

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

Confidential Wage Records Data Request Instructions

Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

This Confidential Wage Records Data Request Form is for use by State Agencies (MOU State Partners) that have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BLS (Wage Records MOU) to conduct research. To request wage records data, you must be employed by a State Agency that is an MOU State Partner. The list of current State Partners can be found on the Wage Records State website, or by contacting the BLS Wage Records Program at Wagerecords@bls.gov.

The form serves as the record of the project and documents information such as the project purpose, data elements requested, agent contact information, and ultimately data disposition. This form is not to be used by, for, or on behalf of any other party (including agents on other MOUs or agreements with BLS, Inter-governmental Personnel Act assignees, or other temporary detailees) seeking confidential wage records data maintained by the QCEW program.

Wage records data must be used for exclusively statistical purposes. Wage Records MOUs authorize the sharing of MOU State Partners' wage Records data for the following statistical activities only:

- To conduct evaluations of State training and education outcomes and local area economic analysis;
- to examine, from a regional perspective, the mobility of the workforce across state borders;
- to provide the ability to perform State specified statistical and economic analysis.

Wage records data is for statistical research only and cannot be linked to State Human Resources data to make a determination about the rights, benefits, or privileges of any individual identified in the course of research.

General Steps for a Requesting Wage Records Data

1. The requesting State Partner Project Coordinator will submit the Confidential Wage Records Data Request form. The State Partner Project Coordinator must be one of the State Agency Project Coordinators listed in Section II.G. of the MOU between BLS and the Wage Records State Partner.
2. BLS Wage Records Program staff will review the request form and evaluate the request based on the viability of the project, i.e. Are there sufficient data to produce outputs that meet BLS disclosure requirements?
3. BLS Wage Records staff will notify the State if their request was approved. If there are questions, the staff will work with the requesting State to develop a successful research proposal. When the request for a micro to macro package

or a micro data package request is accepted, the State will be advised to send their list of requested individuals' social security numbers (SSNs) using the Wage Records Application.

4. Before the data output can be shared outside of the State Agency, all States whose data is used will have the opportunity to review the outputs to ensure that no States' data are compromised.
5. All data packages will be returned to the requesting State Agency Partner using Kiteworks, a secure email application.

Types of Wage Records Data Requests

The Wage Records MOU allows State Partners to request wage records information from other participating States. This ability to share other States' data allows researchers to measure the outcomes of workers who leave their state. The Wage Records Program is able to fulfill three different types of data requests:

1. **Macro Data Package:** The research cohort is defined by the combination of industries, timeframe, and location. The data returned to the requesting State Agency will be in the form of aggregated tabulations. Prior to delivery to the State Agency, the macro package is reviewed for disclosure according to Section I.E.2 of the MOU.
 - a. Sample research question: What are the wage outcomes for workers in the retail sector before and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. **Micro to Macro Data Package:** States provide a list of cohort members by providing identifying SSNs using the Wage Records Application per the instructions in the "Requests involving Micro Data" section below. The Wage Records System will match the requested individuals to the Wage Records in the servers and develop a package of aggregated data tabulations to return to the requesting State Agency. Prior to delivery to the State Agency, the macro package is reviewed for disclosure according to Section I.E.2 of the MOU.
 - a. Sample research question: What are the employment tenure outcomes for individuals who received their nursing license in State A, but found work in State B?
3. **Micro Data Package:** This type of data package will typically be fulfilled so the requesting State Agency can match the data to other datasets they have in-State. States provide a list of cohort members by providing SSNs through the Wage Records Application per the instructions in the "Requests involving Micro Data" section below. The BLS will match the requested individual in the BLS servers and package the data for return to the State Agency.
 - a. Sample research question: What are the wage outcomes for SNAP recipients over a ten-year period?

States should determine the type of data request they would like fulfilled, complete the Confidential Wage Records Data Request form and submit it to Wagerecords@bls.gov.

Requests involving Micro Data

The Micro to Macro Data (Option 2) and Micro Data (Option 3) packages both require State requestors to submit a file of SSNs using the Wage Records Application. Once the research request is accepted, State requestors will be prompted to submit their SSN list to the BLS. **The Wage Records Application is the only approved method of sending SSN data to the BLS.**

The requesting State Agency must use the below format for State input files. The files must be comma delimited in .csv format. A file must be submitted for each year/quarter combination requested. The remainder of the file is comprised of two columns. The first column is temporary id that is unique to its associated SSN. The second column is the SSN of the requested individuals. See the sample file format below. **Due to privacy concerns, no SSNs will be on the file returned to the requesting State Agency Partner.**

SS,YYYYQ

```
99999,1111111111
88888,222222222
77777,333333333
66666,444444444
55555,555555555
44444,666666666
33333,777777777
22222,888888888
11111,999999999
```

SS- Two-digit state FIPS code

YYYYQ- Four-digit year requested, one-digit quarter

Column 1- Temporary ID, **Column 2-** SSN

Temporary ID- a unique number associated with the SSN. This number should be no longer than 20 bytes.

SSN- The social security number of the individual whose data is requested.

Data Return

All data returned, whether aggregated macro data or micro records, are sent to requesting State Agencies using the Kiteworks Application. Aggregated macro data is checked for disclosure prior to sending to the States. State Agencies should feel at liberty to share the data at that time.

Data packages of micro (individual identifiable) data will be in a .csv format with the column titles below.

Temporary ID
State FIPS Code
Unemployment Insurance Number (UIN)
Reporting Unit Number (RUN)
Employer Identification Number (EIN)
Reference Year
Reference Quarter
Quarterly Wages
Hours Reported (element not filled in most states)
Weeks worked (element not filled in most states)
Dominant NAICS code

Micro data returned should be treated as Personally Identifiable information (PII) using all appropriate security practices as described in the Wage Records MOU and in the section of this document titled Securing Wage Records Micro Data.

Securing Wage Records Micro Data

Wage records data are highly sensitive and contain Personally Identifiable information (PII) and Respondent Identifiable Information (RII) protected by the Privacy Act and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA), respectively. Wage records data are available to MOU State Partners only.

In accordance with Section I.I. of the Wage Records MOU, transmission and storage of all wage records data will adhere to Federal information security requirements for protecting sensitive information, as well as generally-accepted best practice standards related to information security, including, but not limited to, commercially available and widespread precautionary measures, such as firewall implementation, virus scanning, security access control software, logical encryption of data as it leaves the data boundary, secure tunnels, and limitation of physical access to confidential information.

Please refer to Section II.F. of your State's Wage Records MOU for specific security provisions that must be adhered to in order to receive confidential wage records data from the BLS. In accordance with Section I.I. of the Wage Records MOU, all transmission of data pertaining to individuals' records shall be transmitted through Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP). Per Section II.A.5. of the Wage Records MOU, MOU State Partners must complete a request form in order to receive the confidential wage records data from BLS. The form must describe the data requested and the need for the data (e.g. to produce a comprehensive analysis of inter-State employee migration). The completed form must be sent by the State Partner Project Coordinator to Wagerecords@bls.gov.

Data Linkage

All new data sets created from linking wage records data with other data are protected by CIPSEA and must be handled in accordance with that law, the Privacy Act, all BLS sensitive information policies and procedures as set out in the Wage Records MOU, BLS Agent Agreements, and annual BLS confidentiality training.

Destruction of Micro Data

At the completion of the research project, States must email Wagerecords@bls.gov to provide confirmation that individual micro data were destroyed.