**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Refresher: Title I and III Annual Statewide Performance Report Narrative**

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JONATHAN VEHLOW: Welcome to "Refresher: Title I and III Annual Statewide Performance Report Narrative." So without further ado, I'd like to kick things off to our moderator today, Cesar Villanueva, workforce analyst, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Cesar, take it away.

CESAR VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Jon. Welcome, everyone, to today's refresher webinar. Thank you for responding to our first poll. Jon, if you don't mind pulling up that poll question again, we'll take a look. It looks like the poll asks, what would you like to learn about today? And it looks like many of you are interested in hearing about best practices. So great. We will definitely cover all of those items. So if you need a quick reminder or are completely new to the process, we hope that you'll take away some tips and ideas for developing your state's annual narrative performance report.

Before we dive in, thanks, Jon. You can take that poll question down. Before we dive in, we have another question for you about coordinating the narrative for your states. If you can pull up that next poll. Please take a moment to let us know if it's easy, somewhat easy, or very challenging for your state. It seems like many of you are saying challenging and then somewhat, but most are selecting very challenging or challenging. So thanks, Jon. Thanks for pulling that up. All right.

During today's refresher, we'll hear from Department of Labor staff Christina Eckenroth and Jessica Hale. And we'll also be hearing from Shawn Fox and Dina Westgrin, also with the Department of Labor. Today we'll give a refresher on the requirements and spotlight evaluations and waivers, some of the topics where we receive questions. And we'll also share best practices for coordinating your report and address your questions at the end. Let's begin with a refresher on the requirements. To get started, I'll ask Dina. Dina, where is the annual report narrative addressed in regulations or in guidance?

DINA WESTGRIN: Good question, Cesar. The annual report narrative is covered in the WIOA common performance reporting information collection request, or ICR, OMB control number 1205-0526 -- as shown on the slide, so you may want to jot that down -- which requires an annual report narrative to complement the WIOA annual statewide performance reporting ETA-9169.

And requirements are further defined in TEGL 5-18, which we did include in the file share on this presentation, which is titled, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Statewide Performance Report Narrative from November 2018. And this refers to all the topics in greater detail, including what should be included in your narrative. So certainly review that if you need a refresher.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Dina. Who has to submit an annual report narrative?

MS. WESTGRIN: Yeah. States need to submit a narrative for both their Title I programs, adult dislocated worker and youth programs; and Title III programs, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. Please note that while we do encourage you to work with your core program partners across system, the narrative requirement does not include Title II, adult education; and Title IV, vocational rehabilitation, as a component of this reporting.

Do feel free to include relevant information, especially where programs partner, and to share the narrative with your partners. But they will not be expected to provide you with a statement, a separate write-up, or to submit the annual report narrative to their agency. So share amongst each other, but they have no requirements to submit.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Got it. Thanks. And how about, what is the purpose of the report? And how does that benefit me at the state level?

MS. WESTGRIN: That's a great question, especially having seen from that poll that a lot of people find this more challenging to coordinate. The report is a key tool that you can all use to share your workforce story both with us here at ETA and with key partners in your state. There's a lot you can do with this report. First thing, of course, we're asking you to describe your state's progress towards meeting the strategic vision and goals for the workforce system. But you do get the opportunity to share additional contacts with us in this report. The report is a great opportunity to include additional information about your program that may not be reflected in more quantitative performance reports that we see.

Use this report to explain the people and programs behind the numbers, share your accomplishments and challenges, and let us know your technical assistance needs. Explain to us how your state operates. You can also provide more information with us about things like industry sector partnerships, employer partners, and the way to integrate them into your system; which is helpful for us as we consider relevant TA for grants in the future. We really do like to learn more about the people behind the numbers and how we can best help serve participants in the system. So this is really helpful for us.

MR. VILLANUEVA: And, Dina, what if I have a lot of reports to write for my stakeholders; for instance, governors reports, a report for my board, success stories for our website, or outreach materials? I feel like this is just another report on my plate.

MS. WESTGRIN: Yeah. We hear you on that. There are a lot of people who want to know what's going on in the system. And they have a lot of different interests. The benefit of the annual performance narrative report is that you do have flexibility. You know, you can use this report for more than just reporting to ETA. Think of this as being helpful for multiple audiences, including state reports and public outreach. And we'll cover that a little bit more later with more details on ways to do that.

