

Workforce Equity Metrics

**How workforce systems and organizations are
incorporating equity into their metrics**

A research scan conducted in collaboration with OneAmerica

July 2020

Background and purpose

This research scan of workforce equity metrics summarizes initial findings from interviews with ten national and local workforce experts with experience and important perspectives on **embedding equity in workforce organizations and systems.**

This research scan was designed and conducted by [Innovation Network](#), a 501(c)(3) research and evaluation organization based in Washington, DC that works nationally with social sector organizations to inform and strengthen strategies and practices through research, evaluation, and learning.

The design and implementation of this research scan was informed by [OneAmerica](#), the largest immigrant and refugee advocacy organization in Washington State. OneAmerica organizes with and advocates for diverse communities to address the backlash, hate crimes, and discrimination against immigrant communities of color. **As part of their economic justice work, OneAmerica is embarking on an effort to work more closely with the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council (WDC) to track its advancement of racial, gender, immigration, and language equity.**

Innovation Network conducted an equity metrics scan to help support the Seattle-King County WDC to adopt a robust set of measures that enables it to better understand how its efforts advance equity.

Methodology and interviewees

Interviewees were identified by Rich Stolz, Executive Director of OneAmerica, and Marie Kurose, CEO of the Seattle-King County WDC. The Innovation Network team developed and used a [semi-structured interview guide](#) with 10 interviewees from December 2019 through February 2020.

Interview notes were summarized and organized into the contents of this research scan report. Information was supplemented through review of documents provided by interviewees.

INTERVIEWEE	REGION	ORGANIZATION
Livia Lam	National	Senior Fellow and the Director of Workforce Development, Center for American Progress
Ana Hageage	National	Program Manager, National Fund for Workforce Solutions
Sherry Kelley Marshall	Southwest OH	President/CEO, Southwest Ohio Regional WIB (SWORWIB)
Andrea Ferstan	Minneapolis-St Paul, MN	Vice President, Systems Innovation, Center For Economic Inclusion
Ellen Watters	Minneapolis-St Paul, MN	Minneapolis Saint Paul Regional Workforce Innovation Network (MSP Win)
Earl Buford	Pittsburgh and Allegheny Co., PA	CEO, Partner4Work
Jason Perkins-Cohen	Baltimore, MD	Director, Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED)
Glenn Scott Davis	Seattle-King County, WA	President, Progressive Workforce Strategy
Anonymous	Southeast PA and Southern NJ	Workforce Program Director
Anonymous	--	Funder

Discussion questions

As you review this report, consider the following questions:

1. What is your definition of equity generally and within specific occupations?
2. What is your approach to increasing equity generally and specifically within occupations?
3. Who will you involve in developing or reviewing your programs or strategies with an equity lens, e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, class, education, ability, age, etc.?
4. How will you measure if your outcomes are increasing equity?
5. How will you expand opportunities for innovations that can promote greater equity?

Equity definitions and approaches

Associated Black Charities (ABC)

*“The condition that would be achieved if the identities assigned to historically oppressed groups no longer acted as the most powerful predictor of how one fares, with the **root causes of inequities**, not just their manifestations, **eliminated**. This includes **elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce or fail to eliminate differential outcomes** by group identity/background (economic, educational, health, criminal justice, etc.).”*

Race Forward

*“**Equity** means fairness and justice and **focuses on outcomes** that are **most appropriate for a given group**, recognizing different challenges, needs, and histories. It is distinct from diversity, which can simply mean variety (the presence of individuals with various identities). It is also not equality, or ‘same treatment,’ which doesn’t take differing needs or disparate outcomes into account. **Systemic equity involves a robust system and dynamic process** consciously **designed to create, support and sustain social justice.**”*

Partner4Work a Workforce Development Board

Equity is the package of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and “changing the needle on participation in an industry, program, or initiative” with a focus on race and gender diversity.

Equity definitions and approaches

1. Definitions of equity are/should be contextual, for example, reflecting historical and systemic barriers specific to the region, groups that have been historically excluded, and/or industries. These definitions are also changing and evolving.
2. Equity and equality are not the same thing. Equality is giving everyone the same thing. Equity is giving individuals what they need to succeed.
3. Racial equity was more often referred to by interviewees as the primary example of equity focus in their organizations or systems. Additional focus populations/lived experiences that were mentioned include people with a criminal background, persistent unemployment, or low income.



The interviewee from the Seattle-King County, WA region defined equity as measurably increasing immigrant integration, access, and participation in the workforce, as well as having policies and programs that produce measurable results for increased representation of various groups in occupations and in educational achievement, including early education.



