy in Everyday Life*, which found that “adults with higher literacy levels were more likely to be employed full-time and less likely to be out of the labor force than adults with lower literacy levels. Adults with lower literacy levels also generally earned lower incomes” (Kutner et al., 2007, p. vi). Findings of the *Adult Literacy Prison Survey* were released in 2007, revealing that prisoners in 2003 had higher levels of literacy than their counterparts in 1992, though their levels remained below that of non-incarcerated adults (Greenberg et al., 2007). The most recent report from the study is *Basic Reading Skills and the Literacy of America’s Least-Literate Adults* (Baer et al., 2009). Related research products include state- and county-level estimates of the percentage of adults functioning at the lowest levels of literacy.

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

company, or hospital (52%) as the instructional provider than any other provider type” (O’Donnell and Chapman, 2006, p. 3).

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

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

In *Ten Years After College: Comparing the Employment Experiences of 1992-93 Bachelor’s Degree Recipients with Academic and Career-Oriented Majors* (2008), NCES analyzes the work experiences of individuals who graduated from college in the 1992-93 school year in 1994, 1997, and 2003. This study found that “By 2003, some 46 percent of graduates had ever been unemployed (not working, but looking for work) since they had graduated.... The average length of time unemployed was 9 months, which could have been one long period of unemployment or multiple short ones” (Choy et al., 2008, p. vi-vii). Further, individuals with career-oriented majors were less likely to experience unemployment, or more likely to have a shorter duration of unemployment, than those with academic majors.

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

Another agency within the U.S. Department of Education that sponsors research on employment and training topics is the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). A report to the President, *Bridges to Opportunity: Federal Adult Education Programs for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (OVAE, 2008), presents the findings of the Interagency Adult Education Working Group, which was created by Executive Order. The group found that the lack of coordination of programs for adult education at the Federal level was replicated throughout the system. In order to address the findings, the group recommended to: (1) broaden the common measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of adult education services to include educational gain and transition to further education and training; (2) consider extending the use of these measures to all federal agencies administering adult education programs; (3) expand access to adult education services through improved program linkages; (4) improve the basic literacy of Americans

who benefit from these programs by continuing to link funding to performance; and (5) coordinate research efforts across federal agencies on issues related to adult education and employment.

In another study, *“Partnerships Between Community Colleges and Prisons: Providing Workforce Education and Training to Reduce Recidivism,”* researchers examined the use of workforce education and training to reduce recidivism and develop lessons learned from interviews with prison and community college administrators. The report examined partnership models illustrating how community colleges are working with prisons to provide workforce training to institutional residents. The study concluded with a summary of factors that allowed the partnership models to flourish, which included partners’: (1) willingness to compromise; (2) good communication; (3) trust; (4) mutual buy-in; (5) shared leadership; and (6) development of a flexible framework to guide the partnership and services provided.

### ***U.S. Department of Commerce***

Research related to employment and training issues is sponsored by several agencies within the U.S. Department of Commerce, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the Economic Development Administration. The Census Bureau’s *Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics* (LEHD) initiative tests the use of state-provided UI wage records and Census-provided employment and wage data to improve the censuses, surveys, and estimates produced by the Bureau. In return, “States receive three key products from the Census Bureau: (1) quarterly workforce indicators about the state economy at detailed industry and geography, (2) enhanced UI wage records, and (3) information about successor/predecessor firms” (*Filling Data Gaps*, p. 2). The 27 quarterly workforce indicators tracked by the LEHD provide data to inform state and local Workforce Investment Boards, economic development agencies, and transportation planners, as well as career counselors and job seekers. These research products also meet some of the gaps identified in prior ETA research plans, including self-directed employment activities, development of a data clearinghouse, and using state and other administrative data to measure progress and outcomes.

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

EDA has sponsored research and demonstration projects to test strategies for improving economic development activities, including workforce training and the development and use of labor market information. This research also fills an identified knowledge gap on integrating regional workforce and economic development priorities. Regional innovation, including rural economic development, was the topic of several reports. *Measuring Regional Innovation: A Guidebook for Conducting Regional*

*Innovation Assessments* (2005) provides a “framework for measuring regional innovation that will help economic development leaders strengthen regional prosperity” (p. 36). EDA also released *Regionalism and Clusters for Local Development Needs Assessment Results* (2007), which identified a need to more actively engage practitioners in their own knowledge and skill development around best practices and new concepts in economic development. Also in 2007, *Unlocking Rural Competitiveness: The Role of Regional Clusters* developed a database on rural economies and analyzed regional cluster structures. *Crossing the Next Regional Frontier* (2009) presents data on occupation clusters at the county level and details analyses generated by two pilot studies using the data.

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

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

### ***U.S. Small Business Administration***

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

Entrepreneurship is a significant line of SBA research, particularly its place in economic development initiatives as well as entrepreneurial activity by various segments of the population. In 2006, SBA released *Entrepreneurship and Education: What is Known and Not Known about the Links Between Education and Entrepreneurial Activity* (Weaver et al., 2006). This study spurred additional research investments, including the report *Toward Effective Education of Innovative Entrepreneurs in Small Business* (2009), which explored the relationship between course-taking in entrepreneurship and actual entrepreneurial activities. SBA has also sponsored a series of analyses of entrepreneurship, including studies on minority individuals (Fairlie, 2005), veterans/service-disabled veterans (Waldman Associates, 2005), gender differences (Kepler and Shane, 2007), and immigrants (Hart et al., 2009). A synthesis

report, *Determinants of Growth in Entrepreneurship Across U.S. Labor Markets* (Gurley-Calvez, et al., 2010), found “substantial shifts in the share of proprietorships in LMAs [labor market areas] across regions during the 1970-2006 period” (*Determinants*, 2010, p. 2).

Other research investments by SBA related to expanding the labor market include: an analysis of business clustering between 1990 and 2006 (Plummer, 2010), and *Human Capital and Women’s Business Ownership* (Hackler et al, 2008). The March 2010 report, *An Analysis of Small Business and Jobs*, presented moment-in-time snapshots of the shares of jobs in large and small firms. In addition, the author explored job growth/decline and net job change (Headd, 2010).

### ***U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development***

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

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

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

### ***U.S. Department of Energy***

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

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

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

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

DOE and the National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA) are working together to identify opportunities to bring more individuals into careers in national security through the *National Security Preparedness Project*. A series of four reports produced by the Arrowhead Center at New Mexico State University (2007-08) has identified barriers, opportunities, and challenges in developing the workforce of the future. *Student Experiential Opportunities in National Security Careers* (2007) documents opportunities for internships, co-op jobs, and other student employment in national security careers as a strategy to expose individuals to career pathways, build entry-level competencies, and encourage engagement in further education and training. In *Strategies for Overcoming Key Barriers to Development of a National Security Workforce* (2008), researchers note the critical need for better partnership between government agencies, private organizations, and the education and training community to meet the national security workforce challenges. *Status of the National Security Workforce* (2008) confirms the critical need to develop the workforce pipeline for NNSA. The average age of NNSA workers is 49, and one-third of the workforce is eligible for retirement in the next five years. In several critical occupations, more than 40% of the science and engineering workforce is over age 40, and more than 75% of the nuclear engineering workforce will reach retirement age by 2014.

