

Introduction

In its narrowest sense, workforce information refers to a set of core statistics-gathering programs conducted under the guidance of the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). In a broader sense, workforce information is the entire body of data that describes in detail the two key elements of a "labor market" – workers and jobs. The labor market can be nationwide, statewide, or local in scope. You can use labor market/workforce information to assess the performance of New Hampshire's economy or to become familiar with existing and projected jobs by industry and area and the occupational characteristics of these jobs such as average wage rates.

New Hampshire Employment Security (NHES) has the primary responsibility for providing New Hampshire workforce and career information through its Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau (ELMIB). It is this bureau that collects, assembles, analyzes, and drafts data into a usable format, and makes it available to the public. ELMIB also provides training and technical assistance to familiarize users with the data.

Federal gathering of workforce data began with the 1820 census which, for the first time, asked questions about occupational employment. Most current workforce information programs originated in the 1930s with the establishment of the Wagner-Peyser Act to measure the impact of the Great Depression and the nation's progress toward recovery. The Workforce Investment Act and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act reaffirmed congressional support for the preparation and use of workforce information. Both of

these acts emphasized the need for continued production and refinement of occupational and workforce information.

NHES is designated as a "cooperating agency" by BLS. This cooperation increases our ability to produce workforce information for New Hampshire and helps BLS develop a national statistical series and ensure comparability of workforce data from state to state.

Today workforce information touches almost everyone's life. Economic decisions made without workforce information are incomplete decisions. Businesses and employers depend on workforce information to guide them in making location and expansion choices and in preparing marketing strategies. It also enables them to compare their performance with state trends, to set attainable goals in affirmative action plans, and to assess their wage scales and employee benefits programs.

Government leaders and decision-makers find workforce information indispensable for planning purposes such as projecting state revenues and expenditures, or preparing education and training programs affecting the future workforce of New Hampshire. Individual job seekers use workforce and career information to help focus their work search efforts – determining what occupations, what geographical areas, or what industries are experiencing job growth – and to identify current job openings.