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Future Opportunities for Rural Workforce and Rural Development

ILLINOIS
Agricultural & Consumer Economics
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Using Labor Market Information to Address Rural Workforce Challenges

Mark C. White, Ph.D.
Clinical Associate Professor
Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Agenda

- Placing Extension within the landscape of workforce development
- Integrating labor market information (LMI) into workforce development planning process
- Introducing the Future Opportunities for Rural Workforce and Rural Development (FORWARD) Curriculum as resource for extension professionals

Extension’s role in workforce development

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Common rural workforce challenges

- Rural employers have a hard time finding workers, and especially skilled workers

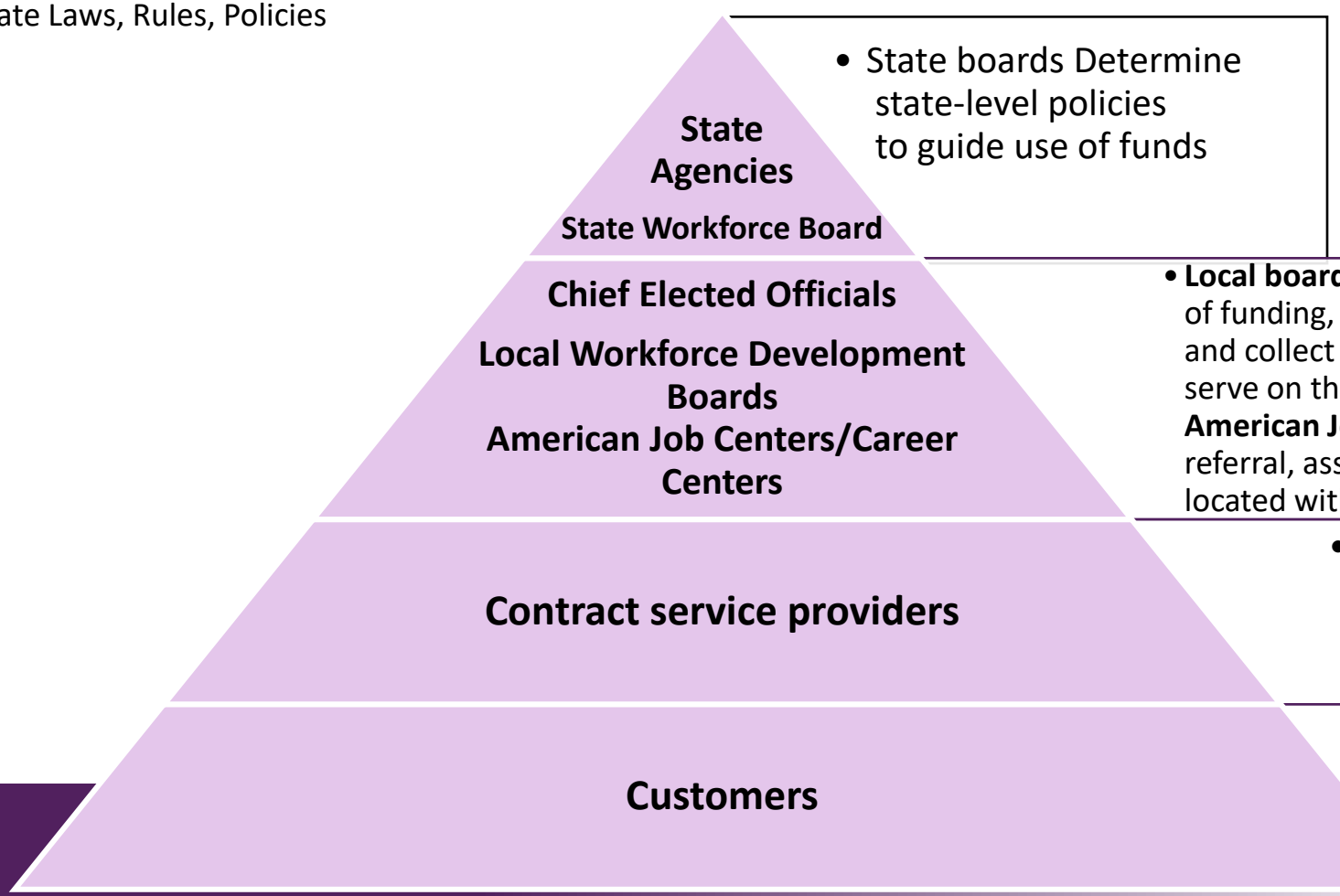
- Rural communities often have limited access to training and education
  - Rural students are under-represented in post-secondary education
  - Rural workers are underserved by workforce development programs

