



July 30, 2021

COVID-Time & Transformation

About mid-2020, we began seeing articles about our collective sense of [time](#)—and were relieved to learn that the disorientation we felt was [not ours alone](#). Vox provided an explanation and a potential remedy for 'blursday' in the form of an [alternative approach to understanding the nature of time](#).

As we transition from what has felt to many workforce professionals like a 16-month, crises-filled sprint, it's important to revisit key accomplishments (and challenges), so we can bring our best selves to our next chapter. Here are some important trends and milestone's you've cited during our check-in calls to date:

- **Governance matters more than ever.** The demand for data during the COVID crisis, together with the shift to remote working, has increased pressure on reluctant agencies to collaborate and boosted interest in workforce data among new partners. New approaches to governance are needed, emerging, and will continue to evolve.
- **Research is emerging as a key priority**—for programs that want to improve, for agencies that want to know what works, and for evaluators who want to understand the factors that impact success for different people in different contexts.
- **Collaboration across states (and across public and private sectors) is accelerating**—new multi-state data collaboratives, civic tech, philanthropic, and academic partnerships, and peer-learning efforts are helping states boost their capacity to manage, link, and use data more effectively and apply it in new ways.
- **Equity and inclusion are recognized as central** to the increasingly urgent post-COVID Future of Work that provides context for many state data improvement efforts supported by WDQI.
- **Public-facing tools (and #dataviz) that extend the value of data to customers directly are a priority** for states in the months ahead.

We say congrats to all of you for surviving (and even thriving) during 2020 and into 2021. We are honored to support you in helping each other succeed.

Goings-On in Workforce & Data (a *highly* curated collection—because so much is going on!)
Happenings

- **STATS DC, August 16-20, 2021**, hosted remotely by NCES. Register [here](#). (Your WDQI colleagues from Maine and Iowa will be sharing their new post-secondary outcomes products on August 18.)
- **Meeting of the Minds, September 7-9, 2021**, IN PERSON(!), Monterey, CA. [More...](#)
- **MIT SOLVE Digital Workforce Challenge is accepting solutions through September 10, 2021**. The \$100K Grand prize winner and \$50K Equity prize will be announced on November 16, 2021. Learn more during [this](#) August 11, 2021 convening and more about SOLVE [here...](#)
- **Data for Policy, Sept 14-16, 2021**, hosted by University College London (remote conferencing has its benefits). Register [here](#).
- **SLDS/WDQI Annual Convening**, November 2021. Dates TBA.

Hirings

- **US Digital Response Team** has three (fantastic) positions open, all remote-ready! [Refer someone great ...](#)
- **Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce** needs a Senior Programmer! [Refer someone great ...](#)
- **Social Policy Research** (that's us!) needs three programmers! [Refer someone great ...](#)

#ICYMI

- **DOL Grant Awards!**
 - **WDQI Round 8 grantees!** Congratulations **Arkansas, Indiana, Maryland, Mississippi**, and for the first time **New Mexico!** [More...](#)
 - **15 new state apprenticeship expansion grantees!** Hey **California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Rhode Island, and Texas** WDQI teams, might your apprenticeship colleagues need data help? [More...](#)
 - Four new **Apprenticeship Centers of Excellence**—including one focused on data—were also announced. [More...](#)
- **Federal Grant Opportunities!**
 - DOL also announced **Comprehensive and Accessible Reemployment through Equitable Employment Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant** program—\$43M in grants to 15 states, proposals due August 31, 2021. [More...](#)
 - Economic Development Association (EDA) announced **6 American Rescue Plan Challenge Grant Programs**, all of which have a workforce component. One program supports Statewide Planning, Research & Networks.
- **Global Skills Day** was July 20, 2021. The agenda is [here](#). We're betting some of the sessions will turn into recordings and will share the best of them.
- **Data Visualization Society** has a [new membership offering](#).

