

America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA)
Reporting Sub-Committee
Savannah, GA
December 11, 2007 – December 13, 2007

Attending Members: Andy Miller (IL), Dave Coleman (MS), Jo Ann Terrell (GA), Kevin Adams (KY), Barry Butler (DE), Mehdi Nazeri (MO), Donna Ortmeyer (MO), Rick Little (UT), Melanie Manry (KS)

Attending AJLA-TS: Gerard Dye, Lloyd Sisco

Excused: Leslie Abramowitz (MA), Nancy St Clair (NV), Rick Lindsey (IN)

Department of Labor Update – Keith Rowe attended by telephone and provided the following information:

Annual reporting update

Self-service participant counts: The national office shared some information with regional offices and asked for additional information. Looking at data for PY05 and PY06, participant counts have increased significantly – and outcomes declined. Adult participants – saw significant increases (138% in PY05) and (61% in PY06). Exiters showed the same pattern. This was expected because of the clarification of policy. However, the entered employment rate (EER) dropped in PY05 and even more in PY06. For dislocated workers (DW), participants dropped about 7% in PY05 then rebounded in PY06. Outcomes also dropped for DW. The national office anticipated some changes as states applied the soft-exit policy differently and at different times. It was not anticipated that there would be changes to EER and ERR (retention). The big drop in DW outcomes is not explained. The national office is wondering if self-services or co-enrollments impact the numbers. What are the reasons for the drop in performance?

Revised incentive and sanctions policy

The revisions to incentives and sanctions apply to WIA only. These changes allow states with common measures (CM) waivers to participate in incentives and to become subject to sanctions. Some states may have avoided the waivers because they rely on incentive money. It was retroactively applied for PY06. Changes include 1) the number and types of measures (nine – 3 for Adult, 3 for DW, and 3 for Youth); 2) states must achieve 90 percent of negotiated levels to be considered for incentives; 3) aggregate scores in each performance groups must be achieved; 4) states must submit timely and accurate reports (accuracy is determined by DRVS and includes a “2 percent validation tolerance;” and 5) states cannot renegotiate (or negotiate later than March 31, 2007). Sanctions are not applied to Wagner-Peyser; however, less than 80 for WIA are subject to sanctions.

WISPR Update

The WISPR package is at the national office for administrative approval (internal clearance). OMB is involved in the process. DOL expects to submit the “final package”

to OMB within the next two weeks (by the end of the calendar year). The actual implementation date is pending (later than December 31, 2007). There is lots of speculation about the new actual implementation date. Opinions range from July 2008 to January 2009 to never. It's anyone's guess.

WRIS

41 states have signed up for WRIS (Colorado pending makes 42). Amendments have been added to agreement. These amendments are: 1) WRIS advisory committee consists of not more than two people per state; 2) confidentiality compliance reviews applies to ETA also; and 3) access to WRIS data for other programs is described.

Training

ETA wants feedback from states about training delivery/content. They have done training the last few years and would like to find alternate formats/options. Give feedback to Keith or Karen or your region. No dates set for next year's training.

Review of minutes from Boston meeting – The committee read the minutes from the last meeting and raised several questions that are discussed in the minutes for this meeting. The minutes were approved.

ReportLink – AJLA developed ReportLink using recommendations from the Reports Steering Committee and information from DOL as guidance. The plan has been to add only those functions in ReportLink that will be part of DOL reporting under WISPR. This includes the WIA annual report and ETA reports 9131, 9132, and 9133. The first release of the product was scheduled for December 31 and includes data for WIA only with the WIA annual report. Labor exchange data is pending due to the delay in WISPR. With additional recent information, the committee decided to revisit its decision to proceed on ReportLink without current DOL reports including the WIA quarterly report, the ETA 9002 and the VETS 200. Therefore, a new decision was made to wait on the initial release of ReportLink to give time to AJLA to add the WIA quarterly report. This is targeted for March 1, 2008. AJLA will pursue including the labor exchange data to ReportLink and its corresponding current reports, ETA 9002 and VETS 200. This is targeted for completion by June 1, 2008. **One caveat is that if DOL proceeds with implementation of WISPR by November 2008 (for the first quarter of PY08), then the effort to make ReportLink compliant with existing labor exchange reporting requirements will be abandoned.** Adding the WIA quarterly to the report will continue regardless.

During the report to the whole steering committee, Arkansas asked that if ReportLink was going to be ready by the end of December with the WIA annual report – can states still receive a copy? AJLA-TS will explore this with Dave McEachern. Management reports currently developed for DART are scheduled to be included in ReportLink. Compliance with Federal reporting is the priority. After those requirements are met, the management reports will be added.

During the annual meeting Leslie Abramowitz asked that the CM-DART file, cmwagefl.dbf, be added to ReportLink so that all wages will be accessible for reports in ReportLink. This will be part of ReportLink with the first release.

The question was raised about transition and subscription rates. Mark repeated the intent voiced at previous meetings that DART states that desire to move to ReportLink will be able to do so without additional costs – with the exception of system changes such as the installation of SQL Server, etc. AJLA anticipates that the costs of ReportLink will be similar to the current cost of DART.

