

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
WORKFORCE INNOVATION IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
(WIRED) INITIATIVE EVALUATION**

A. Justification

1. Circumstances that Necessitate Data Collection

- a. In 2006, the Department of Labor (DOL) began sponsoring the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative, a demonstration to identify strategies to further integrate workforce and economic development systems, with education, at the regional level – where companies, workers, researchers, entrepreneurs and governments can come together to create a competitive advantage.
 - (1) The initiative provides regions with funding and ongoing technical assistance and support from a cadre of experts to implement a transformational approach to their workforce and economic development systems. It focuses on those regions which have economies based on manufacturing or other trade-impacted industries or those which recently have been impacted by hurricanes and other natural disasters.
 - (2) The WIRED Initiative is taking place over the course of five years, with three rounds of grants awarded to regions across the country. Each round provides individual grant awards to 13 geographically dispersed regions, including some regions that cross state lines, for a total of 39 regions.
 - (3) DOL expects that regions participating in the WIRED Initiative will be empowered to implement ground-breaking strategies that will result in their workforce investment systems becoming a key to their regional economic development strategies. Through the WIRED model, regions integrate economic and workforce development activities and demonstrate that talent development can drive economic transformation in regional economies. The ultimate goal of the WIRED Initiative is to expand employment and advancement opportunities for American workers and catalyze the creation of high-skill and high-wage jobs.
 - (4) The WIRED Initiative evaluation, sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the DOL, was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and cumulative effects of WIRED strategies on the regions, in particular, transformations in their regional economic and workforce investment systems.
 - (5) The evaluation focuses on three critical aspects of regional transformation: 1) alliance-building across geographic and professional boundaries, along with development of a regional identity; 2) specific organizational and programmatic strategies, in terms of partners, governance, co-investment,

and specific business development and workforce investment initiatives; and 3) measurable progress toward sustainable economic transformation, as indicated by outcome metrics related to regional economic well-being and workforce preparedness.

- (6) Data collection for the evaluation will take place during site visits to regions participating in the initiative and surveys administered to partners and other key stakeholders in these collaborative efforts. The first round of site visit data collection was approved by OMB on May 2, 2007 under OMB No. 1205-0436, and the follow-up site visit data collection was approved on September 5, 2008 under OMB No. 1205-0467. This information collection request addresses data gathering that would occur during the administration of surveys of leaders and partners in the transformation efforts.
- (7) The site visits previously approved by OMB compile data about: 1) regional labor markets, within which there are expected to be different opportunities and skill mixes for future employment in high growth industry areas; 2) education systems, K-12 as well as post-secondary, with differing leadership, challenges, specialties and linkages with the workforce investment system; 3) business communities, with changing characteristics and opportunities, including major shocks or dislocations resulting from natural disasters or national policy decisions (as in the case of military downsizing); 4) the social, cultural and political environments; and 5) the dynamics that foster and promote innovation, entrepreneurship and development of research ideas and inventions.
- (8) Those site visits also reveal the roster of partners and other stakeholders working to move the collaborative partnerships and transformation strategies forward.

b. The WIRED survey data collection, subject of this data collection package, is necessary to observe and gather information about the various stakeholder roles and relationships in the evolving regional collaborative partnerships. It is intended to supplement information collected during the site visits about partners and other stakeholders and, ultimately, their workforce strategies.

- (1) The primary purpose of the evaluation is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and cumulative effects of WIRED strategies on the regions. Information gathered through the survey will contribute to an understanding of the extent to which the WIRED regions have successfully built regional alliances that cross traditional geographic boundaries, and genuine collaborations across a variety of institutions committed to the economic transformation agenda.
- (2) Secondly, the evaluation will provide a cumulative understanding of the initiative over time, from the first round of grantees through the third, with

analysis of systematic patterns across regions that can be discerned and lessons that can be gleaned from regional experiences.

