Data Collection for the Employment and Credential Indicators Activity Packet

Part I: Introduction

Overview

The *Data Collection for the Employment and Credentials Indicators Activity Packet* is a collection of training activities for use when working with local program staff. The activities are designed to (1) increase staff understanding of how capturing data for these indicators reflects both student and program success, and (2) explore the challenges programs have in collecting the information and strategies they can use to increase data collection on these indicators.

Uses for the Data Collection for the Employment and Credential Indicators Activity Packet

Each activity can be used as-is; however, there is flexibility to maximize their effectiveness by tailoring the activities to your state and program needs.

While the activities are designed for face-to-face trainings, the materials lend themselves to use in other formats, such as webinars, online courses, reference documents, or tip sheets. Below are suggestions:

Face-to-Face Training. Some activities can be completed independently and shared in a larger group; others can be completed in small program teams; and still others can be used to conduct group brainstorming to find solutions, develop protocols, or conduct program planning.

Webinars. Worksheets can be completed prior to a webinar, and answers can be reviewed during the webinar. Polls can be used to see how many people select one answer over another. Breakout rooms can be used for small group discussion. Questions can be submitted prior to a webinar, and answers can be provided during the webinar.

Online Courses. These activities can be added to your state's online courses with modified instructions. The activities can be completed by groups using synchronous or asynchronous common workspaces.

Tip Sheets. Tips are included in the documents contained in this packet. You can compile the tips into one document, develop a tip sheet based on the tips that are provided, or pull content from the *Demonstrating Success: A Technical Assistance Guide for Postexit Indicators* document.

Contents of the Data Collection for the Employment and Credential Indicators Activity Packet

The packet includes the activities described in the chart below. Each activity includes directions and can be printed, shared as a training handout, or uploaded to a web-based platform.

Activity	Purpose
1. Importance of Calculating Performance for the Postexit Indicators	This activity is for program staff to review how the postexit indicator data are calculated and to discuss the impact that collecting the data can have on program and state performance. An answer key is included.
2. Collecting Unique Identifiers Such as Social Security Numbers	This activity helps programs think through how they are collecting SSNs and any changes they might make to improve the rate of collection.
3. Collecting Data for Postexit Indicators - Tip Sheet	This document can be used as a tip sheet, a checklist, or a protocol to highlight what program staff can do to improve follow-up on student performance.
4. Supplemental Data Collection: Guidelines for Conducting Surveys	This document provides guidelines on how to plan, develop, and implement a survey to collect employment and credential data.

Part II: Activities

Activity 1: The Importance of Calculating Performance for the Postexit Indicators

Capturing Postexit Outcomes

This document contains a set of sample data. Examining these data can help you think through the importance of postexit data relative to the overall performance of your own program.

Use the data provided here to calculate performance on the postexit employment and credential indicators for this program. Then answer the questions at the end of the document.

Program Sample Data

Employment	
Total exited participants (periods of participation (PoPs))	310
Number with Social Security Numbers (SSNs) for data match	215
Number of participants to exclude	10
Data match for employed during 2nd quarter after exit	150
Data match for employed during 4th quarter after exit	125
Credentials	
Number of exited participants (PoPs) who entered program without secondary credential and received secondary-level instruction	108
Number of exited participants co-enrolled in adult and postsecondary education or training	50
Number of participants (PoPs) in both cohorts	8
Number of participants who obtained both postsecondary and secondary credentials and were employed within one year of exit	2
Attained secondary school diploma/recognized equivalent and enrolled in postsecondary education or training within one year of exit	12
Attained secondary school diploma/recognized equivalent and employed within one year of exit	40
Attained a postsecondary credential while enrolled or within one year of exit	10

Note: These sample data are provided only to illustrate computation of the indicators. Actual data reported in Table 5 would come from different cohorts and program years. For example, the total number of participants used to calculate second and fourth quarter employment would differ. Secondary credential data in the table are unduplicated unique counts in this sample data, which may not be the case in actual data.

2nd Quarter After-Exit Employment

A. Calculate 2nd Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate

Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 2nd quarter from each PoP

Total number of PoPs (less excluded)

= 2nd quarter employment rate (percent)

B. Calculate 2nd Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate Using *Only Participants with SSNs*

Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 2nd quarter from each PoP

Total number of PoPs with SSNs (less excluded)

= 2nd quarter employment rate (percent)

4th Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate

C. Calculate 4th Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate

Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 4th quarter from each PoP

Total number of PoPs (less excluded)

= 4th quarter employment rate (percent)

D. Calculate 4th Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate *Using Only Participants with SSNs*

Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 4th quarter

Total number of PoPs (less excluded)

= 4th quarter employment rate (percent)

