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WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT IN WESTERN KENTUCKY:
AN EVALUATION OF PROGRAM SERVICE OUTCOMES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Architectural and Manufacturing Sciences
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

By
Matt Lockett

August 2017

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT IN WESTERN KENTUCKY:
AN EVALUATION OF PROGRAM SERVICE OUTCOMES

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47 Pages

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Workforce development programs designed to provide individuals with the skills necessary to gain employment have been in existence for over 80 years. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was a federal workforce development program that ran from 2000 to 2014. The WIA provided three main programs: youth, adult, and dislocated worker. The focus of this research was to evaluate the individual services in the adult and dislocated worker programs in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area and identify the most effective service in each program.

The adult and dislocated worker programs each offered three tiered services: core, intensive, and training. Individuals entered the core service and progressed until employment was obtained or they exited the programs. The services were evaluated based on the success and failure rates of the outcomes using the reported data retrieved from the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) database.

The number of participants were counted in each service as well as the number of individuals that were employed and not employed after exiting the programs. Individuals employed after exiting the program, were counted as successful outcomes. Individuals that were not employed after exiting the program were counted as unsuccessful outcomes. The study found evidence that the training service was the most effective service in both the adult and dislocated worker programs.

Introduction

Workforce development programs have been funded by the U.S. government since 1933 and were designed to provide individuals with the skills to gain and keep employment (Chrisinger, 2013). The last iteration of these programs was the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that ran from 2000 until 2014 when it was replaced by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2014). The WIA included nearly 600 Workforce Investment Areas (Heinrich, Mueser, Troske, Jeon, & Kahvecioglu, 2009) that provided individuals access to the WIA programs. Despite several studies that have been performed to determine the impact of the WIA, surprisingly little is known about its impact on labor market outcomes (Heinrich, Mueser, Troske, Jeon, & Kahvecioglu, 2013).

The WIA established one-stop career centers in each investment area and provided three main programs for individuals (WIA, 1998): a youth program, an adult program, and a dislocated worker program. The youth program provided remedial education and job training services to help individuals achieve educational or occupational goals (Stout, 2015). The adult and dislocated worker programs offered three levels of service including core, intensive, and training (WIA Overview, 2014).

Participants first received core services that included items like job listings, computer access, and resume writing and interviewing skills (Decker & Berk, 2011). If assistance received in the core service was insufficient to secure employment, the individual became eligible for intensive services. Intensive services included skills assessments, counseling, and work experience placement (Decker & Berk, 2011).

Participants that were still unable to secure employment after receiving intensive services became eligible for WIA-funded training services (Decker & Berk, 2011). WIA-funded training services provided various forms of training for the participant. The training may have been occupational skills training, on-the-job training, or cooperative education programs that combined workplace training with related classroom instruction (WIA, 1998). Often training was obtained from outside vendors like community colleges, proprietary schools, and non-profits (Heinrich, et al., 2013).

Although the WIA program was a federal program that offered these services in all states, the focus of this study was the adult and dislocated worker programs in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. This area included seventeen counties made up of two development districts (Pennyrile Area Development District, n.d.; Purchase Area Development District, n.d.). The Kentucky counties included: Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, Muhlenberg, Todd, and Trigg. The yellow region of the map in Figure 1 highlights the location of the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. Each level of service in both the adult and dislocated worker programs provided in this area was evaluated to determine its effectiveness in helping individuals secure employment and achieve program goals.

Problem Statement

Previous studies have not identified the most effective services in the WIA programs. Previous studies attempted to determine the effectiveness of the WIA programs in regards to their impact on labor market outcomes for the individuals that participated in the WIA versus individuals that did not. The studies evaluated the overall

programs and did not evaluate the individual services offered under the programs.

Identifying the most effective service and focusing resources on that type of service could improve the overall effectiveness of future workforce investment programs.

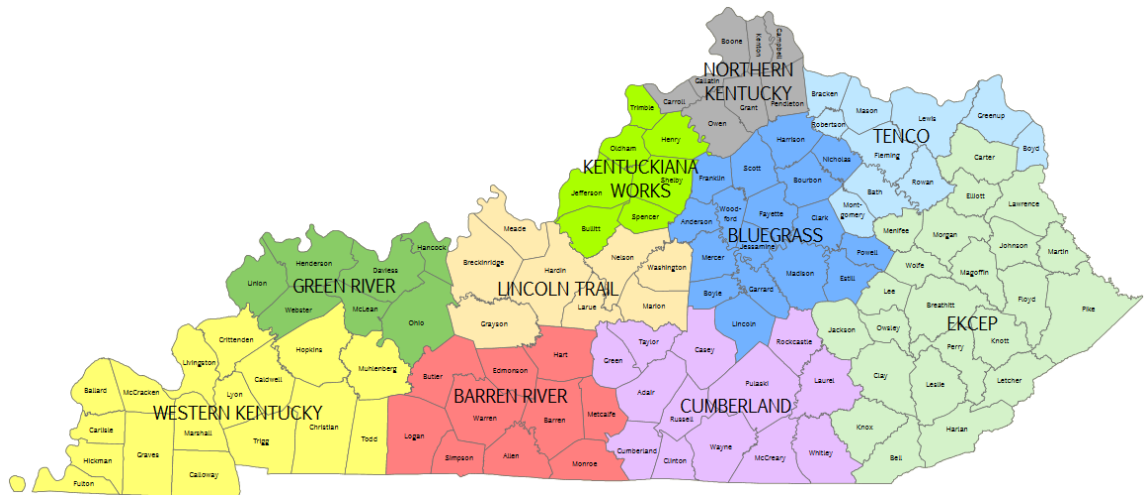


Figure 1. Map of Kentucky Workforce Investment Areas. Adapted from “Kentucky’s Workforce Investment Areas,” by Research and Statistics Branch, Office of Employment and Training, Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. Retrieved from [https://kylmi.ky.gov/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/Workforce%20Investment%20Areas%20\(WIAs\).pdf](https://kylmi.ky.gov/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/Workforce%20Investment%20Areas%20(WIAs).pdf)

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of each level of service provided under the adult and dislocated worker programs of the WIA from 2000 to 2014 in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. The available raw data was used to perform the evaluation. Individuals were counted in the highest level of service in which they participated. All three services were evaluated on the number of participants in the service and their outcomes. The number of individuals that exited each service were compared to the number successful and unsuccessful outcomes in the respective services. A successful outcome was obtaining employment within the first

quarter after program exit. An unsuccessful outcome was not obtaining employment in the first quarter after program exit.