## ***Social Security Administration***

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

The *Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program* connects SSA disability beneficiaries with employment and training services by connecting individuals with an Employment Network (EN), which provides career counseling, job placement, and ongoing support services. Mathematica released an implementation and early impacts study in 2007, *Evaluation of the Ticket to Work Program: Assessment of Post-Rollout Implementation and Early Impacts* (Thornton et al.). The primary difficulties identified in the implementation study related to the inability to recruit Employment Network organizations to participate, the relatively low take-up rates by beneficiaries, and insufficient earnings by participants to reduce SSA benefit payments. SSA addressed these problems in changes it made to the program that were effective in July 2008. Mathematica will be publishing an evaluation of the changes in 2013. In addition, SSA revised the requirements in a new EN Request for Quotations beginning July 2011, which allows SSA to have more control and flexibility in evaluating EN agreements and monitoring EN performance using new requirements and performance standards. These changes will improve services to beneficiaries with disabilities and quality outcomes for ENs.

The *Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)* Program began in 2006 and ended in 2012 when funding expired. It was designed to provide SSDI and SSI disability beneficiaries with free access to information about work incentives, benefits planning, job placement, and career development. The program provided beneficiaries with opportunities to utilize work incentives while maintaining long-term employment and other supports. The final report, *Employment-Related Outcomes of a Recent Cohort of Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Program Enrollees*, dated September 19, 2011, showed that “The rules governing how earnings affect SSI and DI benefits are extremely complicated and fear of losing benefits is often cited as an employment barrier among work-oriented beneficiaries” (Livermore et al. 2009a). Thus, resources like the WIPA programs have an important place in the arsenal of supports available to SSI and DI beneficiaries who want to work.” (p. 52)

In 2006, SSA funded the *Accelerated Benefits (AB) Demonstration* to test whether early access to health care and related services would improve outcomes for new SSDI beneficiaries. Under current law, most beneficiaries are not eligible for Medicare for a period of 24 months after they are entitled to receive cash benefits. AB included about 2,000 new SSDI beneficiaries without insurance. Individuals were randomly assigned to one of three research groups: (1) the AB group, which had access to health care benefits designed for the project; (2) the AB Plus group, which had access to the same health care benefits as well as voluntary services delivered by telephone to help them navigate the health care system and return to work; and (3) a control group, which could not receive AB health care benefits or AB Plus services but could obtain health insurance on their own. The final report found that participants made extensive use of program services; AB health care benefits increased health care use and reduced reported unmet medical needs; and AB Plus services encouraged people to look for work but did not increase employment levels in the first year (Michalopoulos et al., 2011).

The *Mental Health Treatment Study (MHTS)* provides a test of the hypothesis that access to supported employment (SE) services and systematic medication management (SMM) services, coupled with the removal of some known programmatic disincentives, will enable SSDI beneficiaries with schizophrenia or an affective disorder to return to work. Fielded by the SSA between November 2006 and July 2010, the test included 2,238 SSDI beneficiaries in 23 study sites throughout the United States. Beneficiaries volunteering to participate in the study received a random assignment to either a treatment group or a control group following completion of a comprehensive baseline interview. The study collected self-report data quarterly on the primary outcome measures of employment (including earnings), health status, and quality of life. The 24-month employment rate for the treatment group was 61 percent compared to 40 percent for the control group. Treatment group participants had significantly better outcomes than did control group participants on total months employed, consecutive months of employment at study exit, average weekly earnings at their main job, average hours per week at their main job, and highest hourly wage (Frey et al., 2011).

*State Partnership Initiative: Selection of Comparison Groups for the Evaluation and Selected Impact Estimates* (Peikes et al., 2005) provides detail on the 1998 to 2004 initiative conducted in coordination with the Rehabilitation Services Administration to connect individuals with disabilities to employment opportunities and reduce their dependence on SSDI and SSI benefits. Eleven states targeted services at adult beneficiaries, three of which used a random assignment process to identify participants. Short-term outcomes indicated that the partnership initiative in those three states had a significant impact on employment, but no impact on earnings. A synthesis of impact estimates from individual state projects was also released (Peikes and Sarin, 2005).

### ***The National Academies' National Research Council***

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

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

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

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

Another survey commonly used by employment and training researchers is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). A 2009 study for the Census Bureau, *Reengineering the Survey of Income and Program Participation*, explores issues for consideration in a proposed redesign by the Census Bureau, focusing specifically on information not available from administrative data sources. The research committee also recommends that any innovations in the SIPP redesign should be evaluated “on the extent to which a feature contributes to the survey’s ability to measure short-term changes in economic well-being with improved quality and timeliness” (National Research, 2009, p. 3).

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

## **State and Local Governments**

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

### ***State-level Research on Employment and Training Issues***

California's Workforce Investment Board sponsors research on the public workforce system. One publication is *California One-Stop System Cost Study Report* (Moore et al., 2007). Researchers from California State University examined resources within the American Job Center (One-Stop) system, partner organization contributions, types and varieties of services available across the system, and the costs associated with those services. The study found that while American Job Centers in California were customized to address the local labor market, the service models were largely structured around WIA, with costs and performance measures aligned along funding streams. Recommendations for further research include the formation of a voluntary group of American Job Centers to develop unit-cost measures for services and support comparative benchmarking. In *California Integrated Service Delivery Evaluation Report Phase I*, Moore et al. (2010) present the findings from a formative evaluation of four American Job Centers participating in a state initiative launched in 2008-09 to integrate Employment Services with WIA programs. The second phase of the research will be a summative impact evaluation.

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

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

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

Researchers at Rutgers also evaluated state workforce and training programs. In *Evaluation of the New Jersey Workforce Development Partnership Program: Customized Training Program* (Heldrich, 2008), researchers explore outcomes from 10 grants distributed by the state to support customized training, including training in customer service, process improvements, and English as a second language/adult basic skills. The study highlights four promising practices for customized training: industry/higher education partnerships, training for small companies organized by consortia, training leading to college credit or industry-recognized credential, and support for English as a second language training (Heldrich, 2008, pp. 2-4).

Funded by the New York State's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the *Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers: Final Impact Report* for the Pilot Employment Programs, conducted by the Urban Institute, had a significant impact in the Child Support and non-custodial parents field. The study was a quasi-experimental evaluation of a New York state pilot program that linked non-custodial parents to employment services. New York state implemented the pilot employment program from 2006-2009 for parents behind in their child support, as part of the Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative. Sites provided employment-oriented services, fatherhood/parenting workshops, case management, and other support services to nearly 4,000 parents behind in their child support in four New York communities. The evaluation found that these programs successfully helped participants find work, increase their earnings, and pay more child support, with gains continuing for at least a year after enrollment, the length of time participant outcomes were followed.

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

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

The Texas Association of Workforce Boards sponsored a return-on-investment analysis of public workforce services delivered through the state's 28 local Workforce Investment Boards. Building on separate impact estimates for low- and high-intensity services (e.g., job search assistance versus

training) delivered between October 2003 and September 2005, researchers at the Ray Marshall Center found an annual earnings impact of about \$1,850 for training services over a 10-year period compared to an impact of \$564 for two quarters following low-intensity services. Five-year analyses suggest that for every dollar invested in workforce services through Texas workforce boards, positive returns range from a low of \$1.17 for taxpayers to a high of \$1.63 for participants; 10-year returns range from \$2.08 for taxpayers to \$2.74 for participants (King et al., 2008).