While we do have some parameters in specific areas that we are requesting you to cover -- and, like I said, you can find a lot of that information in TEGL 5-15 -- you are not limited to just those topics. And there are very few formatting conditions. So you can leverage this report for different purposes and make it useful not only for us, but for multiple audiences, to help cut down on that burden, hopefully, for you all.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Great, thanks, Dina. And what's the time line for the report? When is that due?

MS. WESTGRIN: Yes. So the report is due annually on December 1, or the first business day after that date falls on a weekend. This year December 1, I believe, falls on a Wednesday. So you should not have to worry about the weekend. Just get that to us by Wednesday, December 1.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Dina. So, Dina, this question is for you. It's great that the report offers states flexibility to showcase their information. Are there any administrative requirements drafters to keep in mind?

MS. WESTGRIN: Hi, Cesar. Yes. If you are working on the report, please keep a few key things in mind -- so the length. The body of the report needs to be 25 pages or less. Keep it 508-compliant so that it is accessible to all our audience. And that means that your submission needs to be in a machine-readable format. And you know, appendices are allowed. Be sure to use those for any of the extras that Dina talked about or anything additional you want to share with us.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks. Won't the appendices count against the 25-page limit?

MS. WESTGRIN: Excellent question. And the answer is no. The 25-page limit applies only to the main report. So if you want to provide us copies of something you think is really interesting that you weren't able to expound on fully in your 25 pages, you can do that. We use them -- anything else that you want to share with us. It won't come into your 25-page limit.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Got it. I also understand that I can make the report useful for my state's purposes. But what is ETA requesting that it cover for Department of Labor?

MS. WESTGRIN: On this slide, you're going to see the topic areas that are covered in Training Employment Guidance Letter 518. We are asking for your state's report to address these areas, as well as anything else you would like to include. But the TEGL goes into specifics for each one of these topic areas. So I do encourage everyone to review that before drafting your report.

In the next slide, we'll spotlight a few areas received have struggled in the past. However, remember that if we didn't highlight a particular topic today, that it should still be included in your report. Be sure to ask questions about any of the topic areas, whether we highlighted it in the presentation today or not.

MR. VILLANUEVA: That's good to know. Thank you. So following the administrative parameters and 25 pages covering the topics and adhering to your 508 compliance and also the use of appendices, but what about visuals and charts?

MS. WESTGRIN: Yes. You can use visuals and charts. You can use pictures. You can use charts. You can use tables. We really encourage you to show your data and highlight your program to reinforce your point. We do ask that you remember to keep it 508-compliant. And there are lots of folks asking, what about 508 compliance requirements? We can get you some -- you can google the 508 compliance requirements.

You can also check on how to do accessibility in your own documents. Also check with your accessibility folks in your state, because your state may also have some tool for you to use. But don't let that stop you from using charts and pictures and maps. And what you see on the screen are some examples of states that have done just that.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Some of you might be asking yourselves, where do these reports go? Is anybody reading them? Christina, what happens to these reports?

CHRISTINA ECKENROTH: Right. So the answer is yes. The reports are all read. And they're used by offices throughout ETA. And I can tell you that the performance staff read each report to learn more about your program operations, your processes, your successes, challenges, and performance-related technical assistance needs.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Got it. And, Dina, what do the program offices reference these reports for?

MS. WESTGRIN: Yeah. So we find these reports to be super helpful. The program office uses these reports to better understand the state's programmatic performance, as well as to respond to any issues based by state. You know, we sometimes see the numbers, but it's great to see the detail behind where people may be struggling or some of those best practices.

We review each report to get content for how states and their grantees leverage the dollars, which better informs how we think about TA and guidance letters and all of that. We also find it helpful to review the success story, which is a great way for us to connect with the work. This also helps us respond to targeted questions about approaches in the states. We can list out best practices that states share and connect the states with each other to problem-solve on some of those issues that we identify via these reports. It's really helpful across the board for program staff.

And remember that these are all posted on the DOL website. And they're publicly available -- so stakeholders, partners, and the public can access them. So if you're interested in what other states are doing, you can check out their report online. And ETA also developed the WIOA success stories report from the state's annual narrative report. So we do use your success stories. And we feature a new success story every month on our performance website.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks Christina and Dina for that information. So in this next section, we're going to take a deeper dive into a few of the report areas where states have questions, which includes evaluations and waivers. So with that, Jessica, what will you be discussing today?

