

Chapin Hall CWICstats

Policy research that
benefits children, families,
and their communities

Workforce Research and Data Initiative

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In partnership with policymakers and program stakeholders of Chicago's workforce development system, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago formed *CWICstats*—a research and data initiative that collects, analyzes, and disseminates information on the performance of Chicago-area workforce development programs.

CWICstats emerged from Chicago LEADS (Leading Economic Advancement, Development, and Sustainability), a mayoral initiative to align workforce development, education, and economic development to better meet the needs of Chicago businesses, residents, and communities. The goals of Chicago LEADS were to increase the supply of skilled labor, improve the skills and earning potential of working residents, build the wealth of Chicago communities by supporting local businesses in finding qualified workers, and enhance the attractiveness of Chicago as a business destination.

CWICstats is designed to support these goals by providing policymakers and funders with reliable data and analysis on the workforce development system and its outcomes. Information provided by *CWICstats* helps stakeholders make better investment decisions and, ultimately, gives residents the information they need to find appropriate programs and services. *CWICstats* aims to identify areas of innovation and, in partnership with the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC), develop a better understanding of program participants and outcomes, thereby helping workforce development policymakers and providers deliver effective services to respond to the needs of residents and businesses.

Data and Analysis

CWICstats matches administrative program data from partner agencies to wage data to understand individual residents' work experiences before, during, and after participating in workforce programs. Reports and studies are packaged in ways that are accessible and useful to multiple audiences. Ongoing structured and informal contact between *CWICstats* staff and stakeholders guides data collection and analysis and facilitates the development of shared goals for the workforce system. *CWICstats* maintains data sharing agreements that enable researchers to analyze individual-level program information on students or clients served by workforce programs provided by the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, and other city and state public agencies.

Key Activities and Products

CWICstats researchers engage in three key activities: (1) developing a regular program "benchmarking report" using meaningful performance measures that policymakers and managers within the workforce system can use, including background measures on program participants (e.g., characteristics, secondary school experiences), process-oriented measures (e.g., participation in workforce programs), and outcome measures (e.g., employment and wages after program completion); (2) producing a quarterly "dashboard report" providing key local labor market indicators for policymakers, program managers, and the public; and (3) developing and executing a research agenda, with input from an advisory council that

includes researchers, funders, and representatives from business and the workforce training provider community.

The *CWICstats* research agenda is developed to help support the research and information needs of policymakers and program managers. Research questions that may be addressed include the following:

- Who is served by the workforce development system, what are their pathways through the system, and what are their outcomes?
- What factors contribute to the achievement of successful employment outcomes?
- How do different combinations of programs interact to influence success?
- What are the factors related to premature exit from the workforce development system?
- What returns do both individuals and society reap—in terms of employment, wages, postsecondary outcomes, etc.—from different public investments?

In conjunction with these primary *CWICstats* efforts, researchers at Chapin Hall have engaged in several other related workforce development research activities, including creating a report describing the complex workforce development system in Chicago, studying the implementation of Career and Technical Education in the Chicago Public Schools, evaluating the Chicago Career Tech workforce training program, identifying and assessing how to quantify factors related to successful workforce development programs, and developing a public website to provide information about and outcomes of Workforce Investment Act

Established in 1985, Chapin Hall is an independent policy research center whose mission is to build knowledge that improves policies and programs for children and youth, families, and their communities.

Chapin Hall's areas of research include child maltreatment prevention, child welfare systems and foster care, youth justice, schools and their connections with social services and community organizations, early childhood initiatives, community change initiatives, workforce development, out-of-school time initiatives, economic supports for families, and child well-being indicators.

training programs. Chapin Hall researchers are able to leverage their *CWICstats* work with program administrative data and performance measures to incorporate additional research and evaluation activities into their research agenda, providing valuable information about the process and outcomes of workforce development programs.

Key Personnel and Financial Support

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago houses and operates *CWICstats*. Chapin Hall combines experience with linking administrative records, access to collaborating labor economists, and a long history of successful collaboration with public agencies to advance knowledge and improve policy. Matthew Stagner, executive director of Chapin Hall, and Robert Goerge, Chapin Hall research fellow, provide oversight of *CWICstats*. Dan Black, professor and deputy dean at the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago and senior fellow at NORC at the University of Chicago, serves as senior faculty researcher. Elizabeth Weigensberg, Chapin Hall senior researcher, serves as *CWICstats* coordinator. Other key Chapin Hall research staff include Shannon Gultinan, Lauren Sartain, Peter Ballard, and Colleen Schlecht.

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