The interviewees from the Minneapolis-St. Paul, WI region defined equity as racial equity with specific attention to employment disparities between people who are indigenous and/or people of color compared to people who are White/Caucasian. They have developed regional indicators for an inclusive economy and regional workforce equity goals tied to postsecondary attainment, employment, and wage disparities.



The interviewee from Baltimore, MD defined equity as race equity, in particular the inequality and disparities in outcomes for people who are Black and/or other people of color compared to people who are White/Caucasian.

Equity metrics

The primary motivator within the workforce system for data collection is federal under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Interviewees advised to use the [WIOA metrics](#) **as the core or foundation of the equity data** effort and move beyond to more adequately speak to equity.

WIOA's Six Primary Indicators of Performance:

1. Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit
2. Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit
3. Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit
4. Credential Attainment
5. Measurable Skill Gains
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Equity metrics

These metrics can be used to go beyond the WIOA metrics to examine questions of equity.

Category	Metrics identified through interviews and document review
Individual Demographics	Race, ethnicity, gender (non-binary), age, zip code, location where they are served, LGBTQ+ status, ability/disability status, language spoken at home, criminal history status, veteran status, refugee or immigration status
Household/Family Demographics	Household income, housing status, family structure, neighborhood stability, receipt of public assistance
Health and Well-being	Food security, mental health or substance abuse status
Education & Training	Education level, English learner support (K-12) status, readiness at milestone moments in education, functional literacy, number of apprenticeships, enrollment/completion rate for trainings, job placement rate, English proficiency
Employment	Job retention rate, wage at placement, wage progression, job advancement, employment status, labor force participation rate, industry of employment
Job Access	Commuting distance and status, driver's license, transportation access
Childcare	Childcare, affordable childcare, high quality childcare
Employer Practices	Hiring practices, inclusion across wage and skill levels, industry/employer diversity, employer hiring and local sourcing
Job Quality	Job quality, employer provided supports/benefits differentials
Financial Security	Increase in credit score, regional investment, mortgage denial, cost burden of renting, business ownership

Data disaggregation

Interviewees identified a wide range of variables they use to disaggregate their data, including:

1. Age
2. Race/ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Geography (e.g., zip code)
5. Education/reading level
6. Employment status
7. Receipt of public assistance
8. Housing status
9. Limited English proficiency
10. People with disabilities
11. People with mental health/substance abuse barriers
12. Arrest/conviction records
13. Dislocated workers
14. Refugee/immigrant status, including H1B visa holders
15. Veteran status

*An interviewee who is a workforce program director talked about the “**power of the intake form**” to collect information that can be used to better understand program participants and disaggregate data.*

Data sources

Type of data source:

Purpose:

Individual-level data collected at intake, completion, and follow-up; ideally can be disaggregated

Consider the pros/cons of unique identifiers in datasets and the need to protect confidentiality

As the underlying dataset for generating point-in-time or over-time statistics about program participation, outcomes, etc.

Program-level data, including grantee data

- E.g., [Workforce Benchmarking Network by Corporation for a Skilled Workforce](#)

To understand similarities/differences among programs regarding population served and outcomes

Population-level data, including other public datasets that can be accessed/linked,

- E.g., SSN, wage, unemployment records, Census

To augment individual-level data (e.g., wage records) and/or contextualize program-level data

Focus groups with individuals intended to be served by the workforce system

To understand constituent feedback, lived experience, and insights

Demand and supply side data about trends in sectors

- E.g., [Realtime Talent](#)

To better target workforce development programs relative to labor trends

Considerations for: Data and structure

1. An area of development is for workforce organizations to **account for historical trauma and structural racism**. This information would be used to identify the individuals and groups who workforce systems should seek to serve and how to serve them effectively and realistically.
2. **Data sharing and integration** among workforce actors is **critical to a robust understanding of local workforce trends** and presents many challenges, including tactical and technical, strategic (relationships and actor alignment), legal, and resource (staffing and expertise).
 - a. **“Backbone” organizations** in the local workforce ecosystem can **tie together data and case management records** to provide a more holistic, integrated picture of individual-level outcomes.
 - b. Depending on the data infrastructure of a region and/or its data sharing agreements, **grantees may be asked to collect individual- or program-level data**.
 - c. When integrating data with other actors, **spend time on definitions** or “operationalizing” concepts such as “enroll” into very specific definitions so that all actors collect data in the same way. To the extent possible, give this work sufficient time and resources as it strongly impacts data quality and interoperability.
3. Map data that is to be collected to the sources it is to be used for/reported to, to ensure that **no additional data is collected and that all data requirements are met**.

