

**TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
NOTICE**

NO.

13-15

DATE

October 15, 2015

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT LIAISONS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS
STATE DIRECTORS OF VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
STATE WORKFORCE AGENCY VETERANS COORDINATORS
AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
STATE VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY DIRECTORS
INDIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN GRANTEES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT
ACT

FROM:

PORTIA WU 
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Update on the Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Gold Standard Evaluation and Announcement of the Availability of a New Research Report: *Providing Services to Veterans through the Public Workforce System: Findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation, Volume I and II*

1. **Purpose.** Since June 2008, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has overseen the development and execution of a rigorous random assignment evaluation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Worker programs called the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation. This Training and Employment Notice (TEN) provides an update on the status of that evaluation and announces the release and availability of the first report from this evaluation: *Providing Services to Veterans through the Public Workforce System: Findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation, Volume I and II.*
2. **References.**
 - Section 172 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998
 - TEN 37-09, The Workforce Investment Act Gold Standard Evaluation, released on April 6, 2010
 - Section 169 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
3. **Background.** As explained in TEN 37-09 the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation will inform the general public, program administrators, the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress about the impact of WIA-funded intensive and training services relative to more

limited services. Further, it will provide substantial detail about what contributed to the impact of WIA-funded intensive and training services on participants' post-program employment and earnings and the services' cost effectiveness. The evaluation will provide details about what works, for whom and under what conditions.

In addition to the reports mentioned below, the evaluation has produced a series of briefing papers that will help ETA and the workforce community better understand how the public workforce system is working and where changes may be needed to conform to the recently-enacted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Furthermore, findings from the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation will be used to inform future system guidance under the new statute.

ETA has long recognized the importance and value of credible, transparent evaluation of employment, training, and economic development activities. As is the case under WIA, WIOA, in Section 169, incorporates requirements for ongoing evaluation of programs and activities authorized under the Act, and includes the prescription for rigorous, independent evaluations. The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation uses an experimental research design that is recognized as the most rigorous approach for assessing the effectiveness of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. It provides for clear transparency of both the process and the evaluation's results. Going forward, the outcomes documented by the evaluation team will provide value to the public workforce system as the WIOA is implemented nation-wide.

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. is conducting the evaluation, working with subcontractors Social Policy Research Associates, MDRC, and the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce. The evaluation team will examine net impacts by subgroups defined by age, gender, race/ethnicity, and prior employment history.

4. Summary of Evaluation Components.

a) **Enrollment into the Evaluation.** Across the continental United States, 28 Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) were randomly selected and agreed to participate in the WIA Gold Standard evaluation. The random selection of LWIAs ensures that the customers in the study were representative of all the workforce investment system customers across the continental United States and not just those in LWIAs that agreed to participate in the study. As a result of the LWIAs' participation, the evaluation's results will be generalizable to the entire workforce investment system and indicative of the impacts that intensive and training services offered through the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs have across the nation.

Within those LWIAs, over 34,000 individual WIA adult and dislocated worker program customers were randomly assigned into one of the following service groups: 1) those eligible to receive core services only, 2) those eligible to receive core and intensive services, but not training, and 3) those eligible to receive core, intensive and training services. In the participating LWIAs, only a small percentage of clients was randomly assigned to a limited services group, with approximately 90 percent assigned to the third group, eligible to receive

any WIA service available in the LWIA. Of particular importance, although WIA services are not an entitlement, no customers were denied all WIA services as everyone was able to receive core services.

Random assignment of clients began in November 2011 and ended in April 2013. An embargo of 15 months precluded those clients in the core-only and core-and-intensive-only groups from receiving services not available to those in their assigned service group. The purpose of the embargo period was to ensure that outcomes of clients eligible to receive certain services are compared to the outcomes of similar clients who were not eligible to receive the same WIA-funded services. Thus, the evaluation will be able to attribute any difference in outcomes to either intensive or training services. The embargo period for all study participants in all LWIAs in the study ended in July 2014.

Given the importance of providing priority of service to veterans, and the potential conflict this presented with the limitation of services for those randomly enrolled into certain treatment groups under this evaluation, veterans were not included in the random assignment component of the evaluation. Instead, services to veterans have been examined separately, through a supplemental component to the evaluation.

b) Data Collection. Both qualitative and quantitative data are being collected for the evaluation, including state-level administrative data. Site visits to each LWIA to collect qualitative data about program operations and partnerships, including data for this Veterans Supplemental Study (VSS), concluded in September 2013. Collection of WIA Standardized Record Data and Individual Training Account data from the states with LWIAs participating in the evaluation was completed in summer 2015. Unemployment Insurance data from the National Directory of New Hires will be collected periodically for inclusion in the evaluation's two impact reports. Administration of a follow-up survey to a sample of study participants 15 months after enrollment into the study concluded in summer 2015, while administration of a 30-month follow-up survey will conclude in spring 2016.

c) Reports. In addition to this VSS report on veterans' services, experiences and outcomes, briefing papers and three additional reports will be forthcoming from the evaluation: 1) an implementation report, describing the operations, partnerships and approaches for providing services, and local context in the LWIAs; 2) an interim report, providing impacts of intensive and training services 15 months after enrollment into the evaluation; and 3) a final report that will document the impacts of intensive and training services 30 months after enrollment into the study, both overall and according to the subgroups described above.

- 5. Publication Description.** The VSS report provides information about the different ways in which the public workforce investment system provides services to veterans, in particular through American Job Centers (AJC). In addition, it describes the characteristics of veterans receiving services through the AJC system, the services they receive, and their outcomes. Among other things, the evaluation team found that veterans were not always aware of the services to which they were entitled or their right to priority of services when they entered an AJC. In addition, AJC staff, including WIA staff and veterans' representatives funded by

Jobs for Veterans State Grants, reported that a key activity was translating veterans' military experience to civilian job opportunities. The report also includes an in-depth analysis of administrative data from two states which allowed the evaluation team to correlate service receipt with veterans' average post-program quarterly earnings.

6. **Evaluation Report Timeline.** The VSS Report has just been released; briefing papers from the study will be released in late-2015; the evaluation's Implementation Report is scheduled to be released in late 2015; the Interim Impact Report is scheduled to be released in late 2016; and the Final Impact Report is scheduled to be released in early 2018.
7. **Inquiries.** For more information about this study, contact Eileen Pederson, Contract Officer's Representative, Office of Policy Development and Research, ETA at (202) 693-3647 or Pederson.eileen@dol.gov. To view an abstract of the VSS Report as well as to download the full report, visit <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.