The Texas Attorney General's Office and the Texas Workforce Commission have partnered on the non-custodial parents (NCP) *Choices* project since 2005. The program provides "employment services linked to enhanced child support monitoring to low-income NCPs who have fallen behind on their child support payments" (Schroeder and Doughty, 2009, p. vi). One key aspect of the project is that participants have a strong motivation to remain engaged: those who do not could be sent to jail. The quasi-experimental impact evaluation by the Ray Marshall Center found that participants paid more child support, more often, and more consistently than did comparison group members. Participants also showed much higher rates of employment than the comparison group, with impacts lasting two to four years after completing the program.

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

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

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has a long history of research and policy development in the areas of economic and workforce development for the state. Publications include an analysis of lessons learned from incumbent and dislocated worker training in health care and manufacturing occupations in the *Industry Partnerships Project* (COWS, 2005), which focused on the use of public investments to spur longer-term connections between employers and training providers. *When Work Doesn't Pay: The Hidden Cost of Low-Wage Jobs in Wisconsin* (Dresser, 2006), found that 45% of the state's medical aid, child care support, food stamp, and TANF dollars went

to families with at least one year-round working individual. Looking at the industries in which those individuals work, the study found that “the health care sector has the highest number of workers receiving public benefits” (Dresser, 2006, p. 2).

Career ladders, particularly those stemming from entry-level occupations and focused on adults with limited basic skills, have been the focus of a number of studies in Wisconsin. *From Bad Jobs to Good Jobs?* (Mitnik and Zeidenberg, 2007) looked at opportunities to build career ladders in the service industry. *Stronger Ladders, Stronger Floors* (Dresser, 2007) examined the employment structure of several low-wage industries and identified a need for better workforce supports to improve access to career ladder opportunities. Other research by COWS focused on improving adult education outcomes, most recently in *Building Bridges in Wisconsin: Connecting Working Adults with College Credentials and Career Advancement* (Valentine and Pagac, 2010). A 2008 report by COWS, *Skilled Workers, Quality Jobs: Meeting the Needs of Wisconsin’s Workers and Businesses*, was part of the Working Poor Families Project.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Local-level Research on Employment and Training Issues***

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

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

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

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<sup>10</sup> The Working Poor Families Project is a national initiative supported by the Annie E. Casey, Charles Stewart Mott, Ford, and Joyce Foundations focusing on state workforce development policies affecting working families. For more information, see: <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/about.html>

Strategy Center has conducted a number of initiatives focused on the city, building from its 2006 report *Strength in Partnership: Building a New Approach to Workforce Development in New York City*.

In Austin, Texas, Travis County's Health and Human Services Department and the City of Austin invest about \$3 million annually in workforce development services for disadvantaged residents. The county has also made an ongoing investment in an outcomes and quasi-experimental impact analysis of the services it funds. In *Evaluating Local Workforce Investments: Results for Short- and Long-Term Training in Austin (TX)*, King et al. (2009) present outcome and impact findings from two county-funded workforce programs, one with short-term (six-week) training and the other with long-term (associate's degree-level) training. The long-term training investment demonstrates strong, significant, and lasting impacts on participants' employment, earnings, and opportunity to access benefits such as UI. It should be noted that the short-term training program participants did experience significant initial employment and earnings gains over their pre-program history; however, these gains were not sustained over time. This study is part of an ongoing evaluation of local workforce investments (Smith et al., 2007, 2008, 2010).

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

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

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

## **Foundations**

Foundations and philanthropic organizations play an important role in sponsoring workforce investment initiatives around the nation. From national players like the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, to regional organizations like the Joyce Foundation, these foundations are sponsoring pilot and demonstration

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

### ***The Annie E. Casey Foundation***

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

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

The foundation sponsored research that resulted in the book *Mistakes to Success: Learning and Adapting When Things Go Wrong* (Gilothe and Austin, 2010). In a collection of essays about failures in social innovation, leading researchers explore how community economic development activities fail and what could be done to better disseminate knowledge about obstacles and barriers to improve future endeavors. In the concluding chapter, Gilothe and Austin argue that the current process for identifying and replicating best practices fails to provide sufficient information on necessary conditions and actors to ensure successful transfer. They recommend that researchers thoroughly document and analyze mistakes, that research sponsors develop a new focus on filling narrowly defined knowledge gaps rather than launch large-scale initiatives, and that policymakers support research and data clearinghouses to share information about both successful and unsuccessful practices.

A joint project of the Annie E. Casey and Ford Foundations, the *Investing in Workforce Intermediaries Initiative*, sought to identify key components of effective workforce intermediary initiatives and develop new intermediary organizations to bridge the divide between employers and education and training

providers.<sup>11</sup> This project laid the foundation for the *National Fund for Workforce Solutions* (NFWS), involving almost 200 foundations. Casey and Ford are part of the fund's steering committee comprised of nine large, national funders. Two reports are available on NFWS, a baseline evaluation report (Baran et al., 2009) and an annual evaluation report (Baran et al., 2010). Also, ETA funded a report on NFWS, *Implementing the National Fund for Workforce Solutions EQ: The Baseline Evaluation Report* (2009).

### ***The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation***

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

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

Another line of research applicable to the employment and training field is the Gates Foundation's interest in *Today's College Student*. In the *New Community College Initiative*, the Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation are supporting the City University of New York (CUNY)'s development of the City's first new community college in four decades. In May 2009, CUNY released the second round of research determining which majors will be offered when the new college opens in 2011. The college has decided to pursue 12 majors across four areas of study: health sciences, business and information studies, education and human services, and liberal arts and sciences (*Summary*, 2009).

A 2009 report funded by the Gates Foundation, *With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them*, presents findings from a survey of young adults aged 22 to 30 with at least some postsecondary education experience. The results suggest that postsecondary completion rates could be improved through strategies that make part-time attendance more viable through better financial aid and support service practices, such as child care and partnerships with employers that offer part-time opportunities around class schedules (*With*, 2009).

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

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<sup>11</sup> The Rockefeller Foundation was an early participant in the IWI Initiative as well.

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

### ***The Ford Foundation***

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

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

### ***The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation***

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

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

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

### ***The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation***

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

In the *Future of Nursing Initiative*, RWJ partnered with the Institute of Medicine to identify strategies for improving the scope of practice, professional development, and work experience of nurses. Among the report's recommendations are: removing barriers that prevent advanced practice nurses from reaching their full potential, expanding the participation of nurses in collaborative improvement projects, implementing nursing residency programs, shifting nursing credentials toward baccalaureate programs and improving the numbers of nursing professionals with doctorates, investing in lifelong education opportunities for nurses, and building a health care workforce data and analysis structure (Institute of Medicine, 2010).

### ***The Joyce Foundation***

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

The second initiative, launched by the Joyce Foundation in 2006 and funded in part by ETA, is the *Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration*. The foundation's \$6 million investment, including an evaluation by MDRC and other research partners, is testing transitional jobs (temporary, subsidized employment connected to training and support services) to help formerly incarcerated individuals build a stable, post-incarceration life and reduce recidivism. One-year findings revealed mixed outcomes from

the employment efforts and provided insights and spurred questions for future research (Bloom, 2009). One strategy that appeared to encourage employment retention was the use of a retention bonus; the initial finding has highlighted a need to further test the approach. The National Transitional Jobs Networks released a brief titled *Advancing the Field of Transitional Jobs* (2010), which highlights potential next steps, including research on screening potential participants, contextualizing adult basic education in sector-based training, improving job quality, and enhancing job retention and advancement services.