The overall cost of each program and the number of participants that obtained employment were used to calculate the average cost per success for each program. The author compared the outcomes among the services provided within each program for the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area to identify the most effective service for each program. The outcomes and cost per success were used to determine the most effective service overall.

Significance of the Research

This study provided the audience with information on the effectiveness of the services provided in the adult and dislocated worker Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs in the seventeen counties that make up the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. The results may be used to identify the most effective services in the programs for this area. This information can be used to allocate funds and other resources more effectively to focus on the services that aid the most individuals possible for the lowest cost in subsequent workforce investment programs, like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Though it is not likely that workforce investment programs will be defunded, given they have been federally funded for the last 84 years (Chrisinger, 2013), adequate funding may not always be available. Federal funding for workforce development declined during the first nine years of the WIA implementation until it was increased with the American Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Decker & Berk, 2011). During the time of

funding decline, caseloads grew (Decker & Berk, 2011). The increase in caseloads made it more difficult to maintain the level of service to those in need.

Previous studies focused on the impact of the WIA on the labor force. The studies attempted to compare the outcomes of WIA participants to the outcomes of other unemployed individuals in similar situations that did not participate in the WIA. The results of these studies suggested moderately better outcomes for those that participated in the WIA programs over those that did not.

The studies used administrative data to statistically match individuals (Hollenbeck, 2009) to build the groups for comparison. The studies relied on the WIA program participant data, Unemployment Insurance data, and Labor Exchange data to identify demographics for the comparison groups (Hollenbeck, 2009). The data used in the study included employment and earnings information (Hollenbeck, 2009), as well as labor market data (Heinrich, et al., 2013) which were used to match individuals for comparison. However, these studies did not account for the various personal motivations of the participants that could have skewed the results.

The possibility existed that there was a fundamental difference between unemployed individuals who participated in the WIA and those who did not (Decker & Berk, 2011). According to Decker and Berk (2011), the WIA performance management system created incentives to enroll individuals that would be easier to place in a job over hard-case individuals in an effort to boost reported performance measures. The possibility also existed that the people who chose not to enroll in the WIA program had better employment prospects than those that did (Decker & Berk, 2011). Finally, an individual drawing unemployment may not have been driven to find a job, and thus,

chose not to enroll in the WIA. Any one or all of these scenarios could have had an impact on the results of these studies.

The studies attempted to answer the question, “Did the WIA program participants outperform other unemployed individuals who did not enroll in the WIA”? The surveys looked at the overall outcomes of each program, but did not drill down to the services that made up the programs. This study compared the services provided to identify the most effective service within each program. The study intended to show which service produced the highest rate of individuals being able to secure employment at the lowest cost.

The research followed a quantitative framework. According to Creswell (2014), “quantitative research is an approach for testing theories by examining the relationship among variables” (p. 4). The variables can be measured and the resulting numbered data statistically analyzed (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). A variable refers to an attribute of an individual or group that was measured or observed and varied among the subjects studied (Creswell, 2014, p. 52). Variables can either cause or influence variation or be the result of variation. In this study, the variables that caused variation, or independent variables, were the different services provided to the WIA participants and the overall program cost. The influenced variation, or dependent variables, were the success rate, failure rate, and cost per success. These values were used to determine the effectiveness of each service.

Research Questions

They were two research questions in this study:

- What was the most effective service in the WIA adult program in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area?

- What was the most effective service in the WIA dislocated worker program in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area?

Assumptions

According to Simon (2011), assumptions are somewhat out of the control of the researcher, but the study could become irrelevant if the assumptions disappeared. The author should justify that the assumptions are probably true or the study will be unable to progress (Simon, 2011). The assumptions for this research were:

- The quantitative data, to the necessary level of detail, was available to perform all aspects of this research.
- This study was useful to officials that allocated funds and resources for workforce development programs.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study (Simon, 2011). The limitations identified in this study were as follows:

- The population used in this study may not be representative of populations in different geographical areas.
- The employment market in the target area may not be representative of employment markets in other areas.
- Some of the records in this study lacked exit data.

Delimitations define the scope of the study (Simon, 2011). This research was limited to the following items:

- Individuals who participated in the adult WIA program in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area.

- Individuals who participated in the dislocated worker WIA program in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area.
- The success rates of the core, intensive, and training services in the adult WIA program in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area.
- The success rates of the core, intensive, and training services in the dislocated worker WIA program in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area.

Definition of Terms

Adult program: Employment assistance program under the Workforce Investment Act that targeted adults, 18 years and older (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2014).

Comma Separated Value (CSV): Text file format that contains values or fields separated by a delimiter, which acts as a database table (Comma Separated Values File, n.d.).

Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA): Government workforce development program enacted in 1973 (Workforce Investment Act Overview, 2014).

Core service: First level of service under the Workforce Investment Act adult and dislocated worker programs that included: (a) job listings, (b) labor market information, (c) computer access, and (d) workshops on resume writing and interviewing skills (Decker & Berk, 2011).

Department of Labor (DOL): Government agency with the mission to promote the welfare job seekers, wage earners, and retirees of the United States (Department of Labor, n.d.).

Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA): Agency under the Department of Labor that provides: (a) job training, (b) employment, (c) labor market information, and (d) income maintenance services (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2010).