MS. HALE: Well, today I'm reviewing the annual report narratives requirements for reporting on evaluations under WIOA. I'll also provide some examples from last year's annual report narratives and share some resources for further technical assistance.

MR. VILLANUEVA: And there will be time for questions at the end. But if you have any specific questions, please type them into the chat room during the conversation. Jessica, I think, will be able to have some time to address those during our discussion. But if not, we'll also have time to address them at the end.

Jessica, what do states need to keep in mind as they prepare the evaluation section of the annual report narrative? Can you provide some insight?

JESSICA HALE: Sure. So within the context of the annual report narratives, it's important to note that program evaluation is distinct from monitoring, performance measurement, and assessment. Though these activities often yield valuable information about programs, they typically only provide descriptive, real-time, or predictive information. Program evaluation, on the other hand, uses more rigorous methods that can isolate causal relationships or answer key questions related to how and why.

So in the context of the annual reports, reporting quarterly program outputs and outcomes, for example, though important for monitoring performance, is not evaluation. However, these numbers might raise interesting questions that could be addressed through evaluation. Or they may even provide data in supportive evaluation. Ultimately, though, these are complementary efforts. And the evaluation section of the annual report focuses specifically on evaluation.

MR. VILLANUEVA: And what are the key activities to consider as states address their evaluation requirements?

MS. HALE: Well, in just a moment, we'll review the annual report requirements as described in the TEGL. And you'll note that the report requires information from across the evaluation lifecycle. So first, in the planning and design phase, the report is interested in learning about how the development of evaluation activities was coordinated in your state. It also requests information on any evaluations that are planned but not currently underway.

Next, in the implementation and analysis phase, the report requests information on evaluations underway or efforts to cooperate with federal evaluations that are underway. And then finally, in the interpreting reporting and disseminating results phase, the plan requests information on reports that they completed and links to those reports.

Also, the report is an opportunity to demonstrate how the results of the evaluations have been used for continuous improvement in your state. So we'll talk about each of these elements and give some examples of past narratives that address them well. Again, here are the elements for reporting evaluation activities in the annual report narrative. This list is available in full in TEGL 05-18. And next, we'll go through each item one by one with some examples of past annual report narratives that have addressed these requirements well.

The annual report narrative requests a brief description of current or planned evaluations, including methodologies used. So here I'm going to give you just a moment to read the first few lines of this. As you can see, this is a great example from California. And it does a nice job of discussing the methods that are planned, in addition to giving an idea of the purpose of the evaluation. So their narrative lists actually a number of evaluation activities if you go look at it, but here I've selected just one.

Other states have pulled excerpts from reports or documents that describe the evaluation, or list a key research question and some general notes about the types of methods that they'll use to address it. So this is another example. And I'll give you just a second to read the first few lines of that. Here the annual report narrative requests information on efforts to coordinate with other core programs, state agencies, and local boards. And in this example, we can see a narrative that suggested efforts to coordinate. This one's also from California.

And here they describe all their efforts to coordinate across several evaluation projects. Other states tackle this question in different ways. Some states have included discussions of standing working groups that are charged with developing the evaluation agenda. Or they'll just describe their general process for describing their evaluation agenda. Great. So the report also asks for a list of completed evaluations and related reports along with links. So here is a simple example. I want to highlight that it references a specific report. And it offers a link to a public document.

I also want to note that this is a great place to list evaluation reports. And there's really no need to provide links or [LMI?] to LMI or performance reports right here. The annual report narrative also requests information on how states cooperate with federal evaluations. I'll give you a few moments to just read the first few lines of this from New Jersey. Here you can see New Jersey offers information on their general process for coordinating evaluations. But other states have discussed in the past specific efforts for any federal evaluations involving core programs.

And then finally, the narrative requests a summary of how the results of studies are used for continuous improvement. And this is an example from college. I'll give you just a few moments to read again. And here you see that Utah is describing their process for using evidence. So other states have drawn specific lessons from a particular evaluation. And they might draw out specific strategies that they have employed or that they plan to employ in order to improve programs and services.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Jessica. And as states drop their evaluation section for the report, what opportunities should they take advantage of?