Kudos

- **Congrats to Bryan Huebsch** (WI WDQI Team member [extraordinaire](#)), who took us up on the suggestion (in this newsletter) to apply for a spot in the (super competitive) [Data Stewards Academy Executive Education Program](#). He was accepted! We're thrilled and excited to learn from him!

- **Congrats to [Andrew Berger-Gross](#)** (NC WDQI team member and Senior Economist) on his recent [Council for Community and Economic Research \(C2ER\) forum](#) based on the findings from [NC's research on the long-term benefits of apprenticeship](#).

Something for Everyone

We try to keep you in the know. And we like surprises (mostly). This month? A new continent. Now [that](#) is a world-changer.

(Continue to) take care of each other out there.

♥ + Summer 🍉 🍌 🍅

Kristin Wolff (@kristinwolff), Editor

Maureen Sarver (@maureensarver) & the **SPR Support Team**

Modernizing Workforce Data Systems



Essay: Digital Transformation in Labor & Education Systems

This week Brookings released an important piece of work on digital transformation and data systems. Informed by a series of roundtables and interviews, the brief connects many disparate themes. It frames the challenges, embraces lessons from civic tech, offers case studies, and provides a vision for a better future. Download, read, and share it now. (Also, watch the video ->)

brookings.edu



Digital Transformation Webcast

Hosted by Rubenstein Fellow and report author Dr. Annelies Goger, the launch event featured Chike Ague (US Department of Labor), Jason Tyszko (US Chamber Foundation), Kris Stadelman (NOVA), and our own Aimee Jahnke (WI WDQI Team), and was moderated by Nicole Turner Lee (Brookings). If you participated in the roundtables or were otherwise involved, thank you. Now let's do this!

[B brookings.edu](https://brookings.edu)

Labor Markets & Work



The Great Resignation: Employers & the New Labor Market

Since the pandemic, employees are leaving the workforce or switching jobs in droves, and employers report increasing difficulty finding new workers. Workforce professionals struggle to connect talent with employers on mutually agreeable terms. Kate Morgan provides a perspective.

 [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com)



Examining the Uneven & Hard-to-Predict Labor Market Recovery

Lauren Bauer, Arindrajit Dube, Wendy Edelberg, and Aaron Sojourner explore the factors leading to slower-than-expected employment gains during the post-COVID economic recovery and the circumstances holding people back from returning to work.

 [brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu)

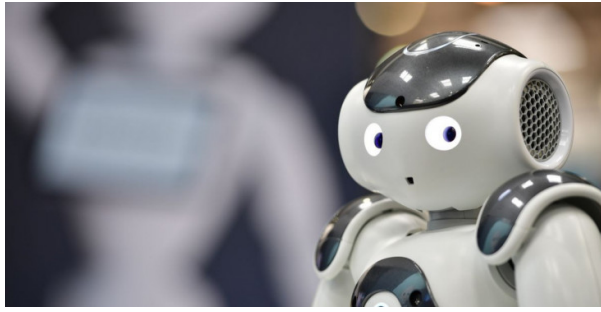


PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK IN THE COMMONWEALTH

A COVID-Era Future of Work Report in Massachusetts

Future of Work reports frequently speak to the challenges state data systems are called on to address—so we share them regularly. Here is the first we've seen issued squarely in a COVID-recovery context.

 [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)



The Robot Apocalypse is Already Here

We've been hearing for some time that automation would change the nature of jobs as much as automate them away. Here are a few industry-specific examples coupled with data-rich links to inform similar discussions in your own state.

 vox.com



Peanut the Waiter Robot Is Proof That Your Job Is Safe

The title might be exaggerated but this counter-automation narrative reveals the human skill required for many essential jobs, especially in the Great-Resignation economy.

