

A Performance Analysis of Florida's Workforce Development Programs

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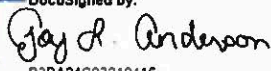
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigated the performance of Florida's workforce development programs over a ten-year period. The state's system for coordinated training and employment services consists of programs operating and reporting according to the federal workforce initiative standards. They served as the focus of this performance analysis. A methodical literature review revealed a lack of directed studies of performance trends. This project adds to the body of research surveying outcomes through a state case study. A quantitative examination of data revealed trends in performance and correlations among core programs. The study also identified noteworthy performance changes within the statewide system since the reauthorization of the most recent federal initiative. The study found that Florida improved its performance in the rate of program participants entering the workforce but saw no significant increases in the average earnings of program completers. The Adult and Dislocated Worker programs maintained positive averages across most measures. The Youth Worker program saw increases in all measures. In addition, Florida consistently achieved its negotiated performance goals and increased attainment of the goal to serve participants with barriers to employment. This project provides empirical research that may be beneficial to future planning as it identifies statistically significant performance changes in the system over time. Findings from this study are useful to fully understanding the state's progression in the desired outcomes. In addition, as Florida is one of the highest federally funded states in workforce service delivery initiatives, implications from this project could expand the scope of essential research on statewide workforce systems participating in the federal initiative.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Federal Workforce Initiative

Formally signed into law in 1913, the United States Department of Labor was established “to foster, promote and develop the welfare of working people, to improve their working conditions, and to enhance their opportunities for profitable employment” (MacLaury, n.d., para. 1). The Department was a direct product of a long-lasting campaign by organized labor and, in the 1930s, was charged with developing plans to alleviate unemployment and stimulate recovery from The Great Depression (MacLaury, n.d., paras. 1-15). In the 1960s, faced with emerging labor challenges brought about by automation, the Department began to identify gaps in the labor force and provide training and assistance in regions of serious unemployment (MacLaury, 2019, para. 22).

Through the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, the federal government embarked upon a tremendous new role in addressing widespread unemployment, low income, and underemployment issues by creating a more streamlined workforce delivery system. New initiatives continued to be introduced to better organize the delivery of services; however, there were still issues of how to adequately measure performance on a national scale. In 1982, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) established a performance standards system, which required programs to become outcome based. This system was developed to measure the outcomes of each state to enhance local-level accountability and encourage more efficient program management

(Heinrich, 2016, pp. 1–2). Still, the separately funded employment and training efforts remained an “uncoordinated patchwork of programs and agencies” that were often seen as a duplication of services (Cottingham et al., 2011, p. 49). State systems often saw redundancies and inefficiencies, ultimately presenting participants with “a confusing maze of programs through which they found it difficult to navigate” (Forston et. al, 2017, p. 2).

The passing of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) represented an essential overhaul of the way workforce development systems were constructed across the country. The WIA replaced the JPTA and ushered in a refined, comprehensive structure of coordinated employment and training services by introducing a single operating system called “One-Stop,” also known as American Job Centers. The One-Stop Career Center delivery system provides career and training services in nearly 2500 centers nationwide. These local centers are tasked with carrying out the seven guiding principles that underlie the legislation.

The guiding principles are:

- *Streamlining services through integration.* The One-Stop delivery system ensures that multiple employment and training programs provide consistent information and participant access across all service providers.
- *Empowering individuals.* Customers have self-access services via Individual Training Accounts, giving them options for when and where they receive services and how much guidance they receive from program staff.

- *Universal access.* Every worker who has difficulty obtaining employment or achieving self-sufficiency through other avenues has access to employment-related services, which are supplemented with intensive services and training activities.
- *Increased accountability.* States maintain a focus on accountability and continuous improvement. In addition to customer satisfaction, these goals are intended to hold states responsible for the performance of their workforce development systems.
- *Strengthened role for local boards.* Local Workforce Investment Boards govern the local workforce system within each state and develop plans in cooperation with the chief elected official assigned to oversee the statewide system.
- *State and local flexibility.* States have latitude in designing and operating workforce development programs, such as allowing greater flexibility in how funds are used and expanding the availability of waivers.
- *Improved youth programs.* Youth Councils function as an adjunct to the local boards. The effectiveness of youth programs is enhanced by requiring linkages between academics and occupational learning, mentoring, and follow-up services.

(Dunham et al., 2006, pp. I4–I5)

Of these seven guiding principles, this study focused on the goal of increased accountability and continuous improvement. Workforce development constitutes a large segment of federal investment initiatives, making it necessary to examine the

effectiveness of program services (Fortson et al., 2017). To ensure adherence to the focus of the national plan, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 established a performance accountability system whose purpose was “to assess the effectiveness of States and local areas in achieving continuous improvement of workforce investment activities.” The overarching goal of the federal accountability system is “to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation” (Workforce Investment Act of 1998, 1998).

The focus of this quantitative performance evaluation centers upon the Adult, Dislocated, and Youth Worker programs. Among the country’s largest publicly funded employment and training initiatives, these programs provide comprehensive workforce development services via American Job Centers across the United States. These three core programs were first authorized under the WIA and then reauthorized in 2014 under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (Fortson et al., 2017). In 2015-2016, these programs received a total of \$2.6 billion in public funding and served nearly 6.8 million customers (Employment and Training Administration [ETA], 2016c, pp. 3–4).

The U.S. Department of Labor explains: “WIOA reaffirms the role of the customer-focused one-stop delivery system” and enhances and increases collaboration between education and training programs (ETA, 2016a, p. 55875). WIOA bolsters the federal system by allowing more flexibility in how services are delivered and “requiring industry or sector partnerships to better meet the needs of the business community,

increasing cross-agency service integration, strengthening performance accountability, expanding public access to training program performance, increasing services to individuals with barriers to employment, and increasing the emphasis on evaluation and evidence” (Fortson et al., 2017, p. xv).

With the original programs remaining intact, the three main reforms brought about by the WIOA were (1) requiring states to strategically align workforce development programs; (2) promoting accountability and transparency; and (3) fostering regional collaboration (ETA, 2014, para. 5). In accordance with these changes, the core programs still served the same populations. Additionally, many local areas were already implementing these collaborative and accountability efforts under WIA (Fortson et al., 2017, p. xv).

In 2003, primary indicators of program performance were introduced into the workforce development data collection requirements. From the implementation of the WIA to the increased structure brought about by the WIOA, the performance indicators continue to serve as the measurements used to determine program success and evaluate improvement outcomes. These indicators, known as the “common measures”, since they measure performance accountability consistently across programs, quickly became a central focus for ETA in its evaluation of program performance (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-12). The common measures used as indicators of performance for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs differ from the Youth Worker programs (ETA, 2016b, sec. 1).

The common measures of performance for Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are:

- Entered Employment Rate
- Employment Retention Rate
- Six Months Earnings Average

The common measures of performance for Youth Worker programs are:

- Placement in Employment or Education
- Attainment of Degree or Certificate
- Literacy or Numeracy Gains

Utilizing the common measures, this project examined performance outcomes among programs in a time series evaluation. The data was examined to assess the continual achievement of program performance goals. For this project, the researcher investigated the performance of the WIA/WIOA core programs offered in the State of Florida between 2009 and 2018.

State Implementation

Researchers at the U.S. Department of Labor have determined that “with a growing need for a more skilled workforce, providing effective and efficient employment and training services is an important national priority” (Forston et. al, 2017, p. xv). In alignment with the Department’s national goals for workforce innovation, states must ensure their workforce system operates in such a way as to support “strong regional economies and play an active role in community and workforce development” at the local level (ETA, 2014). To determine if they are improving the quality of the labor force,

states are required to report on workforce development activities and annual performance outcomes.

Considerable funding for these efforts is provided to states through federal appropriations. “For program year 2016, the federal government appropriated more than \$6.9 billion to states” and approximately \$3.4 billion in funding went to partner programs, usually through competitive grants (Counts, 2017, p. 1). Each state’s allotted funding for optimizing workforce systems highly correlates with its population and the size of its labor force. For example, in 2016, California received the greatest amount of funding, \$897.7 million, and Wyoming received the least amount of funding, which was about \$19.8 million (Counts, 2017, p. 1). States such as Florida and Texas also receive significant funding due to population size, and the states’ demand for skilled workers follows the national trend (State of Florida, 2016; Texas Workforce Commission, 2018).

To further execute the intended purpose, WIA/WIOA-funded American Job Centers must give priority to recipients of public assistance, veterans, displaced homemakers, people who are basic skills deficient, and workers with disabilities. These individuals are considered to have barriers to employment and, therefore, are determined to be “priority populations” for workforce development programs (ETA, 2017, p. 8). Priority population participants often have low incomes, lack job stability, have experienced homelessness, are ex-offenders, lack access to opportunities for occupational and educational skills development, or have low literacy levels.

States are required to prioritize these individuals through offering individualized career and training services and to ensure programs work to enable them inroads to quality jobs by providing enhanced employment services. Services may include job

search assistance and career guidance, along with specialized skills-based training opportunities. These populations represent a portion of a state's most in-need workers, and effective guidance may help ensure participants in these groups have access to the essential services needed to rejoin the workforce. Services provided to these individuals "can be a pathway to the middle class and to maintain and build skills to remain in the middle class" (ETA, 2017, pp. 8–9).

The Department of Labor's push for improving performance accountability is largely based on the ability to obtain quality data. The performance measures are essential to the accountability system and served as the basis for this project. However, there are numerous other data points that the system captures, which impact states' abilities to perform successfully. Two of these critical data trends are of significance to this study.

The first important trend pertains to the negotiated performance goals. The federal government and individual states arrive at "agreed-upon performance standards for states to meet; and a system of incentives and sanctions to encourage high performance, and technical assistance to help states to correct low performance" (Dunham et al., 2006, p. II-1). The negotiations account for the differences between geographic areas, such as the economic landscape, demographics of the labor force, and the services and resources currently available in the state (Dunham et al., 2006, I-9). The economic trends data are also vital to states in determining yearly negotiated performance goals (ETA, 2018a, p.8).

The WIOA legislation states the negotiation model "is to be based on the differences among states in actual economic conditions (including differences in unemployment rates and job losses or gains in particular industries) and the

characteristics of participants including indicators of poor work history, lack of work experience, lack of educational or occupational skills attainment, dislocation from high-wage and high-benefit employment, low levels of literacy or English proficiency, disability status, homelessness, ex-offender status, and welfare dependency” (Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, 2014). The state’s ability to achieve these negotiated goals are critical to avoid sanctions for underperformance and to ensure the continuity of project funding.

The second data trend of great interest is WIOA’s aforementioned prioritization of serving individuals with barriers to employment. Nearly 1.6 million participants served in 2017 reported having such barriers at the time of enrollment. The downward trend of priority populations participating in core programs correlates with the national unemployment rate (ETA, 2018b, p. 3). To document and calculate performance measures, states must collect data about participants they serve and the outcomes they achieve (Dunham et al., 2006, P. II-1). Under the common measures, the ETA tracks program performance trends of priority populations on an ongoing basis to determine a state’s demonstrated ability to deliver workforce training and services to this target group. The researcher conducted a detailed examination of each of these trends in addition to outcomes of the common measures.

Florida’s Workforce Development System

In the United States, all 50 states have access to WIOA funds, yet few states have as robust a workforce development structure as Florida. Florida has consistently been a highly innovative state in developing and implementing workforce development policy, with 24 workforce investment regions administered by local workforce boards

(Barnow & Buck, 2004, p. 17). At the onset of the federal legislation, researchers determined that Florida had been a “leader in going beyond the performance management required of federal programs” by developing standards to fill in what state administrators perceived as deficiencies in the federal accountability systems (Barnow & Buck, 2004, p. 47).

The state’s legislature played a major leadership role in developing its service delivery system through linkages with the business community and by providing support for local workforce activities. The State of Florida reported that it has consistently maintained “several methods for continually monitoring performance that have great value as both real-time management tools as well as tools for continuous improvement” (State of Florida, 2016, p. 79). Early on, state leaders discovered that the number of required performance measures was a significant burden on local workforce systems because they were not standardized across all implementation programs. They determined this impediment made ongoing program performance improvements nearly “impossible” for such a large system to sustain (Barnow & Buck, 2004, pp. 51–52).

Today, Florida is a major workforce development and training implementation state. In 2016, its labor force was comprised of a staggering 10.3 million workers, the third-largest coordinated system in the country (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLR], 2019, p. 8). One major goal Florida seeks to achieve is using performance outcomes, monitoring, and evaluation to inform state services and workforce activities (State of Florida, 2016, p. 49). Following federal guidelines, Florida views the primary indicators of performance as critical factors to prioritize in its efforts to successfully maintain program goals.

Florida uses the common measures as standardized markers for three main functions:

1. to establish performance goals at both the state and local level;
2. to ensure the comparability of statewide performance results in each program; and
3. to provide essential information for system-wide reporting and evaluations for program improvement (Workforce Florida, 2005, p. 3–4).

Purpose Statement

This study unbundled the performance of Florida’s workforce programs in the common measures to observe potential trends and relationships between measures. The dissertation adds to the body of research surveying the outcomes of the federal workforce initiative through a state case study based on the following considerations: (a) few studies provide an adequate assessment of the effectiveness of programs based on the primary indicators of performance; and (b) despite Florida’s innovative workforce development policy implementation, the state has not had a similar external investigation to ascertain trends in performance based on an examination of WIA/WIOA programs over a series of time.

WIA/WIOA legislation standardized performance accountability indicators and reporting requirements in order “to assess the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes” (ETA, 2016a, p. 55822). In addition to common measures, the Department of Labor promotes the process of negotiating performance levels with each state on a rolling basis based on their current needs and available resources. “Enabling states, and subsequently local areas, to present data in support of their case

concerning appropriate levels of performance is consistent with the general thrust of WIA” (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-9). To optimize effectiveness, this approach removes much of the strategic control from the federal level and transfers it to implementing states and local governments.

A comprehensive evaluation of the required performance measures and performance trends may assist state leaders in understanding trends for strategic planning towards sustained improvement and growth. Therefore, the researcher examined performance data submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor through the Education and Training Administration accountability system.

A time series investigation was conducted to examine the performance of these programs for the 2009-2018 reporting years. The project was designed to be carried out in sequential phases. The three principal objectives of this quantitative research project were (1) to determine which areas of Florida’s workforce development programs experienced significant, sustained improvements in the required common performance measures; (2) to analyze Florida’s achievement of negotiated performance goals; and (3) to ascertain Florida’s “demonstrated performance in the delivery of services to individuals with barriers to employment,” which consists of people considered “priority populations” under WIOA (ETA, 2017, p. 9).

