



May 1, 2020

A **May Day** unlike any other: [one in five](#) American workers who had a job in February has since filed for unemployment – [30 million claims](#). Even this is likely a [significant undercount](#).

"[Unprecedented](#)." "[A Wrecking ball](#)." #WordsFail.

Never have our communities needed workforce more than they do today.

- States [need all-hands-on-deck](#) to process UI claims and launch [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#) for gig and other non-traditional workers. In Rhode Island, Maine, and Iowa, WDQI teams have stepped forward.
- Community leaders and policymakers need current and reliable data they can use to understand emerging trends and shape an effective response. Working with the [Coleridge Initiative](#) and [Midwest Data Collaborative partners](#), Illinois has piloted a series of new dashboards intended to meet this need.
- People need tools to help them navigate access to basic needs and engage in learning and work. Toward that end, [California](#) was first to real-time pilot [this](#) new platform, with [Colorado, Oregon, and Washington](#) just behind. (Stay tuned – it will likely be the subject of a coming web convening.)

Like you (and everyone, everywhere), we are adapting in realtime. Our commitment to you is increased relevance in the moment. That's why we've shifted web convenings, resources, and podcasts to focus on COVID-response (with a view toward aggregating longer-term lessons). As one WDQI team member exclaimed during a recent check-in call, "Is there anything *but* COVID? Was there even life before?"

- **Last month**, led by Illinois, [we looked at remote data sharing, cross-state collaboration](#), and the Administrative Data Research Facility with [Dr. Julia Lane](#). For those interested in the next [training](#), a pre-training [informational webinar](#) is scheduled for May 6, 2020.
- **The week of May 10**, the [Rhode Island](#) team, including partner [RIPL](#), will help us understand how the foundation of partnerships and data-savvy built over a decade under WDQI is helping the state mount a quick response to the impossible economic challenges presented by #COVID19 now that a [glimmer of hope has emerged](#) on the public health front (watch your email for details).

- **Ongoing**, we are checking in with state teams to make sure we're capturing important changes, even innovations, during this time. (Note: innovations and effective practices emerging in-the-moment are more important than ever, which is why we encourage you to share the raw and ugly and not just the finished products).

Speaking of iterating, we shifted from Adobe to Zoom to Webex Meeting. In May, we're trying Webex Events, which we think will meet needs more effectively. We hope all you notice is a better experience.

Resources

Since states are in different places along the COVID curve, we've curated a mix of crisis response and capacity building resources this month – plus some new calm-inducing tools for when [Zoom fatigue](#) sets in. In addition, here is the official [revised and updated collection of COVID response resources](#) from our federal partners at the US Department of Labor (Note: *Now is the time* to contact your FPO if you need a grant modification.)

This is hard.

Most states and communities remain in lockdown. As we begin to move toward reopening, we are not likely to "return to normal." Governors and mayors, along with industry, education, and nonprofit leaders, will be looking for answers to questions about emerging industries, jobs, and skills-needs. [Workers and learners will be looking for help too](#) – for meeting a range of family needs. Your data, your services, your emerging bubble-gum and paper-clip prototypes will soon become next-gen navigational tools. Your newly honed public-interest communications (right, Kentucky?) will ensure they are used to the greatest effect.

It may get harder.

If we're honest, pre-COVID "normal" was not working very well for many – a point made [over](#) and [over](#) and [over again](#) in this newsletter. Back then (mere weeks ago), the #futureofwork pointed to large-scale threats (like automation-driven unemployment) and scaleable opportunities (like flexible platforms and pathways for [reimagining working](#) and [learning](#)). [These remain](#), making now and every day after exactly the right time for #MakingBetterWork.

Let us know how we can help.



Kristin Wolff (@kristinwolff), Editor

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

P.S. Just in – @USDOL @ePolicyWorks and @IdeaScale have teamed up to gather ideas about how to safely and effectively re-open the economy. They are soliciting recommendations in six areas. [Share yours here](#).

Navigating the Now



How Data Government Already Has Can Guide a Robust Pandemic Response

As state and local governments continue to lead coronavirus response efforts, they are being tasked with making critical policy decisions and coordinating across overburdened agencies. One of the key tools these governments can leverage is administrative data. (A nod to our data collaborative discussion last month and something you can share with non-specialists).

 governing.com

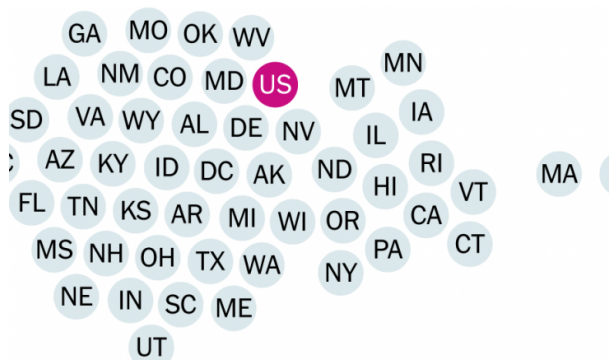


Lessons Learned from the Great Recession

Helping States Manage Booming Unemployment Insurance Claims

Although it's too early to assess the full extent of COVID-19's impact on the economy, we can draw lessons from the Great Recession to help inform decisions we make today about service design, technology systems, and program investments.

 mathematica.org



States Made It Harder to Get Jobless Benefits. Now That's Hard to Undo.