MS. HALE: Well, the annual report offers the opportunity to broaden the knowledge and use of evidence in your state. Through this annual report, you can further disseminate evidence about your programs. It includes summaries of current planned projects in addition to links to publicly available reports that you've completed. By making this information more widely available, you can also encourage evidence use, especially when it's connected to strategies for continuous improvement.

MR. VILLANUEVA: And what if a state isn't quite as far along as they would like to be in meeting their evaluation requirements?

MS. HALE: Well, if you're only in the planning stage or early in the implementation stage of your evaluation, you can report your progress by describing steps that you've taken in those phases. How did you coordinate with core programs, other agencies, and local boards? What questions were selected? What methods will you use? You can also demonstrate that you are taking early steps in building your evidence base.

For example, you can conduct a literature review to find impact or descriptive evaluations using workforce system strategies. Or use the clearinghouse for labor, evaluation, and research to identify any systematic reviews or evidence-based practices. You might also work with your WTQI partners to leverage administrative data or engage with your RESEA or other WIOA core partners. Finally, you can ask about and coordinate with federal partner evaluations

MR. VILLANUEVA: Great. Those are all good recommendations. So how can states build capacity to address WIOA evaluation requirements?

MS. HALE: Well, states can begin building evaluation capacity with a few simple steps. First, you can catalog recent research and evaluation publications produced about your workforce. You might look at federal evaluations of workforce programs, check out research conducted at universities, or search research databases. You can also ask stakeholders about the types of research and evaluations that are responsive to their interests. You can also consider using the research arms of your agencies or consulting with external partners or universities.

Finally, I have provided a link and screenshot of our evaluation and research hub on WorkforceGPS, which supports efforts to use evaluation effectively. I'd like to call attention to the evaluation toolkit that you see featured here on the right. And this offers resources for conducting evaluations. And it was developed specifically for state workforce agencies. I'd also like to call attention to the evaluation peer learning cohort, which is an interactive technical assistance forum for teams across agency representatives from up to six states.

Participants in the cohort complete the evaluation readiness assessment and an evaluation design assessment in order to help states build capacity. So if you'd like to get started looking at the existing evidence base, here are some links to sites that provide access to research in workforce programs. Our Division of Research and Evaluation hosts evaluation reports completed for ETA. The Clearinghouse for Labor, Evaluation, and Research, or CLEAR, provides research summaries across many labor topics completed in a range of workforce development agencies.

And workforce system strategies provide profiles to research toolkits and other resources that support workforce programs. If you have any questions after today's event, there are a few contacts here at the Division of Research and Evaluation. You're always welcome to contact me. In addition, grants [?] cost coordinates technical assistance for evaluation. And Neil Ridley is our evidence team lead.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Jessica, that's all really helpful information. If we didn't get to your evaluation question, you can put it in the chat and we'll get to it at the end. In the next section, we'll be focusing on describing waivers in your report. So, Shawn, can you review what's expected of states regarding reporting on their waivers?

Shawn Fox: Sure. Thanks, Cesar. So for the waiver section, what needs to be included in the annual report is just letting ETA know -- and like Christina said, this is a public report -- so also external stakeholders now -- which waivers you've had in place for the entirety of program year 2020. And it's great to see all your currently approved waivers, but the requirement is specific to the report on waivers approved for the full year in PY 2020.

And then we want to see what progress you're making toward achieving the outcomes you expected by requesting the waiver in the first place -- generally, your implementation experience with the waiver. And most importantly, what can you quantify about your outcomes while using the waiver? These are sort of things that are important to ETA in terms of evaluating whether we think these waivers are useful. And they give us an idea what sort of innovation states are undertaking that may be really good and worth considering and passing along to other states.

For the last several years, ETA has been a lot more stringent on getting real and measurable targets in the waiver requests that we approve. We recognize that there is a lot of staff turnover. So if there is any confusion about the specific progress that we want to see in the report, all you have to do is look to your state's original request and see what those targets were. In a similar vein, I'd like to remind everyone that state plans are due in the spring of 2022.

If any state at that time is asking for renewals, we will be taking into account through the waiver review process whether or not the results were reported and if the use of the waiver has demonstrated positive enough outcomes to merit continuation of the waiver. Again, we can't deny the impact of COVID-19 on service delivery across the board. But we'll still be using implementation data provided in the report when considering renewals. We'd also certainly welcome a discussion of how activities carried out under each approved waiver have directly or indirectly affected state and local performance outcomes.