Conceptual Framework

It has long been established that performance and accountability are essential in assessing programs and are of great importance to the thorough investigation of the workforce development field (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-5). While an array of existing literature focuses on accountability systems and state implementation strategies for the

WIA/WIOA, few studies exist solely and simultaneously on the common measures and related performance trends of a state with a robust workforce. Yet, this intersection is a major component of the ETA's assessment of performance improvement over any given time span. Forston's research group argued, "the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are two of the largest public workforce investment programs in the United States, so it is important to determine the effectiveness of the services they offer" (Fortson et al., 2017, p. 135).

A research study conducted of the State of Virginia's workforce system determined that in order for performance data to be useful, it should be integrated, meaning it should have the same indicators of performance compared across programs, allowing policymakers to make valid ("apple to apple") comparisons (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2007, p. 1). In addition, the information should be limited to a small number of vital measures. In Florida's 2005 annual workforce development report, the state described the core measures as "the key measures of success in achieving the legislative goals of WIA" (Workforce Florida, 2005, p. 3-4). Therefore, a detailed analysis of Florida's integrated measures may assist state administrators in making useful comparisons of performance outcomes to develop future strategies for greater performance.

In addition to studying the common measures, the second part of this study analyzed performance outcomes based on Florida's ability to meet required minimum achievement standards. As discussed, the performance negotiations are intended to incorporate differences between geographic areas. The considerations are based on multiple factors such as "the extent to which the levels set will enable states and local

areas to obtain high levels of customer satisfaction, as well as promote continuous improvement in their efforts” (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-9). This study sought to ascertain Florida’s ability to achieve and maintain these individualized expected outcomes in all core programs on a continuous basis.

The third part of this study determines Florida’s record for reaching its priority participants. A crucial component of WIOA implementation is “the collection and reporting of accurate, timely information about individuals who receive services” because it is critical to administrators in their efforts to “inform public policy and support analysis of effective strategies” (ETA, 2016a, p. 55793). As discussed, WIA/WIOA emphasizes the societal and economic value of providing services to this group, which includes individuals with barriers to employment and those more at risk of not being integrated into the labor market.

The Education and Training Administration encourages states to assist individuals who need “higher levels” of service to achieve a positive employment outcome and asserts that serving these customers may have a significant impact on overall labor force outcomes, considering the availability of specialized programs offered and factors unique to the local population (ETA, 2018a, p. 8). It is with these national objectives in mind that states are encouraged to track the volume, characteristics, and outcomes of their participants for a significant time after exiting the program. Subsequently, the data collection and accompanying management mechanisms can affect the capabilities of states and local areas to generate consistent, successful outcomes on the required performance measures (Dunham et al., 2006, p. II-1).

This review of program outcomes, goal attainment, and trends in performance is a multi-pronged approach to performance evaluation. Investigators have determined that combining an array of data types enables researchers to “address a wide variety of issues of interest to DOL,” including how the measurement system is currently operating and how the common measures affect states and local areas (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-19). Fostering continuous improvement is an important goal for states and local areas and reviewing the data over time can contribute to the “extensive discussions taking place surrounding the legislation” as well as future funding determinations (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-19).

The researcher has investigated Florida’s consistency in achieving these performance targets by establishing whether improvements have been made at a significant rate. Prior to this, it was anticipated that there were specific areas where the state had been strongest in its service delivery, whereas, other areas may reveal the need for strategies for continuous improvement. As determined, the ability to sustain positive results is directly related to consistent review of program data.

As Florida’s workforce leaders have indicated, the program performance data is used to identify viable improvement strategies for sustainable implementation. Findings from this study may lead to a greater understanding of the state’s progression and expand the body of longitudinal research on common measures.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were developed to guide this study:

RQ1: Which performance measures experienced significant improvements in the three federally funded workforce development programs, and which did not?

RQ2: Has Florida consistently achieved or exceeded the negotiated performance goals across all programs?

RQ3: Has Florida seen an increase in attainment of the expected goal to serve priority populations?

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Leading public administration scholars discuss the notion that organizations participating in federal programs are “more easily understood after being unbundled, examined part by part, and reassembled for an assessment of their whole condition” (Frederickson et al., 2012, p. 67). This performance analysis offers a comprehensive look at how well Florida implemented its workforce development services through the lens of expected goals and key performance indicators. As prior research has shown, there is much to be gained from examining this data at the state level, such as discerning ways to upgrade the skills of the American workforce, gaining knowledge about different kinds of federally funded programs, and the contribution the data makes to policymaking, policy implementation, and scholarship (Barnow et al., 2005, p. i).

Prior Research on the Topic

National Studies

For many years, the U.S. Department of Labor has commissioned research companies to aggregate national WIA/WIOA data to determine trends and performance outcomes. In 2017, Mathematica Policy Research and Social Policy Research Associates published a study examining the effectiveness of staff-assisted employment services in WIA-funded programs (Fortson et al., 2017, p. xv). From 2011-2013, investigators reviewed offerings classified as ‘intensive services’ and training activities, both separately and together. Next, the analysis of these programs was

measured relative to the core services at American Job Centers which were available to everyone.

Through the use of surveys and local data, researchers wanted to determine whether customers in the control group who received intensive services and training (both individually and together) saw improved outcomes, such as earnings, employment, and job quality. Their findings suggested that “intensive services, when provided as a stand-alone service without training, increased earnings and employment” largely due to the fact that core-and-intensive customers received more one-on-one assistance and were more likely to participate in workshops and take assessments (Fortson et al., 2017, p. 135).

In addition to the implementation study, this project also included a benefit-cost analysis to determine whether the benefits of intensive training services were great enough to justify the costs. Though the determination was not conclusive, findings during the follow-up period suggested that providing this level of training represented a net cost to both customers and taxpayers (Fortson et al., 2017, p. xxviii).

The 30-month study of clients enrolling between 2011 and 2013 built upon earlier program impact studies. Previous studies focused on workers participating in the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs as operated under WIA and revealed lessons learned which were, at that time, correctly anticipated to also be relevant under WIOA (Fortson et al., 2017, p. xv). As with prior program impact studies, the study’s authors confirmed most local areas offered the same basic set of services but varied in the exact services they provided and to whom they offered them. The 30-month study produced inconclusive evidence on the impact of training during the observed period, but the

findings suggested policymakers should look to improve training made available through these publicly funded programs (Fortson et al., 2017, p. 138).

Studies of Select States

A seminal study conducted by the Rockefeller Institute of Government on the implementation of the WIA legislation was commissioned by the Department of Labor in 2004. The study took a glance back at the original impact the legislation made on workforce service delivery. The study sampled eight states, including Florida, Michigan, Texas, Utah, Indiana, Missouri, Oregon, and Maryland (Barnow et al., 2005). These sample systems represented small and large states as well as urban and rural areas with a range of structures and service practices. The sample was weighted against “leading-edge” states in workforce development that all had implemented workforce reforms in the 1990s before WIA was enacted.

The purpose of the study was to provide “useful information” for national leaders and policymakers in the executive branch and Congress, for program administrators, and policy researchers who were instrumental in reauthorizing funds for workforce development (Barnow et al., 2005, p. iv). The research was conducted in select local counties within the eight states (versus entire workforce systems). The project was anticipated to enhance understanding of how workforce service delivery was operating throughout the country in the early implementation stages of WIA. Researchers developed a guide to conduct structured interviews of legislators, program directors, community and technical college administrators, business leaders, workforce center directors and staff, education advocates, employees of human service agencies, vocational rehabilitation and economic development leaders, and a host of others to

obtain a broad perspective on the inner and outer workings of workforce development activities.

Of the numerous topics addressed in the study, the authors identify several notable matters from the eight states (Barnow et al., 2005, pp. x-35). Major findings revealed:

- Florida’s legislature played a leading role in state implementation and experienced fewer problems because it already had a data system in place before being required to do so.
- Florida and Texas also had highly integrated One-Stop Career Centers and initially included additional performance measures for a more timely review of outcomes. Additionally, Maryland and Oregon also added measures that captured systemic performance for the labor market statewide, not just for a singular program.
- A few states—Florida, Michigan, Texas, and Utah—had been in the vanguard of workforce policy reform, some of them advancing innovative delivery approaches and market-oriented mechanisms years before WIA encouraged such changes nationwide.
- Prior to WIA’s enactment, some governors and state legislatures, namely Michigan, Oregon, and Texas, actively engaged in reforming welfare and welfare-employment.
- California, Florida, Minnesota, and Utah had already instituted some form of welfare reform for more than a decade, often with work-first provisions.

While this study shed light on implementation results and strategies of early adopters, it occurred during the initial stages of the WIA and was limited to only include sample counties within the selected states. Although the states have continued many of the programs and initiatives analyzed, they also have sustained great challenges as well as improvements for the years following. Barnow and King suggested states were looking forward to common measures being instituted. Therefore, studies such as this one continue to support the information presented in the qualitative and quantitative research being discussed today.

One study which produced a comprehensive analysis of a single state was conducted for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The state's legislature approved a set of performance indicators for its workforce development programs and engaged a consultant to examine six integrated indicators for ten of its public programs. Such an effort had not been commonplace for states prior to this. Hollenbeck & Huang's work was groundbreaking in that "prior to this study and the development of the gross and net impact indicators, the only way that Virginia policymakers could judge the performance of workforce programs was to compare the goals that are set for a program prior to the start of a year to the results that the agency reports for the program at the end of the year" (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2007, p. x).

As with the national study, researchers conducted evaluations of the cost-per-participant data. This resulted in important early research on both performance goals and costs benefits. One limitation of this study was that it only was conducted for one program year and did not provide evidence of trends in Virginia's performance.

Florida Research

As previously mentioned, the study of the eight sample states produced critical insights to the early implementation of workforce delivery under the WIA legislation. In addition to the overall report, states received a separate case study for further examination of implementation activities. Barnow and Buck (2004) reviewed areas of Florida's leadership, intergovernmental relations, governance and decentralization, strategic planning, structure and funding, partnership building, local boards, and operational issues.

One significant discovery was the challenge of transitioning from state-led activities to those required by the new federal law. Surveys of employees revealed they felt a great amount of pressure to meet the new goals. During the study period, researchers note "the ease/difficulty of these transitions has varied significantly, and turnover was high initially, then settled down, and is on the rise again as certain operators were not meeting performance standards" (Barnow & Buck, 2004, p. 43).

Another crucial observation was that local leaders believed the legislation influenced state lawmakers to become more "big picture" oriented in their understanding of who their workforce was and what kind of statewide system could adequately and efficiently help Floridians become employed and remain employed. Florida began forming local boards in 1996 under the Workforce Florida Act and linked economic sectors, training sectors, and welfare governance to better align itself with national workforce development initiatives (Barnow & Buck, 2004, p. 51). Based on Florida's review of its early performance outcomes, the principles and provisions of WIA were a contributing factor to better employment outcomes.

The case study's overall conclusion was that the main strength of WIA is the One-Stop Career Center concept and the focus on local flexibility. However, Florida's central workforce agency at the time, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, found that the legislation's objective for workforce systems to provide "statewide responses to statewide needs" was challenging under the existing program (Barnow & Buck, 2004, p. 52). Further, the case study noted a weakness in Florida's system was the turnover of service providers and staff, which is proven to affect customer service quality and consistency. However, despite the potential drawbacks in the system, Florida was considered a "highly innovative state in developing and implementing workforce policy, and has achieved a level of true integration in One-Stop Career Centers and focus on business customers" (Barnow and Buck, 2004, p. 52).

The WIA/WIOA requires all states to develop and submit multi-year strategic workforce plans with an update every two years. Plans outline specific strategies that states intend to employ to achieve new and ongoing workforce goals. Strategic plans are developed in conjunction with state partners and are built around objectives intended to guide policies and practices across participating programs. In its 2017-2020 plan, Florida revealed its goal to improve how the state's workforce network serves customers through collaboration, coordination, and re-assessment. The plan noted that "the identification of both strengths and weaknesses is an ongoing process for the core programs working to implement WIOA" and regional working groups had already begun addressing issues with data integration, which was viewed as a potential challenge going forward (State of Florida, 2016, p. 48).

Following its assessment and strategic planning activities, Florida identified three goals for WIOA implementation through the year 2020. They were:

- To enhance alignment and market responsiveness that “provides businesses with skilled, productive, and competitive talent and Floridians with employment, education, training, and support services that reduce welfare dependence and increase opportunities for self-sufficiency, high-skill and high-wage careers, and lifelong learning.”
- To inform strategies and empower an effective and efficient delivery system by promoting “accountable, transparent, and data-driven workforce investment through performance measures, monitoring and evaluation.”
- To provide Florida youth with opportunities for career exploration, educational attainment and skills training for industries and occupations that are in-demand and “that lead to enhanced employment, career development, credentialing, and post-secondary education opportunities.”

(State of Florida, 2016, p. 49)

Research of Performance Measures

In 2002, Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA) was awarded a contract by the U.S. Department of Labor to conduct an evaluation of the WIA performance measurement system. Results from a survey of local areas included quantitative findings that linked “the state and local performance policies to the characteristics of customers served, services received and outcomes obtained by these customers under WIA” (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-1). Researchers made multiple rounds of visits to 15 states and

25 local areas to examine the beliefs and opinions of workers in the early WIA implementation programs.

The report revealed most of the states visited in the final round were “almost exclusively focused on WIA-specific, performance-oriented policy objectives, and use the performance measures as a means to emphasize specific aspects of their program or services or establish bigger-picture accountability goals” (Dunham et al., 2006, p. II-1). For this reason, several states only emphasized certain performance measures, highlighted services specific to their area, disclosed their goal of prioritizing specific populations, and displayed the tendency to embrace the core measures. These actions were carried out mainly as a way to design services to highlight particular aspects of their program.

Survey respondents noted that changes to their service design and delivery were partly due to their goal of improving their success on the performance measures. For example, reaching a goal of 100% program completion by participants can drive local areas to ensure that customers achieve positive outcomes on a particular performance measure, even though there is no incentive or sanction attached to it at the local level. Although the belief that performance measures had any impact on service delivery varied by respondent, many believed they were already working towards improved measures, while some states saw performance measurement as a key factor in improving services. For example, in most states, training was found to be associated with higher wages, “and thus this goal would also encourage high performance on the wage gain measure” (Dunham et al., 2006, II-4).

Although Florida was not one of the states selected for this national study, it was determined early in the WIA implementation process that Florida joined several of the sampled states in incorporating the consideration of performance measures into its strategic planning efforts. As discussed, Florida was noted as a leader in going beyond the performance management standards as required by the federal system at the time. The state's focus on performance measures is what spotlighted conversations about workforce development in the United States.

Studies on Common Measures

During the course of the SPRA evaluation, the Office of Management and Budget proposed standardized measures to assess performance for WIA and other workforce development programs. These common measures (also known as indicators of performance) were part of an effort to “make comparable the measures across varying programs with relatively similar employment and earnings aims” (Dunham et al., 2006, p. I-1). Because the measures were implemented as the study was underway, researchers waited to complete the final rounds of visits until they had been implemented. The purpose for this action was that studying the measures would further support the original goals of the project.