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

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

### ***The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation***

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

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

The Sloan Foundation and ETA jointly funded the *Collaborative Online Workforce Education and Training Portal*, a demonstration initiated in 2008 and concluded in 2011. The demonstration tested the idea that online and hybrid training options offered through a state's public workforce investment system can be centralized on a single portal, *Workforce Online Learning Information Portal* (WOLIP). The demonstration was designed to centralize access to online certificate programs on a single Web portal, to provide easy accessibility to coursework for clients, including non-traditional populations, and workforce staff, and to foster sharing of online credentialing/certificate programs in high-demand

industries within each state and between states. Participating states included Colorado, Maine, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania. The Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University conducted an evaluation, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection, that concluded in 2011. WOLIP is housed by the Southern Regional Education Board, which developed the portal's technological platform and customized it for each state. Other partners include the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce and Pennsylvania State University, which are providing technical assistance, and sharing expertise on online learning within the different state workforce development systems.

## International Organizations

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

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

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

## Other Employment and Training Research

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

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

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

Steve Wandner, a Visiting Fellow with the Urban Institute, authored *Solving the Reemployment Puzzle: From Research to Policy* (2010). The book explores the lessons learned and policy impacts of eight experimental or demonstration research initiatives targeted at unemployed workers, all funded by ETA in the 1980s and 1990s under Labor Secretaries Bill Brock and Robert Reich. The book concludes that many of the reemployment projects tested by ETA worked, delivering job training and/or job transition assistance services (e.g., job matching, reemployment bonuses, self-employment assistance) "help workers shift from unemployment to new jobs smoothly, quickly, and efficiently" (Wandner, 2010).

## III. RECENT AND ONGOING RESEARCH \*

**B**eyond the volume of research produced between 2000 and 2010, there are recent and ongoing projects that should be considered prior to defining the knowledge gaps in employment and training research literature. ETA's current research and evaluation projects address the following six key interest priorities, developed partially in response to the 2007-2012 Research Plan: (1) integration of workforce and regional economic development, (2) methods of expanding U.S. workforce skills, (3) increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations, (4) using state-level administrative data to measure progress and outcomes, (5) postsecondary education and job training, and (6) UI. The discussion of current research and evaluation projects below is organized by the previously mentioned research strands, whether funded by ETA or another agency/organization. Many projects are

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\* This section utilizes and cites the literature review in *Identifying Gaps and Setting Priorities for Employment and Training Research* (Van Horn, King, and Smith, 2011). Updates and edits have been made in the organization of the content.

acknowledged to address multiple research interests despite being mentioned under only one strand below (strands 2 and 5, for example, are highly correlated). The following is not intended as a comprehensive review of existing projects but is rather illustrative of current ongoing research interests and investments.<sup>12</sup>

## 1. Integration of Workforce and Regional Economic Development

### *ETA Research*

ETA also funded research and evaluation projects examining the workforce system investments made by ARRA. The National Association of State Workforce Agencies is conducting a study of state and local policy, program, and service responses to the infusion of ARRA funds across a number of core programs including the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the Employment Services, the Reemployment Services, and the TAA program. ETA funded qualitative research on the effects of ARRA funding on 2010 post-summer youth employment activities (Holcomb et al., 2012), summer youth employment initiatives for Indian and Native American programs (Berman et al., 2012), summer 2010 youth employment initiatives financed with TANF ARRA funds (Rosenberg, 2012)<sup>13</sup>, state labor market grants (forthcoming), and WIA waivers (Rowe et al., 2012).

### *Other Research*

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

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

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

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<sup>12</sup> Ongoing research in this section is research where an interim or final report is expected to be completed in 2012 or later.

<sup>13</sup> Study funded by HHS’ ACF.

## 2. Methods of Expanding U.S. Workforce Skills

### *ETA Research*

ETA has multiple investments in research related to expanding U.S. workforce skills. One investment by ETA in online programs is the *Preparing Rural Science and Math Teachers Through Distance Learning Demonstration Project* (2007 to 2011). The Western Governors University's online program to train rural teachers combined "academic support, mentoring throughout the program, and professional development opportunities for up to one year following a student's graduation from the program" and linkages with American Job Centers (Current 2010).

In 2008, ETA funded five *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Opportunities in the Workforce System Initiative* grants. The purpose of the initiative is to "expand and align current and new STEM workforce education and training strategies, activities, and resources in One-Stop Career Centers (now American Job Centers) promote, attract, and prepare disadvantaged youth and dislocated workers for STEM careers, while simultaneously enhancing the competitive position of local and regional employers" (STEM, 2010). The initiative includes an implementation evaluation to be completed in 2012.

Between 2005 and 2009, ETA held the first four rounds of the CBJTG competition and awarded 279 grants, most of them to community colleges or community college systems. The CBJTG grants support the development and implementation of training programs designed to meet the needs of high-growth, high-demand industries, as well as recipients' capacity building activities. The Urban Institute is completing an implementation evaluation of the CBJTG initiative, based on a survey of all grantees in rounds 1-4 and site visits to nine. The final report is expected in 2013.

As part of the research investments driven by ARRA, ETA funded an implementation study of the Health Care, High Growth, and Green Jobs initiatives. IMPAQ International conducted the implementation study as projects got underway in 2010. Selected projects participated in a random assignment evaluation. The interim report *Green Jobs and Healthcare Implementation Study* (Shen et al., 2012) was completed in 2012.

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

In 2011, ETA funded the *Self-Employment Training Demonstration* and is working with the Small Business Administration on understanding effective self-employment training strategies that can help dislocated workers become reemployed. Eligible dislocated workers would be offered self-employment training, counseling, seed capital funds, and other services to help them succeed in planning and starting their own business. A final report is expected in 2015.

## Other Research

Other Federal agencies also have investments in research on expanding the skills of the U.S. workforce. ACF announced 23 *Health Profession Opportunity Grants to Serve TANF Recipients and Other Low-Income Individuals* in 2010. The grants will “support the establishment and maintenance of training, education, and career advancement programs to address health care professions workforce needs” (Health Profession, 2010). Also in 2010, the DOE announced approximately \$100 million in ARRA grants for the *Workforce Training for the Electric Power Sector* initiative. Funded projects are split across two topics: developing and enhancing workforce training programs and smart grid workforce training. The 54 projects are expected to train 30,000 workers (Workforce, 2010). With the Department of Education, NCES’s collaboration with the OECD on the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a research effort designed to assess the skill levels of adults in over 20 developed countries, including the US. Skills are assessed in three general-skill domains that are important for labor market success: literacy, numeracy, and IT-based problem-solving. The assessment also includes a detailed background questionnaire that collects information on employment status and the skills used at work (among other things). PIAAC was administered in 2011 and two initial reports—one international report from the OECD and one US national report from NCES—are due in October 2013. PIAAC will allow the US to benchmark the skill level of its labor force (and adult population) against that of other developed nations.