- Extension's role in addressing workforce issues is uneven
  - Workforce is not an extension focus in all states
  - Many extension educators have limited experience with workforce issues

State Funding & Programs
- Pipeline training grants
- Incumbent worker training
- Youth employment programs

Federal Funding & Programs:
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act
- Pell
- Perkins
- Wagner-Peyser Act
- SNAP E&T
- TANF Employment & Training
- Rehabilitation Services
- USDOL Employment and training administration grants

State Laws, Rules, Policies



- State boards Determine state-level policies to guide use of funds
- **Local boards** convene partners and industry sectors, guide use of funding, charter American Job Centers, analyze market data and collect and manage performance data. Elected officials serve on these boards.
  American Job Centers provide services: coaching, job search, referral, assistance for companies with filling positions. Co-located with UI services funded through the Wagner Peyser.
- e.g., Community Colleges, Proprietary Training, social support organizations (e.g., goodwill international, re-entry programs, etc.)
- Job Seekers + Employers

Source: Adapted from Snyder, 2021

Know the landscape and find your role

- Partners can come from education, government, community organizations, or local influencers
- Engaging with other workforce actors can:
  - **Help** by providing potential partners, networks and resources, or
  - **Hinder** through unnecessary competition, redundant activities, or creating confusion.
- Find ways to support, rather than duplicate other regional efforts.

- Good roles for extension include:
  - Leadership and project management
  - Facilitating local initiatives and planning efforts
  - Niche programming
  - ***Applied research***

What is Labor Market Information ?

Labor Market Information (LMI) includes data track how the labor market functions & determines the supply/demand of labor.

- This information can help us answer many common questions, including:
  - What industries drive my economy?
  - What does my workforce look like, & what can they do?
  - How far do people travel to work?
  - What kind of workers do my region's employers need now, & in the future?
  - What types of policies & investments should my community, region, state make to grow the workforce?
  - What do I need to know to select a career or find a job?

Main Suppliers of Labor Market Information

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (DoL)

- ***"Counts the Jobs"***
- National Programs
- Federal/State Cooperative Programs

Employment & Training Administration (DoL)

- Workforce Information Grant
- Program Administrative Data
- O*NET

State LMI Agencies

U.S. Census Bureau

- ***"Counts the People"*** (among many other things)
- US Commerce Dept.

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

- ***"Counts the Money"***
- US Commerce Dept.

Private Sources & Proprietary Data Vendors

- Data Aggregators
- Economic Modelers
- 'Real-Time LMI"