The first goal was to assess the effectiveness of the current system. Including the common measures as they were implemented across the sample states added a way to determine how the accountability system was meeting both the explicit and implicit goals. The second general goal was to identify ways the system evolved over time, which now included the incorporation of common measures (Dunham et al, 2006, p. I-2).

The researchers found that, in general, the level of understanding of the common measures mirrored that of the WIA accountability system in that the staff who best understood the importance of accountability were those who were more knowledgeable about the requirements. In other words, the level of accountability was only advanced as local teams received adequate training on the usefulness of the accountability system and their respective state's emphasis on quality improvement. Regarding Youth Worker programs, one finding was that the level of understanding of common measures for surveyed staff was lower than their knowledge of the accountability system in general. However, this was rarely seen as a problem by the local centers because at this early stage, they did not fully understand what impact the common measures would have.

As previously described, Virginia's study of its 2005 program data, conducted by Hollenbeck and Huang, also reviewed program performance indicators (specifically, only those as incorporated by the Commonwealth of Virginia) across ten workforce programs. The measures were: short-term employment rate, long-term employment rate, short-term earnings level, long-term earnings level, credential completion rate, and repeat employer customers. The goal was "to develop and analyze valid performance information about the outcomes" because these programs are paid for by public resources, automatically requiring accountability to taxpayers as well as policymakers and administrators (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2007, p. 1).

After researchers analyzed the information, they judged that the data was virtually impossible to compare across programs in a "meaningful way" mainly because the number of objectives greatly differed by program (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2007, p. x). The initial attempt to calculate integrated performance measurement indicators for ten

programs revealed significant issues in how the data was collected. However, the agencies administering the programs began to work in tandem to supply useful data for calculating indicators of program performance. It was only then that researchers were able to establish the potential future impact of the workforce initiative.

These findings spoke to the need for improved, streamlined data collection practices and the need to streamline program goals. A positive impact was discovered in results for both the gross impact and the net impact indicators. It was anticipated that data analysis would “continue to be informative for program oversight, workforce policy, and resource allocation and that by including more years of data, the indicators would eventually provide more and more utility” (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2007, p. 31). This research was one of the earliest comprehensive studies on the common measures of performance.

Gaps and Limitations

These and other studies provide a backdrop for the use of standardized indicators of performance in WIA/WIOA programs and the usefulness of determining their impact on state implementation. However, there is a lack of directed studies on trends in performance through the analysis of common measures. Policymakers in Florida acknowledged the importance of their use of performance data to determine the success of their workforce system based on federal guidance. Additionally, despite the national focus on continuous improvement efforts, Florida has had no external research of this nature on performance outcomes over time.

It is understood that policymakers and administrators have “limited time frames and wide responsibilities” leaving them minimal time or need for nuanced analyses of

dozens of indicators and a desire “to quickly get to the bottom line” (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2007, p. 1–2). Trends studies are one way to report bottom line data and to streamline more nuanced investigations. Therefore, in addition to common measures, the negotiated performance goals used to promote continuous improvement efforts should be included as an arm of the multi-branched approach to performance reviews. Moreover, improved performance in this area and an increase in services to those with barriers to employment have been identified as indicators of a successful workforce system. Yet, negotiated goals have not been the focus of a research study of Florida’s WIA/WIOA programs. This study served to reduce these gaps.

The ETA calculates national trends over time on program participants, including services for youth workers, as they are an integral component of the federal goal to enhance the competitiveness of the nation’s workforce. Yet, few projects include the analysis of Youth Worker programs in a longitudinal study. States are expected to consider serving the youth “most in need, especially out-of-school youth (including those who are dropouts, in foster care, homeless or runaways, subject to juvenile or adult justice systems, pregnant or parenting, basic skills deficient, or English language learners)” (ETA, 2018a, p. 8–9). This project is anticipated to both enhance and champion additional research of the Youth Worker programs.

The three-pronged approach used in this study differs from previous studies as it conducts a time series investigation with a detailed analysis of indicator behaviors based on program expectations across all of Florida’s workforce development programs. Out of the 50 states, Florida comes in third in having the largest and most comprehensive system structures. Earlier, this dissertation outlined the state’s current

workforce system. Examination of the performance of a robust system such as this one can unveil the complex nature of implementing WIA/WIOA in a highly populated state with widely diverse regions.

As with the prior reviewed WIA study conducted of the eight early implementation states, the selection for this case study was weighted to analyze a proven leading-edge state in the area of workforce development. This project provides empirical research that may be beneficial to future planning as it seeks to identify statistically significant performance changes in the system over time. In addition, it provides an inclusive review of program progression after the WIOA legislation was implemented.

There are countless variables that impact the success of any system. An entire state's workforce may be impacted by legislative and political climates, economic constraints, etc. For example, program years may be impacted by natural disasters, such as fires in California and hurricanes in Texas and Florida. This study is not intended to address every potential reason an indicator improves or declines. The findings herein should be interpreted in the context of the data and methods employed. The researcher's analysis is descriptive and does not draw causal conclusions.

Chapter III.

METHODOLOGY

“The Department of Labor considers continuous improvement to be a critical factor in the negotiations process and acknowledges that there are many ways to define continuous improvement. Continuous improvement may reflect an increase in the level of performance, a change in service strategy and delivery, or a change in the customers served” (ETA, 2018a, p. 8). For this study, a quantitative method was used to conduct exploratory research on the performance trends of Florida’s core programs for the 2009-2018 reporting years. This evaluation inspected the effectiveness of the Adult, Dislocated, and Youth Worker programs. To properly detect improved performance scales, the project investigated the established common measures of program success. Statistical tests were employed to analyze pertinent performance data as indicated by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. This chapter discusses the study design, key terms, specific tests conducted, and how results were interpreted.

Study Design

The researcher employed a time series approach, observing data in a sequence taken at successive program years for the same indicators. This type of analysis was utilized to detect how single indicators behaved over time. The method was most efficient in observing overall program performance longitudinally to provide a critical understanding of the underlying patterns of change in the target range. The use of time series techniques

for examining these standardized measures can prove useful for future integration into a model for forecasting, monitoring, or controlling performance data at given times.

The researcher empirically examined the data in three parts. First, for the observed ten-year period, the researcher reviewed Florida's outcomes in the primary indicators of performance for the core programs. Second, the project moved forward to an in-depth comparison of negotiated performance expectations with actual performance outcomes. According to federal policy, states achieving at the minimum required rates are considered to have met those goals (State of Florida, 2016, p. 90). Next, the researcher reviewed the outcomes for each of the required indicators of performance reported for serving participants with barriers to employment, which include workers on public assistance and those with disabilities. In addition to analyzing performance indicators, each phase of the study examined program performance before and after WIOA reauthorization.

Key Terms

The following information is provided for clarification of key terms utilized in reporting research findings.

- *“Performance”*

Annual program achievements based on common performance measures as defined by the ETA. These indicators include Employment Entry, Employment Retention, Six Months Earnings Average, Placement in Employment or Education, Attainment of Degree or Certificate, and Literacy or Numeracy Gains.

- “*Core Programs*”

The WIA/WIOA funds an array of initiatives to improve the workforce quality and output in the United States. These programs often have a specific priority audience and set of goals, which are determined before the beginning of each reporting year. In states receiving workforce investment funds, there are three major implementation programs. Core programs must report on “common performance indicators that provide key employment information, such as how many workers entered and retained employment, their median wages, whether they attained any credentials, and their measurable skill gains” (ETA, 2014, sec. 2).

The core programs are:

Adult Worker Program:

This program provides career training services to job seekers 18 years of age and older. While any adult may receive services, the program focuses on low-income workers, low-skilled individuals, and adults currently receiving public assistance. Funding for this program is based on the state’s unemployment rates and disadvantaged adults.

Dislocated Worker Program:

This program provides services to customers who were (a) terminated or laid off from work and were not likely to return to that industry; (b) terminated or laid off due to a plant closure or downsizing; (c) self-employed and experiencing unemployment due to general economic

conditions; or (d) displaced homemakers (people dependent upon income of a family member while providing unpaid services in the home but are no longer supported by that income) (Fortson et al., 2017, p. 4).

Youth Worker Program:

This program prioritizes low-income youth ages 16-21 with barriers to education or employment. The focus is to enroll youth who are out of school. Allotments are based on the state's excess unemployment and its economically disadvantaged youth as of the previous funding year. Low-income youth between the ages of 14 and 24 are eligible, whether they are in school or not. A minimum of 75% of WIA/WIOA youth funds must be expended on services to out-of-school youth (OSY) who make up a significant part of the state's labor force. (ETA, 2019a, pp. 1-2).

- *“Employment”*

Within the WIA/WIOA program, participants are considered employed when they are working a paid, unsubsidized job, or are clocking 15 or more hours per week at a job run by a family member. This is only the case for participants in Title I, II, or III programs. Participants enrolled in Title IV programs must be employed in a job meeting the definition of “competitive integrated employment” (meaning, full-time or part-time employment). These jobs are considered individualized and customized to the worker's unique characteristics. This includes employment with

ongoing support for workers with the most significant disabilities. (ETA, n.d., para 4).

- *“Exit”*

Program participants receive skills training and other development services at different intervals. For the purposes of performance calculations and reporting, the exit date for participants in the Adult, Dislocated, and Youth Worker programs is always the last date of service. This date is only determined 90 days after participants receive their final WIA/WIOA service in any department of a local participating program. In addition, there must be no plans already in place to provide services to the participant in the future (ETA, n.d., para 6), including follow-up on employment placement and new job opportunities or any administrative services.

Data Collection

States are required to submit annual data on all federally funded workforce programs. The data sample extracted for this project spans the course of ten years and represents the total number of data points as reported by the state of Florida during that time window. To review records for this non-experimental analysis, the researcher used publicly available data sources.

Data on primary indicators of performance are collected from Florida’s management information systems. Reemployment Assistance (RA) wage records are pulled from the Wage Record Information System 2 (WRIS2). These systems gather exit

information on participants and provide real-time data elements for case management and performance reporting.

(State of Florida, 2016, p. 90).

Performance Indicators:

The researcher collected outcome data based on common measures in Adult, Dislocated, and Youth Worker programs from the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Records Data (WIASRD) system.

Interpretations of outcome data from the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs:

(a) Entered Employment Rate: Of those unemployed at the initial date of program participation: the number of adult and dislocated participants who became employed within the first three months after exiting the program, divided by the total number of participants who exited the program during the same period.

(b) Employment Retention Rate: Of those who became employed within the first three months after the exiting the program: the number of adult and dislocated participants who remained employed nine months after exiting the program, divided by the total number of participants who exited the program during the same period.

(c) Six Months Earnings Average: Of those adult and dislocated participants who remained employed nine months after exiting the program: the average wage earnings of workers during the six to nine months window after exiting the program, divided by the total number of participants who exited the program during the same period.

Interpretations of outcome data from the Youth Worker programs include:

(a) Placement in Employment or Education: Of those enrolled in education (at the date of participation or at any point during the program): the number of youth participants who attained a diploma, GED, or certificate within nine months after exiting the program, divided by the total number of youth participants who exited the program during the same period.

(b) Attainment of a Degree or Certificate: Of those who are not in post-secondary education or employment (including the military) at the initial date of participation: the number of youth participants who were employed (including the military) or enrolled in post-secondary education and/or advanced training/occupational skills training in the first three months after exiting the program, divided by the total number of youth participants who exited the program during the same period.

(c) Literacy and Numeracy Gains: Of those out-of-school youth who were basic skills deficient: the number of youth participants who increased one or more educational functioning levels, divided by the number of youth participants who completed a year in the program, plus the number of youth participants who exited the program before completing a year in the program.

Negotiated Goals Outcomes:

Data collection for Florida's negotiated outcomes was gathered from the State of Florida's Annual Reports for the target years via the U.S. Department of Labor website. Information retrieved from ETA's archived data system provided an additional lens to

view the achievement of the required minimum standards, which are the agreed-upon performance goals for states to meet. The system, which was designed to encourage high performance and provide accurate insight, provided annual data points, averages, and percentages useful for determining whether targets were met or if outcomes exceeded the negotiated levels.

Priority Population Outcomes:

Data collection for participants with barriers to employment was gathered from the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Records Data (WIASRD) system. This section of the research project examined the income barriers indicators spanning ten years, including outcomes for individuals on public assistance, displaced homemakers, and workers with disabilities. This phase of the study extrapolated measures consistently reported by the state on priority populations during the target years.

Data Analysis

This multi-faceted approach included a secondary analysis of program outcomes for WIA/WIOA core programs. The researcher made comparisons between measures as well as across all programs. To identify statistically significant performance, methods such as t-tests and correlations were employed for reviewing the data. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize performance data based on properties such as trends and changes over time as well as values of central tendency.

Analyzing Indicators

- Common Measures

The project includes an exploratory research method for analyzing the variables across an ordinal time sequence. To discover which program areas

saw consistent significant increase and which saw no improvements, for both the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the researcher examined performance trends and relationships in the areas of Employment Entry, Employment Retention, and Six Months Earnings Averages. For Youth Worker programs, the researcher examined the data in the areas of Placement in Employment or Education, Attainment of a Degree or Certificate, and Literacy and Numeracy Gains.

- Attainment of Negotiated Goals

The overall state scores among programs and indicators were reviewed to determine if Florida met the yearly required minimum performance standards for the three core programs. To identify statistically significant performance, the researcher compared negotiated outcome percentages to actual attainment for each program for all indicators of performance.

- Reaching the Priority Population

The third portion of this study included a data analysis to discover whether Florida achieved the goal of increasing services to workers with barriers to employment. For all programs, the researcher ascertained data on participants who were determined to be part of the priority populations upon entering the program. The researcher conducted statistical tests to determine outcomes and trends over time.

Statistical Tools

The researcher employed descriptive statistics to (a) summarize the outcomes by program and by measure; (b) to illuminate the differentiations in the levels of

significant increase; and (c) highlight the patterns or trends over time. Data was inspected to determine if it was normally distributed. Line graphs provide visual representation of the progression over time and provide an understanding of ranges as well as clusters of data points.

Pearson's correlation was utilized to measure the degree of association between variables as well as the direction of the relationship. For this project, the researcher established a value of r greater than 0.7 to be considered a strong correlation. Values between 0.5 and 0.7 indicate a moderate correlation, and anything less than 0.5 is considered a weak relationship, having little to no correlation. Finally, the researcher used two-tailed t-tests to determine if there was a significant change in the outcomes within the observation years. Data was determined to be statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Performance indicators were tested at the 95% confidence interval. This means, the researcher was 95% certain the outcomes and/or relationships did not occur by chance.

Observations

In each phase of the study, trends and relationships between the key variables were analyzed to observe programmatic success. The sections are presented as follows:

- Trends
 - *Observed trends over ten years.* The three parts of this study assessed progression of program performance. For each program (Adult, Dislocated, and Youth Worker), trends in common measures are

presented using a time series graph to present data points at successive time intervals.