Credential Rate

Calculate Credential Rate—Obtained a Secondary Diploma and Enrolled in Postsecondary or Training Within One Year of Exit and Obtained a Postsecondary Credential While Enrolled or Within One Year of Exit

*	Participants in the denominator who attained a secondary school diploma/equivalent and enrolled in postsecondary education or training or were employed within one year of exit; and participants who obtained a postsecondary credential	=		Credential rate (percent)
**	Exited participants who entered without a secondary credential and were enrolled in a secondary level program; and exited participants who were dually enrolled in adult and postsecondary education and exited postsecondary education			

*Total all participants who obtained any credential (62) and, subtract those who obtained both credentials (2) = 60
**Total all participants in both cohorts (158) and subtract duplicates (8) = 150

Questions

Employment Indicators

1. Why are the denominators different in A and B? Why are the numerators different in B and D?

2. What impact does the SSN data match have on performance in this program? What are the implications of missing SSNs for this program and the state?

3. Below are issues the director at this program has encountered with staff related to collecting SSNs. In the box that follows, brainstorm ideas about what this director might do to address these challenges.
   - Staff do not want to collect SSNs because they think SSNs are private information that students do not need to share.
   - Staff have expressed that, if students are receiving measurable skills gains (MSGs) while enrolled, staff should not be required to collect more information that is difficult to obtain.
   - Staff do not have connections to local employers, so it is difficult to determine what exited students are doing.
   - Staff have complained that the time lag makes it difficult to track exited students.
   - Staff have no way of determining if students obtained postsecondary credentials after exit.

Credential Indicators

1. From your own experience, what challenges might the staff at this program encounter in determining whether participants obtained secondary or postsecondary credentials?

2. What strategies have you used, or do you think might work to collect credential data? What sources are useful?

Activity 1: The Importance of Calculating Performance for the Postexit Indicators

Capturing Postexit Outcomes

ANSWER KEY

This document contains a set of sample data. Examining these data can help you think through the importance of postexit data relative to the overall performance of your own program.

Use the data provided here to calculate performance on the postexit employment and credential indicators for this program. Then answer the questions at the end of the document.

Program Sample Data

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Note: These sample data are provided only to illustrate computation of the indicators. Actual data reported in Table 5 would come from different cohorts and program years. For example, the total number of participants used to calculate second and fourth quarter employment would differ. Secondary credential data in the table are unduplicated unique counts in this sample data, which may not be the case in actual data.

2nd Quarter After-Exit Employment

A. Calculate 2nd Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate

150	Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 2nd quarter from each PoP	=	50%	2nd quarter employment rate (percent)
300	Total number of PoPs (less excluded)			

B. Calculate 2nd Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate Using *Only Participants with SSNs*

150	Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 2nd quarter from each PoP	=	73%	2nd quarter employment rate (percent)
205	Total number of PoPs with SSNs (less excluded)			

4th Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate

C. Calculate 4th Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate

125	Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 4th quarter from each PoP	=	42%	4th quarter employment rate (percent)
300	Total number of PoPs (less excluded)			

D. Calculate 4th Quarter After-Exit Employment Rate *Using Only Participants with SSNs*

125	Number of exited participants employed at any time in the 4th quarter	=	61%	4th quarter employment rate (percent)
205	Total number of PoPs (less excluded)			

Credential Rate

Calculate Credential Rate—Obtained a Secondary Diploma and Enrolled in Postsecondary or Training Within One Year of Exit and Obtained a Postsecondary Credential While Enrolled or Within One Year of Exit

60*	Participants in the denominator who attained a secondary school diploma/equivalent and enrolled in postsecondary education or training or were employed within one year of exit; and participants who obtained a postsecondary credential	=	40%	Credential rate (percent)
150**	Exited participants who entered without a secondary credential and were enrolled in a secondary level program; and exited participants who were dually enrolled in adult and postsecondary education and exited postsecondary education			

*Total all participants who obtained any credential (62) and, subtract those who obtained both credentials (2) = 60
**Total all participants in both cohorts (158) and subtract duplicates (8) = 150

Questions

Employment Indicators

1. Why are the denominators different in A and B? Why are the numerators different in B and D?

The dominators are different because in A, all participants are being counted, and in B only those with an SSN data match are being counted. The numerators in B and D are different because some participants who were employed during the 2nd quarter may not be employed by the 4th quarter after exit; in this case 25 people were no longer working.

With actual data, 2nd quarter and 4th quarter denominators are also different because they come from different program years. Second quarter data comes from one program year prior (e.g., the PY 2019 report is for July 2018-June 2019.) Fourth quarter data come from two calendar years prior (e.g., PY 2018 report is for January 2017-December 2017.) Therefore, the number of exited participants will vary.

2. What impact does the SSN data match have on performance in this program? What are the implications of missing SSNs for this program and the state?