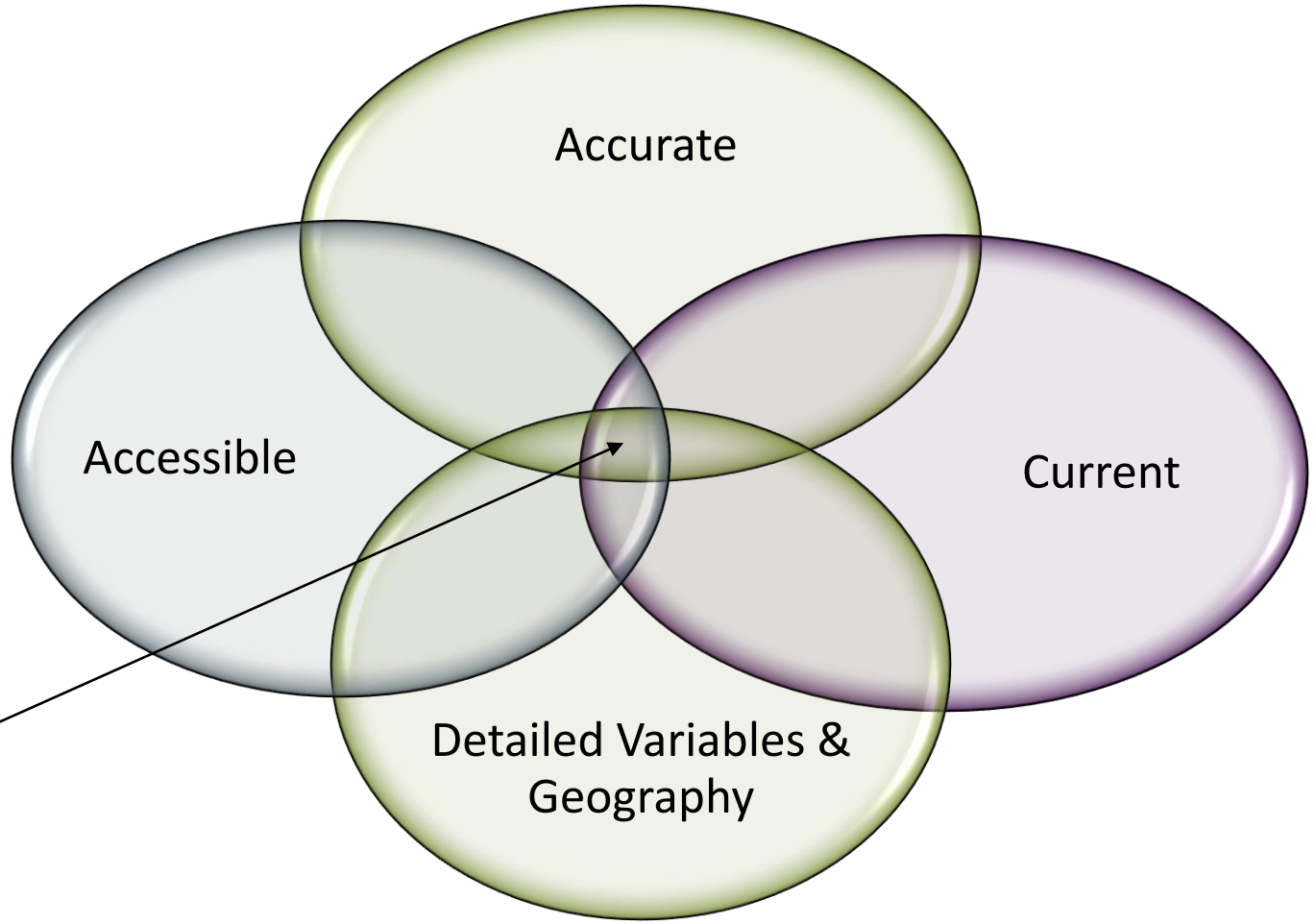
Different LMI user groups

- **Students and jobseekers** use data to find and select career and job opportunities;
- **Employers** use LMI to understand local prevailing wages for a given occupation;
- **Counselors** need information to place students and workers in jobs and careers;
- **Education and training providers** use LMI to help determine the courses and programs they offer, and
- **Community leaders** use LMI to inform workforce training and economic development investment decisions.

Data User Perspective:

Characteristics of “Good Data”

How do different users define each?



The data users’ “sweet spot”

Incorporating Labor Market Information into Your Workforce Efforts

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Developing the necessary information requires several steps

Set the direction

- **Understand the priorities of community leaders**
- **Develop research plan that speaks to those priorities**
- **Consider how the information can help build support**

Examine key issues & focus areas

- Determine strategic focus
  - Target industry (e.g., construction) or occupational (e.g., IT) focus
  - Specific populations (e.g., Youth, disabled, etc.)

Frame data for different audiences

- Customize information according to participant needs
  - Stakeholders: Emphasis on labor market conditions
  - Jobseekers: Focus on employment opportunities & career exploration

Validate data

- Build in multiple feedback opportunities for stakeholders (e.g., employers, instructors)
- Use feedback to identify critical information & remaining information gaps.

Your efforts will garner more support if they align with how the community prioritizes jobs.