Dislocated worker program: Employment assistance program under the Workforce Investment Act that targeted individuals that lost employment due to termination, layoff, facility closure, or were self-employed and then unemployed (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2014).

Intensive service: Second level of service under the Workforce Investment Act adult and dislocated worker programs that included: (a) assessments, (b) individual employment plans, (c) counseling, and (d) work experience placements (Decker & Berk, 2011).

Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA): Government workforce development program enacted in 1982 that placed an emphasis on targeted job training and reemployment (Workforce Investment Act Overview, 2014).

Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA): Workforce development program enacted in 1962 to retrain workers that were displaced due to technological advancements (Workforce Investment Act Overview, 2014).

Return on investment (ROI): Performance measure used to evaluate efficiency of an investment (Return on Investment, n.d.).

Training service: Third level of service under the Workforce Investment Act adult and dislocated worker programs that included occupational skills training that was often provided by community colleges, proprietary schools, or nonprofits (Heinrich, et al., 2013).

Wagner-Peyser Act: Workforce development act of 1933 that provided skills training for individuals to find and retain employment (Chrisinger, 2013).

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): Workforce development act that superseded the Workforce Investment Act in 2014 (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2014).

Workforce Investment Act (WIA): Government funded workforce development act that was enacted in 1998 and implemented from 2000 to 2014 (Workforce Investment Act Overview, 2014).

Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD): State reported data that contained detailed information on Workforce Investment Act participants (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, n.d.).

Workforce Investment Area: Governor designated local workforce investment areas within each state (Workforce Investment Act, 1998).

Workforce Investment Board (WIB): Group that was “responsible for policy and oversight of State and local workforce investment activities” (Workforce Investment Act Overview, 2014).

Youth program: Employment assistance program under the Workforce Investment Act that targeted low-income individuals, 14 to 18 years of age, that faced at least one of the six defined barriers (Decker & Berk, 2011).

Review of Literature

Workforce development is not a new concept. According to Chrisinger (2013), workforce development began in 1933 with the Wagner-Peyser Act, which was meant to provide skills training for individuals to find and maintain employment. Next, came the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA) in 1962 (WIA Overview, 2014). MDTA was funded to retrain individuals who were displaced due to technological change (WIA Overview, 2014). Subsequent programs were the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of 1973, and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of 1982 (WIA Overview, 2014). CETA focused on providing government subsidized employment, while JTPA emphasized training (WIA Overview, 2014). The programs evolved over time, but the goal to provide skills for employment remained essentially the same.

In 1998, the WIA was enacted and later implemented in 2000 (Jacobs, 2001). The WIA took a much different approach to workforce investment. According to Decker and Berk (2011), the Department of Labor (DOL) presented seven key principles to steer the implementation of the WIA. The key principles were: (a) streamlining services, (b) empowering individuals, (c) providing universal access, (d) increasing accountability, (e) having a strong role for local workforce investment boards and the private sector, (f) ensuring state and local flexibility, and (g) improving youth programs (WIA, 2000).

To achieve these principles, a system of state and local “One-Stop” centers to administer WIA training and employment activities were set up (WIA Overview, 2014) in Workforce Investment Areas. Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) were responsible for these areas. The WIBs had the authority to establish their own policies and guidelines

relating to the program operation, as long as they did not conflict with the WIA regulations (WIA, 2000). This authority allowed local agencies to tailor their operation to meet state and local needs.

The WIA employment program provided services for three primary program groups: adults, dislocated workers, and youths (WIA, 1998). Adults were considered individuals 18 years of age and older. Dislocated workers were those that had been terminated or laid off without cause, had their place of employment close, or were self-employed and now unemployed. The youth group was considered low-income individuals ages 14 to 21 who faced at least one of six WIA-defined barriers (Decker & Berk, 2011).

The youth program consisted of ten service components including tutoring, work experience, and counseling support services (WIA, 1998). The adult and dislocated worker programs offered three tiers of services. The first tier, or core services, provided: (a) job listings, (b) labor market information, (c) computer access, and (d) workshops on resume writing and interviewing skills (Decker & Berk, 2011). The core services were made available to everyone that participated in the adult or dislocated worker programs (Heinrich, et al., 2013).

An individual that entered the adult or dislocated worker programs received core services first. If an individual was unable to obtain employment through the core services and the need was determined by a one-stop operator, the individual was then eligible for the next level of service, which is intensive services (WIA, 1998). The intensive services included: (a) assessments, (b) individual employment plans, (c) counseling, and (d) work experience placements.

If the intensive service was unsuccessful in helping an individual obtain employment and the one-stop operator determined it was appropriate, the individual was eligible for the top level of services or training services (WIA, 1998). The training services were usually provided by approved training providers that were often community colleges, proprietary schools, or nonprofits (Heinrich, et al., 2013). The training services were provided through a voucher called the Individual Training Account (ITA) (Heinrich, et al., 2013). According to Decker and Berk (2011), the ITA's dollar values and durations were capped and varied across local areas.

Previous Research

There have been a number of studies performed on the WIA employment programs. The common theme was to determine if the Workforce Investment Act really worked and if it truly had an impact on the workforce. Different approaches were taken. A number of studies attempted to compare the outcomes of WIA participants to those in similar circumstances who did not participate in the WIA. The results varied.

For example, one study analyzed data from 12 states that included roughly 160,000 WIA participants and nearly 3 million comparison individuals. The study concluded that participants that exited the adult WIA program generally earned about \$400 to \$600 more per quarter than the comparison group (Heinrich et al., 2013). In the same study, those who participated in the dislocated worker program demonstrated no discernable advantage over those in the comparison group (Heinrich et al., 2013).

Hollenbeck (2009) performed four studies in three states, Washington, Virginia, and Indiana. The studies evaluated WIA participants' short-term and long-term outcomes based on employment rates, work hours, wage rate, and quarterly earnings. Short-term

outcomes were considered 2 to 3 quarters after program exit and long-term ranged from 4 to 12 quarters after program exit.

