Evidence-Building Capacity
Research and Evaluation in State Workforce Agencies

Presented by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Policy Development and Research
Today’s Objectives

Since the first convening, DOL-ETA initiated several steps to understand the states’ needs to build or expand capacity, this session will:

- Set the context that drives evaluation and research.
- Describe the current capacity, challenges and opportunities based on a national scan.
- Include practices and strategies that enable states and their research partners to build evaluation and research capacity and champions in their policymaking community.
- Allow you to identify actions to help your states to meet WIOA’s evaluation requirements.
Today’s Agenda

- Overview
  - Setting the context
  - Defining evaluation and research

- Understanding Evidence-building Capacity
  - Findings from the National Scan (NASWA)

- Planning and Operationalizing Evaluation and Research
  - State scenarios with workforce agencies, partners, and independent research organizations

- Seizing Evaluation and Research Opportunities

- Moving Forward with a Research Agenda
What do you want to know about research and evaluation session?

Summarized responses from the index cards
Overview

- Setting the Context
  - Department-level Chief Evaluation Office
  - Evaluation Policy
  - Research and Evaluation History
  - Annual Research Agenda
Evaluation Requirements for State Workforce Systems

WIOA Section 116 (e) and 20 CFR 668.220

- **Conduct** evaluations of activities of core workforce programs (youth, adults, dislocated workers and Wagner-Peyser) – and must use state set-aside funds.

- **Coordinate and consult** with other core programs and local workforce boards.

- **Cooperate** with Federal evaluations (and research projects) authorized under WIOA (sections 169 and 242, and the VR act) to the extent practical.
Understanding Evidence-Building Capacity

Background and Purpose

- Lack of systemic information
- Goals of the scan:
  - Document research community,
  - Collect and share recent R&E efforts,
  - Allow states to learn from other efforts, and
  - Provide federal policy makers a realistic understanding of capacity and TA needs.
- Forty-one state responses
What is the Demand for Evidence?

- Understanding customers and their barriers
- Improving program operations / administration
- Understanding labor markets and labor market change
- Measuring program performance and outcomes
- Measuring program impacts and effectiveness

Knowing the difference between outcomes and impacts!
What is the current level of State Workforce Agency capacity to meet the demand for evidence?

- Current efforts related to:
  - Organizational units and recent outside contractors/partners
  - Adequacy of in-house staff capacity
  - Adequacy of research skill sets

- CY 2015 spending estimates

- Funding adequacy
  - Amounts
  - Sources
  - 2011-2015 Research Output
Scan findings on evidence-building capacity include:

- Agency responses to pressing workforce development questions heavily weighted to
  - Understanding labor markets
  - Measuring program—
    - Performance and outcomes, and
    - Impacts and effectiveness
- States asked to share research agendas
- Twenty-seven percent of states reported that they did not have a research and evaluation unit in their workforce agencies
Scan findings examined staffing levels, staff experience, and research skills; and states reported:

- Two-thirds of the agencies report their staff capacity is 'inadequate' or 'fair,'
- Thirty percent report their research staff capacity is 'adequate,' and
- The remaining five states were at either end of the spectrum – 'nonexistent' or 'very adequate'
Insights related to workforce agencies that used evidence to drive decision making include:

- Many states already conduct some level of research and evaluation activities
- Learning organizations can borrow from other states’ experiences
- Improving research skills and identifying partners, managing partnerships, and implementing contracts are TA needs
- Supplementing and leveraging individual state efforts
- Using phased approaches with data "wins" – cross-agency relationships and relationships with Governor’s office and legislature are important keys to success
Leveraging other resources to help SWAs move forward, the report also includes:

- Two state case studies (Washington State and Ohio)
- Lists of –
  - in-house research units in other states
  - Recently use of outside contractors and partners, and
- Links to individual studies produced by other states (combination of agency publication websites and lists of publications)
Additional resources from the Scan to help SWAs, include:

- Examples of data sets, data tools and data systems other SWAs can access for R&E
- Major TA and capacity needs and strengths, by research skill area
- Funding streams SWAs rely on for R&E
- Populations/programs SWAs are studying
Planning and Operationalizing Evaluation and Research

Case studies with partnerships, and independent research opportunities
Moderated discussion with federal and state research and evaluation champions about data, research and evaluation studies that examine (see Evidence-Build Case Studies):

- Program Impacts of Effectiveness
- Measuring Program Performance
- Utilizing Labor Market Information
- Addressing Customer Barriers
- Improving Program Administration or Operations
State Approaches for Research and Evaluation

➢ Comments or questions about the research and evaluation examples shared?
➢ Share your examples.
Stepping Up Evaluation and Research Efforts

Group Exercise
Develop a Research and Evaluation Plan

- Pick a research question and propose a study OR identify an action that you can do in your state to increase the use of research and evaluations
- Explain what steps can be taken to initiate and/or formalize partnerships to support the study or action
- Describe two resources and/or data sources that can be leveraged to conduct the study or action
- Report out
Any Questions?
Seizing Opportunities to Conduct Evaluations

WIOA, Technical Assistance, and Resources
Guidance on evaluation and research activities is anticipated by mid-Summer 2017; planned technical assistance includes:

- Disseminate the NASWA Scan
- Produce “WIOAcised” Evaluation Toolkit
- Continue to develop a technical assistance plan

The NASWA scan allowed us to identify state workforce agency best practices and strategies, and as we move forward we will work with the ETA regional offices to identify and provide specific TA.
Resources

In addition to the resources that are available in the NASWA scan, the Department also evaluation-specific resources:

- Chief Evaluation Office
  - Evaluation Policy
  - Clearinghouse for Evaluation and Research
  - Topic Area Studies
- Employment and Training Administration
  - Five-Year Research Plan for 2012-2017
  - Research Publications Database
  - Workforce System Strategies
  - Annotated Bibliography – FLASH DRIVES
Contact Information

For questions regarding the information in presentation, send an email to*:

Gloria Salas-Kos, Office of Policy Development and Research
Salas-Kos.Gloria@dol.gov

ETAPERFORMS@DOLGOV
DOL.WIOA@dol.gov

*Please use Evidence-Building Capacity as the subject line.
Thank you!