Considerations for: Setting equity goals

For program-level performance measurement and management, set goals and indicators, and collect performance data. Within those, set **realistic benchmarks** about how equity can be produced from programs/systems.

1. **Identify where research exists** about what programs/strategies can produce the intended effect, e.g., to close gaps.
2. Map and set goals around disaggregated populations who have the **most significant gaps**.
3. Address **wage and benefit disparities** in addition to employment disparities.
4. **Target setting** can be a **political exercise** with vested interests in setting targets unreasonably high/low, especially at with a board of directors.
5. Identify what **kinds of workers the system is serving**—the easiest to serve or hardest? How does this affect goal setting?

Considerations for: Data sharing and use

1. **Tailor data to audience.** For example, develop fact sheets and concise summaries for policymakers as they are unlikely to use a data portal.
2. Along with statistics, **storytelling** is required to **provide a deeper context behind the numbers**. Build narratives relevant for the legislators and policymakers. At the same time, be careful not to reinforce negative/unhelpful stereotypes.
3. **Use data to** go beyond painting a picture of negative outcomes, e.g., unemployment, to **lift up underlying dynamics** such as disinvestment, exclusion, etc.

Supportive factors

Interviewees spoke to a range of factors that supported their success with advancing a focus on equity and equity metrics:



Visible and consistent leadership at the CEO level to advocate for equity and measurement and shepherd the resources necessary for effective implementation.



Work within the organization to equip staff and embed a culture of support for equity. Rethink program/system design to increase collaboration among organizations who can provide programming.



Reinforce support for equity in programmatic work through funding.



Cultivate business stakeholder support for equity, including making the case in business terms.

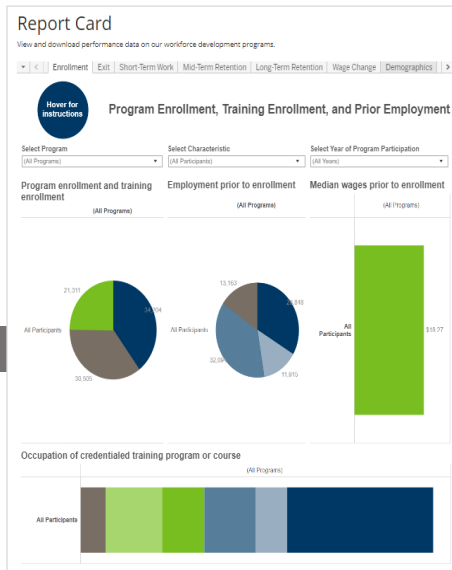


Invest in data infrastructure, including specialized staffing to design, analyze, and make use of what is collected. To this end, develop philanthropic support for expanded data capacity, especially consulting support to design and implement databases and systems and ongoing BI/analyst staffing.



Take a systems view to better understand broader workforce trends. Go beyond sector-driven data analysis, i.e., look beyond single workforce sectors or geographies to understand workforce mobility and broader dynamics.

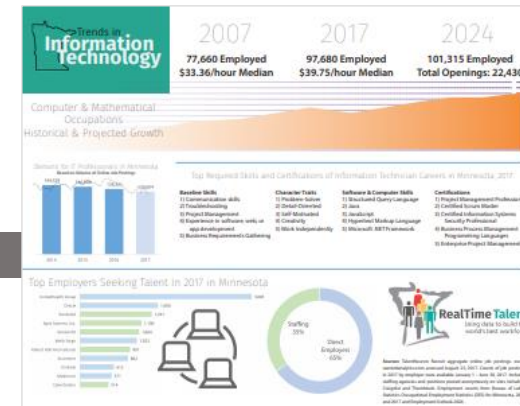
Metrics, dashboard, and system examples



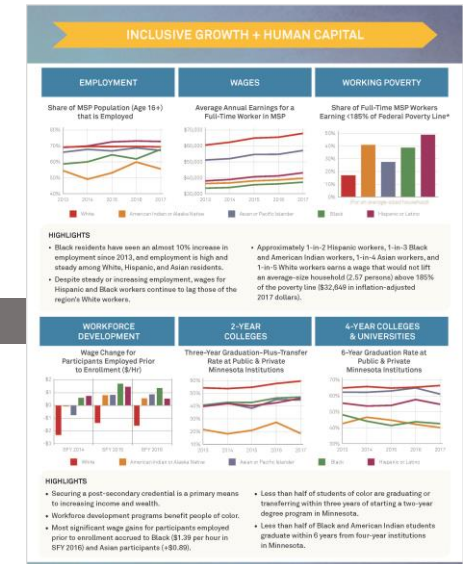
[Report card](#) for performance data on WF development programs in MN



Greater MSP [regional indicators dashboard](#)



RealTime Talent's [IT infographic](#) and [labor force and economic development research](#).



