

¹Survey of Employer Provided Training Development Results and Recommendations

Executive Summary

September 26, 2017

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In 2016, the Department of Labor contracted with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to develop a survey to measure employer provided training. This memo is a high level summary of four documents that provides the details of the proposed approach: results from exploratory establishment interviews, results from cognitive interviews with establishments (including proposed survey form), results from cognitive interviews with employees (including proposed survey form) and the proposed sampling plan.

Building upon work done for the BLS 1993 and 1995 Surveys of Employer Provided Training (SEPT), the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics (OEUS) and the Office of Survey Methods Research (OSMR) staff completed several activities to meet this goal. Stakeholder consultations, environmental scanning and literature reviews were the first steps, and these informed the development of the survey's measurement objectives.

The original primary objectives for the new SEPT survey were to measure the percentage of workers receiving employer provided (or financed) training and the hours of training they received in order to create annual estimates. The primary estimation objectives included both incidence of training (percentage of establishments providing, sponsoring or financing training, percentage of workers receiving training from their employer) and intensity of training (hours of employer provided training per worker, expenditure on training per employee). The survey was also to collect information about both formal and informal training.

Note: This research was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Policy, Chief Evaluation Office.

The first round of exploratory interviews with establishments revealed that several of these objectives were not feasible; establishment respondents simply were not able to provide detailed information about the number and hours of training provided to employees (in total and by mode, source, and type) or the exact amount of money spent on training. Interviews also confirmed that employers were not able to provide any reliable information about informal training. Based on these findings, the measurement objectives were revised, and the survey design expanded to include surveys of both employers and employees. Employee training logs were also recommended to collect the most detailed information.

In the second round of testing, the research question focused on the feasibility of collecting the desired measurement objectives using only surveys (and not training logs). The decision to exclude logs from the testing was based on the added respondent burden and the significant cost increase, due to the likely requirement for in-person placement to obtain cooperation. Draft employee and employer questions were created and tested in cognitive interviews with establishments and employees. The results from these interviews were promising; both types of respondents were generally able to understand and provide the desired information. There were some questions that proved to be confusing or difficult, and recommendations for revisions were created. Two survey forms were created, along with the recommendation that an employee log be developed and tested. For both, participants are expected to be able to answer without need of an interviewer, and the short completion time observed in testing suggests that the surveys are well suited for online administration.

Based on the final proposed survey forms and measurement objectives, a sampling plan was developed. Two independent national samples were designed to produce the key estimates below with reasonable precision. Additional estimates will be produced if the sample is sufficient for them to be estimated with enough precision, and enough respondents are in each cell to preserve confidentiality.

- Proportion of employers providing formal training by mode (employer survey)
- Proportion of employers providing formal training by topic (employer survey)
- Proportion of employers providing formal training by source (employer survey)
- Proportion of employees receiving formal training by mode (employee survey)
- Proportion of employees receiving formal training by occupation (employee survey)
- Proportion of employees receiving informal training by mode (employee survey)
- Proportion of employees receiving informal training by occupation (employee survey)

Summary of Recommendations

1. Online employer survey to collect incidence of formal training. Sample size of 20,700 establishments to produce tables by industry and tables by size class with a 3% margin of error.
2. Online employee survey to collect incidence of formal and informal training. Sample size of 18,500 households to produce tables by occupation with a 3% margin of error.
3. Following the survey, have employees keep an online employee log (to be developed) to collect intensity of formal and informal training.
4. Conduct another round of development and testing, focusing on the employee log and outstanding substantive issues (e.g., focus on job skills instead of training topics).