- *Performance before and after WIOA reauthorization.* The researcher compared outcomes from the reporting years before the WIA/WIOA legislation was reauthorized with subsequent year data to see if there were any changes in performance.
- Relationships
 - *Relationships between measures.* For each program, the researcher established whether there was a relationship between the performance of one measure and the performance of the other measures within in the same program.
 - *Relationships between programs.* An analysis of the relationship between programs was conducted to determine whether the successful attainment of goals for one program was connected to the success of other programs.

Additional Methods Considerations

WIA/WIOA program data was extracted to quantifiably address the three research questions. To improve data quality from states, the ETA created the Workforce Data Quality Initiative. This initiative looks to collect data sources longitudinally to “provide a comprehensive picture of workers’ earnings throughout their careers” (ETA, 2019b, para. 2) and ensures the reliability and validity of reported performance data.

One limitation of a time series study is the existence of temporal trends. Therefore, the evaluation identified the greatest threats to its internal validity to

determine the degree of threat each one poses. It is understood that an important tool for minimizing threats to validity is to consider the other available data, therefore increasing the possibility of rendering the threat to the ultimate significance of the results highly unlikely. This study assumes there are external factors which may significantly impact outcomes in the state during certain program years. To adequately address threats to evaluating large data sets over an extended period, data should be collected at multiple time points (Grimshaw et al., 2000, p. 512). Each data point in this study was evaluated to account for potential major impacts to the underlying trend. Due to the number of points to be analyzed, the results are presented thoroughly and then summarized to directly answer the research questions. Test results are explained, significant outcomes are addressed, and findings of the project are reported. Information is provided in graphs and tables for a clear presentation of the researcher's data analysis.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this study was to focus on the state of Florida's goal of increased accountability and continuous improvement by examining data from the federal performance accountability system. The WIA/WIOA's system assesses states' effectiveness in achieving continuous improvement of their workforce investment programs. The primary goals of this accountability system are to increase employment, retention, and earnings of the nation's workers and to enhance skills attainment. As previously determined, this method for improving the quality of the workforce is directly related to consistent review of outcome data. Florida was selected for this case study, as it has one of the largest and most comprehensive workforce development structures in the country.

This chapter discusses the findings of this quantitative study based on the investigation of individual common measures and how they compare across programs. Each part of the study directly addressed one of the research questions guiding this dissertation. In addition, the researcher notes adjustments in performance after the 2014 reauthorization of the Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act at the indicator level. Notable program outcomes are identified and significant changes in performance—positive or negative—are presented.

PART 1: Performance in the Common Measures

Part 1 of the project addresses RQ1: *Which performance measures saw significant improvements in the three federally funded workforce development programs, and which did not?* This was addressed by examining the yearly performance results of each program. The researcher analyzed key variables to observe which program areas experienced positive outcomes and which areas failed to see improvements. This section highlights the most significant outcomes.

Common Measures in the Adult Worker Program

The Adult Worker program was consistent in its performance over the course of the observed years. The average number of participants exiting the program in any given year was 14,381, with the highest rate at 19,800 in 2009. The results of the tests below provide a look at how the program progressed in serving adults from 2009 to 2018.

Trends

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the Adult Worker Program performance in the reviewed common measures of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Six Months Earnings Average. Analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test, as shown in Table 1, reveals an increase in the rate of participants entering employment since the WIOA reenactment.

There was a decrease in performance in Employment Retention and the Six Months Earnings Average of adult participants. The earnings rate dropped from \$19,960 to \$10,537. A p-value of .03 indicates there is a statistically significant difference in the average rates.

Figure 1.
Common Measures Outcomes for Adult Worker Program

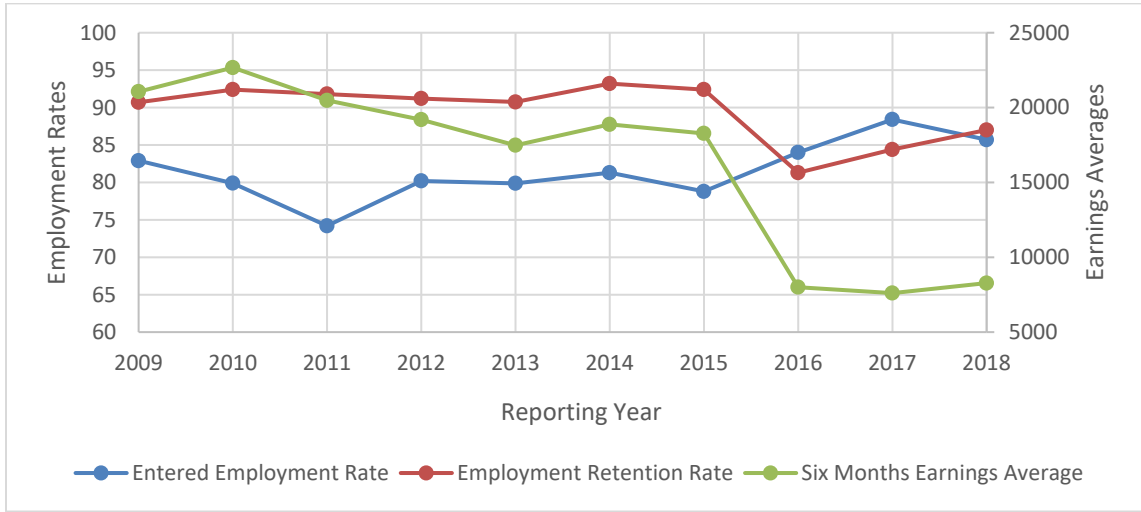


Table 1
Adult Worker Program: Common Measures from WIA to WIOA

	Entered Employment		Employment Retention		Earnings Average				
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After			
Mean	79.72%	84.22%	Mean	91.67%	86.27%	Mean	\$19,960	\$10,537	
P-value	0.11		P-value		0.11		P-value		*0.03

*significant at the $p < 0.05$ level

Relationships

Table 2 reflects the correlation analysis conducted to observe the relationship in performance across common measures. The correlation table shows a significant relationship between all three measures. There was a very strong, positive relationship (.90) between the Employment Retention Rate and the Six Months Earnings, indicating that as the rate of worker retention declined, there was a correlating decrease in average earnings for WIA/WIOA adult program completers.

Table 2

Adult Worker Program: Common Measures Correlation

	1.	2.	3.
1. Entered Employment Rate (EER)	1.00		
2. Employment Retention Rate (ERR)	-0.70	1.00	
3. Six Months Earnings Average (SMEA)	-0.77	0.90	1.00

Research Findings

The Adult Worker program saw no significant improvements in performance in the employment indicators. The Entered Employment Rate and Employment Retention Rate averaged near the same rate as the initial reported rates in 2009. In the final common measure, Six Months Earnings Average, participants exiting the program saw gradual decreases in earnings until the sharp drop in 2016.

Common Measures in the Dislocated Worker Program

The Dislocated Worker Program maintained consistent effectiveness in two of the three common measures over the course of the surveyed years. The average number of participants exiting the program in any given year was 5,334 peaking at 9,667 in 2011. The results of the tests below illustrate the 2009 to 2018 programmatic outcomes.

Trends

The researcher completed an analysis of the Dislocated Worker Program performance in the investigated common measures of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Six Months Earnings Average (Figure A2). This program experienced dips performance near the end of the series. Since the WIOA reauthorization, there was a decline in average rates for employment retention and earnings. An analysis of the data using a two-tail t-test revealed that there was a minimal

increase in the average rate of participants entering employment after the WIOA reauthorization (Table B3), and a decrease in the six-month earnings of these workers, going from \$16,500 down to \$10,335.

Relationships

A correlation analysis (Table B4) was conducted to observe potential relationships in program performance across common measures. The analysis indicates there is a relationship between all three measures. There is a positive relationship between the Employment Retention Rate and the Six Months Earnings Average (.72), revealing that as the rate of worker retention lowered, there was potentially a correlating decline in average earnings for WIA/WIOA adult program completers.

Research Findings

The Dislocated Worker Program saw minimal improvement in the rate of participants entering employment. Although outcomes were consistent over time, the other two common measures did not show significant growth. The Entered Employment Rate averaged nearly the same rate as the initial reported rates in 2009, and the six-months earnings were slightly lower in average than in the initial observed reporting year.

Common Measures in the Youth Worker Program

The Youth Worker program saw much variance in the performance outcomes of the three common measures over the course of the target years. The average number of participants (up to 21 years of age) exiting the program in any given year was 5,218, peaking at 7,474 in 2010. The results of the statistical tests below offer a detailed look at how the program progressed in serving youth from 2009 to 2018.

Trends

The researcher conducted an analysis of the Youth Worker Program performance in the primary indicators of Employment/Education Placement, Literacy/Numeracy Gains, and Degree/Certificate Attainment (Figure A3). The program experienced increased performance throughout the time sequence. After WIOA implementation, there was a consistent progression in performance in Employment/Education Placement and Degree/Certificate Attainment of youth participants and a slight increase in the average of Literacy/Numeracy Gains.

As shown in Table 5 below, an analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test revealed a statistically significant improvement in the average rate of youth participants entering employment after the WIOA reenactment. The measure saw a jump from 58.35% to 77.45%. This occurrence was found to be statistically significant at a p-value of .02.

Table 5

Youth Worker Program: Common Measures from WIA to WIOA

	Employment/Education		Degree/Certification		Literacy/ Numeracy Gains			
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After		
Mean	58.35%	77.45%	Mean	69.36%	77.10%	Mean	47.20%	50.83%
P-value	*0.02		P-value	0.12		P-value	0.41	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Relationships

A correlation analysis was conducted to explore any relationships in performance across common measures (Table B6). The analysis revealed a relationship between all

three measures. It was determined there was a positive relationship between the Employment/ Education Placement and Degree/Certificate Attainment indicators, determining that as the employment placement and higher education rates improved for youth workers, there was a correlating rise in the rate of program completers attaining degrees and certificates.

Research Findings

In the Youth Worker Program, all three common measures saw significant improvements in performance. All three primary indicators of Youth Worker Program performance averaged higher than the rates initially reported in 2009. There were no notable or major decreases in program effectiveness during the observed reporting years.

Common Measures Across Programs

A detailed analysis of achieved results was conducted to determine whether there was a relationship between the performance in the common measures for one program and the performance of the other two programs. The data shows a significant positive relationship between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Figures 4-6 (see Appendix A) display comparisons of the programs across the time sequence based on comparable indicators of performance.

A correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between employment outcomes for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Also, as the correlation results show in Table 7, there was a strong relationship between Adult and Dislocated Worker retention rates (.86), and ultimately, a very strong relationship between the Adult and Dislocated Worker earnings averages (.97).

Table 7*Correlation of Common Measures Across Programs*

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Adult EER	1.00					
2. Dislocated EER	0.24	1.00				
3. Adult ERR	-0.70	0.10	1.00			
4. Dislocated ERR	-0.47	0.48	0.86	1.00		
5. Adult SMEA	-0.77	-0.23	0.90	0.63	1.00	
6. Dislocated SMEA	-0.79	-0.20	0.94	0.72	0.97	1.00

PART 2: Attainment of Negotiated Goals

This section addresses RQ2: *Has Florida consistently achieved or exceeded the negotiated performance goals across all programs?* This was addressed by comparing program outcomes with the goals negotiated between Florida and the ETA. The critical variables for the required indicators were analyzed to observe whether Florida consistently achieved the minimum performance standards. To identify statistically significant performance, the researcher observed the rates at which actual outcomes landed above or fell below anticipated levels. This section highlights the most significant results.

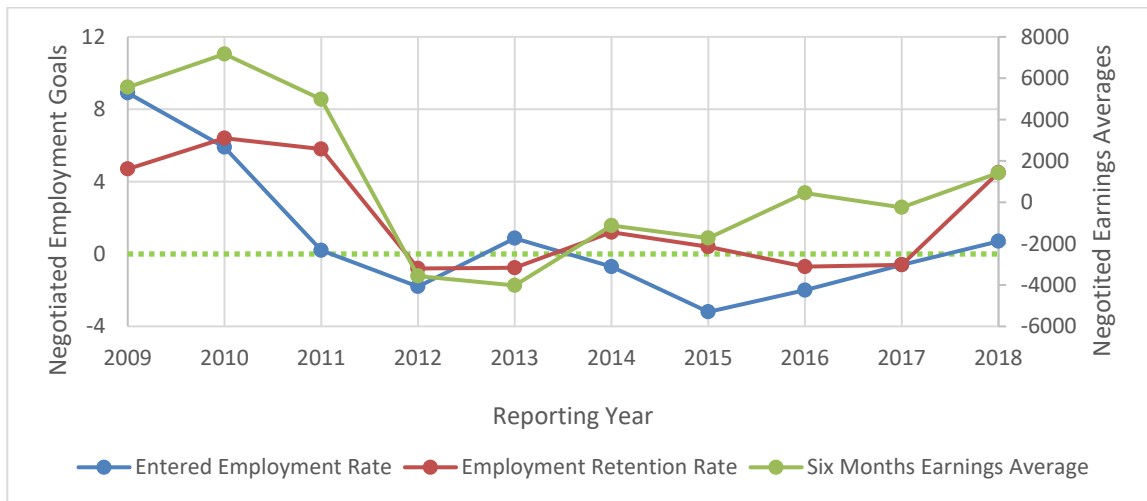
Negotiated Goals in the Adult Worker Program

The Adult Worker Program experienced little variance in its outcomes for maintaining success in reaching negotiated goals over the course of the observed years. The program began the 2009 reporting year having exceeded the negotiated goals in all three common measures. The results of the statistical tests below provide an illustration of how the program progressed from 2009 to 2018.

Trends

Figure 7 visually demonstrates the outcomes of the Adult Worker Program’s performance in achieving the negotiated program goals in the indicators of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Six Months Earnings Average. The program achieved or exceeded the minimum negotiated level in its goals from 2009 to 2011, then experienced a sharp decline in all indicators in 2012. Since the WIOA reenactment, the Adult Worker Program met its Entered Employment Rate and Six Months Earnings Average goals, on average, and began to exceed performance goals toward the end of the time series.

Figure 7.
Negotiated Levels Attainment for Adult Worker Program



Analysis of the data using a two-tail t-test (Table B8) determined the program’s success in maintaining goals in all three measures. The researcher determined the negotiated goals attainment for the program saw no significant variances in effectiveness per year after the initial drop. This means the program did not greatly exceed negotiated

goals nor did it dip sharply below the target goal for the majority of the 10 observed reporting years.

Relationships

Table 9 shows the correlation analysis used to observe potential relationships in performance across indicators. The correlation table shows a significant relationship between all three measures. There is a very strong, positive relationship (.90) between the Employment Retention Rate and the Six Months Earnings Average at the negotiated rate, revealing that as the goals for worker retention were met, there was a correlating attainment of the earnings goals for adult workers in the program.