- (3) The WIRED survey is designed to supplement previously-collected information by asking a large number of individuals at different levels within participating organizations to report on the nature and intensity of their collaboration efforts. It is designed to flesh out important dimensions of collaboration, specifically the structure, organizational penetration, and sustainability of efforts to achieve regional transformation.
- (4) The thirteen (13) questions in the WIRED survey will capture information on different dimensions of collaboration. It will be administered during ongoing –steady state - grant operations.
- (5) For the Generation II and III regions, ETA proposes to administer a screener survey before administering the WIRED survey.
 - a. Subsequent to awarding the Generation I grants in early 2006, ETA has expended considerable effort to promote the importance of collaboration for guiding future talent development. ETA has also encouraged creative efforts to bring new partners into networks created to transform a region, including partners who do not receive direct funding through the WIRED partnerships. Thus, it is anticipated that Generations II and III regional efforts may be affecting entities that are not directly involved in the federally-funded transformation efforts spearheaded by this initiative.
 - b. In addition, ETA substantially reduced the amount of funding for Generations II and III, thereby leading many of these regional partnerships to collaborate with entities which also have a vested interest in achieving long-term regional economic and workforce success and stability. In order to gather information about how widely disbursed are ongoing efforts to transform these regions' economic, education and workforce development systems, including those efforts which receive direct funding and those which do not receive direct funding but which benefit from the initiative's increased collaboration, ETA hopes to use the screener survey to identify the range of organizations and entities that are participating directly and indirectly in efforts to transform their regions.
 - c. The screener survey will be administered to a wide range of regional leaders to identify the organizations involved in regional transformation. In so doing, it will reveal the key individuals and organizations that support transformative efforts, individuals who will then be administered the WIRED survey in the Generation II and III regions.

- c. The WIRED Initiative is authorized under P.L. 82-414 (1952), Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as amended, Title IV: American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act, Section 414(b)(s)(2) Use of Fees For Job Training. The evaluation is being conducted under section 172 of the Workforce Investment Act.
- d. There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate this collection of data.

2. Purpose and Application of the Data

- a. The requested data collection consists of a thirteen (13) question survey to be administered electronically.
- b. Data will be collected by staff from Berkeley Policy Associates, the University of California - San Diego, Public Policy Associates, and W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, who will be specifically trained in the WIRED data collection procedures.
- c. The collected data will be used to describe the WIRED regions' collaborative strategies and partnerships for initiating and increasing joint efforts to integrate various systems in support of workforce talent development through regional economic prosperity.
- d. DOL will use the results of the evaluation to design future programs and policies for expanding employment and career advancement opportunities for American workers and catalyzing the creation of high-skill, high-wage job opportunities. Both the Administration and Congress are considering the WIRED approach for integrating workforce development and economic development when reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act next year. Collection of information on the extent and effectiveness of regional collaborations using the WIRED framework will be important for informing those discussions about whether to incorporate this approach in WIA reauthorization.

3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden

- a. The surveys will be administered electronically, with follow-up options to include mailing the survey or collecting responses by telephone. Most questions offer closed-ended response categories, and only a small number of short-answer or open-ended items will require post-coding. This will keep the response burden to a minimum and allow for greater consistency of data across all regions for the final analysis.
- b. The evaluation teams will administer electronically the WIRED survey only to the individuals and organizations that are key partners and stakeholders in efforts to integrate regional activity, thereby minimizing the burden on individuals. With respect to the screener survey for Generation II and III regions, the evaluation team will administer this brief survey only to the principal regional leaders of organizations that are expected to engage in regional transformation, in an effort to administer the WIRED survey only to those who are actively engaged in regional transformation efforts.
- c. In addition, the researchers will continue ongoing efforts to pursue additional sources of data, including administrative data pertaining to each region, in an effort to ensure that data

which is readily available can be accessed, thereby reducing imposition on those to be questioned through the survey.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

- a. There is no existing database that can provide the level of detail about the key roles and relationships of partners and other stakeholders in the WIRED regions necessary to support the evaluation analysis.
 - () No other program or demonstration implemented in the current climate of increasing global competition with the resultant affect on the American workforce by DOL, other Federal agencies or outside organizations has sought to bring together governments, companies, workers, educators, researchers, and entrepreneurs to create a regional competitive advantage.

5. Methods to Minimize Burden on Small Entities

- . The data collection will not affect small entities. The survey will be sent to the primary partners and other key stakeholders in the WIRED regions.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection

- . If these data are not collected, DOL will not be able to understand or analyze the evolving interaction and partnerships among workforce, education, industrial, research and commercializing institutions that can respond rapidly to global and national challenges and opportunities in order to catalyze the creation of high-skill and high-wage jobs in the context of regional economies.
- . Furthermore, it precludes the opportunity to understand the roles that civic, investor, academia, entrepreneurial and philanthropic leaders play in support of a regional economic vision and aligning and leveraging their respective activities and resources.

7. Special Circumstances

- . There are no special circumstances.

8. Summary of Public Comments and Efforts to Consult with Persons Outside the Agency

- . DOL published a notice in the *Federal Register* on October 9, 2008 (Vol. 73, No. 197, p. 59672) in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, soliciting sixty days/ public comments on this data collection.
- . No comments were received in response to the published notice.

9. Payments to Respondents

- . There will be no payments to respondents of the survey.