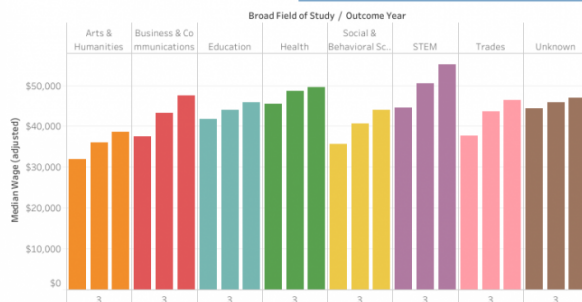
 wired.com

State Innovations: ME & NC!

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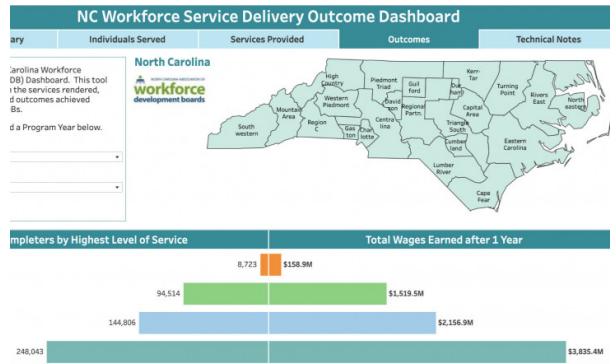
Research by Individual Broad Field of Study



How Learners Fare in the Workforce? | Maine's Post-Secondary Outcomes Report

Maine's newly-launched WDQI-supported Post-Secondary Outcomes report (MPSO) provides information on employment and wage outcomes for Mainers who graduated from partnering post-secondary institutions. Get a cup of tea and explore the tabs on the left or download the data and see what you find. Congrats Hunter, Mark, Erica & team!

 maine.gov



How Do Workers Fare after Receiving WIOA Services? | North Carolina's Workforce Outcome Dashboard

North Carolina's WDQI-supported workforce dashboard aggregates outcomes by service type and charts the number of participants in each service category—a remarkable look at what the system does at a quick glance. Congrats Andrew, Oleks & team!

 analytics.nccommerce.com

Ethics, Equity & Data



Charting the 'Data for Good' Landscape

There is huge potential for public-private collaboration and modern data science to play important roles in meeting social needs. Better connectivity could help. Data.org's new map can inform our future partnerships.

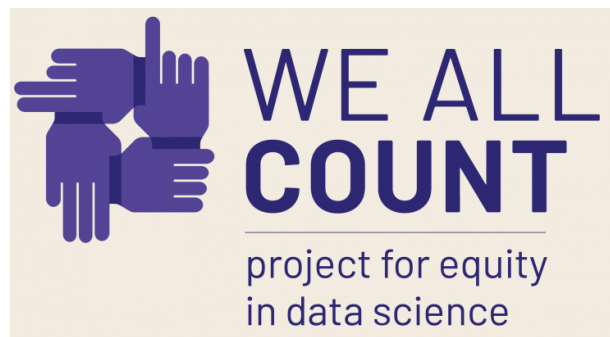
 data.org



Advancing Workforce Equity: A Guide for Stakeholders

What Is Workforce Equity? The National Fund for Workforce Solutions has an answer and a five-step collaborative process for achieving it —built on a foundation of accessible, high-quality data.

 nationalfund.org



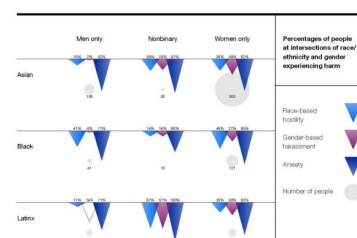
We All Count

Data equity is a topic we cover regularly, and one for which we see increasing demand. We All Count's new Data Equity Framework offers a systemic way of building equity into all data projects, improving their quality, explanatory power, and impact.

 weallcount.com

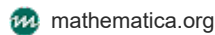


The Critical Role of Data in Advancing



Equity

This month, Mathematica released recommendations for advancing equity within federal policy and an [issue brief on Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation](#). These materials have much to offer all who worry about what works and why in social policy.



Equity Awareness in Data Visualization

Urban's new Do No Harm guide offers recommendations, case studies, and checklists for adopting equitable data practices, with an emphasis on data visualization and communication.