The short-term results showed a five to fifteen percent advantage in employment rates for WIA participants over the comparison group. Quarterly earnings were also an advantage over the comparison group. The adult program ranged from \$146 to \$711 per quarter more than the comparison group while the dislocated worker program showed a \$410 to \$784 per quarter advantage. The results pointed to a lower actual payoff for dislocated workers due to lost earnings during the training period. The long-term results were consistent with the short-term results suggesting that the outcomes do not depreciate over time.

According to Decker and Berk (2011), impacts were marginal for WIA participants when compared to individuals who did not enroll in WIA. They found that the impacts of the adult worker program were modestly positive. The evidence for the dislocated worker program suggested little or no positive impact and could possibly have been negative (Decker & Berk, 2011).

Chrisinger (2013) took yet another approach in Washington State. Instead of comparing only income levels, she included earnings progression after program exit. The results showed virtually no difference between WIA program participants and individuals in the less-intensive Labor Exchange services. Her findings suggested that there was no advantage to participating in the WIA program.

Tormen (2013) performed a qualitative study in Delaware by interviewing program participants, administrators, and training service providers. The study was meant to highlight the experiences of these individuals, identify successes and challenges

in the program, and suggest how to improve the program. Many of the challenges fell back on inadequate funding. Participants felt that increased funding could be used to reach more individuals in need and increase program completion. According to Tormen (2013), although the study showed benefit to the individuals in the program, it showed no evidence of impact on unemployment.

Finally, Hollenbeck (2009) performed a benefit-cost analysis to determine the return on investment (ROI) for the individual (program participant), public (taxpayers), and society (sum of individual and public). The ROI was calculated using: (a) lifetime earnings, (b) fringe benefits, (c) taxes, (d) reductions in assistance programs and Medicaid benefits, (e) forgone earnings, (f) tuition payments, and (g) program costs. The results for the adult program demonstrated a positive ROI for the individual and society, and a negative ROI for the public. The results for the dislocated worker program showed a negative ROI for all three categories of stakeholders.

Despite these and other studies, there was little known about WIA's actual impact on labor market outcomes (Heinrich, et al., 2013) in regards to unemployment rates. One commonality with most of these studies was that the adult program was more effective than the dislocated worker program. However, there was no concrete evidence that explained this result. With the enactment of WIOA, there will be more opportunity to gather data to answer the question of program impact.

Methodology

The research was conducted using a quasi-experimental, quantitative design. Quasi-experiments do not use random sampling, rather naturally formed groups (Creswell, 2014, p. 168). In the case of this research, the groups were made up of the individuals enrolled in each service of the adult and dislocated worker programs in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area.

Quantitative methods examine relationships among variables, analyze data, and test a theory using empirical observations and measures (Creswell, 2014, p. 155). The objective of this research was to measure the effectiveness of each service by comparing the number of individuals who enrolled in each service to the number of individuals that successfully completed each service. The overall cost of each program was then used to determine the average cost per successful individual outcome.

Procedure and Analysis

The first step in this research was to acquire the administrative data, or Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) (Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, n.d.), for the WIA program. This data was accessible through the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) WIA Performance Result Archives. The data included the records for all WIA participants.

Data Description. The WIASRD was in a comma-separated value (CSV) format. Each individual record contained over 250 fields for items, such as: (a) individual information, (b) program participation data, (c) employment and job retention

data, and (d) education, credential, and skill attainment data. The following record fields were used to compile the data for evaluation:

- *Individual Identifier* – Unique identification number assigned to an individual.
- *ETA-Assigned Local Board/Statewide Code* – Code to identify workforce investment area where services are received.
- *Date of Exit* – Date when last program-funded service received by the participant.
- *Adult* – Identifies participation in Adult WIA program.
- *Dislocated Worker* – Identified participation in Dislocated Worker WIA program.
- *Date of 1st Staff Assisted Core Service* – Date when the participant received first staff-assisted core service.
- *Date of 1st Intensive Service* – Date when the participant received first intensive service.
- *Date Entered Training* – Date when the participant training began.
- *Type of Training* – Code indicating type of training received by participant.
- *Employed in 1st Quarter After Exit Quarter* – Identified if the participant was employed in the first quarter (3 months) after program exit.
- *Type of Recognized Credential* – Code identifying the type of credential earned by the participant after receiving training services.

Data Sorting. Once the data was acquired, the individuals who participated in the adult and dislocated worker programs between the years of 2000 and 2014 in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area were identified. According to the DOLETA (2011), the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) assigned local board/statewide code for the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment area was 21005.

This code was used to identify the participant records that belonged to the target area in the national data sets for each year. Once these records were identified, they were sorted by program and service participation.

The records were sorted by program first. All the individuals that participated in the adult program were identified using the adult program identifier. The identified individual records were compiled and separated from the dislocated worker records. This step created separate datasets for the adult and dislocated worker participants. The adult program dataset was sorted first.

The individuals identified as participants in the adult program core services were selected and separated into their own subset. These records were identified by having a date of core service and no dates of intensive or training services. The records were then sorted by those that did not obtain employment. These were identified by having no employment in the first quarter after program exit. These individuals were classified as unsuccessful.

The individuals that remained in the core services, after removing the individuals that did not obtain employment, were then sorted for individuals that were employed as a result of core service participation. These individuals were identified by having participated in the core service with employment obtained in the first quarter after program exit along and no other service participation. These individuals were classified as successful. The remaining records that showed participation in the other services were classified as progressing to the next level of service, intensive services. Individuals that were classified as progressing to the next level of service were not counted at this point

because they were counted in the subsequent service level evaluations (intensive and training). Refer to Table 1 for a truth table that illustrates the identification and classification method.

