Improving the Occupational Employment Statistics Program to Measure Occupational Wage and Employment Growth

Background

- The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program is the only comprehensive source of regularly produced occupational employment and wage rate information for the U.S. economy, as well as States, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, all metropolitan areas and divisions, and balance-of-State areas for each State, for complete geographic coverage.

- Data from the OES program are among the most widely used BLS products, and are the foundation of the BLS and State-produced occupational projections that are vital to education and training program planning and career guidance.

- The OES survey sample is not large enough to accurately measure growth or decline in employment and wages using observations from a single year, while still meeting its goal of producing occupational employment and wage estimates for industries and areas at the level of detail required.

Proposal

- In 2011, the BLS is requesting $4,918,000 for the OES program to address the lack of reliable data available that support the identification of occupational trends in employment and wages.

- The BLS will make year-to-year comparisons possible through the collection of annual data from a subset of establishments within the OES survey sample.

- After development work is completed, the BLS will begin data collection in 2012.

- The BLS will publish the first set of national and State estimates of occupational employment and wage growth in the spring of 2013, with a reference date of 2012.

Impact

- In 2014, with the release of 2013 estimates, these new data will make possible year-to-year comparisons of occupation-specific wage and employment trends for the Nation and among States.

- Understanding trends in occupational employment and wages is critical in making decisions about investments of billions of public dollars in education and training, including many Federally funded programs.

- With occupational trend data, data users could answer such questions as:
  - In which occupations are there rapid changes occurring?
  - Where are occupational shortages and surpluses?
  - Are the jobs being created “good jobs,” with high skills and high wages?