By collecting the SSNs, this program was able to verify that participants were employed in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit and the performance rate is based only on exited participants with SSNs and not the all exited participants, which increases the percentage of participants who are reported as meeting the indicator. This shows the advantage of collecting SSNs and that performance at the program level will improve and contribute to the overall performance at the state level.

3. Below are issues the director at this program has encountered with staff related to collecting SSNs. In the box that follows, brainstorm ideas about what this director might do to address these challenges.
   - Staff do not want to collect SSNs because they think SSNs are private information that students do not need to share.
   - Staff have expressed that, if students are receiving measurable skills gains (MSGs) while enrolled, staff should not be required to collect more information that is difficult to obtain.
   - Staff do not have connections to local employers, so it is difficult to determine what exited students are doing.
   - Staff have complained that the time lag makes it difficult to track exited students.
   - Staff have no way of determining if students obtained postsecondary credentials after exit.

Possible responses:

- Explain the impact on performance if the program cannot make data matches and this affects funding and therefore, whether the community can be served by the program.
- Explain that they are not getting credit for the outcomes that their hard work is facilitating.
- If there is a local employer who hires many participants, establish processes for collecting follow-up information on participants.
- Establish methods for keeping in contact with participants after they exit the program such as direct communication via phone or email, social media, newsletters, events

Credential Indicators

1. From your own experience, what challenges might the staff at this program encounter in determining whether participants obtained secondary or postsecondary credentials?

There is not one source to access the postsecondary credential information.

2. What strategies have you used, or do you think might work to collect credential data? What sources are useful?

Possible responses:

- Data sharing with Community Colleges
- Searching national level databases such as: the National Student Clearinghouse, the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, and Federal Student Aid.

Activity 2: Collecting Unique Identifiers Such as Social Security Numbers

Using participants' Social Security Numbers (SSNs) is one of the most efficient ways to obtain data needed to calculate performance on postexit employment indicators. This worksheet helps you think through the processes your program uses to collect SSNs, the challenges your program might face, and strategies to increase the rate of collection of this important, unique identifier.

Rationale for Collecting SSNs

What purpose do SSNs have for helping determine your program's performance?

Current Practices in Collecting SSNs

How does your program currently collect SSNs from students upon program entry?

What is your program's current rate of SSN collection?

What is your state's target for collecting SSNs, if any?

Challenges in Collecting SSNs

What challenges, if any, does your program have relative to collecting SSNs?

Check and describe any of the conditions below that affect your program's ability to collect SSNs. Describe other challenges you have that are not mentioned.

☐ Local policy _____

☐ Legal/policy barriers _____

☐ Students do not have SSNs _____

☐ Privacy concerns/students do not want to share their SSNs _____

☐ Staff members do not want to ask for SSNs _____

☐ Data entry issues _____

☐ Other _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Strategies for Collecting SSNs

Think about the procedures, methods, and strategies your program has used to improve the collection of SSNs and how effective they were.

In the chart below, indicate if you are currently using a strategy and if you plan to use it in the future. In the notes section, describe how the strategy is working, what you may need to change, or how you will implement the strategy in the future.

Strategy to Collect SSNs	Current	Future	Notes
Messaging and Program Policies			
• Sending clear messages to staff that collecting SSNs is important for performance measures (e.g., through staff orientation, webinars, professional development training sessions, etc.)			

Strategy to Collect SSNs	Current	Future	Notes
• Setting targets for SSN collection in our program			
• Using a data base to track if specific sites/staff have low collection rates			
• Using incentives to encourage staff to collect SSNs			
• Standardizing procedures for follow-up with students			
Support to Staff			
• Providing professional development on intake procedures			
• Troubleshooting with and providing targeted technical assistance to staff if they have difficulty collecting SSNs			
Technology			
• Using phone apps, online registration, or other electronic intake processes			
• Sending text messages to students to remind them to submit their SSNs			
• Conducting electronic or phone surveys			
Partners			
• Asking case managers who work with your participants to share students' SSNs			

Strategy to Collect SSNs	Current	Future	Notes
Students			
• Transparently communicating with students about the importance of collecting SSNs (e.g., SSNs allow program to show success in helping students, and success is connected to funding)			
• Making frequent requests of participants at entry, during programming, at testing, at exit, postexit			
Other Strategies We Use			
•			
•			
•			
•			

What support do you think staff and/or program administrators need to collect SSNs?

What strategies are other programs using that you want to try?

Activity 3: Collecting Data for the Postexit Indicators - Tip Sheet

Use this quick reference sheet listing actions to increase success in collecting postexit indicator data.

During Program Entry and Enrollment

- ☐ Collect SSN during initial contact with student.
- ☐ Record family member contact information.
- ☐ Record current employment information.
- ☐ Collect SSN at enrollment.
- ☐ Collect SSN at time of pretest.
- ☐ Collect SSN at posttest.
- ☐ Inform participants that they may be contacted after leaving the program to ask them about their successes, employment credential attainment, and further education.

