Foundations of Economic Development Research: Introduction to Data Sources

Telling Your Region's Story - Exercise Guide

This course provides economic developers and researchers with an introduction to key data sources, research methods, and tools to support state and regional economic development strategies. The course exercises that follow many of these explanatory modules reinforce the basic analytical skills needed to address real-world questions that policymakers and practitioners encounter. Each will ask you to navigate online statistical resources and access data for a region. In some cases, you will also be asked to use the data to perform some basic analytical tasks.

Download and print the linked PDF guide to the course exercises--and as you work through each activity, think about the story the data tells for your region--or perhaps for another region you'd like to learn more about.

Note that the first section of the course does not include accompanying exercises.

Using Key Federal Data Sources: A Guide to the "Big Three" Statistical Agencies

U.S. Census

- Find the following data using the American Community Survey:
  - Total Population for your area
  - Number of Households
  - Percent population by race

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

- Find the following data using the QCEW Data Viewer:
  - Total Employment (average, latest quarter)
  - Number of Establishments
  - Average Annual Wage

Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

- Find the following data using the Regional Interactive Tables:
  - Per Capita Personal Income (latest year)
  - Metro GDP (latest year)

Evaluating Regional Data Trends

- Find the following data using the American Community Survey:
  - 2010 and 2018 Employment Status for your area

- Using the data pulled, examine employment growth in your region, calculating the simple and compound growth rates.

Performing Labor Market Analysis

- Find the following data using IPEDS for your region.
    - Top Three Colleges & Universities (excluding barber, beauty & theological schools)
        - Name
        - Address
        - Enrollment
    - Total Number of Graduates

- Find the following data using the BLS Occupational Employment Statistical data:
    - Top Five (detailed) Occupations
    - Total Employment
    - Mean Annual Wage
- Describe the skills and education required for each occupation

- Compare national growth projections to the leading occupations and industries in your region.
    - Is your region well positioned?

Conducting Competitive Market Intelligence Research

After watching the tutorial on accessing and using C2ER datasets for regional analysis, try accessing these datasets yourself from the member area of the C2ER website.

Using Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) Data

After watching the LEHD On The Map Tutorial with Earlene, try using the tool for your area.

- How many employees live and work in your metro?
- How many employees work inside your metro but live elsewhere?
    - What are the top three places that they live?

Presenting Research Findings

- Think about the story the data is telling about your region. How would you present this to a business prospect? What are your region's primary industries that can help support the new business? What are the most common degree fields people in your area are obtaining? How can this help a company looking to locate and why should they choose you?