Table 9

Adult Worker Program: Negotiated Goals Correlation

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>
1. Entered Employment Rate (EER)	1.00		
2. Employment Retention Rate (ERR)	0.67	1.00	
3. Six Months Earnings Average (SMEA)	0.73	0.90	1.00

Research Findings

Despite the decrease in 2012, the Adult Worker Program’s performance levels were at or above its targeted levels for most of the program years. None of the indicators saw averages as high as the rate as the first observed year, 2009. All three indicators began a trend of improved performance during the end of the time series.

Negotiated Goals in the Dislocated Worker Program

The Dislocated Worker Program saw much variance in performance results while attempting to maintain negotiated goals over the course of the surveyed years. The

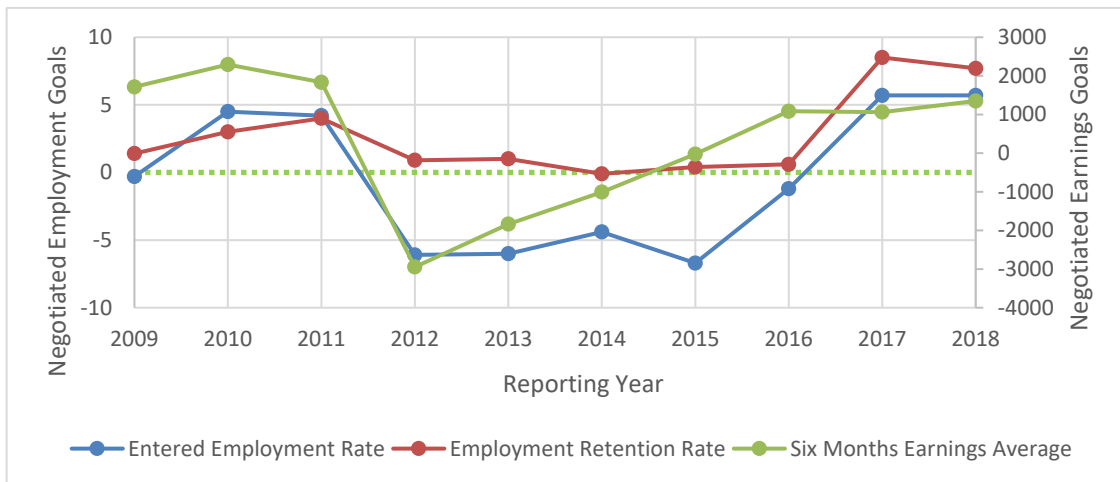
program began the 2009 reporting year having met the minimum requirement in the Entered Employment Rate and exceeded the negotiated goals in the other two common measures. Results of the tests below show how the program advanced from 2009 to 2018.

Trends

Figure 8 provides a visual representation of the Dislocated Worker Program’s performance in achieving the minimum negotiated program levels in the indicators of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Six Months Earnings Average. The program met or exceeded its goals from 2009 to 2011, then experienced a sharp decline in two of the three performance measures in 2012. Since the WIOA reauthorization, the Dislocated Worker Program consistently exceeded its Employment Retention Rate. Analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test (Table B10) revealed the averages of the final observed program years were higher than those of the reporting years prior to WIOA.

Figure 8.

Negotiated Levels Attainment for Dislocated Worker Program



Relationships

Table 11 shows the correlation analysis conducted to observe any potential relationships in performance across indicators. The correlation table shows a strong, positive relationship between Entered Employment Rates and the other two negotiated goals. The strength of these relationships (.84 and .80 respectively) reveals that as the goals for worker employment were met, there was a correlating increase in the retention rates and earnings goals for this program.

Table 11

Dislocated Worker: Negotiated Goals Correlation

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>
1. Entered Employment Rate (EER)	1.00		
2. Employment Retention Rate (ERR)	0.84	1.00	
3. Six Months Earnings Average (SMEA)	0.80	0.47	1.00

Research Findings

Despite the sharp drop in 2012, the Dislocated Worker Program's performance outcomes were at or above its targeted negotiated levels for most of the program years. Overall, Entered Employment Rate and Employment Retention Rate indicators averaged at a higher rate than the first observed year, 2009. All three indicators began a trend of improved performance during the end of the time series.

Negotiated Goals in the Youth Worker Program

The Youth Worker Program saw the greatest variance in performance outcomes when attempting to maintain minimum negotiated levels. The program began the 2009 reporting year having exceeded the required negotiated goals in two common measures,

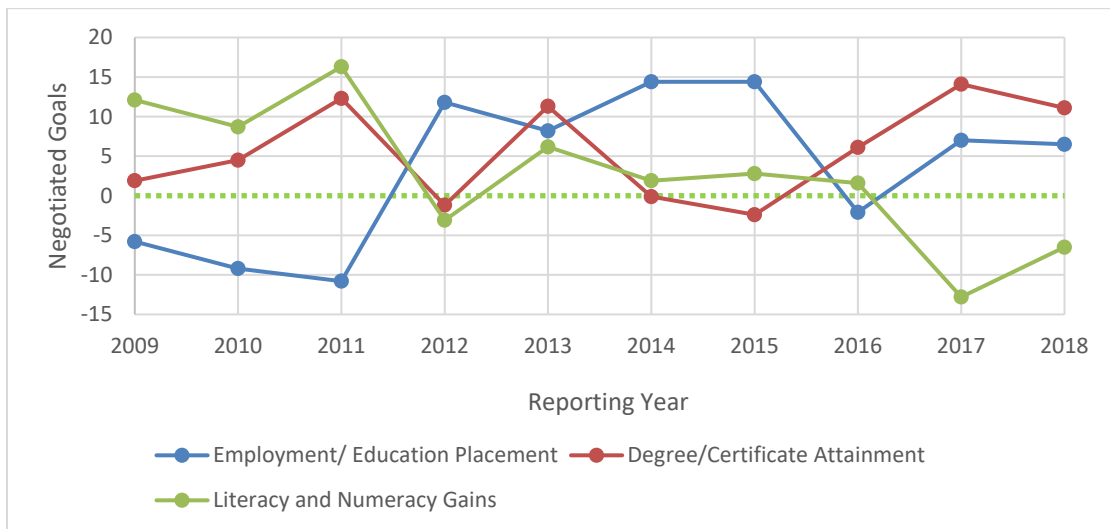
but not meeting the minimum requirement in the Employment/Education Placement Rate. The results of the t-test and correlation analysis below demonstrate how the program advanced from 2009 to 2018.

Trends

Figure 9 is a visual depiction of the Youth Worker Program’s performance in achieving the negotiated program goals in the indicators of Employment/Education Placement, Literacy/Numeracy Gains, and Degree/Certificate Attainment. The program met or exceeded its goals in Degree/Certificate Attainment for nearly all observed years. There was also a notable increase in the Employment and Placement averages. Analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test (Table B12) further reveals that since WIOA implementation, the Youth Worker Program demonstrated progress in its average Employment Retention rate, yet it decreased in its Literacy/Numeracy Gains rate.

Figure 9.

Negotiated Levels Attainment for Youth Worker Program



Relationships

The researcher conducted a correlation analysis to examine the relationship in performance across indicators (Table B13). The analysis revealed there was a moderate connection between Employment/Education Placement and Literacy/Numeracy Gains at the negotiated rate (.63), indicating that as the goals for academic gains were met, there was potentially a correlating attainment of the employment and education goals for this youth program.

Research Findings

During the observed program years, the Youth Worker Program consistently met or exceeded its negotiated goals. Overall, the employment indicators averaged at a higher rate than the first observed year, 2009. All three indicators saw much variance in performance through the program years but began increasing performance during the end of the time series.

Negotiated Goals Attainment Across Programs

The detailed analysis of achievement results was conducted to determine whether potential program relationships occurred in the effort to meet the minimum required performance standards. The data shows a positive relationship between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Figures 10-12 (see Appendix A) display comparisons between the programs across the time series based on comparable indicators of performance.

The correlation analysis of the outcomes did not reveal a strong relationship between the Entered Employment Rates or the Employment Retention Rates between programs. However, as shown in Table 14, there was a strong, positive relationship (.87)

observed between the two programs in the Six Months Earnings Average.

Table 14

Correlation of Negotiated Goals Across Programs

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Adult EER	1.00					
2. Dislocated EER	0.35	1.00				
3. Adult ERR	0.67	0.62	1.00			
4. Dislocated ERR	0.05	0.84	0.26	1.00		
5. Adult SMEA	0.73	0.69	0.90	0.24	1.00	
6. Dislocated SMEA	0.49	0.80	0.71	0.47	0.87	1.00

PART 3: Serving Priority Populations

This section addresses RQ3: *Has Florida seen an increase in attainment of the expected goal to serve priority populations?* This was determined by examining the indicators of performance for each program in serving participants with barriers to employment. As discussed in Chapter 3, this project ascertained data on priority populations that were consistently reported on by each program throughout the entire time series. Florida’s reports of required indicators were reviewed for program participants receiving public assistance, participants who were displaced homemakers, and those with disabilities. This section highlights the most significant outcomes.

Serving Priority Populations in the Adult Worker Program

The Adult Worker program exhibited consistent performance over the course of the observed years. This was true for serving participants on public assistance as well as

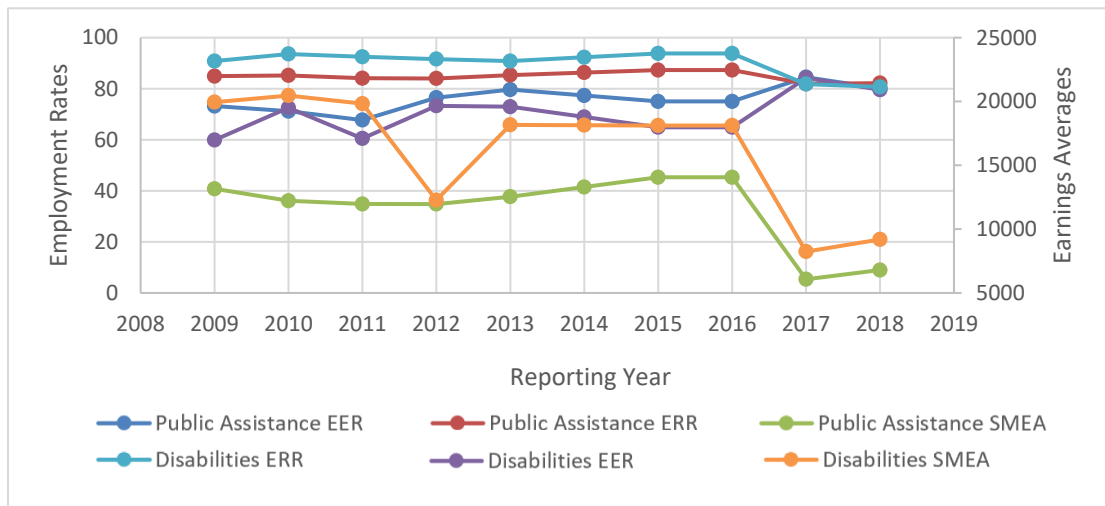
those workers with disabilities. The results of the tests below illustrate how the program performed from 2009 to 2018 in serving participants with barriers to employment.

Trends

Figure 13 offers a visual representation of the Adult Worker program’s performance in serving priority participants in the indicators of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Six Months Earnings Average. The program experienced some changes in performance in 2017. There was a sharp decline in earnings averages for both populations, as they saw only a minimal improvement in the 2018 reporting year.

Since the WIOA reenactment, performance in all six indicators remained constant until a significant drop in performance in four of the six indicators near the end of the observed program years. Analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test (Table B15) revealed decreases in performance in 2011 and 2012 for two of the six indicators, yet there was no significant progress or decline in total averages across all measures after WIOA implementation.

Figure 13.
Priority Populations in the Adult Worker Program



Relationships

Table 16 shows the correlation analysis observing the relationships in performance across indicators. The correlation table shows strong relationships between five of the six measures, especially within the two categories—Public Assistance and Disabilities. The strength of the relationships between the average earnings of those on public assistance and the employment retention rates in both categories (.91 and .96) reveals that as the rate of worker retention improved, there was a correlating improvement in average earnings for low income and disabled participants.

Table 16

Adult Worker Program: Priority Population Correlation

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Public Assistance EER	1.00					
2. Public Assistance ERR	-0.41	1.00				
3. Public Assistance SMEA	-0.62	0.91	1.00			
4. Disabilities EER	0.81	-0.66	-0.82	1.00		
5. Disabilities ERR	-0.71	0.85	0.96	-0.76	1.00	
6. Disabilities SMEA	-0.78	0.75	0.86	-0.83	0.86	1.00

Research Findings

The Adult Worker Program made improvements in performance in the employment and retention rates for participants with disabilities. All indicators, except the Disabilities Six Month Earnings Average, saw an average performance near the same rate as 2009. In the earnings measures for both the public assistance and disabilities indicators, program completers saw gradual decreases in earnings until the measure dropped significantly later in the time sequence.

Serving Priority Populations in the Dislocated Worker Program

The Dislocated Worker Program saw much consistency over the course of the target years, especially in serving participants with disabilities. As previously discussed in Chapter III, the Dislocated Worker program prioritizes participants who are displaced homemakers, a priority population unique to the program. The results of the tests below provide a detailed look at how the program progressed from 2009 to 2018 in serving participants with barriers to employment.

Trends

An analysis (Figure A14) was conducted of the Dislocated Worker Program's performance in serving priority participants in the indicators of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Six Months Earnings Average. Since the WIOA reauthorization, performance in all six indicators remained constant until a decrease in performance of four of the six indicators near the end of the observed time series. Despite this drop, analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test (Table B17) revealed there was no major increase or decline in total averages across measures after WIOA implementation. The performance outcomes did not vary greatly throughout the time series.

Relationships

Table 18 shows a correlation analysis observing the relationship in performance across indicators. The correlation table shows a strong, positive relationship (.83) between the displaced homemakers' earnings and the earnings of participants with disabilities, indicating that the rate of average earnings after six months was strongly correlated among those participants with barriers to employment.

Table 18*Dislocated Worker Program: Priority Population Correlation*

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Displaced Homemakers EER	1.00					
2. Displaced Homemakers ERR	0.72	1.00				
3. Displaced Homemakers SMEA	0.23	0.60	1.00			
4. Disabilities EER	0.12	-0.14	-0.30	1.00		
5. Disabilities ERR	0.51	0.48	0.66	0.30	1.00	
6. Disabilities SMEA	0.20	0.51	0.83	0.08	0.74	1.00

Research Findings

During the examined program years, the Dislocated Worker Program experienced growth in performance in the Entered Employment Rates of both priority groups. Over the 10 investigated years, the program saw an average performance near the same rate in 2009 in four of the six indicators.