Department of Energy’s *Weatherization Assistance Program National Evaluation* will provide a robust data set of pre-weatherization, post-weatherization, measures installed and energy impact for the 2007 and 2008 Weatherization Assistance Program Years. As part of the effort, a process evaluation will be performed where all states and agencies will receive surveys to collect data about their operations, approaches to training and client education, and quality assurance procedures. Surveys of the workers that actually perform the energy upgrade work in weatherized homes – Energy Auditor, Crew Leader, and the Crew (or Retrofit Installer Technicians) – will be part of the process evaluation. These studies are expected to be available in 2012.

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

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

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

### **3. Increasing the Labor Market Participation of Underutilized Populations**

#### ***ETA Research***

A large number of research investments at ETA are focused on increasing the labor market participation of underutilized populations with projects targeting older workers, youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, and TANF/low-income parents. The *Evaluation of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)* began in 2007. The purpose of the SCSEP program is to foster useful part-time employment opportunities in community service for low-income older Americans and fostering individual economic self-sufficiency.” The final evaluation report, focused on the program’s processes and grantee outcomes, is expected in 2013. Another investment targeting older workers is the *Aging Worker Initiative (AWI)*, announced by ETA in 2009, which supports 10 projects exploring how best to provide training and related services to assist individuals age 55 and older in securing “employment and advancement opportunities in high-growth sectors” (*Aging*, n.d.). An ETA-funded evaluation of the AWI grants will identify key factors leading to success and implications for the larger workforce system; an interim report is expected in 2012 and a final report in 2013. ETA has also provided funding for technical assistance and peer learning institutes to share best practices. A process evaluation is being conducted by Social Policy Research Associates and Mathematica, with an interim and final report to be completed in 2013.

In 2007, ETA funded the *Performance-Based Job Training and Education Demonstration Project* in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Participants, primarily formerly incarcerated individuals and those at risk of criminal/gang involvement, are offered “three program components that include a 13-month core program, and pre- and post-release transitional services. Central to the demonstration is that employers pay a placement and retention fee when they hire a participant, operating much like a private staffing agency.” A final evaluation report, *Process Evaluation and Outcomes Analysis: Twin Cities RISE! Performance-Based Training and Education Demonstration*, was completed (Antkowiak et al., 2012). ETA also funded a project to replicate the use of mentors and intensive employment and training services to formerly incarcerated individuals in Newark, New Jersey and an evaluation of that project and a final report are expected to be completed in 2013.

The random assignment evaluation of the *Reintegrating Ex-Offenders Initiative* is being conducted by Social Policy Research Associates and MDRC. The ETA initiative seeks to identify effective employment strategies for the hard-to-serve ex-offender population. Participants began enrolling in the program in spring 2010. *Evaluation of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program: Interim Report* was completed in 2012 (Leshnick et al., 2012), and the impact evaluation is expected to be completed in 2014.

Two projects target disadvantaged youth. In 2008, ETA funded an implementation analysis, *Evaluation of Mentoring, Educational, and Employment Strategies to Improve Academic, Social, and Career Pathway Outcomes in Persistently Dangerous Schools*. The report was completed in 2011 (Lewis-Charp et al., 2011). MDRC and Mathematica are conducting the *National Evaluation of YouthBuild*, which will “use a random assignment design to measure the impact of YouthBuild on employment, educational attainment, criminal justice involvement, and other important outcomes” (MDRC – Announcement, 2010). The interim impact report is expected in 2015, and the final report is expected in 2018.

The *Beneficiary Choice* demonstration was another effort to connect with youth offenders. In this demonstration, grants were awarded to faith-based and community organizations in five communities to provide work readiness training, career counseling, and six months of follow-up support services. Youth could select among providers, at least one of which was non-religious, that were funded through a performance-based contract. In 2008, Mathematica released the first report from its evaluation of the demonstration, *Giving Ex-Offenders a Choice in Life: First Findings from the Beneficiary Choice Demonstration* (Bellotti et al., 2008). The report found that while formerly incarcerated individuals were connected with workforce services at a higher rate than they would normally have been, providers found that the lack of certainty driven by both customer choice and the performance contracts made it difficult to plan for service provision. A final evaluation report, *Examining A New Model for Prisoner Re-Entry Services: The Evaluation of Beneficiary Choice*, was completed in 2011 (Bellotti et al., 2011).

Two projects target young or low-income parents and TANF recipients. The *Young Parents Demonstration Grants* program includes multiple projects in three rounds of funding. ETA’s investment includes interventions in mentoring, education, training, and employment for parenting and pregnant youth, ages 16 to 24; and an ongoing process evaluation, as well as a random assignment impacts study of added services through the Young Parents project (Evaluation, 2010). ETA and HHS started the *Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project* in 2001. The project “assessed the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance employment outcomes for current or former TANF recipients and other low-income parents who have demonstrated difficulty entering and sustaining employment” (Enhanced 2012). ETA was one of the early funders, and many of the related reports, such as *Alternative Welfare-to-Work Strategies for the Hard-to-Employ: Testing Transitional Jobs and Pre-Employment Services in Philadelphia* and *Four Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Employment: An Introduction to the Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project*, are posted on the MDRC website.

ETA also supported the *Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration* through 2011. The demonstration is continuing with foundation support, with studies such as *Strategies to Help Low-Wage Workers Advance: Implementation and Early Impacts of the Work Advancement and Support Center (WASC) Demonstration*, *Moving from Jobs to Careers: Engaging Low-Wage Workers in Career Advancement*, *From Getting By to Getting Ahead: Navigating Career Advancement for Low-Wage Workers*, and *A New Approach to Low-Wage Workers and Employers: Launching the Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration* posted on the MDRC website.

ETA began the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration, an initiative designed to measure the impact of transitional jobs as tools for helping formerly incarcerated individuals and non-custodial parents achieve self-sustaining unsubsidized employment. The initiative is designed to build on lessons learned from previous efforts to assist low-income individuals with transitioning into the workforce. Project funding supports efforts by seven local organizations to address the gaps that continue to exist in

successfully implementing this strategy. A rigorous impact evaluation will be conducted by MDRC with final results expected in 2017.

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

Since 1989, the Department of Labor has administered the *National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)*, an employment based survey of the demographic, employment, and health characteristics of hired crop farm workers. ETA assumed responsibility for the NAWS in 2006. In addition to providing labor market information for ETA's National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), NAWS findings are also being used to inform programs and/or help meet the Federal agency information collection needs of the Administration for Children and Families, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. To improve the statistical efficiency of the survey for continued use across the Federal government, Mathematica is evaluating the statistical methodology of the survey (Current, 2011). A separate study on NFJP, to be completed in 2013, will examine the context in which the nine NFJP grantees' operate their programs, their partnerships in the community, their approaches for serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and their technical assistance needs. It will include cross-site analysis of administrative data on clients' use of services and factors that contribute to performance measures.

Finally, ETA funded the *Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations* grants. Through these projects, community-based organizations worked to place and retain women in apprenticeship programs for nontraditional occupations such as those in the construction industry. A cost-benefit analysis was completed as part of the study on *An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States* (Reed et al., 2012).

### **Other Research**

Other agencies within DOL also have significant ongoing research investments aimed at increasing labor market participation of underutilized groups. The Women's Bureau has a long-standing tradition of providing employment, training, and work-life services to women in the workforce. Several research investments specifically look at preparing women for nontraditional work. *Why Green is Your Color: A Woman's Guide to a Sustainable Career* provides an overview of the types of green jobs that are available and the skills needed to get them. The report contains information on hiring needs and challenges, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities, and in-demand and emerging jobs in green industries. The Women's Bureau also sponsored nine Green Jobs Training Projects to demonstrate how to engage and prepare women for high-skilled and technical jobs in green industries and occupations. The Bureau created a lessons learned guide to share the valuable lessons and insights learned through these projects.