Data Equity at Work: Covid-19 Made Tech's Problems Worse

This short Medium post by Ellen Pao illustrates how disaggregated data, presented clearly, can tell a more complete story than one relying on an analysis of the mean. #smallmultiples

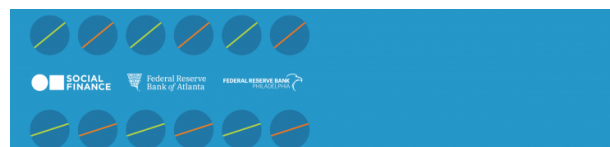
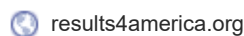


Research & Policy

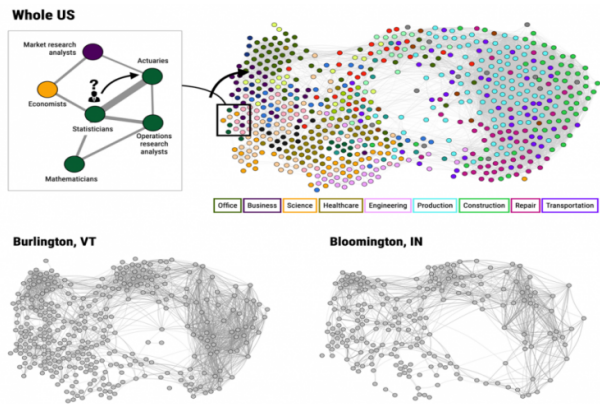
RESULTS FOR AMERICA

What Works Bootcamps

Results for America and the National Governors Association have convened a series of bootcamps on Using Evidence in Economic Recovery. June's event focused on state efforts to increase evidence-building capacity and leverage data to support an equitable economic recovery. WDQI states participating include California, Colorado, North Carolina, and Rhode Island. If you have not connected with colleagues who may have participated, now is a great time! Click for more information and a partial list of attendees.



Workforce Realigned: How New Partnerships Are Advancing Economic Mobility



This month, Social Finance and the Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta and Philadelphia launched a new report on partnerships to reboot economic mobility. The recorded launch event featured U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Ford Foundation President Darren Walker, and Bank of CEO Brian Moynihan, adding to the chorus that supports connected data systems that can help public programs boost mobility.

 socialfinance.org

Job Connectivity Boosts Resiliency in US Cities

MIT researchers found that job “connectedness” (e.g., the thickness of labor markets) is key to resilient local economies, with implications for education, workforce, and economic development policy.

 news.mit.edu

DOL Strategy & Evidence-Building

Goal 1: Build Opportunity and Equity for All			
1.1 Advance training, employment, and return-to-work opportunities that connect workers to higher-wage jobs, especially in ways that address systemic inequities.			
ETA 1.1 Create customer-focused workforce solutions for American workers.	VETS 1.1 Provide veterans, service members, and their spouses with resources and tools to gain and maintain employment.	WB 1.1 Formulate policies and initiatives to promote the interests of working women.	ODEP 1.1 Develop evidence-based policies, practices, and tools to foster a more inclusive workforce to increase quality employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan | US Department of Labor

The Department of Labor (DOL) is updating its Strategic Plan to reflect current priorities and COVID recovery. A companion Evidence-Building Plan identifies five priority learning areas. The Department welcomes your input on both the strategy and the learning plan—contributions on evidence and data gaps are of particular interest. Comments due by August 6, 2021. The next two resources may help inform your ideas.

 dol.gov

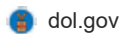


The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Research Portfolio

A Scan of Key Trends in the Labor Market and Workforce Development System

Key Labor Market Trends

SPR and Mathematica engaged dozens of workforce experts, including some of you, to help the Department of Labor develop its research portfolio for the coming years. This scan of labor market trends—from automation in the workplace to remote learning at home—was the first product and provides context for assessing research and evaluation needs.