Serving Priority Populations in the Youth Worker Program

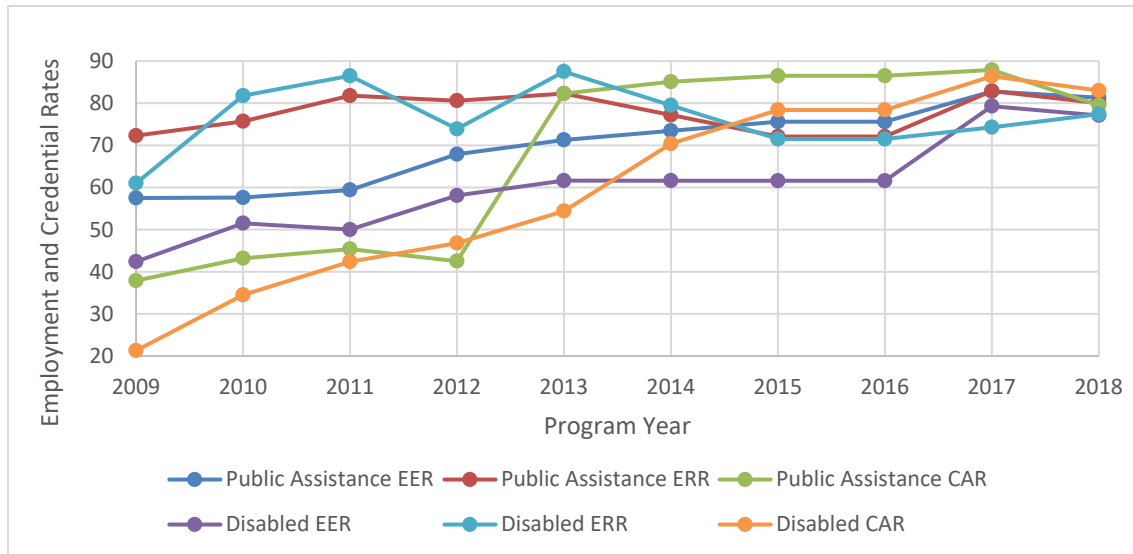
The Youth Worker Program saw continuous improvements over the course of the program years. For priority populations, the Youth Program reports on participants who are 19-21 years of age. All six of the observed indicators experienced notable progress. The results of the tests below demonstrate how the program progressed from 2009 to 2018 in serving youth participants with barriers to employment.

Trends

Figure 15 illustrates outcomes of the Youth Worker Program's performance in serving priority participants in the indicators of Entered Employment Rate, Employment Retention Rate, and Credential Attainment Rate. The graph depicts the rates at which the

program experienced growth in performance in all common measures. The data shows significantly higher rates across the time sequence, especially in the rate of Credential Attainment for workers receiving public assistance.

Figure 15.
Priority Populations in the Youth Worker Program



Since the WIOA reauthorization, performance in all six indicators remained on a positive trend. Analysis of the performance using a two-tail t-test (Table B19) revealed there was an increase in averages in the Entered Employment and Credential Attainment Rates after implementation, and the performance outcomes did not vary greatly throughout the observed years.

Relationships

Table 20 shows the correlation analysis conducted to observe the relationship in performance across indicators. The correlation table shows very strong, positive relationships among employment rates (.94), among credential rates (.90), as well as between the Public Assistance employment rate and credential rates of participants with disabilities (.96). The strength of these relationships indicated that as the rate of worker

employment and credential rates increased for participants receiving public assistance, there was a correlating improvement in the same indicators for workers with disabilities within the youth program.

Table 20

Youth Worker Program: Priority Population Correlation

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Public Assistance EER	1.00					
2. Public Assistance ERR	0.21	1.00				
3. Public Assistance Credentials	0.88	0.03	1.00			
4. Disabled EER	0.94	0.43	0.76	1.00		
5. Disabled ERR	-0.03	0.65	0.11	0.14	1.00	
6. Disabled Credentials	0.96	0.11	0.90	0.89	0.04	1.00

Research Findings

The Youth Worker Program did see increases in performance in the employment and retention rates for participants with disabilities. Over the 10 observed years, the program saw higher average performance rates than the 2009 results in all six indicators observed.

Reaching Priority Populations Across Programs

An analysis of all variables was conducted to determine potential program relationships in the performance measures for serving participants with barriers to employment. Data was examined across programs based on comparable indicators of performance reported consistently across the time series. The data shows a significant positive relationship between all programs (Figures A16-A21).

Table 21 depicts the correlations of outcomes for serving participants on public assistance. Two of the programs required to report consistently on the Entered Employment Rates and Employment Retention Rates for low-income workers showed connections among the measures. A correlation analysis of the outcomes shows a strong, positive relationship (.83) between employment entrance for the Adult Worker Program and the Youth Worker Program (for those 19 and older). In addition, for workers with disabilities (Tables B22-B23), there is a relationship noted between Adult and Dislocated Worker retention rates (.78) and earnings averages (.77), indicating a correlation between the average earnings across programs for priority populations.

Table 21

Correlation of Public Assistance EER and ERR

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>
1. Adult Public Assistance EER	1.00			
2. Youth Public Assistance EER	0.83	1.00		
3. Adult Public Assistance ERR	-0.41	-0.19	1.00	
4. Youth Public Assistance ERR	0.38	0.21	-0.73	1.00

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Project Summary

This chapter provides a discussion of the results of the investigation of Florida's three core WIA/WIOA Workforce Development programs, the interpretation of their outcomes, and the implications of the findings. The results of this study can provide insight on the effectiveness of the programs utilizing the standardized measures instituted by the U.S. Department of Labor. Conclusions based on these results as well as recommendations for future research are provided.

Interpretation of Results

Part 1. Examination of Common Measures

A review of results from the tests conducted on the common measures revealed clear trends and relationships among the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Both programs saw consistent achievement in program performance over the course of the observed years. There is a strong, positive association between the rates of success in the common measures of both programs. The Entered Employment Rates and Employment Retention Rates maintained averages near the same rate over the time sequence as the initial reported rates in 2009.

In the final common measure, Six Months Earnings Average, program completers saw gradual decreases in earnings until the rate dropped significantly near the end of the series. For the Adult Worker program, the researcher determined with 97% certainty that

the drop in the earnings rate from \$19,960 to \$10,537 did not occur by chance. This was the most significant change over time found in the study. This change may have been the result of a combination of factors, both internal and external, including changes in training capacity and fewer program completers per year, shifts in the industries or major employers that were in high demand, surges of natural disasters which contributed to barriers in connecting program completers to higher-paying jobs, etc.

Following the WIOA reenactment, there was a significant decline in total averages across the time series in the Employment Retention Rate and the Six Months Earnings Average Rate of participants due to this dip in performance. Otherwise, program effectiveness remained relatively steady. Of the three reviewed performance indicators, the Entered Employment Rate saw the most significant improvement in both programs.

Unlike the other two programs, the Youth Worker Program did see some variance in the performance outcomes of its common measures over the course of the observed years. There was a statistically significant relationship between all three measures, and a strong, positive relationship between the Employment/Education Placement and Degree/Certificate Attainment indicators. In the Youth Worker Program, all three common measures saw positive changes in performance and all three indicators had higher average rates over the time series than rates initially reported in 2009. This was especially noticeable in the employment rates. The researcher determined with 98% certainty that the improvement rates in the employment rates of youth workers did not happen by chance.

When comparing the programs, it was determined that among the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, there were strong, positive relationships between the rates of program participants entering employment. In addition, there were strong, positive relationships in the earnings outcomes of workers between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.

Part 2. Examination of Negotiated Goals

Variances across all programs surfaced upon assessing the test results for the achievement of minimum negotiated goals. There was not as strong a relationship in performance as with the common measures outcomes. The Adult Worker Program succeeded in meeting its negotiated targets for most of the program years. Furthermore, none of the program's indicators averaged the same rate or lower than the first observed year, 2009. An exploration of the data showed that all three indicators initiated a consistent, upward trend toward goal attainment during the end of the time series. There was a strong, positive relationship between successful achievement across all indicators. This reveals that as the Adult Worker Program effectively met its goals in one of the common measures, it also achieved the required negotiated outcomes at a similar rate in the other measures.

As with the Adult Worker Program, the Dislocated Worker Program consistently met or exceeded its negotiated levels of performance. Overall, the Entered Employment Rate and Employment Retention Rate indicators averaged at a higher rate than the first observed year, 2009. Like the Adult Worker Program, the data revealed that all three indicators began to experience greater performance towards the end of the timeline. With this program, there was a trend of very slight improvements in attainment of negotiated

goals during the end of the series. Despite the earnings drop identified in Part 1 of this study, it is important to note that the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs met the negotiated goals on average for those same years. They were both at or above the minimum levels in the year before the drop and continued to achieve the negotiated rates afterwards. This suggests that, prior to these declines, administrators in Florida had already anticipated potential changes in economic circumstances and other factors that would greatly impact earnings across programs.

In this phase of the study, similar to the success of the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the Youth Worker Program was shown to have consistently met or exceeded its negotiated goals. Also, like the Dislocated Worker Program, the Entered Employment Rate and Employment Retention Rate indicators averaged at a higher rate than in 2009. Although there was some amount of variance in the performance outcomes throughout the observed years, all three indicators began a trend of increased goal attainment during the end of the time series. This particular trend was noticeably positive across all core programs.

Part 3. Examination of Priority Population Services

The investigation of the priority population outcomes showed the Adult Worker and Dislocated Worker programs experienced positive performance trends in serving participants with barriers to employment. Both programs maintained consistent outcomes over the course of the target years. Similar to the common measures analysis, there were major decreases in the latter years of the series, but there was no significant adjustment in averages across all measures after WIOA implementation.

Earlier in the studied years, there were declines in performance in 2011 and 2012 for two of the six indicators, yet there were no significant changes in averages across the time series. For participants with disabilities, the Adult Worker Program saw improvements in performance in the Entered Employment Rate and Employment Retention Rate. By comparison, the Dislocated Worker Program saw growth in outcomes for entering employment in both its priority groups.

The Youth Worker Program made notable improvements across the timeline. There was a significant progress in averages in the Entered Employment and Credential Attainment Rates after WIOA implementation and the performance outcomes did not vary greatly throughout the time sequence. Participants with disabilities in the Youth Worker Program saw notable rises in both their Entered Employment Rates and Employment Retention Rates.

There was a strong, positive relationship between workers entering employment and employment retention outcomes for the Youth and Adult Worker program. Over the 10 investigated years, the Youth Worker program experienced rises in performance rates in all indicators for serving participants receiving public assistance as well as for serving those with disabilities.

Summary of Findings

The multi-pronged approach to this evaluation included the examination of program improvements, goal attainment, and trends in performance. The study was guided by three main objectives and this section provides the findings for each of the research questions based on the results of the study.

The first part of the study addressed outcomes in the common measures.

- **RQ1:** *Which performance measures saw significant improvements in the three federally funded workforce development programs, and which did not?*
 - Findings: Of all the indicators, Florida saw the most consistent improvement in its rate of participants entering the workforce—the Entered Employment Rate. The Six Months Earnings Average was the single measure that did not experience improvements over the course of the examined years. Although the averages before and after the WIOA implementation were not significantly different, program completers began to see gradual decreases in earnings near the end of the series.

The Adult and Dislocated Worker programs effectively maintained consistent averages across the common measures, but no significant improvements. In the Youth Worker Program, all three common measures saw significant growth over the time series.

The second part of the study explored Florida’s ability to achieve its yearly goals at or above the negotiated level.

- **RQ2:** *Has Florida consistently achieved or exceeded the negotiated performance goals across all programs?*
 - Findings: Yes. Overall, the state met or exceeded its goals for most of the observed reporting years. The goals for Entered Employment Rates and Employment Retention Rates were consistently met. There was

variance in the achievement of youth outcomes, but the program still met or exceeded negotiated rates on average.

The third part of the study addressed the state's efforts to provide services to participants with barriers to employment.

- **RQ3:** *Has Florida seen an increase in attainment of the expected goal to serve priority populations?*
 - Findings: Yes. The Adult Worker Program saw increases in performance in the employment and retention outcomes in serving participants with disabilities. The Dislocated Worker Program saw increases in performance in the Entered Employment Rate of serving both priority populations. Over the ten years observed, the programs average performances neared the same rate as the initial 2009 outcomes in four of the six indicators. The Youth Worker program saw steady increases in all measures across the time series.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study

The research project yielded useful information on the outcomes of the federal workforce initiative through a state case study. Although the researcher took appropriate steps to ensure validity throughout the study, there are countless variables which impact the success of any system. This project did not seek to determine causation for sharp changes in data points. For example, near the end of the series, in some indicators, there was a noticeable drop in rates and then a steady progression. However, the state had properly negotiated levels for those reporting years to be decidedly lower than the

previous years. This suggests there was already an expectation of a significant change in outcomes.

This study is not intended to address every potential reason an indicator has experienced improvement or declines. However, it is imperative that Florida monitor program trends and relationships as well as foreshadow changes to ensure it is delivering services efficiently. In accordance with the national focus on continuous improvement efforts, this project contributes to filling the gap of limited external research on Florida's WIA/WIOA performance outcomes over time.

Policymakers in Florida acknowledged the importance of their use of performance data to determine success of the workforce system based on federal guidance. However, there exists a lack of directed studies on trends in WIA/WIOA performance over time.

Based upon the findings from this study, suggested recommendations for future research include:

1. Conduct an external data review of Florida's performance at the regional and local levels. This may provide insight on where some of the greatest challenges to performance may take place based on county and city data and it may also assist in future program planning.
2. A detailed analysis of the downward trend in the Six Months Earnings Averages is recommended to investigate the potential impacts of both internal and external factors. This may assist leaders in not only forecasting issues, but potentially implementing strategies to address them to ensure program success.

3. Future studies may focus on determining the effective practices being implemented in the services provided to those with barriers to employment. It has been determined that improvements in this area is crucial for building an efficient labor force. Practices that are implemented in the most successfully trending indicators of performance may be replicated in serving priority populations.
4. Prior to this project, few projects included the analysis of Youth Worker programs in a major longitudinal study. The data shows the program has seen gradual improvements over time. Future studies should include additional research into the barriers to the program reaching even higher levels of success.
5. Finally, a future qualitative study may build upon the previously reviewed project conducted by Barnow and Buck in 2004. As their research took place during the earlier stages of the WIA, a new study may include a survey of the implementing agencies' staff and leadership 20 years after the passing of the legislation. An examination of survey responses from program completers would further enhance the findings of such a study.

Study Implications

As established, the Department of Labor determined that providing effective and efficient employment and training services is a national priority based on the growing need for a more skilled workforce. The Literature Review this study provides is a targeted exploration of the body of research that exists on the examination of WIA/WIOA programs. This study contributes to the field by providing (a)

comprehensive assessments of the effectiveness of programs based on the primary indicators of performance; (b) an external investigation of data in a time series to ascertain trends in performance; and (c) an examination of the success and effectiveness of Youth Worker programs.