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

The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), a joint effort with ETA and DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), provides grants to states to carry out the initiative. The DEI demonstration initiative will test strategies to enhance the American Job Center system's capacity to improve labor market outcomes for adults and youth with disabilities. DEI grants will assist American Job Centers to undertake service and system-building strategies that draw on promising practices. These practices include staffing Disability Resource Coordinator positions (formerly called Disability Navigators) and becoming a Ticket-to-Work Employment Network (EN) member, thereby tapping into Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) resources to support service delivery. Also included are evidence-based practices – such as integrated resource teams, braiding and blending financing, offering customized employment solutions and self-employment options, or asset development services— practices that have been proven to be effective components of strategies focused on adults and youth with disabilities.

The evaluation of the DEI will include impact, system change and implementation/process evaluation components. The impact evaluation focuses on comparing customer outcomes and the efficacy of different strategies across customers in randomly selected pilot and comparison sites. The impact evaluation will use data from the WIASRD, Wagner-Peyser (Labor Exchange), and a customized DEI system to collect employment status, earning, employment-retention and degree-certification completion at baseline and follow-up during the three-year study period. The impact evaluation includes plans to conduct data matching of WIASRD and Wagner-Peyser data with the Social Security Administration's SSI/SSDI data base. The DEI data system was implemented in fall 2011 to collect expanded customer demographic, service utilization and outcome data.

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

ACF's *Subsidized and Transitional Employment Demonstration (STED)* (2010-2017) will evaluate subsidized and transitional employment approaches for critical low-income populations, potentially including welfare recipients and low-income non-custodial parents. The project will examine subsidized employment strategies designed to address two distinct goals: (1) provide work-based income support for people who are not able to find regular, unsubsidized jobs; and 2) to improve the employability of disadvantaged groups. These strategies will build upon approaches that have demonstrated empirical effectiveness in previous studies, test new and innovative interventions designed to demonstrate promising program components, and adapt to current policy environments at the federal, state, and local levels (ACF OPDRE: Subsidized, 2012).

In the TANF/SSI *Disability Transition Project (2008 to 2011)*, ACF and SSA explored opportunities to improve services to TANF recipients with disabilities, rather than the current practice of simply referring individuals to apply for SSI benefits. Because of the narrow definition of disability used by the SSA, many TANF recipients fall through the cracks. The project will document current practices, and pilot test

new approaches for screening potential SSI applicants and better-serving recipients with disabilities (ACF OPRE: TANF, 2011).

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

Foundations and philanthropic organizations are also engaged in research on improving labor market participation. In the *Ensuring Good Jobs and Access to Services* initiative, the Ford Foundation is funding research and activities that look at how low-wage workers access workforce development services, including UI (Ensuring, 2010). The Ford Foundation pledged \$80 million over five years to improve the administration of public benefits, including UI and Food Stamps, and advocate for improved job quality for low-income individuals. Ford will work with 5 to 10 states to identify policy, programmatic, and technical changes necessary to modernize and streamline services (Strom, 2009). A report by the National Employment Law Project (2010) analyzed job creation between December 2007 and July 2010, finding that “growth has been concentrated in mid-wage and lower-wage industries” (*Where the Jobs Are*, 2010).

#### **4. Using State-Level Administrative Data to Measure Progress and Outcomes**

##### ***ETA Research***

In 2010, ETA announced grants to 13 states for the *Workforce Data Quality Initiative*.<sup>14</sup> The purpose of these grants is to encourage and support state efforts to build longitudinal systems connecting education and workforce data (Workforce Data, n.d.). This project mirrors the larger Department of Education’s *Statewide Longitudinal Data System* (SLDS) grants, which are intended to help states manage, analyze, and use data to improve student achievement (Statewide, 2011). Begun in 2005, the SLDS grant program is operated through the Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics. As of 2012, the SLDS has awarded grants to 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to help them design, develop, implement, and expand their K-12 education data systems into longitudinal data systems covering early learning through workforce entry (P-20W). These systems are intended to help states efficiently manage, analyze and use education data, including individual student records, to make data-informed decisions that will improve student learning, as well as students’ achievement and labor force outcomes. In addition to the grants, the program offers many services and resources to assist education agencies with SLDS-related work. Best practices, lessons

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<sup>14</sup> The 13 Workforce Data Quality Initiative states funded by ETA are: Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

learned, and non-proprietary products developed by grant recipients are disseminated to aid state and local agencies.

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

### ***Other Research***

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

## **5. Postsecondary Education and Training**

### ***ETA Research***

ETA has invested in research efforts to expand access to post-secondary education and job training for workers.

Since late 2009, Mathematica has been conducting a study on the effectiveness of assessment and cost-benefit analysis of registered apprenticeship as a training option for workforce system clients. The final report, *An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States*, utilized administrative data and interviews with Federal and state program administrators (Reed et al., 2012). A subset of this study also examining women in apprenticeship programs.

Another area of ETA program research relates to the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. A study by researchers at the University of Michigan examined the labor market effects of globalization in relation to TAA (Johnson, 2005). Further, ETA is conducting a national evaluation of TAA that involves a quasi-experimental impact analysis and a process study of the TAA program as it operated under the 2002 amendments. The evaluation contractor, SPRA and its subcontractor, Mathematica, have produced five occasional papers covering such subjects as initial implementation of the Trade Act amendments of 2002 (D’Amico et al., 2009), case management (Mack, 2009), and characteristics of TAA-eligible workers and their early program experiences (Dolfin and Berk, 2010). Multiple reports from the process and impact studies will be released in 2013.

A long-term follow-up survey to the ITA random assignment evaluation of nearly 8,000 individuals in eight sites between 2001-2004 examined the impacts between the three different ITA strategies that practitioners used to offer ITAs to individuals (Perez-Johnson et al., 2012).

In 2006, ETA launched the *Technology-Based Learning (TBL) Initiative* as an internal program to encourage a national strategy for advancing the use of technology for training within the workforce investment system. The initiative seeks to increase the number of people trained in high-growth jobs through the broadening of opportunities for skill and competency development, which is made available quickly and conveniently through the use of TBL methods. In 2008, ETA funded a two-year, four-state

pilot project to develop and implement “an online portal...with information on nationally available online certificate and degree programs that respond to identified high-growth areas in each state” (Current, 2010). The *Collaborative Online Workforce and Education Training Portal Demonstration* evaluation report is forthcoming. A second study will examine the twenty TBL grants projects awarded in 2009 by using administrative data to determine participant demographics; TBL training completion rates; degree, certificate, and credential attainment in industry-recognized or educational certifications; and pre- and post-participation employment and wages. The final report will be delivered in 2012. A third effort under this initiative seeks to gain a fuller understanding of TBL parameters of the workforce investment system, states, local areas, and Workforce Investment Boards, with a report expected in 2013.

ETA funded the *WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation*, which is a random assignment evaluation of intensive and training services across 28 local workforce investment areas. Plans call for follow-up surveys of participants at 15 and 30 months after random assignment. The implementation report is expected in 2014, the first impact report is expected in 2015, and the final impact report is expected in 2017.