Another consideration for the committee is whether or not AJLA should continue its development of WISPR-DART. If ReportLink performs all functions, what advantage would any state have in implementation of WISPR-DART? Initially, the committee recognizes that some states may not own the SQL-Server licenses necessary to operate ReportLink and will prefer to use a FoxPro product in WISPR-DART. However, AJLA is also looking at whether or not it is possible to utilize SQL-Server Standard instead of the Enterprise edition. If so, the costs savings if very significant most states would be able to afford the \$2,500 (or so) it would take to implement ReportLink on SQL Server Standard. Currently, it is anticipated that the cost of ReportLink would be comparable to DART (less than \$50,000 per year). The committee requests that a short proposal (question) be developed by AJLA-TS so the committee can send to DART subscribers for their input. Another option to having states purchase their own license of SQL-Server is to have AJLA host their data. This is being done currently for Kansas, Oklahoma, and Delaware. Finally, AJLA will explore to option of bundling the costs of SQL with the cost of ReportLink so states can take advantage of volume purchases and avoid higher prices by buying independently.

Lloyd Sisco demonstrated feature currently in development for ReportLink including the security settings and report builder. Several individuals in the meeting were absent at the annual conference where these were previously demonstrated. The committee is encouraged by the demonstration and is very happy about the options to drill numerators and denominators to detailed records. The ability to create ad hoc reports looks intuitive; however, the committee believes many users will require intensive training and/or delegate the development of ad hoc reports to more technical users.

Update on CM-DART – Gerard provided a brief update to let states know that the most recent release of CM-DART includes the option to calculate literacy/numeracy according to TEGL 17-06, change 1 (option 2). The new release also includes an extension on the expiration date of the software. The release for extending the expiration date and additional updates for Option 2 states will be out the week of Christmas. Gerard will send a release notice to everyone when it is available.

Fox Pro Size Limitations – Illinois (Andy Miller) described their limitations using DART for Wagner-Peyser reporting because Fox Pro has a 2 GB limit on processing memory). Andy offered three options to resolve this issue and requests AJLA to consider these and any others they may have to address the problem. Andy estimates that unless a remedy is found, Illinois will have to find an alternative within 12 months.

- 1) Partition tables in DART and make programming changes to accommodate partitioning. This would allow all of the processing to take place on FoxPro and not involve other databases. The downside is that potentially complex programming changes would have to be thoroughly tested.
- 2) Port the data from FoxPro table to SQL 2005 tables and convert the DART application to run on SQL 2005. This may be done with Microsoft Tools. It is a single database solution and potentially allows the use of SQL 2005 tools to query the data but the testing of the DART conversion may present challenges doing it a screen at a time. The testing for reporting should be fairly straight-forward.
- 3) Port the data from FoxPro tables to SQL 2005 tables using an ODBC connection and run the application on FoxPro while getting the data from SQL 2005. Microsoft has a product “FoxPro Connectivity Kit Architecture” which addresses this. This would require a second database but should not require code changes thus easing the testing issues.

If completed, a fully-functional version of ReportLink may also remedy this issue.

New Hire Registry Data – During the annual meeting, Indiana (Rick Lindsay) raised the question about “New Hire employment data and whether it will be allowed to be used for Wagner-Peyser supplemental employment purposes [and not WIA supplemental employment purposes] and, if so, how will that affect ReportLink wage record data security, etc. The subcommittee agreed to do individual research to be able to discuss at the December meeting.”

Some states use data from their Human Services agency to supplement employment outcomes (particularly entered employment). The source of data at question is a file each state generates from employer-reported new hire information. States gather the data and export it to a national database used mostly for enforcement of child support. States may NOT access the National Registry of New Hires (NRNH) for labor-related outcomes; however, many states are able to share locally obtained “new hire” data that is forwarded to the NRNH. If a state uses this data for W-P outcomes, can fields be created in DART/ReportLink files and accessed by query? If so, what security issues would be raised?

For now, the committee determined that few DART states would supplement their W-P or WIA outcomes with state new hire data. However, the committee recognizes the potential advantages for some states by doing so. With other pressing developments, adding new hire data to DART or ReportLink files is not a priority at this time. After initial development of ReportLink, the committee can reconsider this issue.

FEDES – Kentucky (Kevin Adams) indicated the immediate need his state has that FEDES data be accessible and used in DART and ReportLink. AJLA is aware of the issues related to the current failure of the system to import and use FEDES data. AJLA will continue to work on the problem and notify states when resolved.

Futureworks and other “Business Intelligence” – Missouri (Donna Ortmeyer) is investigating new reporting technology called Futureworks and needs to determine if the capacity of ReportLink competes with this new technology. Similarly, Utah (Rick Little) has recently purchased Cognos, a “business intelligence” and reporting tool, for use in Trade, UI, and public assistance programs. MIS analysts in these states are being challenged by administrators to find more user-friendly and glitzy (meaning graphical) means of getting data to users. One question raised is whether or not states get a return on their investment of \$50,000 per year for DART and/or ReportLink or if they should leverage those dollars with other sources to purchase alternative reporting software. Indiana has mentioned previously that other states are opting to use extracts created for data validation as the foundation of reporting schemas developed for federal and management reports. Missouri and Utah bring this matter to the subcommittee and AJLA-TS as a reminder that competitors are lurking and administrators are tempted to abandon the technical (and program/policy) expertise at AJLA.

Data Validation Software – This was a brief discussion about the frustration some states feel about last minute (even late) updates of data validation software and their impacts on reporting. There are few solutions offered. Ironically, TEN 19-07: Program Year 2006/Fiscal Year 2007 Performance Reporting and Data Validation Time lines, was issued Monday.

AJLA Update – There has been significant turnover at AJLA and several retirements in member states. These minutes recognize the hard work and valuable contribution of these individuals. In particular, the committee salutes Gerard Dye as he will retire by the end of the calendar year. Thank you for your expertise and professionalism. Good luck!

Meetings for 2008 - Steering team meetings are scheduled for April 22-24, 2008 in Perdido Beach, Alabama; annual meeting is August 18-22, 2008 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania or Vermont; December meeting is not yet scheduled and its destination is unknown.