

## Network to Work Meeting

April 2019

### RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *LABOR MARKET INFORMATION*

#### *Using LMI in Career Planning and Searching for Jobs*

In choosing an occupation you want one that matches your personality type, interests, aptitude, and values. You also consider whether you have – or can attain – the requisite education or training. An equally important consideration should be this: will it be possible to find a job and have a career in this field? The answer to this question is found by looking at labor market information.

#### **What Is Labor Market Information (LMI)?**

Data about labor supply and demand, earnings, employment and unemployment statistics, job outlook, and the demographics of the labor force make up what is known as labor market information. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor collects and analyzes such statistical data about the labor market in this country, which it then shares with Congress, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and the public.

As one explores careers, this labor market information is invaluable. For any occupation, it can tell you:

- The industries that employ people in this field;
- The geographic area where jobs in this field can be found – and where the best employment opportunities are;
- The size of the career field;
- The long-term outlook for opportunities in this field – whether jobs will be available after one completes any required training.
- The range of wages one can earn in this field.

**Employment Outlook – Will there be jobs?** The BLS publishes lists of the fastest growing jobs, fastest growing industries, and occupations the agency predicts will add the most jobs between a base year and a target year. Such information is very helpful, yet it shouldn't be the sole determinant of your career selection. You also want to make sure the career is right for you and matches your interests, aptitude, personality and values.

**Where will the jobs be?** Also, if geography is a crucial factor, it is important to investigate what future opportunities will be where you plan to live. While the BLS does not make employment projections on a state or local level, this labor market information is provided by individual state agencies. **To find the agency and labor market information associated with your state, visit the website Projections Central: State Occupational Projections, at: <http://www.projectionscentral.com/>**

## How Does A4TD Use Labor Market Information?

A4TD pays close attention to the Labor Market Information related to each of the areas where we have a training office. We do this to ensure that the occupational skills training (training tracks) we offer reflects the in-demand jobs that are growing in the area and that have good long-term prospects for providing employment to our SCSEP participants. LMI and our training tracks are regularly reviewed to ensure that we offer the best and most appropriate training in light of what we are learning from LMI.

Once we have a good picture of the Labor Market and the growing, in demand occupations, we use that information to develop our Individual Employment Plans (IEP) for each occupational training track. Each IEP is tailored to a specific occupation, such as “Customer Service Representative” or “Personal Care Attendant”. The IEP spells out the abilities, work styles, work activities, and tasks associated with that occupation. This information is gathered from O’Net Online (see below) at [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org). O’Net Online is a valuable source of LMI.

## Resources for Finding Labor Market Information

Employment, earnings and industry information can be found in various offerings of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Here are some of note:

- The National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates
  - Here you can find the size of the career field for 800 occupations, the industries that hire folks in that career field, and the earnings paid.
- The Selected Occupations Data tool
  - Here you can find employment projections that will clarify how abundant the job opportunities will be.
- The Occupational Outlook Handbook
  - The OOH provides employment, earnings and projections data for about 250 occupations. It includes extensive descriptions and educational, training and experience requirements, as well as information about advancement opportunities. It is revised every two years.

- A **particular occupation's** projected employment change is compared - usually over a 10-year period - to the average projected change in employment **for all occupations combined** over the same period. The Handbook describes an occupation's projected job outlook by saying it will:
  - grow much faster than average (an increase of 14% or more)
  - grow faster than average (an increase of between 9% and 13%)
  - grow about as fast as average (an increase of between 5% to 8%)
  - grow more slowly than average (an increase of between 2% and 4%)
  - have little or no change (a decrease or increase of 1% or less)
  - decline (a decrease of at least 2%)
- The Career Guide to Industries
  - This BLS publication is helpful if you want to learn about a particular industry and find out what occupations it employs. You can find out about earnings, training requirements and advancement opportunities as well as job prospects and working conditions.
- O'Net Online
  - This is an interactive tool for exploring occupations and covers an extensive network of occupations. A4TD uses this tool during our process of enrolling new participants to help identify occupational interests.