### **Other Research**

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

Under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, the Department of Education allocates funds to state education agencies and local education institutions (at the secondary and postsecondary sub-baccalaureate levels) to support career and technical education (CTE) programs. Mandated within the Perkins Act, National Assessment of Career and Technical Education (NACTE) consists of a variety of research studies designed to evaluate the implementation of the Perkins Act and the status and outcomes of CTE in the US. To meet these objectives, studies are being conducted to cover a range of topics that are relevant to federal CTE policy. These topics include student participation in CTE, integration of academic and technical content in CTE programs, program accountability, Perkins funding, and students’ educational and labor market outcomes. A final report on NACTE research is due in 2013.

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

In the fall of 2009—at the request of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Under Secretary of Education (OUS)—the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) began a new interagency effort to improve federal statistical data on the education, training, and credentials that out-of-school youth and adults need for jobs. An Interagency Working

Group on Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA) was founded to oversee this work. GEMEnA consists of senior representatives from the Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the National Science Foundation (NSF), as well as CEA, NCES, OMB, and OUS. With GEMEnA's expert guidance and support, NCES has embarked upon a multi-faceted effort to apply best-practice survey development principles towards the goal of developing valid national measures of the participation in and credentialing of education and training for work, and to build government-wide consensus for the adoption of these measures. GEMEnA's portfolio includes four main strands of work: (1) development and deployment of a core set of survey items related to the prevalence and key characteristics of industry-recognized certifications and occupational licenses; (2) development and deployment of a core set of survey items related to the prevalence and key characteristics of sub-baccalaureate educational certificates; (3) consideration of new measures of participation in education and training designed to prepare out-of-school youth and adults for work; and (4) support for NCES in the development of a new household study on education, training, and credentials for work.

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

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

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

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

The Gates Foundation's *Next Generation Learning Challenges* project, presented in an October 2010 white paper, seeks to answer four key questions: (1) How do we better engage young people in learning and demonstrate its relevance to real life and their aspirations? (2) How do we personalize learning to accelerate and deepen understanding and knowledge retention? (3) How do we encourage persistence and completion in spite of the competing demands of students' lives? (4) How can institutions and educational systems afford improvements in student success in light of flat or declining budgets? (*Next*, 2010, p. 4). Partners in the *Next Generation Learning Challenges* project include the Council of Chief State School Officers, Educause, the League for Innovation in the Community College, and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning.

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

## **6. Unemployment Insurance**

### ***ETA Research***

Since 2005, ETA has provided funds to states to provide Reemployment and Eligibility Assessments (REAs) to individuals claiming Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. Implemented in 40 states, the program is designed to enhance the rapid reemployment of unemployed workers, identify existing and eliminate potential overpayments, and realize cost savings for UI trust funds. ETA funded an experimental evaluation that used recommendations and findings from the 2005 study to design and implement the evaluation. The final report, *Impact of the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Initiative*, was completed in 2011 (Poe-Yamagata, 2011).

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

### ***Other Research***

In 2010, OASAM awarded two contracts to Mathematica to study the ARRA provisions affecting UI compensation and the effects of the ARRA subsidy on the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act health benefit take (OASAM, 2011).

## IV. RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR RESEARCH \*

The Heldrich Center paper, DOL and ETA staff, and stakeholders recommended focusing on a number of important areas in future research. The list of topics was long and varied, although there was considerable consensus on the broad areas needing more research. The Heldrich Center coordinated the response and feedback from these individuals to develop the recommended areas for research listed below. (It should be noted that some areas of research are highly linked with others, e.g., *Identifying Effective Strategies* and *Addressing the Needs of Special Populations*.) These areas will be the priorities of the Department of Labor covering employment and training research.<sup>15</sup>

- 1. Understanding Changing Labor Markets.** This priority supports research on: understanding the changing dynamics of labor markets and the program and service needs that result from them; the severity of ongoing difficulties in the labor market, in particular concerns about the increased share of the long-term unemployed; sorting out the changing structural versus demand-deficient causes of labor market distress; gaining a better understanding of the workings of sub-markets, such as those on and around tribal reservations; and strategies to better understand and anticipate employer workforce needs, especially relating to energy, green jobs, and other emerging industries.
- 2. Identifying Effective Strategies.** This priority supports research on: the needs of the workforce system as a whole by linking research across the various titles of WIA; identifying variations in programs and strategies, underlying reason for the variations and their effectiveness through the use of multi-disciplinary, cross-state, cross-site analysis that takes full advantage of ongoing, multi-state research partnerships; determining what UI and employment strategies (such as job matching, career counseling, and other reemployment services) assist UI claimants and other jobseekers adjust to ongoing labor market difficulties; determining the effectiveness, costs, and return on investment of training services and strategies, especially those leading to industry-recognized credentials and training certifications including employer-specific strategies such as apprenticeship and on-the-job training; determining effective ways of teaching adult education and language skills through contextual learning; and examining workforce intermediaries (including nonprofit temporary staffing agencies) and sectoral strategies.<sup>16</sup>
- 3. Improving Workforce System Infrastructure.** This priority supports research on: effective management approaches and tools (e.g., the Frontline Decision Support System, E-tools, UI reforms); developing performance adjustment mechanisms; determining how best to transfer knowledge within the system, going beyond the simple dissemination of promising practices to ways to encourage their adaptation and implementation by other practitioners; and examining the effectiveness of waivers in terms of their ability to give states and local areas the flexibility to improve the workforce system.

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\* This section is composed of extensive text taken directly from *Identifying Gaps and Setting Priorities for Employment and Training Research* (Van Horn, King, and Smith, 2011). Edits and updates have been made in the content.

<sup>15</sup> In undertaking research, the focus should be on using the most rigorous research and evaluation methods possible.

<sup>16</sup> For example, sector strategies implemented by the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, Project Quest, Capital IDEA, and other organizations to examine whether their estimated impacts are enduring and whether these strategies can be successfully expanded and replicated.

- 4. Addressing the Needs of Special Populations.** This priority supports research on: the long-term unemployed (including people who are still unemployed after they exhaust their unemployment benefits); dislocated workers; incumbent workers; youth (including at-risk youth); older workers; immigrants (including migrant and seasonal farm workers) and low-wage workers generally; English-language learners; working families; persons with disabilities; formerly incarcerated individuals; TANF recipients; veterans; low-skilled, disconnected men (a group that has severe problems with long-term consequences); Indian and Native Americans (a group that tend to face very distinctive challenges and issues); and Hispanics (specifically with immigration and internal relocation of Hispanics, as well as the cultural and language barriers these populations face). This priority also supports research on: examining the effectiveness of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to determine the types of employers that use it and what specific populations benefit from the tax credit; and examining what other types of incentives or strategies, such as short-term compensation, might be offered to these special populations that would improve their training and/or employment outcomes.
- 5. Building Research Infrastructure and Support.** This priority supports efforts to: improve access, use, and confidentiality of administrative records for research and evaluation; create more public-use and restricted-use datasets for analysis; and support research, evaluation, and site participation efforts at all levels of government (Federal, state and local) so that we can support, implement, and build knowledge of, evidence-based practices.