In this plain-language explanation of why states systems are buckling under the crush of applicants, [Emily Badger](#) and [Alicia Parlapiano](#) also highlight key policy differences between states – many of them WDQI states.

 nytimes.com

The Cloud Helps Rhode Island Manage an Unprecedented Surge in UI Claims

California's Unemployment System Strains, Adjusts

During the second week of April, California processed 660,966 unemployment claims.

Innovative technology helped the state Department of Labor and Training to rapidly scale services for residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Learn more during our May web convening!)

 governing.com

The state has also sought to ease the load on the system by *temporarily suspending the need to certify for jobless benefits every two weeks*.

 sfchronicle.com

Washington State was among the first to lockdown in response to the coronavirus. It then faced an early surge in unemployment insurance claims. Communication has been essential in managing the crisis. Here's Employment Security Commissioner Suzi LeVine explaining processing delays in plain language – using 22 tweets and a video.

 s3-eu-west-1.amazonaw...

Why Government Websites Fail

It's not just your state. While the rest of the world has evolved to a place where we can track anything at all times and order anything from anywhere, some government agencies have been hopelessly stranded on an island in 1993. It doesn't have to be this way.

 fastcompany.com

Navigating the New

COVID-19: Policies to Protect People and Communities

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread and people are forced to stay home, workers are losing their jobs and local businesses are at risk of closing permanently. The country is bracing for recession. Enter Urban's archive of evidence-backed policies.

 urban.org

COVID-19: Our Shared Responsibility | JFF

We need to look beyond the immediate emergency and find long-term ways to strengthen economic advancement for everyone to ensure that we continue building a future that works. Enter JFF's COVID Resource Center.

 jff.org

National Skills Coalition's State Policy Response Toolkit

Reference this unfussy, densely packed toolkit (thank you, [Molly Bashay!](#)) into your next zoom call and contribute ideas for days. It's a compilation of policy and program responses across a range of workforce, education, and human service issue areas that states, agencies, and programs are advancing in-the-moment. All of them have data implications. Know what they are, and you can establish a baseline before the shift, and share what happens afterward.

 nationalskillscoa...

Colleges Could Lose Up to 20 Percent of Students

[Inside Higher Ed](#) projects a dramatic decline in college enrollment this fall, with particularly low levels anticipated for minority students. The policy and the data implications are significant. Where will these would-be students go and how will we know?

 insidehighered.com

Ed Dept Announces \$307.5M in Grants to Reimagine Educational Models

These grant funds, announced this past Monday, are aimed at building "adaptable, innovative learning opportunities" in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Who in your state is competing? How can your data systems play a role?

 educationdive.com

Carrying On

Covid-19: Unprecedented Data Sharing Leads to Faster-than-Ever Outbreak Research

Scientists have been able to trace and monitor the COVID-19 pandemic faster than any previous outbreak. Could data sharing on re-open and recovery strategies similarly speed up our understanding of what works and why?

 horizon-magazine.eu

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) – Statistics and Research

Our World in Data's overview of the early research and data on the outbreak. The page is updated daily and may point to the kinds of data platforms workforce and policy leaders will be looking for.

 ourworldindata.org

We're All Getting More Comfortable with the Language of Data.

The Best & Worst Coronavirus Dashboards

We're all in the business of dashboards. Let's make

15 Insane Things That Correlate With Each Other

These 15 correlations will blow your mind. A reminder

When interconnected individuals with a common goal pool knowledge and information, we all win.



meetingoftheminds.org

them useful, trustworthy, user friendly.



technologyreview.com

(and examples for when have to explain) that correlation is not causation.



tylervigen.com

The Better Part

All the Things COVID-19 Will Change Forever

Thirty top experts – tech executive, venture capitalists, analysts, and others – on the pandemic's lasting impact on how we live, work, and think.

FC fastcompany.com

Calm Sounds From Outside: National Parks

Falling water from Glacier National Park is one of many natural wonders – including wildlife – captured in sound and available through this US National Park Service Gallery. You can even visit individual parks. Eyes-closed while listening recommended.



nps.gov

...And From Inside: Víkingur Ólafsson – Etude #5

Composed by Phillip Glass, this quiet piece is as beautiful to look at as to listen to. We lost ourselves in it by the third minute. Grateful #COVIDCrisis commenters were as inspired as we were. Headphones and nightfall recommended.



youtube.com

#CombatCovid: PSAs

In case art is more your jam, posters have always been an important means of mass communication, especially in times of crisis. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Poster House has teamed up with Print Magazine to craft these gems.



posterhouse.org

Help a Neighbor, Repurpose a Business

How to Help People During the Pandemic, One Google Spreadsheet at a Time

We introduced #MutualAid last month. It's improved and expanded since. Now, thousands of volunteers in "mutual aid" groups are bringing groceries, medications, and more to vulnerable strangers – an ecosystem we may need for some time.



vox.com

A Shifts to Food Runs

Oregon's [Hood To Coast Relay](#) is the most popular relay race in the world, drawing 12,000 participants from over 40 countries (and a waiting list of 40,000). Twelve-member teams run 199 miles from the top of Mount Hood to the beaches of the Pacific Ocean. This year, the relay experts are using their logistics chops to deliver food – modeling exactly the kind of creativity required to rebuild our economy in post-COVID.



pamplinmedia.com

Have a Listen

Our Very Own #WDQI #MakingBetterWork Podcast Now Has 16 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 new 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 16th 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). We changed up the headers this month to make it easier to navigate. Let us know what you think!

Here's our focus (always subject to change) going forward:

- **COVID-19** (until future notice)
- **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
 - #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.