- ***Good paying jobs:*** Look at jobs that pay above the median wage, or a family-sustaining wage.
- ***Middle-skill jobs:*** Emphasize jobs that require more than high school, less than a 4-year degree, & some OJT.
- ***Pathway jobs:*** Identify jobs that, with incremental education & training, can provide steppingstones to other higher-paying jobs.
- ***High demand jobs:*** Focus on jobs that have grown & are projected to grow.
- ***Cross-cutting occupations:*** Select occupations that are in-demand across multiple industries.
- ***Uniquely competitive occupations:*** Examine occupations that are relatively concentrated in your region (using LQs).
- ***Diversity & Inclusion:*** Consider jobs that employ people of different age, gender, race & ethnicity.

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Examine key issues & focus areas

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  - **Target industry (e.g., construction) or occupational (e.g., IT) focus**
  - **Specific populations (e.g., youth, disabled, residents from disadvantaged neighborhoods, etc.)**

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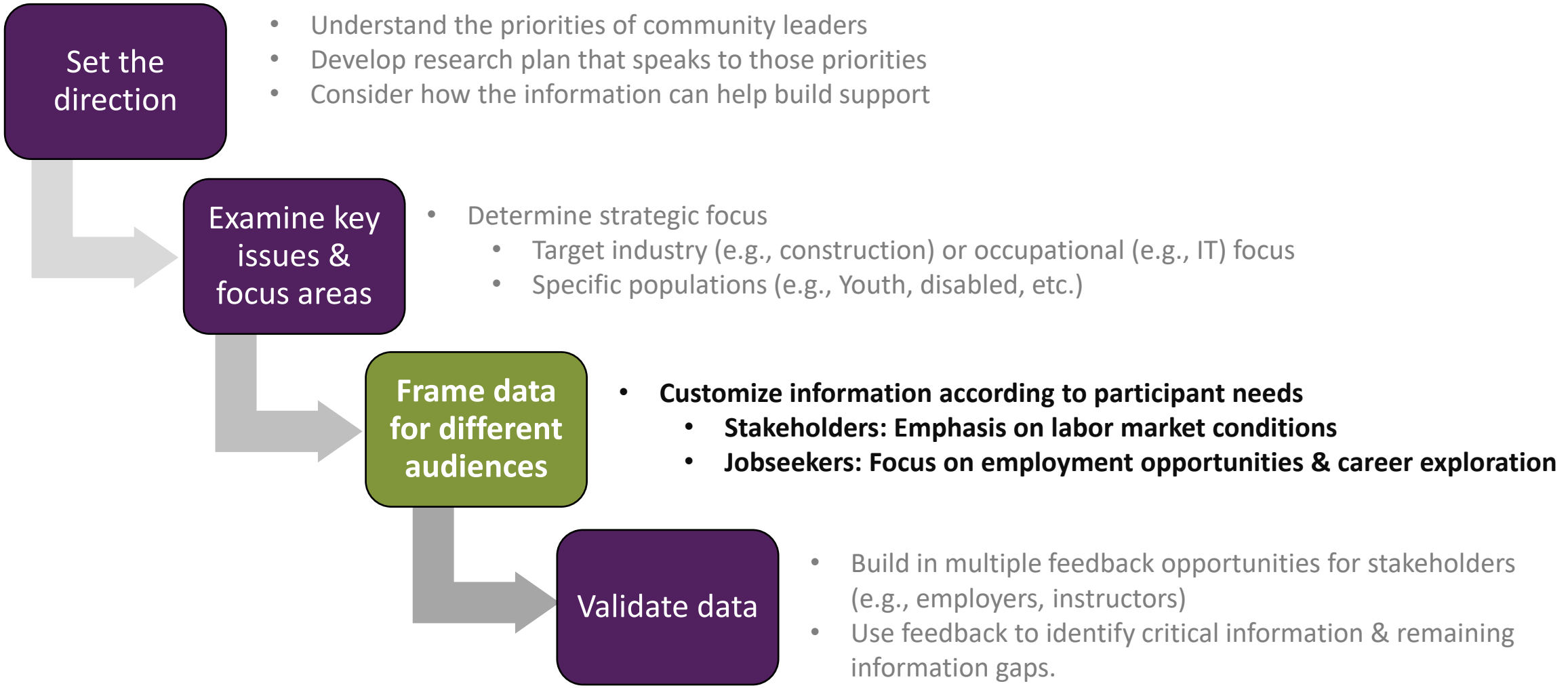


