

State Education Employment Outcomes Task Force
Meeting Summary
August 11, 2014

Convened 10:07 a.m., Room 208, Cross State Office Building, Augusta

Members Present:

Sen. John Patrick, Senate Chair
Rep. Seth Berry, House Chair
Rep. Joyce Maker
Connie Brown, Maine School Management Association
Rosa Redonnett, University of Maine System
Bill Hurwitch, Maine Department of Education
Jeffrey Jordan, Maine Office of Information Technology
Paul Leparulo, Maine Department of Labor
Angela Dostie, Finance Authority of Maine
Diane Vickrey, Maine Community College System

Members Absent:

Sen. Brian Langley

Members Not Yet Appointed:

A representative from the Maine Maritime Academy
A representative from a private postsecondary educational institution
A representative from the Maine State Chamber of Commerce*
A person with expertise in state and national higher education policy

* Joyce LaRoche sat with the Task Force by invitation of the Task Force Chairs in order to provide input on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, though no official appointment had yet been made.

Staff:

Henry Fouts
Phil McCarthy

1. Introductions

Sen. John Patrick, Senate Chair of the Task Force, called the meeting to order and asked all members to introduce themselves.

The Chairs briefly outlined the importance of the project the Task Force would be reviewing, noting that this data is important in enabling our young people to go into their career fields with their eyes wide open. Rep. Berry, House Chair of the Task Force, expressed disappointment that not all appointments to the Task Force had been made, but that given the importance of the project it was necessary to get started as soon as possible. Joyce LaRoche sat with the committee by invitation, in order to provide input on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce (as the official appointment for the Chamber of Commerce representative had not yet been made).

2. Review of Task Force duties

Staff introduced themselves and explained the duties of the Task Force as laid out in the enabling legislation, Public Law 2013, chapter 593 (*See also 20-A MRSA, Chapter 437*).

The Chairs indicated their preference that the Task Force meet 2 more times before submitting the final report for the 2014 calendar year by November 1st.

Presentation: Maine Employment Outcomes Dashboard website preview

Task Force member Paul Leparulo gave a presentation of the Department of Labor's new Wage & Employment Outcomes Data System and its related dashboard website. (*See PowerPoint presentation slides from meeting materials*). Chris Boudreau, the Director for the Dept. of Labor's Center for Workforce Research and Information, joined Mr. Leparulo in answering questions during the presentation.

The education and workforce database website provides aggregate first year wage data for University of Maine System and Maine Community College System graduates from 2009-2011 (*See <http://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/wdqi/wdqi.html>*). This three year period is referred to as a "cohort." The data does not include those graduates that are self-employed, employed out of state, or those that are continuing their studies. Only first year wage data is currently available. There is no information on the actual occupation of graduates, only their course of study and the wage earned.

Members noted that using this Dept. of Labor unemployment wage data provided a much greater and more reliable data than the post-graduation surveys that the UMS and M CCS have traditionally relied on for information.

Data sets that represent 10 or less individuals (i.e., graduates of a certain course of study) are omitted from the website results to ensure that personally identifiable information is not disclosed. There was discussion on how this number was arrived at and whether a lower number may be more appropriate in order to show maximum data and still protect student privacy. Mr. Boudreau and Mr. Leparulo said the number was based on best practices. Going forward there would be more information and therefore less "blanks" in those areas with 10 or less students. They saw room to potentially lower this number, however, and still be in line with best practices.

Discussion: Website features and functionality

After the presentation, the Task Force continued a discussion about the database and website. Bill Hurwitch noted that the database allows one to look for geographical differences, and that there was not much difference in wages based on the region where individuals were educated in the State. He has met with representatives of the MELMAC Education Foundation and guidance counselors and they are very interested in the website and excited to get access to this data. An issue is how to promote this website to let the general public know about it. Members agreed that promotion of the website was an important issue.

There was discussion on the ability to track website usage. Jeffery Jordon answered that the Dept. of Labor uses Google Analytics to track use of the website; Google Analytics provides analytic data for age gender and other demographic information of users.

There was discussion about what the right age level is to start promoting this information to students. Angela Dostie noted that based on her experience with FAME youth outreach programs, a good time to start is grades 6-8. This is the best time for students to begin thinking of their future career. Students will not want to be on this website - need more color, fun and interaction or to have others show them this site. The best way to promote this information is to reach out to teachers, guidance counselors and parents. Other members agreed with importance of reaching students at this age level. Educators need to know about this data.

Senator Patrick and other members discussed the usefulness of having this data connected with information on where the Maine economy will likely be in 4 to 8 years into the future, wondering whether there was some way to integrate this information. Chris Boudreau of the Dept. of Labor replied that it would be very difficult to drill down to this information because currently the database does not have occupation specific data, only education information.

An exchange with the Department revealed that longitudinal tracking is built into the database so data can accumulate going forward and will provide more information. The idea of backward tracking was brought up. Mr. Hurwitch noted that this is not very feasible because of poor data quality before the project began, for example a lack of Social Security numbers to link to data. Going forward good data will be available. Some states are using Driver's License Bureau information to capture information on age, gender, etc. of high school students (because no Social Security number is available pre-college).

There was discussion about data sharing between the states. Mr. Boudreau told the Task Force about the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS), which does provide a data clearinghouse shared by some states. Unfortunately New Hampshire and Massachusetts do not currently participate, so there is a large gap in data for the region.