Leaders in the field of public administration have determined that workforce organizations with federal programs are more easily understood once they are unbundled. By reviewing program data part-by-part and observing relationships, researchers can better assess the whole condition of the program. The research presented in this comprehensive study was conducted down to the individual indicator level, not just by program. An analysis at this level offers further insight into the specific areas where improvement is needed.

As discussed, Florida's workforce leaders have documented that program performance data is the key component needed to identify viable improvement strategies for sustainable implementation. Data is used in strategic planning and to ensure the accountability of service delivery. Also, the improved performance in serving those with barriers to employment has been identified as an indicator of a successful workforce system. The findings from this study are significant to the full understanding of the state's progression in the desired outcomes.

Conclusion

The main observation emerging from the analysis is that the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs both have been effective and consistent in performance, but did not increase significantly since 2009. The Youth Worker Program, however, has seen steady growth in performance. After examining trends and relationships, the researcher

discovered numerous variances in success among the programs and between measures. The project revealed correlations among all three programs, specifically a strong correlation between the Adult and Dislocated Worker program success. In addition, the Youth Worker Program saw correlations with the Adult Worker Program in some measures.

The findings of the effectiveness of the Adult Worker and Dislocated Worker programs might be separate, but their outcomes are comparable in two sections of the three-part study. There are few differences in their outcomes that are statistically significant in the common measures. However, there are unique concerns in the programs achieving negotiated goals and serving the priority populations. State leaders may find there are service delivery strategies in one program that may be beneficial to the other.

This case study soundly illustrated the need for continuity of data reporting and highlighted the need for additional studies on the common measures. It also drew on the results of the data to provide insight on Florida's outcomes and to identify potential studies that can add important understanding to the body of knowledge on WIA/WIOA-funded programs. By recognizing the effective performance of successful core services, Florida can further its efforts to ensure that it provides a consistent, effective workforce development system.

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APPENDIX A

Common Measures and Comparison Figures

Figure 2.
*Common Measures Outcomes
 for the Dislocated Worker Program*

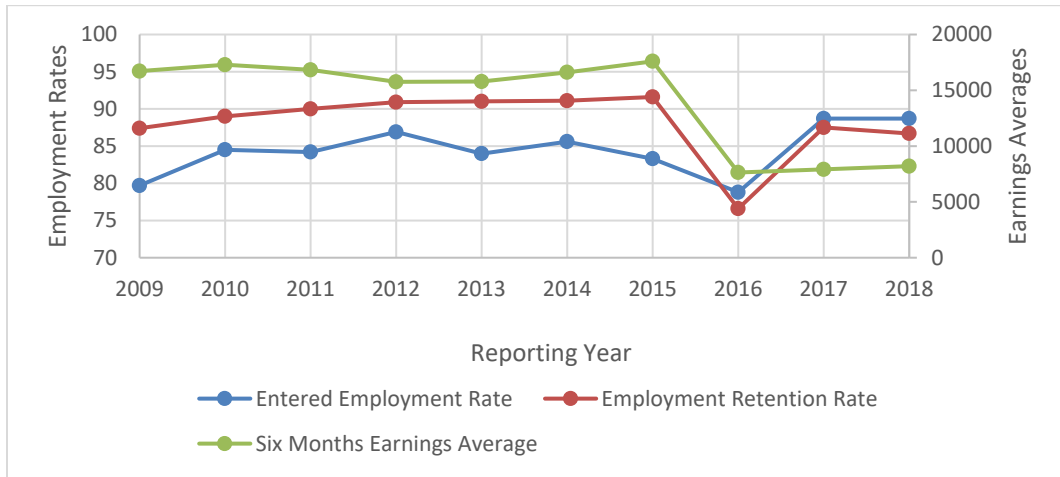


Figure 3.
*Common Measures Outcomes
 for the Youth Worker Program*

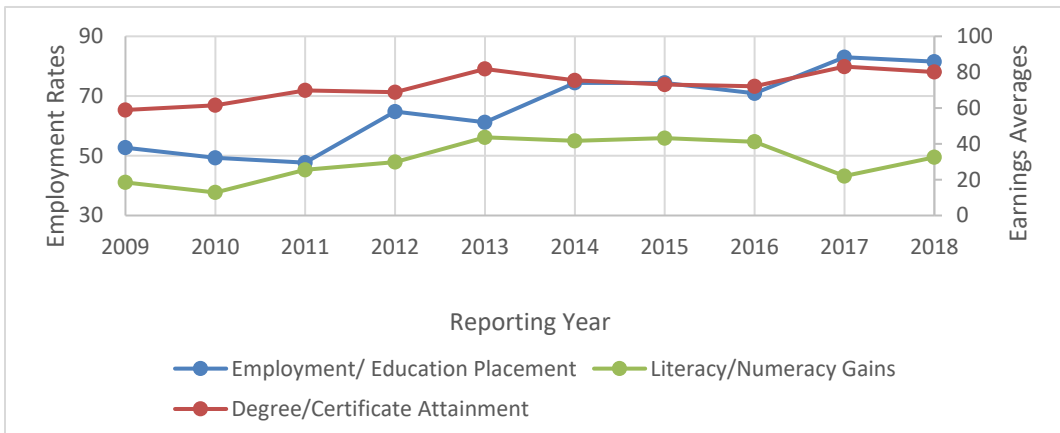


Figure 4.
Comparisons Across Common Measures
Entered Employment Rates

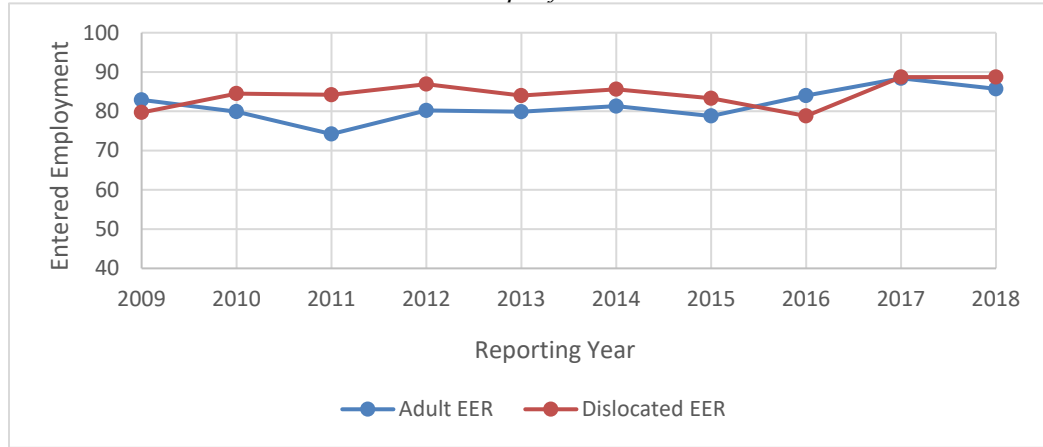


Figure 5.
Comparisons Across Common Measures
Employment Retention Rates

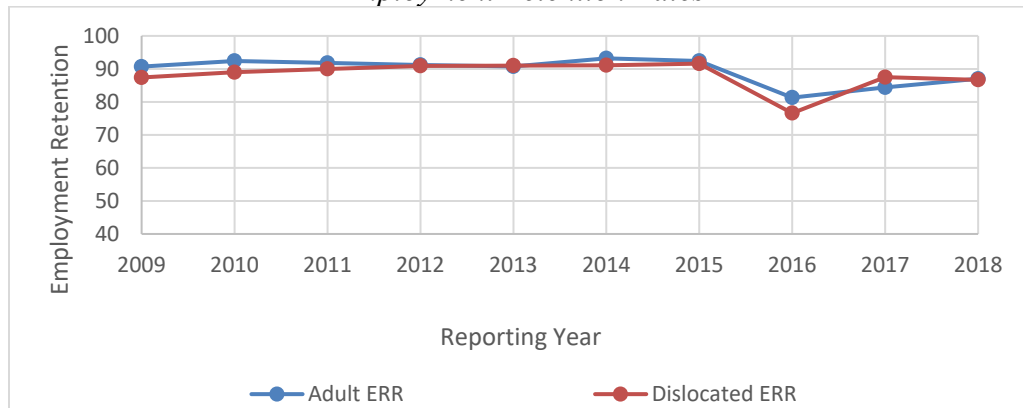


Figure 6.
Comparisons Across Common Measures
Six Months Earnings Average

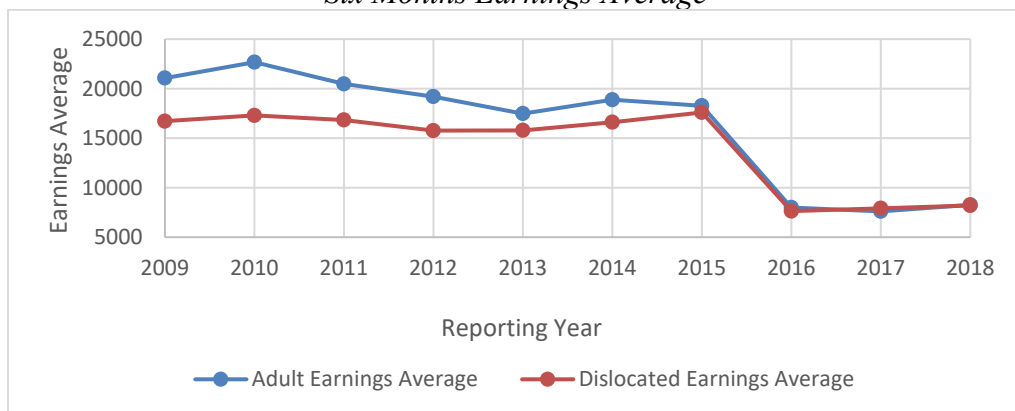


Figure 10.
Comparisons of Negotiated Goals Across Programs
Entered Employment Rates

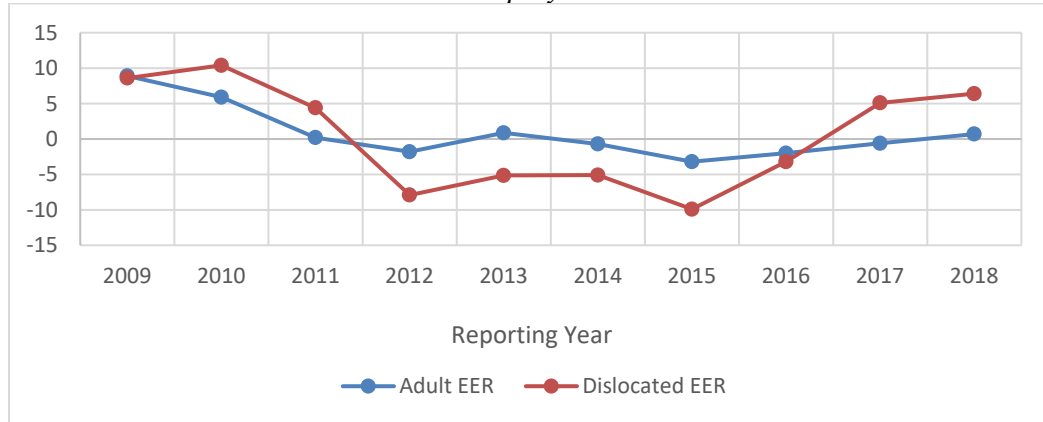


Figure 11.
Comparisons of Negotiated Goals Across Programs
Employment Retention Rates

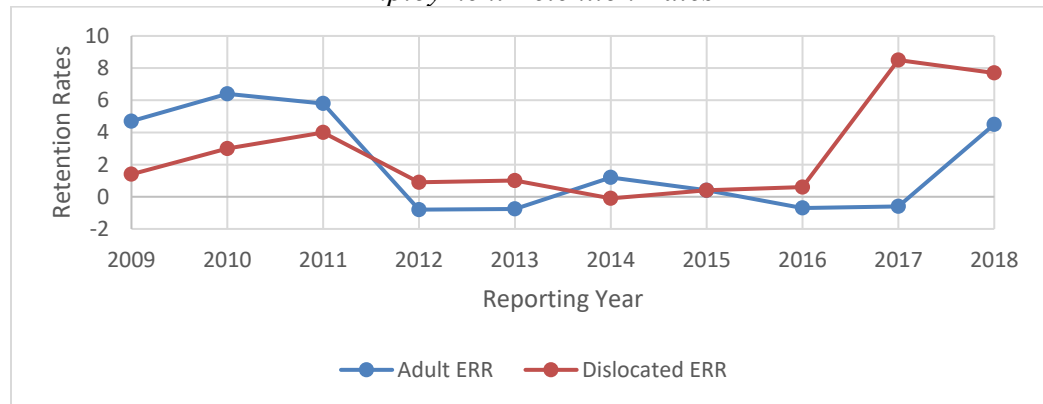


Figure 12.
Comparisons of Negotiated Goals Across Programs
Six Months Earnings Average