Table 1
Core service classification truth table

Classification	Criteria		
	Participated	Employed	Intensive Service Participation
Unsuccessful	Yes	No	No
Successful	Yes	Yes	No
Next Level	Yes	Yes or No	Yes

Next, the individuals identified as participating in the intensive services were sorted. Like the core services, they were classified based on a set of criteria. The records that showed participation in the intensive services with no employment obtained or training participation were classified as unsuccessful. The records that showed intensive service participation along with employment obtained in the first quarter after program exit and no training participation were classified as successful. Records that showed participation in the intensive and training services were classified as progressing to the training service. See Table 2 for the truth table illustration.

Finally, the individuals identified as participating in the training service were sorted by credential earned status, and employment data. The individuals that showed training service participation, no credential earned, and no employment were classified as unsuccessful. The records that showed training service participation, and employed were considered successful. The individuals that showed training service participation, no employment obtained, and a credential earned were classified as credentialed/not

employed. The individuals that showed training service participation, no credential, and employment obtained were classified as employed/not credentialed. See Table 3 for the truth table.

Table 2

Intensive service classification truth table

Classification	Criteria		
	Participated	Employed	Training Service Participation
Unsuccessful	Yes	No	No
Successful	Yes	Yes	No
Next Level	Yes	Yes or No	Yes

Table 3

Training service classification truth table

Classification	Criteria		
	Participated	Earned Credential	Employed
Unsuccessful	Yes	No	No
Successful	Yes	Yes or No	Yes
Credentialed/Not Employed	Yes	Yes	No
Employed/Not Credentialed	Yes	No	Yes

Once the records were grouped and classified by participant outcome for each level of service, the data was analyzed. The core services were evaluated on the number of initial participants of the service versus the number that exited the program with employment. Success rates for the core service were established based on this analysis. The intensive services were evaluated using the same method.

The training service were evaluated differently than the core and intensive services because of the additional potential outcomes. The initial number of participants was calculated. The unsuccessful participants were then counted. Those who gained employment after participating in training were counted as a successful outcome. The records that showed participation, a credential earned, and no employment obtained in the first quarter after program exit (credentialed/not employed) were counted. Although noteworthy, this was considered a null value for the training service level. It was neither a success or failure because a credential was a positive outcome, although not the target outcome of the study. The records that showed employment obtained and no credential earned (employed/not credentialed) were also counted as a potential outcome. Again, this was a noteworthy outcome, but it was not counted as a success or failure. Success rates were then determined for the training service level based on the total number of participants, and successful outcomes.

Note, not all the records had an exit date or employment data. These fields were blank in several of the records in all the data subsets. The WIASRD record layout information that accompanied each data set stated that a blank field could not be counted as a zero or “no.” A blank field meant only that the data was not available at the time the record was reported. Records that lacked exit and employment data could not be accurately classified as a success or failure. Considering this, the individual records that had no exit data were separated and subtracted from the result totals.

Next, the total cost of the adult program was divided by the total number of successes from each service to calculate an average cost per success for the program. The program cost information was obtained from the annual budget reporting from the

Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Board. The cost per success, in tandem with the success and failure rates, were used to evaluate each service in each program to identify the most effective service.

The dislocated worker program records were sorted and classified utilizing the same method as the adult program. The dislocated worker program was sorted into core service, intensive service, and training service subsets. The individual records were classified within each service by their respective outcomes. The total cost of the dislocated worker program was calculated using the annual budget reports. The resulting information was used to evaluate the services to identify the most effective service.

Variables

Variables are the characteristics or attributes that can be measured or observed and varies among the subjects being studied (Creswell, 2014). There are two primary types of variables. The two primary types are independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variables are those that influence an outcome (Creswell, 2014). Dependent variables are dependent on the independent variable (Creswell, 2014). The dependent variables are the outcomes. The variables in this research were as follows:

The independent variables were:

- Number of individuals participating in the adult program core service
- Number of individuals participating in the adult program intensive service
- Number of individuals participating in the adult program training service
- Number of individuals participating in the dislocated worker program core service

- Number of individuals participating in the dislocated worker program intensive service
- Number of individuals participating in the dislocated worker program training service
- Number of successful outcomes in the adult program core service
- Number of successful outcomes in the adult program intensive service
- Number of successful outcomes in the adult program training service
- Number of successful outcomes in the dislocated worker program core service
- Number of successful outcomes in the dislocated worker program intensive service
- Number of successful outcomes in the dislocated worker program training service
- Cost of adult program
- Cost of dislocated worker program

The dependent variables were:

- Success rate of the adult program core service
- Success rate of the adult program intensive service
- Success rate of the adult program training service
- Success rate of the dislocated worker program core service
- Success rate of the dislocated worker program intensive service
- Success rate of the dislocated worker program training service
- Average cost per success in the adult program

- Average cost per success in the dislocated worker program

Threats to Validity

Threats to validity are aspects of a study that may impact legitimacy of the research results. The parts of this study that may have impacted the results were:

- The accuracy of reported data
- Some of the exit employment data was based on surveys
- Records absent of exit and employment data

Findings

This research was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of each service provided under the adult and dislocated worker programs of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) from 2000 to 2014 in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. The reported WIA data was compiled in a manner that demonstrated the level of effectiveness based on the number of individuals that participated in each service and their outcomes. The compiled data was able to show the most effective service in each program.

Data Compilation

The national data sets were first sorted by the ETA-Assigned Local Board/Statewide Code. The records with the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area code, 21005, were isolated. The records were then sorted by program participation. The adult program participants and dislocated worker participants were separated. The resulting datasets were sorted by the Individual Identifier field and duplicate records were removed. This resulted in 7,027 individual records in the adult program dataset and 10,148 in the dislocated worker program dataset.