10. Confidentiality

- a. Respondents will not be promised confidentiality but respondents will be advised that opinions and impressions they provide will be used only to describe the general trends and directions of strategic planning, implementation, collaboration and partnership development within their respective regions and across regions. Individual respondents will not be identified in study reports except with their express permission. The information they provide will not be released unless required by the Freedom of Information Act or necessary for litigation or legal proceedings.

b. The researchers will protect the identity of the respondents in the following ways:

- o Researchers will not discuss either the information obtained through the survey or their opinions of it with people outside of the research team.
- o In order to honor their assurances to each respondent, the evaluation team members will not attribute observations or comments to specific individuals nor reference their names, titles, or organizational affiliations in the written reports.

Data will be collected by Berkeley Policy Associates, the University of California - San Diego, Public Policy Associates, and W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, the evaluators of the initiative. Survey team members will be trained in all aspects of data collection for a large implementation study and their use of proper procedures will be monitored throughout the data collection period. All team members will be trained in confidentiality policy and security safeguards.

- c. All workstations used for the implementation analysis will be part of the local area network (LAN) at the researchers' facilities. Data stored on network drives is protected using the security mechanisms available through the network operating system used on their primary network servers. These networks are protected from unauthorized external access through the networks' firewalls. These firewalls reside between the networks and the communications lines over which their Internet traffic flows.

- d. Access to all network features such as software, files, printers, Internet, E-mail and other peripherals is controlled by user ID and password.

11. Sensitive Data Items

- . There are no sensitive data items to be asked of respondents.

12. Estimate of Hour Burden

a. Approximately 4,160 individuals who are associated with the Generation II and III WIRED regions will be administered the screener survey, and approximately 7,800 individuals from all three WIRED Generations will be administered the WIRED survey. Of these, approximately 50% will be from the private sector (business or other for-profits, 40% and not-for-profit institutions, 10%) and the other 50% will be from the public sector (i.e. state, local, or tribal government representatives).

The time estimated for completion of the screener survey was the average time for completion among the five respondents with whom the evaluators pilot-tested the screener survey.

The time estimated for completion of the WIRED survey is 30 minutes, which was the average time for completion of the survey among the five respondents with whom the evaluators pilot-tested the survey. Two respondents completed the survey in only 20 minutes. One respondent took 45 minutes; he noted that he would have completed the survey faster but had problems completing it in the Word format. These issues have been resolved in the online version of the survey, and will not arise if respondents choose to complete the survey in hard copy. The surveys will be administered according to the following tables.

Survey	Total Number Respondents	Annual Number of Respondents
Screener Survey (Gen II and III)	2,080	2,080
WIRED Survey (Gen I, II and III)	3,900	3,900

Screener Survey (Generations II and III only)				
Year	Group of Regions	Number of Respondents	Average Time per Response	Annual Burden
2009	Gen II and III	2,080	5 minutes	174 hours

WIRED Survey (Generations I, II and III)				
Year	Group of Regions	Number of Respondents	Average Time per Response	Annual Burden
2009	Gen I, II and III	3,900	30 minutes	1,950 hours

b. Total Burden Cost: The total burden cost, based on an annual average salary of \$75,000 per respondent, is estimated to be \$6,240 for the screener survey and \$70,200 for the WIRED survey, per the following tables.

Screener Survey				
	Group of	Annual Burden	Average Cost	Annual

Year	Regions		per response	Burden Cost
2009	Gen II and III	174 hours	\$3 (5 minutes at \$36 per hour)	\$3 x 2080 responses = \$6,240

WIRED Survey				
Year	Group of Regions	Annual Burden	Average Cost per response	Annual Burden Cost
2009	Gen I, II and III	1,950 hours	\$18 (30 minutes at \$36 per hour)	\$18 x 3,900 responses = \$70,200

13. Reporting Cost

There are no projected cost burdens for reporting.

14. Estimate of Cost to the Federal Government

- . Contractor costs associated with the data collection are estimated to be \$450,347.
- . These figures were estimated as the sum of the anticipated direct labor; fringe and burden on direct labor; other direct costs including computers, telephone, reproduction, shipping, mail, travel and per diem; general and administrative costs, and contractor fee.

15. Changes in Burden

- . There are no changes in reporting burden. This information collection request is a new submission.

16. Publication Plans and Project Schedule

- a. The proposed survey will be administered in 2009. Interim reports which will incorporate data collected from these sources will be published in 2010, with final reports published in 2011.

17. Expiration Date

- . The requested expiration date for the data collection is two years after OMB approval.
- . We do not seek approval not to display the expiration date.

18. Exceptions to Certification Statement

- . We do not request any exceptions to the certification statement in Item 19 of OMB 83-I.