Ms. Vickrey and Ms. Redonnett expressed that their institutions had been pleased working with the Dept. of Labor on this project. This data will provide a useful performance review of various degree programs. There were concerns about the potential interpretations of the data – for example, certain programs are intended for further study or transfer. There is a need to think carefully about how the information is communicated. In regards to omitting data for privacy concerns, it was noted that UMS currently uses 5 as the cutoff as opposed to the Dept. of Labor website's current limit of 10, so lowering the "n" factor to 5 should be considered.

It was noted that expanding the mission of Task Force to include outreach to the adults looking to reenter the workforce or change careers may be a good idea.

There was discussion about the effect the data should have in helping improve economic and workforce development generally in the State. Businesses are looking at the number of

certain degree completers when considering entering a state. For example, Mississippi attracts companies to different parts of the state by providing data on degree completers in different regions of the state.

The issue of including information on unemployment was discussed, with the Dept. of Labor noting that employment status information is not currently included in the database and would likely require special permission. The Dept. is working with the Maine Attorney General's Office to make sure that database is in compliance with federal confidentiality laws. The Dept. mentioned the use of tax records as a potential way to increase the available data. The Task Force asked the Dept. to do some investigation and get back to staff with what would be required in order to be able to access information from the Maine Revenue Service and employment status information from the Unemployment Insurance Program. Members expressed interest in expanding the database with this information.

There was also discussion about the importance of outreach to CareerCenters, Career and Technical Education programs, Adult Education and GED programs. This information could help underemployed and others see how certain education investments can pay off.

Discussion: Funding

Staff reviewed the existing sources of funding for the database, which comes from two federal grants – the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) (administered by the Dept. of Labor) and the Statewide Longitudinal Database Systems program (SLDS) (administered by the Dept. of Education). Chris Boudreau from the Dept. of Labor joined the discussion, adding that the WDQI funds awarded have also been used for employment and training programs. The current grant ends in November 2014 – the Dept. of Labor was unsuccessful in its applications for subsequent WDQI grants. These are highly competitive grants. The Task Force asked Mr. Boudreau what could be done to make the State more competitive in the next round, and he replied it may enhance the State's chances if it had "some skin in the game" and put forward its own funds towards the project. It is uncertain what the winning combination of factors would be for a successful grant application.

The majority of the SLDS funds have gone towards establishing longitudinal data on the education side, with \$500,000 going towards the comprehensive database and website. Bill Hurwitsch explained that the grant ends in December 2014, and that he expects another round of funding to be available in 2015. An announcement will probably come in September - October, with the application due by the end of year – we should know the award status in the spring and, if successful, funds would probably be provided in July 2015. These grants are typically in the \$3-5 million range. The focus of the grant would be data use.

Possible future federal funding could also come from a Workforce Innovation Fund grant, but this would be limited to adding employment services data to the database. A Race to the Top award, if won, could potentially be applied to the project, but in order to be competitive there are a number of comprehensive educational reforms the State must undertake.

Additional potential for federal funding would be in reallocation of existing streams of federal funding, though given stringent requirements generally placed on this money, it is an unlikely source of funds to carry the project.

Several states have contributed their own general funds to their database projects, including Oregon and Mississippi who have reportedly contributed just over \$1 million each, and California who has reportedly contributed around \$15 million in state funding.

Private funding may be available, for example, through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funded program through Georgetown University. This funding would likely only be available to a state that was committing its own state funds as well. The Lumina Foundation is another potential source of private funds.

The Task Force asked staff to contact CollegeMeasures.org to get more information about their services, and also asked staff to gather more information on other states' funding sources for their similar employment outcomes websites.

Rep. Berry asked the Department representatives when the State would need to have money committed to the database project in order to help with grant prospects. The WDQI grants could be announced in April 2015 and awarded 6-8 weeks later. It was noted that the federal government is not looking for state funding commitments necessarily as much as the State demonstrating political will and showing that the project has the backing of the Legislature. A sustainability plan is essential (i.e., showing how the program will continue after grant funding ends).

Mr. Boudreau estimated that about \$300,000 per year would be required to expand data sources and maintain the website. Mr. Hurwitch thought \$100,000 may be enough to provide a full time position to provide training outreach, based on Dept. of Education experience.

Sustaining the database website is not enough – Maine need to be expanding it in order to attract funding. Members noted that an area to expand could be including Career and Technical Education, Adult Education and GED program data.

The Task Force requested that the Departments get together with staff and come up with a full cost estimate for the project, including: promotion, training, expanding the database, and website maintenance. They are to come back with three alternate levels of proposed funding with the level of services each respective budget would allow – “Gold, Silver and Bronze” plans.

Next Steps/Future meetings

The Task Force will have 2 more meetings:

- September 29 at 10 a.m.
 - John Dorrer from Jobs for the Future will give a presentation on what other states are doing in this area and how they are addressing funding

- The Task Force will outline recommendations so that staff may begin drafting the report after the meeting, including Task Force recommendations on:
 - Funding
 - New legislation
 - The future of the Task Force

- October 20 at 10 a.m.
 - Review of the draft report; discussion of edits and additions

All meetings will be held in Room 208, Cross State Office Building, Augusta.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Henry Fouts and Phil McCarthy