



Using Employment Projections to Assist the Workforce Training System

by Tom Austin

You can't predict the future, right? Well, that is partially true. While the future is always fluid, current information and sophisticated analysis can produce the Illinois Department of Employment Security's (IDES) employment projections.

These are forecasts that calculate the projected growth of employment by both industry and occupation. This data determines which jobs are expected to be in demand in the future and how best to prepare for those jobs. Employment

projections are broken out by short-term (two-year) and long-term (10-year) time periods. These reports tell us which industries and occupations are poised for growth statewide and by local workforce areas – invaluable information for someone planning a career in Illinois.

Who Uses Employment Projections?

Employment projections are used in a number of ways by a variety of individuals. School counselors use employment

Information included in occupational employment projections:

- Base Year Employment
- Projected Year Employment
- Employment Change
- Average Annual Job Openings
- Annual Compound Growth

projections to show students which occupations have a high rate of annual openings, which ultimately translates into the most employment opportunities. High school and college students can use this information to make informed career decisions. Employment projections assist these students as they decide which classes and subjects might help them become successful in their future careers.

Using employment projections isn't just limited to students. They help people who are forced to leave their current jobs because of layoffs, or help job seekers transition into new careers. Most laid-off individuals prefer earning similar wages as quickly as possible. The annual openings data, combined with additional workforce information, such as the IDES occupational wage data, becomes an effective tool for helping people make important career decisions and transition back into the workforce effectively.

Employment Projections Help Workforce Professionals

In the workforce system, employment projections are used to assist policy makers in deciding which training programs to fund. Limited funding opportunities on training for occupations and industries that offer their customers the best employment success make good investments. Employment projections are not a listing of actual jobs, but they offer predictions of employment changes in the local economy. This information provides workforce professionals the tools to help individuals match their current skills and education to future employment opportunities.

A New Employment Projections Tool

The Boone and Winnebago County Workforce Board, in Local Workforce Area 3, recently collaborated with the Illinois Department of Employment Security to develop a database to help its members make critical decisions concerning which training programs were best for future employment prospects. Using data from the Illinois Workforce Development System, employment projections are matched to training programs, with the Classification of Instructional Programs* (see breakout box) system, to show the availability of employment opportunities within a particular training area. In addition, IDES wage data is coupled with employment projections to show potential earnings by occupation. The Illinois Workforce Development System also supplied

information on the number of people currently in training to help determine the competition for the projected job openings. The database combines a variety of information to help workforce board and staff members make informed decisions on which training programs are most successful in helping trainees gain employment. In summary, employment projections are a useful tool for students, job seekers, and workforce boards. When employment projections are combined with wage data and workforce program information, workforce staff and board members have a powerful tool to assist them with their planning and program decisions. This, in turn, allows workforce systems to better serve their clients and get people ready to work. IDES Workforce and Career Information staff are eager to work in partnership with workforce board staff to provide them with the information they need.

Classification of Instructional Programs:

The purpose of the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) is to provide a taxonomic scheme that will support the accurate tracking, assessment, and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity. See <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/cip2000> for more information.

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