But it's really the projected outcomes in the waiver requests that we'll be holding states accountable to. In terms of examples of what's acceptable and what is unacceptable, we want to make sure that the results are clear and measurable, the results correspond directly to the projected outcomes in the request, and as appropriate you can cite the data. In the past, some of the material that we have received has been less than helpful. That sort of makes sense, because it's like the full program year. And program year 2019 there weren't that many requests that were approved for the full year.

What we do not want to see this time around is the cut-and-paste from the initial waiver request, or vague statements like, performance data indicates that the percentage of WIOA youth has earned a credential has increased since X date. That doesn't give us a lot to go on. And that would be an example of unacceptable information to report. So moving on to an actual example, a really popular waiver is the out-of-school youth waiver that allows states to spend a lower percentage on out-of-school use, and spend that money on in-school use with a focus to the most at-risk -- like homeless, foster, and other vulnerable populations.

An example that the state may have set in their projected outcome section in their request could include an increase in the percentage of at-risk, in-school youth enrolled in work experience and drop-out prevention activities. Looking through this past year's report, a great example would be, receipt of these waivers has resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of in-school youth participating in work experience activities.

So 40 percent of in-school youth participated in work activities in PY 2019 compared to 2.15 percent in 2018 -- like a 29 percent in-school youth participating in tutoring, study skills, and other drop-out prevention services, compared to 19.4 percent in 2018. In both of these instances, the outcomes are clear, measurable, and attract back to the state's initial waiver request. So what we're really looking at is what actually happened with the use of your waiver.

As an aside for this particular waiver, and really for all youth-oriented waivers, we want to know what's happened to the out-of-school youth population. If you decided to shift the resources to in-school youth, has it had any sort of negative impact, or no impact whatsoever on the out-of-school youth population? So we'd like to hear about that in your report as well. Moving on to outcomes and results, this is just an example -- whatever waivers you have in place.

Something that we found particularly effective in terms of thinking through waiver effectiveness, some states have undertaken really expensive monitoring efforts to oversee the effectiveness of waiver implementation. There is often times that some information in the monitoring reports that you can glean to help you prepare for your end of report. For example, if you have this waiver to increase the cap of employer reimbursement for on-the-job training -- depending on business size -- you can talk about the expansion of OJT among small businesses.

Or you can talk about how you have more contracts in place with small businesses under this waiver. Are there fiscal requirements being met in terms of how reimbursement is being processed? These are just some of the questions that you can start asking yourselves when you're reporting on this waiver and other waivers. To conclude, some other questions to consider with each waiver request -- has the waiver achieved any other tangible benefits for job seekers or employers outlined in the approved waiver request?

You can identify how each waiver has favorably impacted services for disadvantaged populations and people with various employment and business. And through the waiver implementation, you maintained a satisfactory level of support for out-of-school youth while documenting the benefits for in-school youth. And then overall, this is sort of food for thought -- how, if possible, have the waivers changed strategies in your state? We would love to see that in the annual report.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Great. Thank you, Shawn. All right. Earlier in the presentation, we talked about the benefits of this report. We would like to know how many of you are currently leveraging the report for other state needs? So please take a quick minute to answer the poll question -- so, Jon, if you can pull that up. The question is, what do you use your state's WIOA annual performance report narrative for? Take a few seconds.

It seems like most are saying meet the DOL requirements, which makes sense. Also, others are sharing, to also showcase the state's vision and workforce system activities with internal and external stakeholders. Great. Thanks, everyone, for participating. Thanks, Jon. Yes. A state is required to submit this report. So if you are writing it anyway, why not make it work for you as well?

We read all of the reports, and we see that some states are definitely using the flexibilities to make this report work for them and to speak to their multiple stakeholders. So in this section, we'll show you some of the ways that states are making the most of these reports. So with that, I'll turn it over to Christina.

MS. ECKENROTH: Thanks, Cesar. Yes. You are having to fiscal report, so can you also put things in here that would leverage and talk about your state -- your state plan, your state vision, a letter from the governor or quote. You can definitely do that. And if you see have done just that. And you can see here the letters from governors are featured here from secretaries and commissioners, along with details about how the state is achieving their state plan and things like that, that would make it a little bit more leverage-able for a broader audience. And Dina's going to talk to you little bit more about how to leverage the report for more than just the DOL requirements. Dina?