Next, each dataset was further sorted into subsets by the highest level of service participation. The records that showed participation in training, by containing a date in the Date Entered Training field, were isolated as training participants in their respective programs. The remaining records that showed participation in the intensive service, by containing a date in the Date of 1st Intensive Service field, were isolated as intensive service participants. The remaining records were identified as core service participants. This process prepared the data for evaluation.

Adult Program

The author evaluated the core adult program first. There were 7,027 individuals who participated in the adult program. All the individuals entered the adult program beginning with the core services. Eight-hundred eighty-nine of those individuals remained in the core service and did not progress to the intensive or training service. The 889 individuals who remained in the core services made up the counts for the adult program core service evaluation. The remaining 6,138 individuals who entered the core service progressed to the next level of service. Interestingly, 6,097 of the 6,138 entered the intensive service. Forty-one skipped the intensive service and went directly into the training service.

Eight-hundred eight of the 6,097 who entered the intensive service did not progress any further and remained in the intensive service. Those 808 individuals remaining in the intensive service made up the counts for the adult program intensive service evaluation. The remaining 5,289 individuals who entered the intensive service plus the forty-one that skipped the intensive service made up the 5,330 who entered the training service. Those 5,330 individuals made up the counts for the adult program training service evaluation. See Table 4 for the adult program service entrance and progression totals.

Table 4

Adult program service entrance and progression totals

Program Service Totals							
Year	Entered Core Service	Remained in Core Service	Next Level	Entered Intensive Service	Remained in Intensive Service	Next Level	Entered Training Service
2000	301	1	300	34	4	30	14
2001	323	0	323	64	6	58	46
2002	252	1	251	6	3	3	29
2003	4	0	4	9	4	5	3
2004	152	0	152	470	111	359	269
2005	596	0	596	937	134	803	787
2006	707	0	707	775	80	695	752
2007	82	2	80	80	19	61	137
2008	428	0	428	418	31	387	282
2009	850	7	843	821	66	755	685
2010	1193	32	1161	1256	257	999	923
2011	547	352	195	103	10	93	348
2012	799	237	562	606	48	558	501
2013	487	201	286	273	8	265	272
2014	306	56	250	245	27	218	282
Totals	7027	889	6138	6097	808	5289	5330

There were 889 individual records that remained in the adult program core service. The records were sorted by the year the individuals entered the core service and counted for each year. The records were then sorted by the date each individual exited the program and counted. Finally, the records were sorted by whether they were employed in the first quarter after program exit and counted. Table 5 shows the tallied results. The research revealed that 269 of those that entered the adult program core service had no exit data and were subtracted from the number of individuals that entered the program. The results showed that of the 620 individuals with complete records who participated in the adult program core service, 351 were employed in the first quarter

after exiting the program. This resulted in a success rate of 56.6% for the adult program core service.

Table 5
Adult program core service totals

Counts			
Year	Entered	Exited	Employed
2000	1	0	0
2001	0	0	0
2002	1	0	0
2003	0	0	0
2004	0	0	0
2005	0	1	1
2006	0	0	0
2007	2	0	0
2008	0	0	0
2009	7	0	0
2010	32	6	1
2011	352	308	183
2012	237	245	166
2013	201	60	0
2014	56	0	0
No Exit Data	269	0	0
Totals	620	620	351

The adult program intensive service underwent evaluation in the same manner as the core service. The research revealed that 808 individuals remained in the adult program intensive service. Two-hundred seventy-nine of those individuals had no exit data recorded and were subtracted from the totals. The result showed that 529 individuals entered and exited the intensive service with 318 of them obtaining employment in the first quarter after exiting the program. Table 6 displays the final

tallied results. Using this data, the adult program intensive service success rate was found to be 60.1%.

Table 6
Adult program intensive service totals

Counts			
Year	Entered	Exited	Employed
2000	4	0	0
2001	6	0	0
2002	3	0	0
2003	4	0	0
2004	111	10	9
2005	134	149	118
2006	80	68	40
2007	19	35	18
2008	31	76	26
2009	66	45	21
2010	257	49	29
2011	10	48	35
2012	48	25	11
2013	8	14	6
2014	27	10	5
No Exit Data	279	0	0
Totals	529	529	318

The adult program training service had 5,330 individual records. It was first sorted for the number of individuals that entered the service (minus the individuals with no exit data), the number that exited, and the number that were employed in the first quarter after program exit. The totals are displayed in Table 7. The calculated success and rate for the adult program training service was 74.4%.

Table 7
Adult program training service totals

Counts			
Year	Entered	Exited	Employed
2000	14	0	0
2001	46	0	0
2002	29	0	0
2003	3	0	0
2004	269	78	65
2005	787	283	217
2006	752	576	404
2007	137	407	330
2008	282	550	368
2009	685	314	221
2010	923	591	489
2011	348	727	625
2012	501	470	201
2013	272	354	306
2014	282	268	210
No Exit Data	712	0	0
Totals	4618	4618	3436

The evaluation of the adult program training service also included a review of credentials earned without employment and employment gained without earning a credential. As in the previous evaluations, the total number of individuals in a given classification was counted minus those with incomplete exit data. Using this formula, the result was that 2,280, or 49.4%, of the 4,618 individuals who entered the adult program training service earned a credential. Four-hundred forty-four, or 9.6%, of the individuals who entered the training service earned a credential and did not find employment while

993, or 28.9%, of the employed individuals found employment without earning a credential. Refer to Table 8 for the individual counts.

Table 8

Adult program training service credential outcomes

Year	Counts		
	Credentialed	Credentialed/ Not Employed	Employed/Not Credentialed
2000	0	0	0
2001	0	0	0
2002	0	0	0
2003	0	0	0
2004	64	8	9
2005	199	20	36
2006	358	37	83
2007	276	10	64
2008	323	38	83
2009	207	27	41
2010	416	37	135
2011	433	51	201
2012	192	178	72
2013	0	24	182
2014	0	14	87
No Exit Data	188	0	0
Totals	2280	444	993

The overall budget for the adult program from 2000 to 2014 was \$25,961,594.