## How to Use Labor Market Information When Planning Your Career

Job outlook is among the labor market information you must consider when you are deciding whether or not to choose a career. Before you invest money and time to prepare for an occupation you have determined is a good fit, you must see whether your ability to find a job once you have met all the requirements is decent. Of course, there are no guarantees that you will find a job, regardless of an occupation's outlook, but you will want the odds to be in your favor.

If you are wondering whether to change careers, you should also investigate the outlook of your current occupation. One of the reasons to make a career change is a worsening job outlook. If employment opportunities are few and it looks like they will get even worse, it may be time to prepare to work in a different field.

You need to look at job prospects too. The economists who estimate employment growth also compare the number of job seekers with the number of job openings to determine job prospects. Although the BLS may project that an occupation will grow much faster than average over the next 10 years, the number of available jobs may be few. One reason may be that some fields don't employ many people. Even if economists expect high growth, it may not translate into a significant number of opportunities for those hoping to get into a field or industry.

Labor market information, however, can't predict everything. Keep in mind that job outlook and job prospects can change. Employment growth can slow down, and it can speed up. Many factors can influence it. For example, a glut or shortage of qualified candidates looking for work will affect your job prospects. A downturn or upturn in an industry will change the outlook.

Most importantly, in addition to looking at the national job outlook data for the career you are investigating, **you should also research the projections for that occupation in the state in which you want to work.** You can use Projections Central to look at long- and short-term occupational projections by state. <http://www.projectionscentral.com/>

## How to Use Labor Market Information in your Job Search

You can use labor market information to develop an effective job search strategy. Many jobs are filled before they are ever advertised, but understanding labor market information can help you tap this hidden job market. Focus your job search by learning which industries are growing and what skills you have that are currently in demand. Follow these steps:

### Steps:

**#1. Access government resources.** Use Projections Central, <http://www.projectionscentral.com/>, to access state-issued LMI information for your area or the area where you plan to seek employment.

**#2. Make a list of your job-related and soft skills.** Start with a large list of every possible thing you can do that might lead to a job. Employers are most interested in what you can do for them.

**#3. Next look at labor market information to identify which skills are most in demand.** Compare those skills to your skills. Which of your skills are in greatest demand?

**#4. Dig deeper in LMI to find out if any certificates or degrees are commonly required** to use those high demand skills. If you were self-taught, you may need to first find work through an internship or mentorship program so you have the necessary references to prove your aptitude.

**#5. Look for skills you don't have but might like to learn.** Identify those skills that you could become proficient in fairly easily. You may even be able to find an online certification program.

**#6. Use LMI to identify the major industries that are growing in your area as well as the largest employers.** Will your skills be valuable to employers in that industry?

**#7. Think about other sectors that these major employers use or impact.** For example, if a major hospital is one of your city's largest employers, other health care services that support the hospital's work may also be thriving.

**#8. After you identify the major industries, look for smaller businesses in that industry that are likely to be hiring and who could benefit from your skills.**

**#9. Determine whether the jobs of interest to you ensure financial health and stability in your future.** Using LMI, compare average wages in a selected field to your current wages.

**#10. Evaluate training and education requirements.** Labor market information can tell you what training and education is expected for particular occupations, and whether additional education will be required for you to advance.

**#11. Use Information about specific occupations to determine if any certificates or licenses are required or can enhance your value to a potential employer of interest to you.** Many licenses are relatively simple and inexpensive to obtain and can make a significant difference in your paycheck.

**#12. Finally, use labor market information to identify additional skills of yours that you might not have thought were relevant to your job search but that can add value to your application.** For example, you might learn through your research that the second-largest employer in your area has opened a new factory in French-speaking Quebec. If you know how to speak French, you are potentially more valuable to the company.

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### **Sources:**

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