MS. WESTGRIN: Thank you, Christina. Many of you may already be doing this, but as I mentioned before, if the state has a report that pretty much fits the bill, you should recycle it for this or recycle this report for other requirements as well. Use materials from other reports or publications that you have already prepared, such as the example we saw in the Q&A chat earlier. If these reports meet the needs of TEGL 5-18, there's really no need to reinvent the wheel here.

Repurpose those performance charts, maps that you've already produced that you use for other meetings and presentations. We know we're asking for specific information in TEGL 5-18. But to the extent that you have something that meets those requirements, do include it. And make the report work for you by using something that not only addresses what we ask for, ETA, but could also be used to showcase your system to program partners, board members, community stakeholders, AJC staff, and others.

Other partners you may want to think about when you're creating this or recycling this report is workforce development program partners, your system report, any community stakeholders you want to loop in, board members, general outreach, and even AJC staff training. There are lots of different ways that you can utilize this report across your systems.

MS. ECKENROTH: And another key tip, our hyperlinks and footnotes are allowed. So if you've got a great evaluation study, but it's way too long to attach, even as an appendices, that's okay. Footnote or hyperlink it. If you have a terrific web tool, if you have an awesome program site you would like us to visit, include hyperlinks to share with the system. And you can add all these features to share your great work in this report. Now, I think that generally covers the content and some of our best practices. So, Cesar, can you help recap some of the really important reminders people should take away today?

MR. VILLANUEVA: Yeah. Definitely. So here we have some important reminders. We stated submit an electronic copy of the annual statewide performance report to the wioa.ar@dol.gov email at the close of business on December 1. Also, copy in the email the state's respective ETA regional administrator and federal project officer. And submit it in a 508-compliant PDF format. Sometimes a state submits different PDFs for different appendices, but one joint PDF with all of the content and the appendices, that is preferred. And no separate partner narrative is required.

So that wraps up those important reminders. We hope that this was a useful refresher on the content and submission requirements for the annual performance narrative report, and that we provided some tips and ideas for you to consider when drafting your submission. So now we have some time for questions. If you have any questions about the report content, the submission, or the ideas shared today, please enter them into the chat. And we'll get to those, hopefully, all today. So take some time now and we'll take a quick look here at the chat. I have a question. Christina, can you answer this question? Where do I find the 508 compliance requirements?

MS. ECKENROTH: Yeah. Sure. Your state likely has accessibility resources available to you. So I would start that. But I'll also ask Jon to drop the website for federal government 508 compliance website into the chat. It is for federal government agencies. But they have some great tips. And they can put you in the right direction for 508 compliance in documents.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Christina. And another question for you -- is this a similar webinar for Title II adult education?

MS. ECKENROTH: So this is a good question. If you are familiar with Title II and adult education, if you are writing a narrative report for them as well, this is a different narrative report. So they have in the past had trainings about their specific requirements for a narrative report. So I really encourage you to reach out to your Title II contact to get the most recent information and about any training that they might have upcoming regarding their requirement.

MR. VILLANUEVA: And another question for you, Christina. Does the state need to include the Stevens Amendment on these report narratives?

MS. ECKENROTH: No. The Stevens Amendment -- remember referring -- you need to give credit for anything that was developed with federal funding. This is a mandated report. So while we are encouraging you to feel free to leverage this report for other uses, it is a requirement that you submit it to us. I don't think that the Stevens Amendment really applies because you're doing it on a basis of our requirement, and you're going to definitely say what it's for. So it wasn't produced with our money for the purposes of outreach or tools or TA or something like that -- it is a mandated report.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Christina. I do have a question here that says, I am also curious what constitutes a WIOA research project. Jessica, can you answer that question?

MS. HALE: Yes. Thank you. With respect to the requirement that states conduct evaluations, the requirement is that the evaluation examined activities under the WIOA Title II core programs to promote continuous improvement, research and test innovative services and strategies, and achieve high levels of performance and outcomes. So that's a little bit. The scope of it is activities under WIOA Title I, and then also that it's kind of geared towards performance improvement.

It's also important to note that the regulation requires that the evaluation uses designs that employ the most rigorous, analytical, and statistical methods that are reasonably feasible. But they offer an example of, say, a control group. Ultimately, the method used is going to depend on the evaluation question. And some questions require more rigorous methods. Certainly, not all questions require randomized control trial. And there are many questions that really call for more descriptive methods.