Data Type	Data Element	Extension Educator	WF-ED Professional	Community Leader	Educators & Counselors	Employers	Jobseekers
Population Trends & Characteristics	1a. Population trends						
	1b. Components of population change						
	1c. Age characteristics						
	1d. Gender composition						
	1e. Racial and ethnic diversity						
	1f. Per capita income						
	1g. Poverty						
Labor Force Trends & Characteristics	2a. Labor force size						
	2b. Unemployment						
	2c. Labor force participation rate						
	2d. Educational attainment						
	2e. Commuting patterns						
Employment Drivers	3a. Current industry demand						
	3b. Industry demographics						
	3c. Measuring entrepreneurship						
Occupational Demand	4a. Occupational employment and wages						
	4b. Industry staffing patterns						
	4c. Occupational projections						
	4d. Occupational requirements (O*Net)						
	4e. Online job postings						
Filling Needs	5a. Post-secondary completers						
	5b. Professional credentials						
Other sources	6a. Focus groups and interviews						
	6b. Other data resources						

Use often
Use sometimes
Use rarely

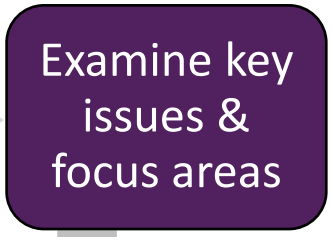
- No one size fits all research, as it may vary by:
  - Issue
  - User
- Some users need general labor market, while others need more job-specific information.

Building career pathways programs requires an array of participants & they each have different information needs

- **Stakeholders**
  - e.g., community leaders, ED/WF professionals, extension educators, etc.
  - Need wider array of LMI that address both labor supply and demand
  - Used to highlight workforce challenges, or to build support (financial or otherwise) for workforce strategies.
- **Jobseekers**
  - e.g., students, incumbent or displaced workers
  - Need more targeted information that guides their career exploration or job search
  - Concise information to answer straight forward questions (e.g., How much should I expect to make in this job?)

Developing the necessary information requires several steps

- Understand the priorities of community leaders
- Develop research plan that speaks to those priorities
- Consider how the information can help build support



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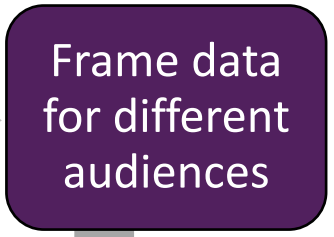

- Customize information according to participant needs
  - Stakeholders: Emphasis on labor market conditions
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- **Build in multiple feedback opportunities for stakeholders (e.g., employers, instructors)**
- **Use feedback to identify critical information & remaining information gaps.**

Validating this information with employers or other key stakeholders will strengthen your efforts

- Qualitative data can help interpret your findings
  - Quantitative data shows patterns, qualitative helps explain underlying processes.
- These conversations can add important or missing details to your understanding of workforce issues and challenges.
- Specific examples can also make your story more compelling, by ‘putting a face on data’.
- Engaging stakeholders and private sector leaders in your research can help build support for your subsequent efforts.
- Creating feedback loops on what works or does not work—in the past, present and future—can strengthen the effectiveness of your strategies.

The Future Opportunities for Rural Workforce and Rural Development (FORWARD) Curriculum

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The full FORWARD curriculum is available through the Community Development Extension Library

The FORWARD Curriculum

Introduction: Moving Communities FORWARD
curriculum (pdf)

Module 1: Developing Key Partnerships
curriculum (pdf) | slides (pptx)

Module 2: Identifying Workforce Assets and Needs
curriculum (pdf) | slides (pptx) | workbook (xlsx)

Module 3: Mapping Pathways to Economic Mobility
curriculum (pdf) | slides (pptx)

Module 4: Recruiting and Supporting Rural Learners
curriculum (pdf) | slides (pptx) | handouts (pdf)

