TIP SHEET: BUILDING STATEWIDE DATA CAPACITY

A tip sheet (one of three) for workforce boards and state LMI offices.

Strong workforce systems aren't built on better data alone. They're built on partnerships that translate labor market information into practical insights that employers, educators, elected officials, and job seekers can actually use. The tips below are designed to help state and local offices collaborate more effectively and deliver better services to all the stakeholders in their regions and states.

FOR WORKFORCE BOARDS: GETTING MORE FROM YOUR STATE LMI OFFICE

Familiarize yourself with the products that your state LMI office already provides. Your state LMI office may already have just the product you need. Ask what standard products they offer (high priority or in demand occupation lists, area profiles, wage data broken out by entry level, median, and experienced) before requesting something new.

Don't be afraid to ask for what you need. State LMI offices are your partners. Your success is their success so if the existing products don't meet your needs, reach out and see if they can provide some customized data that fits your audience or task. LMI offices want your input - feedback helps your state LMI office identify and implement improvements that can make their existing products stronger. Looking for a state LMI office contact? Find it **here**.

Before requesting or sharing anything, ask: what question is this meant to answer? Context, not the underlying data, is often the missing piece when it comes to effective decision making. Having a clear goal in mind and asking the right question can ensure you get the information your client needs. Your state LMI office may have received similar requests from other regions so they can help you get at the right question.

Include LMI data into your process early. Boards that engage their state office early can ensure they get any custom data developed well in advance.
Treat your state contact as a planning partner, not a last-minute data source.

Build a standing relationship, not a one-time contact. The boards with the strongest access to their state office aren't just calling a help desk but rely on established relationships. Join any regular calls your state office runs for boards, attend their forums, or set up a standing meeting so you're sharing upcoming initiatives before you need data.

FOR STATE LMI OFFICES: BUILDING THE KIND OF PARTNERSHIP THAT GETS USED

Treat product development as an ongoing collaborative process. Workforce Boards surface recurring employer questions, emerging industries, and gaps in what already exists. The state LMI office responds by revising dashboards, reports, and custom analyses. Include the people who will use a new product in the planning and development process and keep the loop open after release.

Build staff development into the plan. Make yourself available to new workforce board staff to help familiarize them with the products your office makes available. Additionally, helping the people who collect and clean data understand how it's applied, even staff who never talk to local boards directly, strengthens the whole partnership. Set aside time for your own team to see their impact on the finished products.

Start with the boards that need the most help. Smaller and mid-size boards without dedicated data staff often benefit most from direct outreach, training visits, and short regional forums. Consider focusing your limited time where the marginal benefit is highest.

Make yourself reachable and mean it. A working phone number, a fast response, and staff willing to walk someone through a dashboard live can be a real relationship builder, more than any single tool or report. Responsiveness is a capacity building strategy in its own right.

A SHARED NEXT STEP: AI READINESS

As workforce boards and state LMI offices bring AI into daily work, NAWB and Microsoft built three free AI credentials for career coaches, workforce administrators, and job seekers, hosted on LinkedIn Learning outside its usual paywall. Consider adding one to onboarding for new program participants or staff before leaning on AI tools to interpret labor market data.

- **AI Fluency: Generative AI for Career Coaches by Microsoft and NAWB**
- **AI Fluency: Generative AI for Career Growth and Job Search by Microsoft and NAWB**
- **AI Fluency: Generative AI for Workforce Agency Administrators by Microsoft and NAWB**

This tipsheet was developed as a companion to the first session of the NAWB and LMI Institute Decision Maker Series, featuring Pennsylvania's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) and three of the state's 22 local workforce development boards. You can find that conversation here: ***Decision Maker Series – Session 1: Building Data Capacity with Limited Resources: Practical Strategies for Regional Organizations.***

This product is the final phase of the LMI Institute ***Data at Work*** *series funded by* ***Lumina Foundation****, exploring how workforce development boards across the country are building data capacity to inform strategy, drive innovation, and expand access to education and career opportunities.*