During the same period, 4,105 adult program participants were employed. See Table 9 for the annual figures. Dividing the budget total by the number of individuals employed in the adult program resulted in a \$6,324 average cost per successful outcome.

Table 9

Adult program budget totals

Year	Figures		
	Budget	Employed	Cost/Employed
2000		0	
2001	\$1,018,893	0	
2002	\$847,000	0	
2003	\$1,195,000	0	
2004	\$1,424,343	74	\$19,248
2005	\$2,269,999	336	\$6,756
2006	\$2,747,022	444	\$6,187
2007	\$1,896,283	348	\$5,449
2008	\$2,254,715	394	\$5,723
2009	\$2,604,544	242	\$10,763
2010	\$2,711,134	519	\$5,224
2011	\$2,062,156	843	\$2,446
2012	\$1,441,272	378	\$3,813
2013	\$1,870,682	312	\$5,996
2014	\$1,618,551	215	\$7,528
Totals	\$25,961,594	4105	\$6,324

Dislocated Worker Program

The author evaluated the dislocated worker program services utilizing the same method as the adult program services. The number of individuals that entered each service, remained in a service, and progressed to the next service was tracked. Ten-thousand one hundred forty-eight individuals entered the dislocated worker program through the core services. Thirty-six remained in the core services and were counted in the dislocated worker core service evaluation while 10,112 progressed. Ten-thousand eighty-five of those who progressed from the core service entered the intensive service.

As in the adult program, a small number of individuals, twenty-seven, skipped the intensive service and went directly into the training service.

Of the 10,085 individuals who entered the intensive service, 3,680 remained in the intensive service. The 3,680 that remained in the intensive service were counted in the dislocated worker intensive service evaluation. The remaining 6,405 that entered the intensive service plus the 27 that skipped the intensive service progressed to the training service. Six-thousand four-hundred thirty-two individuals entered the training service and made up the count for the dislocated worker training service evaluation. See Table 10 for the dislocated worker service entrance and progression totals.

Table 10

Dislocated worker program service entrance and progression totals

Year	Program Service Totals						
	Entered Core Service	Remained in Core Service	Next Level	Entered Intensive service	Remained in Intensive Service	Next Level	Entered Training Service
2000	618	0	618	27	1	26	13
2001	515	0	515	69	15	54	51
2002	341	1	340	148	34	114	117
2003	179	0	179	652	146	506	290
2004	350	0	350	744	167	577	692
2005	750	0	750	1002	471	531	549
2006	962	0	962	1051	669	382	392
2007	893	0	893	895	516	379	365
2008	963	0	963	809	298	511	457
2009	2040	1	2039	2062	731	1331	1051
2010	644	1	643	799	187	612	1002
2011	351	3	348	303	149	154	144
2012	745	4	741	740	116	624	574
2013	417	5	412	418	38	380	411
2014	380	21	359	366	142	224	324
Totals	10148	36	10112	10085	3680	6405	6432

The dislocated worker program core service had 36 individual records. Twenty-seven of those that entered the program had no exit data and were subtracted from the totals. The results showed that nine individuals entered and exited the dislocated worker program core service. Eight of those individuals were employed during the first quarter after program exit. Using these exit data totals resulted in dislocated worker program core service success rate of 88.9%. Refer to Table 11 for the individual counts.

Table 11

Dislocated worker program core service totals

Counts			
Year	Entered	Exited	Employed
2000	0	0	0
2001	0	0	0
2002	1	0	0
2003	0	0	0
2004	0	0	0
2005	0	1	1
2006	0	0	0
2007	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0
2009	1	0	0
2010	1	0	0
2011	3	4	4
2012	4	4	3
2013	5	0	0
2014	21	0	0
No Exit Data	27	0	0
Totals	9	9	8

The dislocated worker program intensive service had 3,680 individual records. Four-hundred ninety-six of the individuals that entered the dislocated worker program intensive service had no exit data and were subtracted. The results showed that 3,184

individuals entered and exited the dislocated worker program intensive service. Two-thousand two-hundred eighteen of those that exited were employed in the first quarter after program exit. Based on the exit data, the success rate of the dislocated worker program intensive service was 69.7%. Table 12 displays the individual counts.

Table 12

Dislocated worker program intensive service totals

Counts			
Year	Entered	Exited	Employed
2000	1	0	0
2001	15	0	0
2002	34	0	0
2003	146	0	0
2004	167	72	63
2005	471	278	216
2006	669	199	115
2007	516	388	265
2008	298	435	261
2009	731	392	301
2010	187	599	456
2011	149	533	435
2012	116	197	35
2013	38	29	25
2014	142	62	46
No Exit Data	496	0	0
Totals	3184	3184	2218

The dislocated worker program training service had 6,432 individual records. Nine-hundred seventy-nine of those had no exit data and were subtracted from the totals. Of the 5,453 individuals that entered and exited the dislocated worker program training service, 4,115 were employed in the first quarter after program exit. The exit results showed a success rate of 75.5%. Refer to Table 13 for the individual counts.

Table 13

Dislocated worker program training service totals

Counts			
Year	Entered	Exited	Employed
2000	13	0	0
2001	51	0	0
2002	117	0	0
2003	290	0	0
2004	692	233	202
2005	549	424	322
2006	392	615	415
2007	365	470	383
2008	457	442	297
2009	1051	471	389
2010	1002	619	546
2011	144	750	626
2012	574	628	299
2013	411	461	382
2014	324	340	254
No Exit Data	979	0	0
Totals	5453	5453	4115

The dislocated worker program training service evaluation included a review of the number of credentials earned by the participants without gaining employment and employment gained without a credential. Using the formula of counting all the individuals that earned credentials minus those that had no exit data, revealed that 3,378, or 61.9%, of the 5,453 participants who entered the dislocated worker program training service earned a credential. Six-hundred sixty-one, or 12.1%, of the individuals who entered the training service earned a credential and did not gain employment in the first

quarter after exit while 1,052, or 25.6%, of the employed individuals gained employment without earning a credential. Refer to Table 14 for the individual counts.

