Discussion Framework for Using Workforce Development Data
In P-20 Educational Programming

What types of jobs should we prepare our students for? There is a wealth of information about the current and anticipated workforce from a variety of sources – so much that it can be overwhelming. This discussion framework offers a set of questions to help guide career programming throughout the P-20 continuum.

**Question 1: Who else in our region is involved in workforce planning and how can we leverage their efforts?**

The recent federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that states and regions partner with economic development, adult education, employment security, and rehabilitation services in designing and delivering workforce training. Extensive analysis of local labor markets and projected employment demand have driven this planning in Illinois. Data used for the State WIOA plan and in regional-level planning may be accessed at [https://www2.illinoisworknet.com/wioastateplan](https://www2.illinoisworknet.com/wioastateplan).

**Question 2: How does our service area compare to that of our Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA)?**

Check on this link to see how the geography you serve aligns with your LWIA:


If it is significantly different, you will need your own analysis of industry and occupational data. The Illinois Department of Employment Security provides the following:

- current and projected occupational data for LWIAs: [http://www.ides.illinois.gov/LMI/Pages/Employment_Projections.aspx](http://www.ides.illinois.gov/LMI/Pages/Employment_Projections.aspx)
- labor force data by race, ethnicity, sex and occupational categories by county: [http://www.ides.illinois.gov/LMI/Pages/Worforce_Availability_Information.aspx](http://www.ides.illinois.gov/LMI/Pages/Worforce_Availability_Information.aspx)

For the more advanced data analyst, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics provides information on hires, separations, turnovers, job creation, job destruction, net jobs, and employment figures by county through the QEI Explorer at [http://qwiexplorer.ces.census.gov/#x=0&g=0](http://qwiexplorer.ces.census.gov/#x=0&g=0).

Commuting patterns should also be considered. Local employers may need to draw from a larger area than your institution serves to meet their employment needs. Similarly, your graduates may be willing to commute outside of your region for good jobs. Both circumstances should be taken into consideration. Commuting data is available from OnTheMap - [http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/](http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/) (use a browser other than Explorer to access this tool).

**Question 3: What should we be looking for in this industry and occupation data?**

Consider meeting with your workforce development, economic development, and/or employer partners to make sense of the data and take advantage of the analysis they may have already done. Aspects to consider include:
a. Where is the largest growth occurring? Rapid expansion in a given sector or occupation may mean that employers are challenged to find enough qualified workers.

b. Where is growth occurring through expansion (job creation) vs. turnover (replacement)? Both types of growth are important to address, but expansion may mean new jobs with new skill requirements, while turnover may mean retirements, low wages, or problematic retention practices by employers.

c. What types of clusters exist in your region? Different clusters require different workforce development needs, but all are important to the local economy:
   i. **Leading or growth clusters** – have both high concentration and high employment growth. They typically export products/knowledge out of the region.
   ii. **Emerging clusters** - low concentration but high employment growth that may require increased labor to keep up with demand.
   iii. **Mature industries** – highly concentrated but low or negative employment growth.

d. What new or emerging jobs should be addressed? A number of industry sectors, particularly those in STEM fields, are evolving rapidly and may require new jobs with new skill sets. Resources available at this link include new and emerging jobs by community college district for the northern Illinois P-20 Network: [http://www.niu.edu/p20network/resources/index.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/p20network/resources/index.shtml)

e. Which jobs should we as educators target? Developing criteria with your workforce partners is an excellent way to begin this conversation. Three considerations to launch the discussion include:
   i. Are the wage levels adequate? Low wage, low skill service jobs tend to dominate the fastest-growing/high-demand occupations. The Living Wage Calculator offers more realistic benchmarks than the federal poverty level: [http://livingwage.mit.edu/](http://livingwage.mit.edu/)
   ii. Where are employers who are ready to provide quality work-based learning opportunities for our students?
   iii. Where do programs already exist to provide quality career pathways?

**Question 4: What do our students need to be prepared to access good jobs and careers?**

Three helpful websites describe the knowledge, skill, experience, and credential requirements associated with various occupations. These include the U.S. Department of Labor’s O*NET Online ([https://www.onetonline.org](https://www.onetonline.org)), Illinois workNet ([https://www2.illinoisworknet.com](https://www2.illinoisworknet.com)), and Illinois JobLink ([Illinois JobLink.com](https://illinoisjoblink.com)). These sites represent good starting points for identifying what employers need in their employees, but the information must be supplemented with real-time information. Whether it’s from employers directly or through job market analytics, it is vital to understand core requirements and ensure they are addressed in curriculum development.

**Question 5: Can we collaborate on a pilot project to prepare students for a strategically important industry or job cluster?**

The objective of this data analysis is to identify new and strategically important workforce gaps. Pooling resources with other workforce partners in your region is an excellent way to learn about available resources while building new partnerships.