Module 5: Evaluation and Reflection
curriculum (pdf)

FORWARD Team

Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel, University of Nebraska
Tanya J. Hall, Purdue University
Paul Hill, Ph.D., Utah State University
Sheila Martin, Ph.D., Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Joy Moten-Thomas, Fort Valley State University
Jeff Sherman, Oregon State University
Mark C. White, Ph.D., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Michael D. Wilcox, Jr., Ph.D., Purdue University

- https://cdextlibrary.org/resource-library/forward/
- Or just Google: "*Community Development Extension Library*" and "*FORWARD*"

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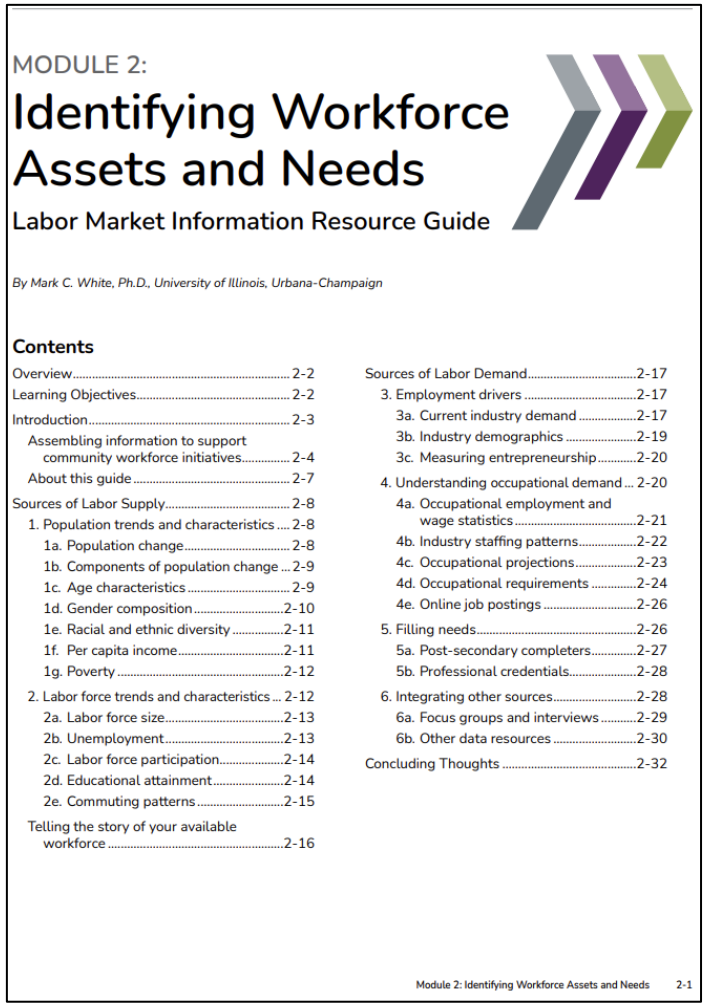
Resources available through the FORWARD Curriculum



MODULE 2:

Identifying Workforce Assets and Needs

Labor Market Information Resource Guide

By Mark C. White, Ph.D., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

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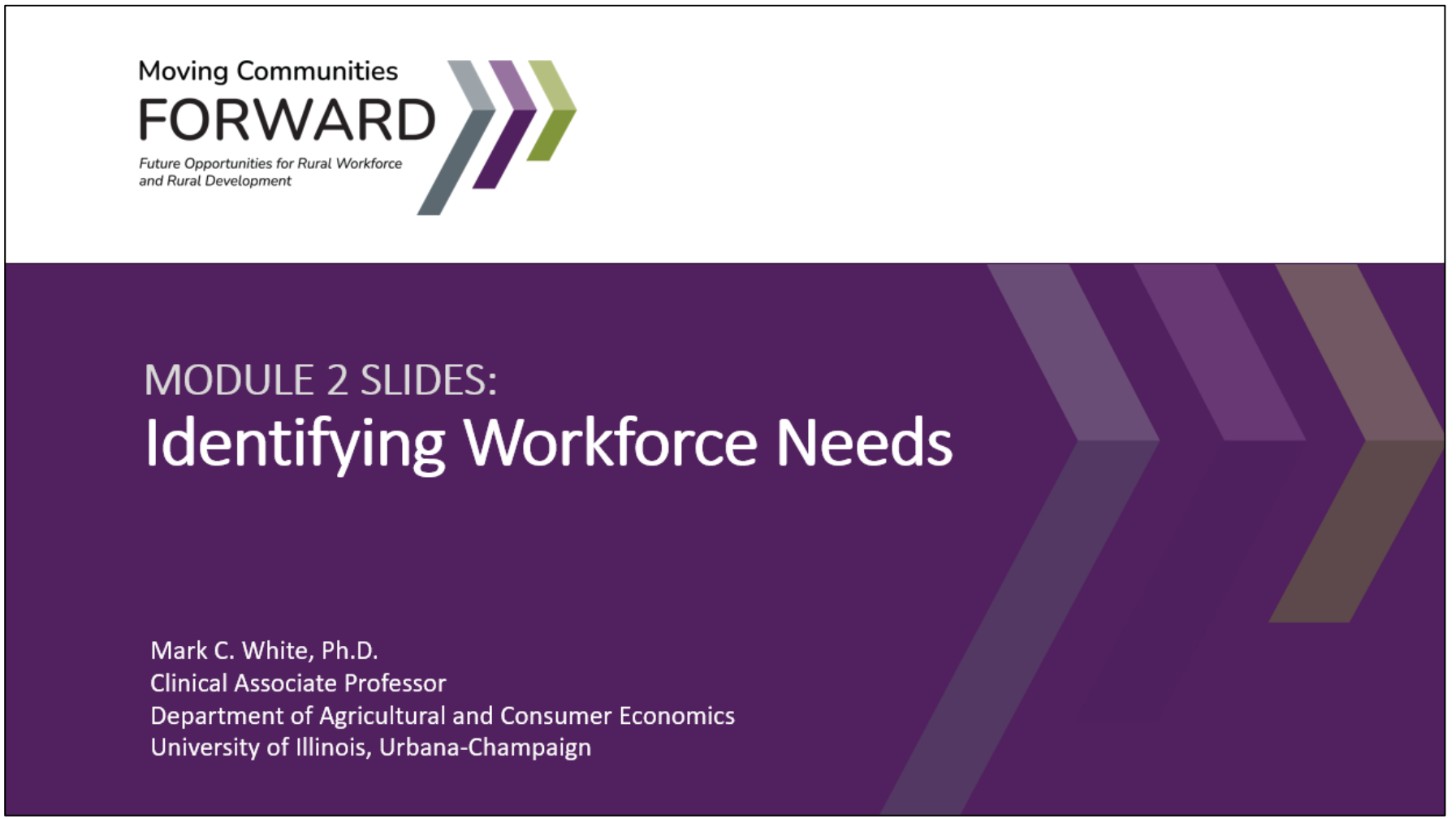

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MODULE 2 SLIDES:

Identifying Workforce Needs

Mark C. White, Ph.D.
Clinical Associate Professor
Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics
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This guide can support community or regional workforce initiatives by:

- Directing users toward data tools and resources that will allow them to answer key labor market questions.
- Describing how these data are produced and what they show.
- Identifying any important caveats for which users must be aware when using these data.

The full FORWARD curriculum is available through the Community Development Extension Library

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Concluding Thoughts

A few key takeaways

- Make sure you know your region's workforce landscape before diving into any significant workforce initiative.

- Integrate labor market information (LMI) into your workforce development planning process, but make sure it fits with your community's priorities and informs its actions.

- The FORWARD Curriculum can serve as a resource to help extension professionals get started

Just as your community workforce efforts will require partners, so too should your labor market research.

- Organizers should actively engage others (e.g., employers, community leaders, subject matter experts, etc.) to help interpret and validate the information and findings.
- Develop a relationship with your state's LMI agency, as they can help you more effectively access, understand, and use labor market data and information.
  - Find your state's LMI agency here: https://www.lmiontheweb.org/what-we-do/agency-directory/

Thank you.

Mark C. White, Ph.D.
whitemc@illinois.edu

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