Center for Economic Inclusion's [Indicators of an Inclusive Regional Economy](#)



- [A Design for Workforce Equity](#) by the Center for American Progress suggests “workforce redesign and proposes building a new future-proof Workforce Equity Trust Fund (WETF)”
- Government Alliance on Race and Equity's [Racial Equity Toolkit](#)
- [Racial Differences on the Future of Work](#), by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
- Southwest Ohio Workforce Investment Board's [Mind/Shift and Word/Shift Messaging Task Force](#) for a new approach to messaging and language



Seattle-King County WDC's [self-sufficiency calculator](#)

Metrics, dashboard, and system examples

Many workforce organizations and systems struggle with data systems. Midwest Urban Strategies (MUS), a consortium of urban workforce boards, is working with BOEN Group to develop a workforce data system for workforce boards and other organizations to better track, analyze, and transmit workforce program and participant data.

The BOEN/MUS data system offers many valuable and advanced functions, including the ability to:

1. **Report** on workforce program outcomes
2. Track and **compare metrics across participating organizations** for similar programs
3. **Apply predictive analytics** to understand more precisely who benefits from which programs and how those successes can be used to drive more successful workforce programming
4. **Tell the story of workforce programs**, especially by aggregating data from organizations serving the same geography/population
5. **“Speak” to other systems**, for example, by exporting data in the format required for Department of Labor’s Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS)

The BOEN/MUS system is promising, especially for equity as its built-in predictive analytics simplifies the analysis/statistical work necessary to identify factors that predict a participant’s success in a program. The BOEN/MUS system is in its final stages of development and testing and is expected to launch to a wider audience in the near future.

For more information, contact Tracey Carey (traceycarey@midwesturbanstrategies.com) or Anne Rascon (solutions@boengroupllc.com).

Workforce equity actors and roles

Stakeholders who can support a workforce development board's (WDB) work on equity:

Philanthropy



- Critical to funding data work.
- Supports other actors who can assist on related policy change efforts and can connect workforce issues to interrelated issues like education, transportation, etc.
- Supports regionally-focused organizations that back integration and a systems view.

Local government



- Can support policy change.
- Local and state public officials, such as municipal leaders in the fire and police departments can be allies by supporting DEI goals in their hiring and employment practices.

WDB board of directors



- Plays a key role of oversight and governance of the WDB.
- WDB Board of Director recruitment can be conducted to promote greater representation at the board-level including gender, race/ethnicity, age, industry/sector, geography, abilities, veteran status, etc.

Community



- Community voice is supposed to be represented on the WDB Board of Directors, but often this is not fully actualized and other methods for incorporating community voice need to be pursued.
- Additional venues such as focus groups may be helpful in augmenting community feedback about workforce development priorities.

Labor unions and worker centers



- Works to improve conditions for low-income workers.
- Not often engaged in the traditional workforce development conversations.

Businesses



- Need to sell employers on why DEI goals for programs makes good business sense.

Interview guide

Section 1: Metrics and Data Sources

1. Tell us about you and your role.
2. How does your WDB define equity?
3. What are the demographics of the region you serve?
4. What metrics do you track to understand your impact on equity?

Section 2: Practical and Logistical Considerations

5. Where does the data come from?
6. What public systems/data sources do you draw on?
7. How does your WDB use data about equity within your own organization?
8. How does your WDB use data about equity externally with partners, funders, the public, etc.?

Section 3: Reflections

9. What have been some of your successes or learnings about measuring your impact on equity?
10. What have been your challenges in this work?
11. How is this work staffed?
12. How is this work funded?

About Innovation Network

Innovation Network is a nonprofit evaluation, research, and consulting firm. We provide knowledge and expertise to help nonprofits and funders learn from their work to improve their results. Learn more about us at www.innonet.org.

Thank you to the interviewees who participated in this study. Without your wisdom and graciousness this project would not have been possible. All analysis in this report is the work of Innovation Network. For feedback or questions, please reach us at info@innonet.org.

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