Table 14
Dislocated worker program training service credential counts

Year	Counts		
	Credentialed	Credentialed/Not Employed	Employed/Not Credentialed
2000	0	0	0
2001	0	0	0
2002	0	0	0
2003	0	0	0
2004	181	26	47
2005	256	29	95
2006	345	42	112
2007	339	29	73
2008	274	42	65
2009	364	50	75
2010	363	39	148
2011	543	71	155
2012	481	243	62
2013	314	57	125
2014	192	33	95
No Exit Data	274	0	0
Totals	3378	661	1052

The total budget for the dislocated worker program from 2000 to 2014 was \$16,079,537. The number of dislocated worker program participants that gained employment during the same time was 6,341. Dividing the total budget by the total number of individuals that were employed in the dislocated worker program resulted in a \$2,536 average cost per successful outcome. Refer to Table 15 for the annual figures.

Table 15

Dislocated worker program budget totals

Year	Figures		
	Budget	Employed	Cost/Employed
2000		0	
2001	\$1,611,426	0	
2002	\$978,000	0	
2003	\$1,004,000	0	
2004	\$1,041,366	265	\$3,930
2005	\$1,291,000	539	\$2,395
2006	\$1,380,842	530	\$2,605
2007	\$836,481	648	\$1,291
2008	\$1,469,092	558	\$2,633
2009	\$1,517,014	690	\$2,199
2010	\$1,345,374	1002	\$1,343
2011	\$1,046,483	1065	\$983
2012	\$818,387	337	\$2,428
2013	\$806,785	407	\$1,982
2014	\$933,287	300	\$3,111
Totals	\$16,079,537	6341	\$2,536

Conclusion

The findings from this research provided the evidence used to determine the most effective service in both the adult and dislocated worker programs provided in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. The summarized results are shown in Table 16. The results showed that the training service was the most effective in the adult program while the core service was the most effective dislocated worker program service. However, the results do not show the entire picture.

Table 16
Summarized research results

Program	Cost Per Success	Service Success Rates		
		Core	Intensive	Training
Adult	\$6,324	56.6%	60.1%	74.4%
Dislocated Worker	\$2,536	88.9%	69.7%	75.5%

The first consideration was that several records were excluded from the results for having no exit data. One-thousand two-hundred sixty, or 17.9%, of the 7,027 adult program records had no exit data. One-thousand five-hundred two, or 14.8%, of the 10,148 records from the dislocated worker program records had no exit data. The records were omitted from the results because a determination could not be made on whether they demonstrated a successful or unsuccessful outcome.

The record layout descriptions in the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) stated that a blank field should not be considered a zero or ‘no’. It only meant that the data was not available at the time the record was reported. The exit data may have been missing for several reasons. The data could have been missing

because an individual dropped out of the program without notifying the one-stop operator. An individual may have gained employment and dropped out of the program without notifying the one-stop operator. An individual may have still been receiving services under the newer Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) at the time the 2014 Workforce Investment Act data was reported. So, the unknown outcomes could not be counted as successes or failures.

The omitted records could have impacted the results. The adult program service success rates were close enough that the omitted records could have changed the results to show a service other than the training service as the most effective. Another area where the omitted records had an impact was the dislocated worker program core service. There were only 36 total records in the dislocated worker core service and 27 of those were omitted because they lacked exit data. Although the records that had no exit data were omitted from the results, they must be considered.

Another area of consideration was the number of participants in each service. In both the adult program and the dislocated worker program, the training service was utilized most. In the adult program, 75.8% of all participants received training services while, 63.4% of the dislocated worker program participants received training services. The one-stop operators' disproportionate reliance on one service over another may have impacted the effectiveness results.

Based on the research results, the answer to the research question asking which adult program was most effective was the training service. The adult program training service's success rate of 74.4% was highest overall. The answer to the research question asking which dislocated worker program service was most effective was initially the core

service. The dislocated worker program core service showed an 88.9% success rate. However, the nine records that were used to calculate the rates for the dislocated worker program core service accounted for 0.1% of the total records for the dislocated worker program. The sample size was deemed too small to be reliable. Thus, the 75.5% success rate in the training service was the highest measurable success rate, which made it most effective in the dislocated worker program.

Another added benefit for the training service participants was the earning of credentials. Credential attainment was not the target outcome of this study, but it could not be ignored. Credentials could have a lasting positive employment impact for an individual even if employment was not attained when exiting the program. This provided more evidence of positive training service effectiveness.

Factoring in the cost per success for each program revealed that the dislocated worker training service was arguably the most effective service overall. The dislocated worker program had the lowest cost per success at \$2,536 while dislocated worker program training service had the highest measurable success rate at 75.5%.

Seventeen-thousand one-hundred seventy-five individuals participated in the Workforce Investment Act adult and dislocated worker programs in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area. Ten-thousand four hundred forty-six of these WIA participants were employed after receiving WIA program services. Five-thousand six-hundred fifty-eight of these WIA participants earned a credential after receiving WIA services. One-thousand one-hundred five of those that earned a credential did not immediately find employment, but the earned credential may help them find future employment opportunities. Workforce investment proved to be an effective and

worthwhile tool that helped unemployed individuals find employment in Western Kentucky.

Future Study

Future studies could further analyze the external influences on the outcomes of the participants. This could include an analysis of the job market environment in the Western Kentucky Workforce Investment Area during the time that the WIA was implemented. Additional studies could be performed to compare participant outcomes in different employment sectors. For example, it was possible that participants who chose to enter the medical field had a higher success rate than those who chose business or a technology based field. A more detailed study of the participant outcomes could provide a clearer picture on how to more effectively provide workforce development programs.

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