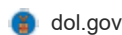


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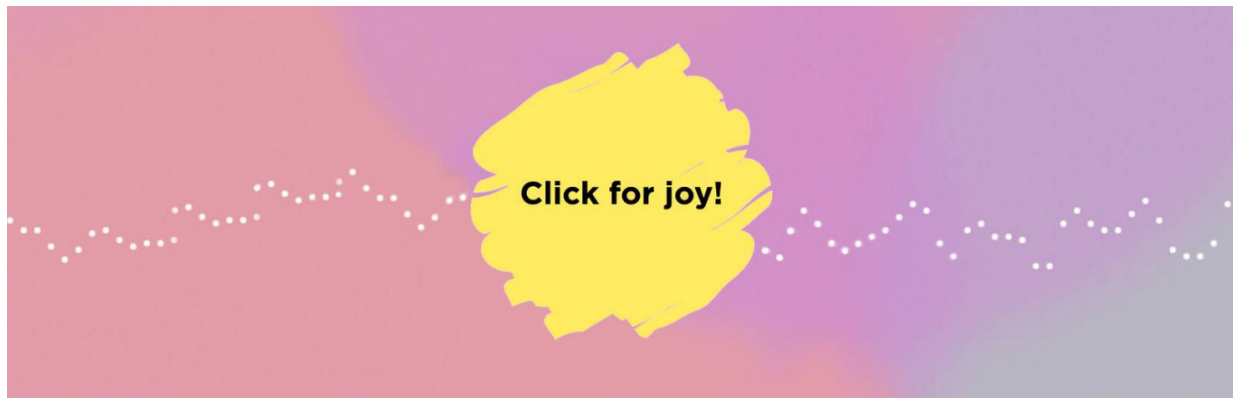
A Research Evidence Scan of Key Strategies Related to WIOA

A Scan of the Evidence

This companion resource focuses on key topic areas important to the Department—case management, integrated service delivery, training programs, and youth services—and documents the evidence we have about their effectiveness. It also identifies evidence gaps and would benefit from additional input from you. Contribute by August 6, 2021.



Just for You



The Joy Generator

We all need joy now and again. NPR has a tool you can try out right now.



The #MBW Podcast

***Our Very Own #WDQI
#MakingBetterWork Podcast Now
Has 22 Episodes!***

If you haven't subscribed, pull out your mobile device and do it now!

[iTunes](#) * [Stitcher](#) * [GooglePlay](#)

Search for **Making Better Work** on Google Play (a quirk of the platform).

Again, we hope these communication channels will bring your work further into the public domain so that kindred spirits in different parts of the public data ecosystem can find each other. It's a big job but somebody's got to do it. Why not us?



Information Wants to Be Shared

This is the 26th edition of #MakingBetterWork, the perpetual beta newsletter of the longitudinal workforce data community.

We'd love your continued help in making it great (and your generosity of spirit when we don't quite get there). Here's our focus (always subject to change) going forward:

- **COVID-19 Recovery!** (Alas!)
- **Impact** (Products, legislation, key policy decisions, and more – what difference is WDQI making in your state, community?)
- **Governance** (In the words of one of our subject matter experts, "It's everything.")
- **Ecosystem** (How do we better align public data efforts and work with nonprofit, foundation, university, and other partners more effectively to address critical workforce and education issues? How do we do this consistently, ethically, and responsibly?)
- **Themes that run through WDQI events and activities:**
 - Federal legislative mandates (WIOA – and evaluation, HEA, Perkins, etc.)
 - Trends in training: non-degree credentials, work-based learning, apprenticeship, technology and distance learning, dual-systems, stackable credentials, etc.)
 - Future of Work – using data to help policymakers, institutional leaders, and the rest of us navigate it
 - Data Equity
 - #DataViz – so more people can understand, interact with, and use the data and tools we're all creating.

In case you've received this from a friend or colleague and don't know how to find us, we've provided our contact information below.

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Know someone who needs this newsletter? Forward it or send them here.

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