The Workforce Data Quality Initiative

In December 2009, Congress appropriated $12.5 million to support the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) to the U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) as part of the Fiscal Year 2010 budget. The WDQI complements the state Longitudinal Data Systems Grants Initiative that is currently being implemented through the U. S. Department of Education. WDQI funds will be awarded to state workforce agencies through a competitive Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA). The SGA was announced May 17, 2010 and the Department estimates that about twelve states may receive grants, ranging from up to $1 million for single-state applicants and up to $3 million for multi-state consortium. State workforce agencies were required to submit their applications by August 16, 2010. Grantees will be selected in October to receive WDQI awards.

WDQI grants will support the development of or enhancements to longitudinal administrative databases to integrate workforce and education data. These funds will help states incorporate workforce information into their longitudinal data systems. States will be able to use their longitudinal data system to follow individuals through school and into and through their work lives. Additionally, the WDQI places an emphasis on promoting improvements in the information quality and the accessibility of performance data, including data reported by training providers. High quality and consistent data from providers concerning the services they offer will provide better information on how well these services serve their customers when they enter the labor market, and are integral to informed consumer choices.

Grantees of the WDQI will be in various stages of development from incipient databases to systems that are well under way. At a minimum, grantees will be expected to: develop or improve state workforce longitudinal data systems with individual-level information; enable workforce data to be matched with education data to create comprehensive longitudinal data systems; improve the quality and breadth of the data in the workforce data systems; use longitudinal data to provide useful information about program operations; analyze the performance of education and training programs; and provide user-friendly information to consumers to help them select the training and education programs that best suit their needs.

Successful implementation and sustainability of the WDQI will rely on strong data-sharing partnerships between state workforce agencies and other state agencies, research institutions and various data collection entities as well as on expert knowledge and analysis of the longitudinal data collected.

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