CWICstats: A collaborative model to address the research and data needs of local workforce development policymakers

Elizabeth Weigensberg, PhD

Federal Reserve System Community Development Research Conference
Resilience & Rebuilding for Low-Income Communities: Research to Inform Policy and Practice
Washington, DC
April 11, 2013

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Policy research that benefits children, families, and their communities
What is CWICstats?

CWICstats:
Chicagoland Workforce Information Collaborative

- Workforce development research and data initiative at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, established in 2009
- Analyze data to assess Chicago’s workforce development system
  - Specialize in analyzing & linking individual-level administrative data
  - Also use labor market data & conduct original data collection for both quantitative & qualitative research
- Conduct research to help answer workforce development policy questions
  - What is the workforce development system? How are these program performing? How can we better assess program performance?
  - Who are the participants in the workforce development system? What are their pathways through the system? What are their outcomes?
  - What are key factors of successful workforce programs?
Chicago has a very fragmented workforce development system, creating a need for coordinated/linked data to assess program outcomes.

Need for CWICstats
Audience for CWICstats

- Users of CWICstats research include a variety of stakeholders with a need to make data-informed decisions:
  - Workforce Investment Boards: Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership, former Chicago Workforce Investment Council
  - Workforce and economic development policymakers
  - State & local public agency administrators
  - Community-based workforce service providers
  - Foundations funding local workforce programs
  - Businesses working with workforce providers
  - Workforce program participants
How does CWIC*stats* work?

- Collaborate with partner agencies to:
  - Establish data sharing agreements to access individual-level administrative data on program participants
- Link & analyze data to:
  - Assess program performance measures
  - Perform research on participants’ program engagement, educational attainment, and employment outcomes over time and across programs
  - Conduct program evaluation
  - Provide transparency of program outcomes for consumers with a website of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training program outcomes
    - [http://www.chicagolandwiatraining.com](http://www.chicagolandwiatraining.com)
Agency Partners & Data

- Chapin Hall partners with local/state public agencies to link individual-level administrative program data to employment wage data and across programs
  - Illinois Department of Employment Security
  - Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
  - Illinois Department of Human Services
  - Chicago Department of Family & Support Services
  - Chicago Public Schools

- Other data sources including
  - National Student Clearinghouse data
  - GED data

- Provides unique opportunity for research on individuals’ employment and training experiences before, during, and after program involvement, assess program performance, and study factors related to achievement of positive outcomes
Objective: Describe characteristics, pathways/experiences, and outcomes of youth in education and workforce development system

Descriptive and longitudinal cohort analysis of first-time Chicago Public School (CPS) freshman (9th graders) in 2000-01 and 2001-02 (n=47,006)

Follow youth through high school into workforce & post-secondary education

- **Education attainment**: Career & Technical Education (CTE) completion, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, persistence
- **Employment outcomes**: engagement in workforce development programs, employment, earnings

Link individual-level administrative data across systems & over time

- CPS student transcripts, dropout & graduation data
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program data
- National Student Clearinghouse post-secondary data through 2010
- Unemployment Insurance quarterly earnings data in 2010
Selected findings regarding post-secondary education & employment

Post-secondary education outcomes among graduates:

- 70% of high school graduates enrolled in college
- 49% enrolled in the fall immediately after graduation, showing a third of graduates take non-traditional paths to college
- Students who were CTE completers enrolled in post-secondary education at similar percentage to non-CTE students, with 72% ever enrolling in college

Employment & earnings among all students in sample:

- 61% had earnings during 2010
- Higher employment and average earnings among high school graduates (59%, $5775) compared to dropouts (36%, $4790), however employment & earnings were much lower among black students regardless of high school completion
Research example: *Inside the black box: What makes workforce programs successful?*

- Objectives: (1) understand the factors that may explain *why* workforce programs achieve success, (2) *how* these factors may be quantified or measured to help improve the system
- Qualitative research with 6 community-based workforce development programs in Chicago
- Develop better understanding of program processes & contextual influences on outcomes
- Determine what measures & data are needed

*Study was funded with support by from the Ford Foundation*
Conceptual model: Factors related to successful workforce outcomes

External factors
- Community context
- Employer engagement
- Partnerships

Organizational factors
- Diverse funding sources
- Staff, leadership, size

Program/practice factors
- Support services
- Program flexibility
- Family involvement
- Focus on quality of job placement

Individual participant characteristics
Recommendations for workforce development program data & outcomes

**Improve measures for workforce development, by…**
- establishing some common measures, but allow for flexibility
- using longitudinal measures to assess outcomes over time
- analyzing outcomes by subpopulations, barriers to employment

**Expand what is measured to include…**
- assessment data, continual development of skills, intermediate participant achievements
- use of support services, achievement of economic self-sufficiency
- achievement of industry credentials
- employer and community engagement/outcomes

**Establish integrated data systems that…**
- minimize repetitive, redundant data entry in multiple systems
- collect information on all program participants
- provide programs with useful measures for self assessment & facilitate reporting
- is flexible to meet the diverse & changing needs of programs
Implications

- Model for building agency partnerships to share, link & analyze data to assess the performance of the workforce development system and promote improved participant and program outcomes
- Provides policymakers and program administrators with unique and valuable look at education and employment outcomes using cross-system and longitudinal perspective
- Developing a better understanding of contextual factors that influence workforce program outcomes
- Promoting improved data systems and better use of data
- Promoting culture of data-informed decision-making among policymakers, administrators, and participants
Thank you!

Elizabeth Weigensberg, PhD
Senior Researcher
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
eweigensberg@chapinhall.org

www.chapinhall.org