## V. SUMMARY

This Research Plan is part of the first of five phases in a sound research process that has been identified by the Government Accountability Office. In setting an agenda, both the extensive literature review and consultative process to obtain stakeholder feedback were critical in ultimately identifying the following research topic areas:

1. Understanding Changing Labor Markets;
2. Identifying Effective Strategies;
3. Improving Workforce System Infrastructure;
4. Addressing the Needs of Special Populations; and
5. Building Research Infrastructure and Support.

In addition to using the Research Plan to help inform the decision-making process for research and evaluation, it must be noted that other criteria may need to be taken into consideration when prioritizing and selecting research and evaluation, including (but not limited to):

- Congressional mandates that stipulate the conduct of research and evaluation<sup>17</sup>;
- Strategic priorities from ETA, DOL, and the Administration;
- Requests from other Federal agencies to partner, leverage resources, and/or co-fund workforce initiatives;
- Program-level topic areas identified by ETA, other Federal agencies and/or oversight entities such as OMB and GAO;
- Unforeseen developments (such as the recent economic recession and ARRA), which require a refocusing of resources;
- Timing of appropriations bills that may have implications on ETA's ability to fund and execute research<sup>18</sup>; and
- The feasibility of conducting a rigorous study, which takes into consideration the practicality and interest of sites implementing the research and carrying out data collection efforts, program and policy relevance, availability of data, timing, and total cost of the research effort.

It is important to note that planning for and funding long-term rigorous research and evaluation initiatives, such as outcome and impact studies to answer questions about what happens to individuals in the long-term, are further constrained due to the lack of appropriation and procurement language in legislation that would allow ETA to conduct these multi-year research initiatives in a more efficient and effective manner. Appropriations law does not address statutory restrictions that limit ETA's ability to enter into multi-year research, including: (1) the requirement for upfront funding of the evaluation in its entirety; and (2) limited life of funds. Further, access to microdata from states and security issues related to microdata continue to be challenges that can impact the timeliness and total cost of research.

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<sup>17</sup> GAO has also recognized that, "The Congress influences an agency's program evaluation choices through legislating evaluation authority, mandating studies, making appropriations, and conducting oversight." (GAO-11-176)

<sup>18</sup> Many-- not all-- of these criteria were also identified in the GAO report on *Program Evaluation: Experienced Agencies Follow a Similar Model for Prioritizing Research* (2011), GAO-11-176.

The public workforce investment system continues to face challenges resulting from the economic downturn and changing needs of the system in order to better respond to jobseekers and employers. Research and evaluation of workforce programs and initiatives has a significant role in identifying effective workforce services, and the partnerships, collaboration, and participation of internal and external stakeholders are critical components in understanding what works and what does not work.

An important part of this effort includes effective dissemination of research findings. ETA posts research and evaluation reports on the ETA Web site<sup>19</sup> and announces them through a Training and Employment Notice (TEN) to an email list of more than 50,000 subscribers. ETA also highlights research findings through other avenues, such as through research conferences and research forums. ETA-sponsored research conferences and forums explore new strategies, evaluate promising practices, and highlight evidence-based research that can promote innovation and improve practice in the workforce system. ETA also encourages authors to present findings at other ETA-sponsored conferences, as well as other conferences sponsored by Federal agencies and associations, such as the Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation within HHS's ACF; the OVAE with the US Department of Education; the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management; the American Evaluation Association; and others. ETA also supports emerging Research Scholars, through grants to individuals conducting research on pertinent workforce topics.

Beyond ETA's use of this Research Plan, ETA encourages other workforce stakeholders to use this plan as a source of information in their process for developing their own priorities for carrying out critical research and evaluation projects to improve the public workforce system. Looking ahead, ETA will continue its commitment to its research investments, improving the dissemination of its research, and increasing collaboration and sharing of employment and training research findings to improve the public workforce investment system that helps workers obtain good jobs.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>

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## APPENDIX B: Members of the National Expert Advisory Panel

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Heldrich Center for Workforce Development  
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Heather Boushey  
Center for American Progress

Susanne Bruyere  
ILR School, Cornell University

Gary Burtless  
Brookings Institution

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

John Dorrer  
Maine Department of Labor

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

Michael Fix  
Migration Policy Institute

Carolyn Heinrich  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Richard Hobbie  
National Association of State Workforce  
Agencies

Harry Holzer  
Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University  
and Urban Institute

William Kiernan  
Institute for Community Inclusion  
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Rakesh Kochhar  
Pew Hispanic Center

Sheena McConnell  
Mathematica Policy Research

Edwin Melendez  
Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter  
College

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

Ron Mincy  
Columbia University

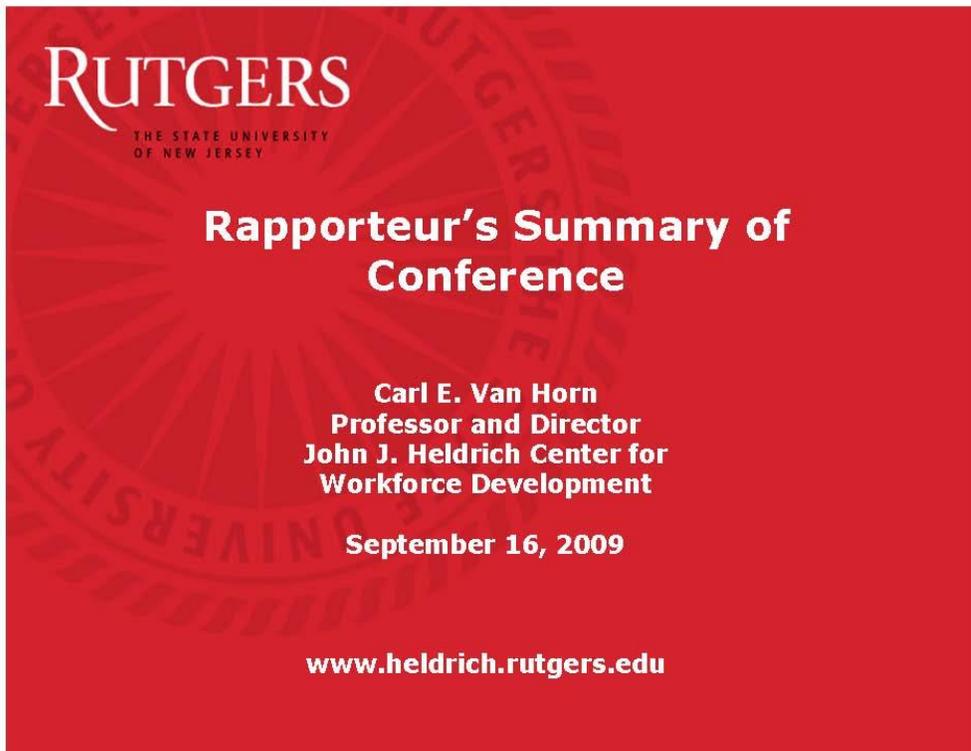
Larry Mishel  
Economic Policy Institute

Demetra Nightingale  
Urban Institute

Martin Simon  
Center for Best Practices,  
National Governors Association

Joan Wills  
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# APPENDIX C: Rapporteur's Summary of 2009 DOL ETA Recovery and Reemployment Research Conference



**RUTGERS**

**John J. Heldrich Center for  
Workforce Development**

## **Critical, Shared Values**

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

## **Cross-Cutting Priorities** (continued)

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

## **Cross-Cutting Priorities**

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

## **Core Issues for Future Research**

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

## **Core Issues for Future Research** (continued)

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