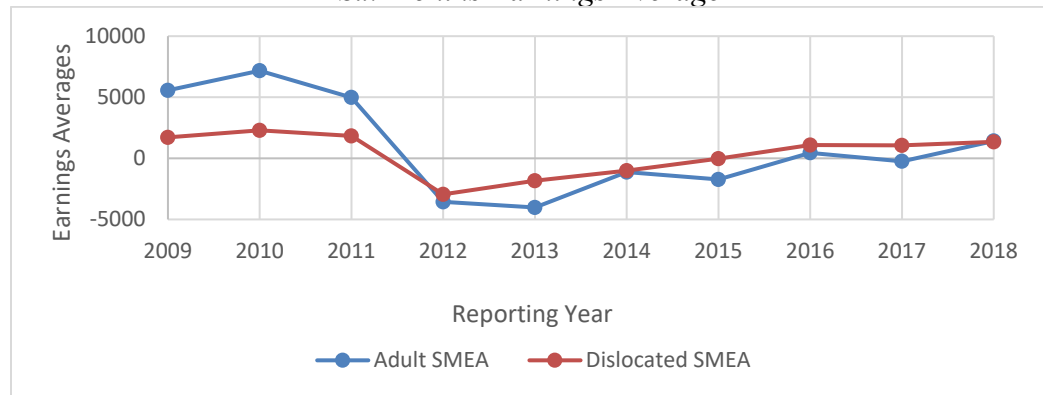


Figure 14.
Priority Populations
in the Dislocated Worker Program

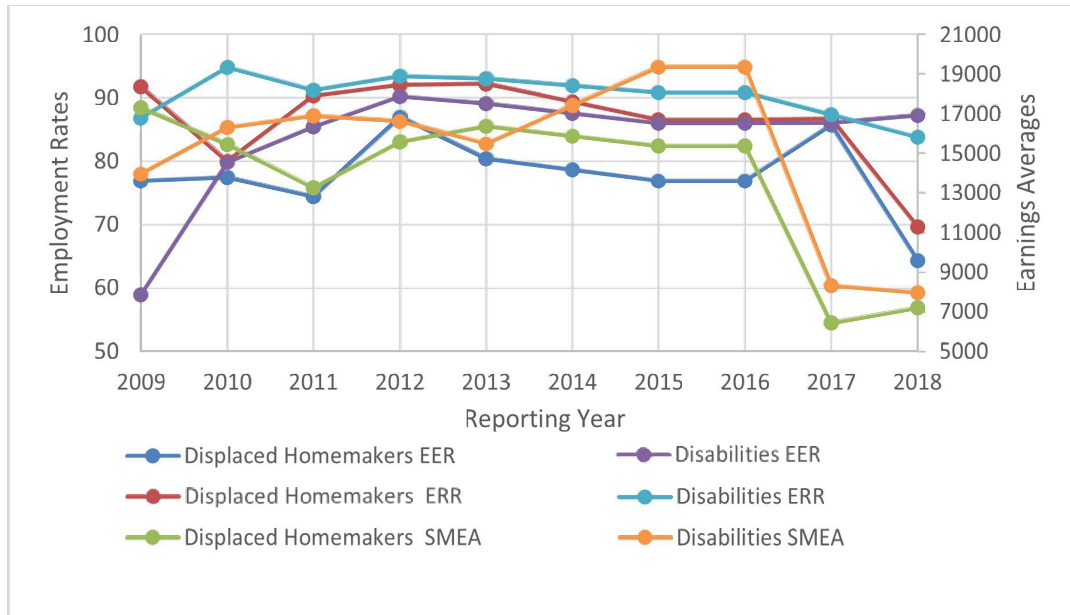
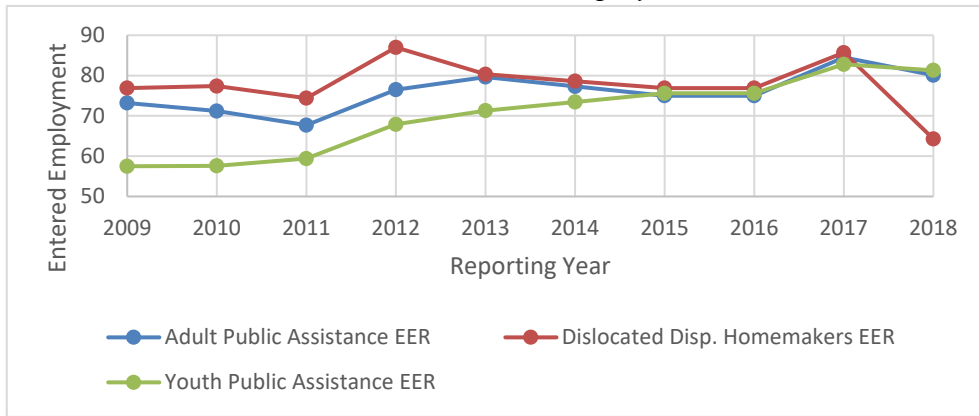


Figure 16
 Comparisons of Priority Populations
Public Assistance Entered Employment Rates



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Figure 17
 Comparisons of Populations
Public Assistance Employment Retention Rates

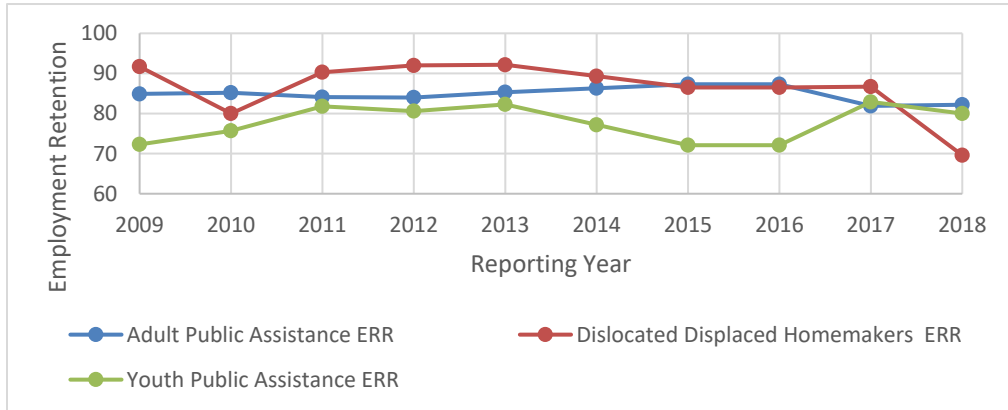


Figure 18
 Comparisons of Priority Populations
Disabilities Entered Employment Rates

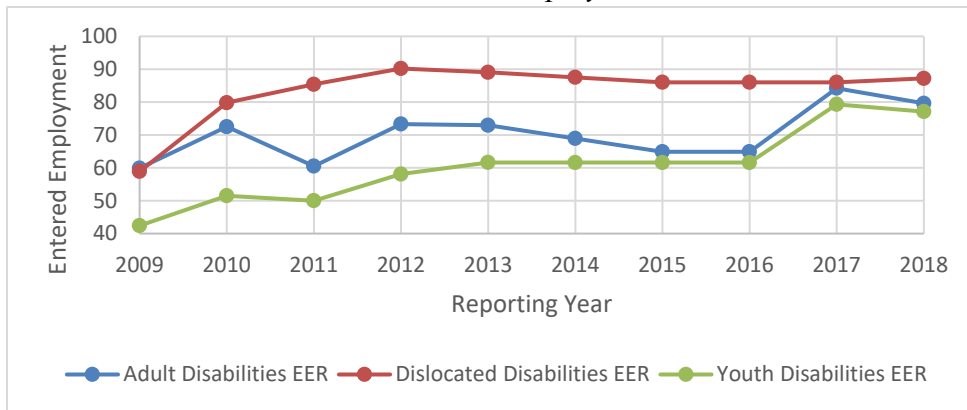


Figure 19
 Comparisons of Priority Populations
Disabilities Employment Retention Rates

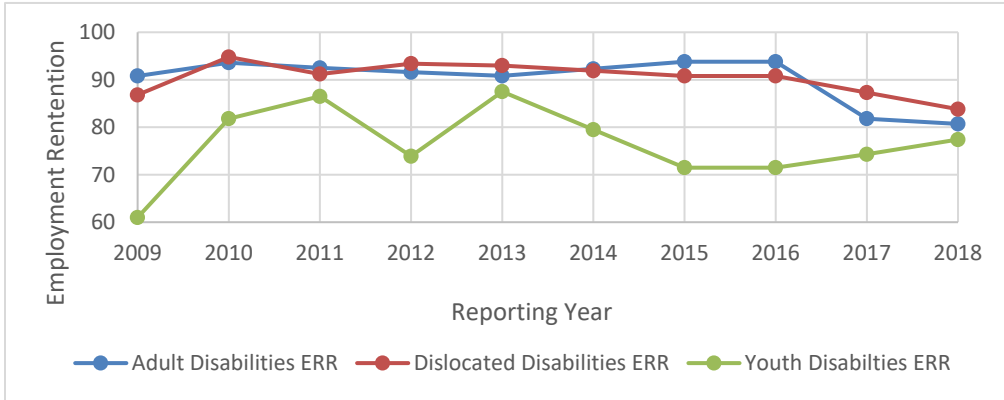


Figure 20
 Comparisons of Priority Populations
Public Assistance Six Months Earnings Average

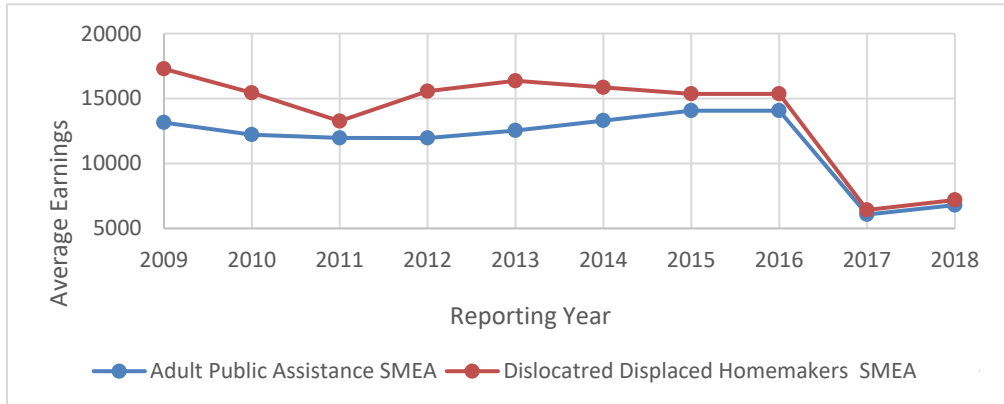
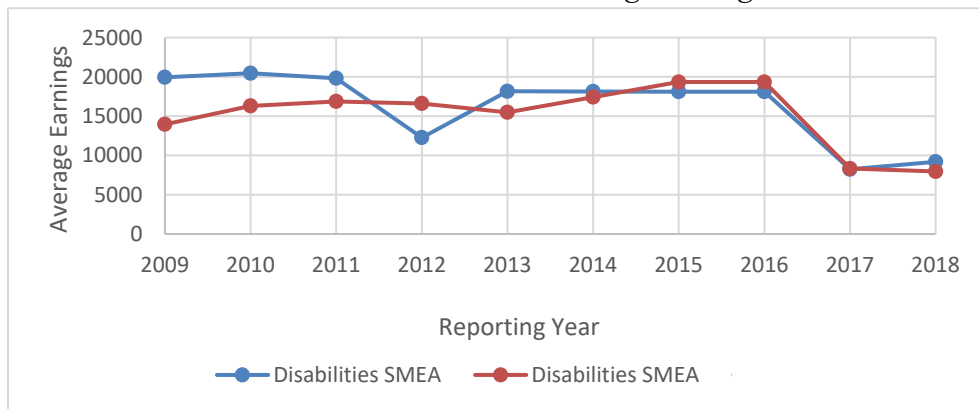


Figure 21
 Comparisons of Priority Populations
Disabilities Six Months Earnings Average



APPENDIX B

T-Tests and Correlation Tables

Table 3*Dislocated Worker Program: Common Measures from WIA to WIOA*

Entered Employment			Employment Retention			Earnings Average		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	84.15%	84.88%	Mean	89.90%	85.60%	Mean	\$16,500	\$10,335
P-value	0.79		P-value	0.28		P-value	0.09	

*significant at the $p < 0.05$ level**Table 4***Dislocated Worker Program: Common Measures Correlation*

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>
1. Entered Employment Rate (EER)	1.00		
2. Employment Retention Rate (ERR)	0.48	1.00	
3. Six Months Earnings Average (SMEA)	-0.20	0.72	1.00

Table 6*Youth Worker Program: Common Measures Correlation*

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>
1. Employment/ Education Placement	1.00		
2. Degree/Certificate Attainment Rate	0.74	1.00	
3. Literacy and Numeracy Gains	0.48	0.56	1.00

Table 8*Adult Worker Program: Negotiated Goals from WIA to WIOA*

Entered Employment			Employment Retention			Earnings Average		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	+2.23%	-1.285%	Mean	+2.76%	-.90%	Mean	+\$1,501	-\$26
P-value	0.11		P-value	0.34		P-value	0.41	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Table 10*Dislocated Worker Program: Negotiated Goals from WIA to WIOA*

Entered Employment			Employment Retention			Earnings Average		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	-1.35%	+6.45%	Mean	+1.70%	4.30%	Mean	+\$8.33	+\$867.50
P-value	0.10		P-value	0.34		P-value	0.41	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Table 12*Youth Worker Program: Negotiated Goals from WIA to WIOA*

Employment/Education			Degree/Certificate			Literacy/ Numeracy Gains		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	+1.43%	+6.45%	Mean	+4.78%	4.30%	Mean	+7.01%	-3.73%
P-value	0.41		P-value	0.59		P-value	0.06	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Table 13*Youth Worker Program: Negotiated Goals Correlation*

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>
1. Employment/ Education Placement	1.00		
2. Degree/Certificate Attainment Rate	-0.34	1.00	
3. Literacy and Numeracy Gains	-0.63	0.15	1.00
			1.00

Table 15*Adult Worker Program: Priority Populations from WIA to WIOA*

Public Assistance EER			Public Assistance ERR			Public Assistance SMEA		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	74.26%	78.65%	Mean	84.97%	84.68%	Mean	\$12,523	\$10,247
P-value	0.18		P-value	0.86		P-value	0.38	
Public Assistance EER			Public Assistance ERR			Public Assistance SMEA		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	68.01%	73.40%	Mean	91.94%	87.53%	Mean	\$18,135	\$13,416
P-value	0.38		P-value	0.31		P-value	0.19	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Table 17*Dislocated Workers: Priority Populations from WIA to WIOA*

Displaced Homemaker EER			Displaced Homemaker ERR			Displaced Homemaker SMEA		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	79.11%	75.95%	Mean	89.25%	82.33%	Mean	\$15,628	\$11,085
P-value	0.54		P-value	0.21		P-value	0.17	
Disabilities EER			Disabilities ERR			Disabilities SMEA		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	81.82%	86.30%	Mean	91.85%	88.18%	Mean	\$16,111	\$13,747
P-value	0.40		P-value	0.12		P-value	0.52	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Table 19*Youth Worker Program: Priority Populations from WIA to WIOA*

Public Assistance EER			Public Assistance ERR			Public Assistance CER		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	64.53%	78.83%	Mean	78.31%	76.78%	Mean	56.06%	85.10%
P-value	*0.003		P-value	0.65		P-value	0.17	
Disabilities EER			Disabilities ERR			Disabilities SMEA		
	Before	After		Before	After		Before	After
Mean	54.21%	69.90%	Mean	78.37%	73.68%	Mean	44.97%	81.55%
P-value	*0.04		P-value	0.31		P-value	*0.002	

*significant at the p<0.05 level

Table 22
Correlation of Disabilities EER and ERR

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Adult Disabilities EER	1.00					
2. Dislocated Disabilities EER	0.46	1.00				
3. Youth Disabilities EER	0.83	0.61	1.00			
4. Adult Disabilities ERR	-0.76	-0.10	-0.76	1.00		
5. Dislocated Disabilities ERR	-0.23	0.30	-0.44	0.78	1.00	
6. Youth Disabilities ERR	0.22	0.63	0.14	0.04	0.45	1.00

Table 23
Correlation of Priority Populations SMEA

	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>
1. Adult Public Assistance SMEA	1.00			
2. Dislocated Displaced Homemakers SMEA	0.95	1.00		
3. Adult Disabilities SMEA	0.86	0.83	1.00	
4. Dislocated Disabilities SMEA	0.94	0.83	0.76	1.00