Postexit

- ☐ Identify which participants should be tracked based on exits and likelihood or knowledge of postexit employment and credential attainment to focus efforts.
- ☐ Maintain contact with participants via electronic communications so they are accustomed to hearing from your organization and receiving requests for information.
  - Conduct surveys.
  - Collect self-employment worksheets.
  - Update contact information.
- ☐ Track students through established relationships with partners and other service organizations.
  - Align database reporting formats and schedules.
  - Request One-Stop and other partner operating systems' administrative records.
- ☐ Establish relationships with local employers to more easily access employment status of participants.
  - Copies of quarterly tax payment forms or pay stubs.
  - Signed letter from employer.
  - Detailed case notes verified by employer.
- ☐ Check education databases.
  - Community colleges and other postsecondary institutions.
  - National Student Clearing House.
  - Institute for Higher Education Policy.
  - Federal Student Aid.
  - Institute for Higher Education Policy.
  - Other postsecondary service providers.

Activity 4: Supplemental Data Collection: Guidelines for Conducting Surveys

Social Security Numbers (SSNs) are needed to match employment data with the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database. Therefore, if your program is missing SSNs for participants for whom you would collect postexit employment performance data, or if your state does not conduct UI data matches, you will need to use other methods. Surveying students via phone or electronically is one way to collect information on employers, employment durations, and earnings.

This document includes a list of steps for conducting surveys, tips to make the process easier and more successful, and questions to help you plan the development and administration of the survey.

Primary Steps to Surveying Participants on Postexit Indicators

Establish Schedule

- Collect survey data at least quarterly.

Develop Survey Instrument

- Design standardized, short, and simple questionnaire.
- Translate questionnaire into most-common languages in your program.
- Include questions regarding employment and credentials.

Identify the Pool to Be Surveyed

- Include only participants who exited during the program year.
- Include participants for each PoP, which could include multiple counts for the same participant.
- Identify demographic information and barriers to employment.
- Determine which participants should be surveyed for which indicators.

Locate Those to Be Surveyed

- Make contact using information obtained during intake.

Prepare Staff for Survey Process

- Train staff on survey administration.
- Devise tracking method.

Administer Survey

- Explain purpose and obtain consent.
- Track contacts and completed surveys.

Tips to Make Surveying Easier

Keep It Simple:

- Surveys can be brief—you are asking for basic employment and credential data.

Familiarize Participants with the Process:

- Explain to participants at entry that it is important for the program to track their successes after exiting because tracking is connected to funding.
- Inform participants during enrollment, at exit, and after exit that they may receive a survey, so they are not surprised that you are contacting them and collecting this information.
- Provide a copy of the survey at enrollment so students are familiar with it prior to being asked to complete it later (again, avoiding surprises).
- Inform participants at intake—and periodically remind them—that you may contact their family members or employers to follow up on their progress if you cannot reach them directly.

Maintain Contact with Participants:

- Maintain contact with participants after they exit the program so that it will be easier to follow up with them. Use community resources and networks to reach participants.

Make Strategic Decisions to Conserve Resources:

- Set a target survey rate goal each year.
- Implement the survey gradually by focusing on larger programs first because you are more likely to obtain higher rates of return for your efforts.
- Reduce the survey's participant pool by identifying those who are unlikely to achieve the outcome or to respond. Doing so will help you to avoid committing resources when low return rates are probable.

Use Technology:

- Use technology such as apps and social media to reach participants and to issue the survey.
- Automate your data system to identify and track the targeted pool of participants.
- Integrate the survey into the state database to increase ease of data collection and monitoring.
- Test the process before scaling it up by piloting it with a small group of students.

Planning Your Survey Process

Below is a set of questions to consider as you plan your survey process. Following the questions, you will find a chart to map each step of the survey's design and delivery.

- Who will design the survey?

- How do we want to administer the survey? Telephone, electronic, other? What protocol will we use?

- At which times of the year should we administer the survey?

- What information are we trying to collect (e.g., average hours scheduled to work per week; average number of hours actually worked per week; start and end dates of employment)?

- What questions do we want to answer?

- What resources and time are required to translate the survey into multiple languages if and as needed?

- What instructions should we provide to participants via phone or electronically?

- What staff training is needed to administer the survey? How will we provide training?

- What system will we use to track follow-up communications with participants, and how will it be integrated with our current data system?

Step	Who Will Be Responsible?	Timeframe	How We Will Execute This Step
Establish schedule			
Develop survey instrument			
Identify pool to be surveyed			
Locate survey participants			
Prepare staff			
Administer survey			
Track survey participation			