But typically, evaluation -- just more broadly out in the literature if we look at how evaluation is defined -- it's defined as an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency. So often, when you're conducting your literature review and you are crafting your research question, what that research output will look like, what your methods that you use, what your report will look like are really revealed through that process. Thank you.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Jessica. We do have time for more questions. If you have any other questions, please enter them into the chat and we'll take a minute to review those. Okay. And I do see another question. It says, as I recall, the WIOA Title II Program is not required to submit. However, they are required to participate. Can someone explain this? Christina, can you provide some insight?

MS. ECKENROTH: Yes. So two things like happening with this question. One, there is some language in the ICR that says that the partner program should participate where appropriate. And I think we talked a little bit on that. Dina talked a little bit on that where if you're doing some things that are joint, you should definitely -- Title II can get you the information you're asking for.

You can feel free to ask them for input to help you create this report to adequately reflect and respond to those topic areas. And/or we might thinking of the state plan, depending upon how your state is organized and what type of state plan you're submitting -- whether you're going to be submitting it alongside with Title II.

So I guess the squishy answer is, definitely Title II can help you or should be expected to help you out if you're working on something jointly and they have information that you need in order to submit this report. But they're not really expected to help you draft it or submit it in any way. Hopefully that answers. And this is not the state plan. I hope that answers the question. If you have an additional follow-up question, let us know and we'll take another look at it.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Okay. Thanks, Christina. Very helpful. So I do see that we do have some state best practices shared in the chat too. We have Kentucky. The Kentucky process is to have the state whip write the report with input from all other agencies who use WIOA Title II and III. So the agency keeps a RAG sheet so that their input is easy. That's a great best practice.

And Nebraska uses the annual performance report narrative to satisfy requirements established with their state saw. So thanks for sharing those practices as well. Okay. We do have more time to answer more questions. So if you do have any other questions, take a minute or so to provide those into the chat. We have another question -- does DOL ETA ever return a state's program narrative? Christina, can you take that one?

MS. ECKENROTH: I think the questioner is probably asking, does it ever "fail"? That's cheap program narrative. So we said that all of the ETA uses these program narratives, that everybody reads them, and that we do use them for different purposes across the agency. And that includes our regional offices. So I can't think of an instance in which we ever sent back a narrative report. But your regional office is also reading these. And they're also reading them for the meeting requirements of TEGL 5-18.

So if you fail to meet the requirements, fail to apply with 5-18, then you would probably hear from your friendly federal project officer or the regional office asking for more elaboration or to better understand some of your responses. If you do not submit an annual report -- we do track all of those -- we would be getting back in touch with you to try to find out if you need technical assistance or what is happening that prevented you from submitting that report timely.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Got it. Thanks, Christina. And we have another question in the chat. It says, is it correct to say that the Department of Labor will keep the effect of the pandemic in mind when it comes to our local area's ability to use their waivers? Shawn, can you answer that question?

Shawn Fox: Sure. A couple different things -- one, yes. I think it would be unfair to ignore the effects of the pandemic service delivery across the board; but I would qualify that by saying, that isn't a pass. It would be unacceptable to just say, well, you know, COVID-19 happened, so we can't give you any progress on our projected outcomes. We recognize maybe you have the benchmarks you set. Or maybe it was. But we do want to see, like, as a state, like the state is monitoring progress, those benchmarks.

And we recognize that just the nature of waivers -- some states apply a waiver statewide -- some just have it for a couple locals. And so that'll impact what the performance outcomes look like or what the projected outcomes and implementation results look like. So that's a long way of saying, yes. We will consider COVID-19. But, no, it doesn't give states a pass in terms of their outcomes.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Thanks, Shawn. That's helpful information there. And then we have one other question in the chat -- is this report supposed to be done by each local LWIOA in the state? Or is this a state's report only? So should it be done by the local boards? Or is it a state report? Dina, can you provide some insight?

MS. WESTGRIN: Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you for this question. It is a state report. The report that's sent to ETA would come from the state. But each state will probably have its own processes to develop the report and require input from the local level. So definitely check in with your state to see what they want from you in terms of their information -- data, details, perhaps some of those success stories I mentioned earlier. But only one report need to come to us, and that would be from the state.

MR. VILLANUEVA: Great. Thanks, Dina. So that seems like we've answered most of the questions. If you have any additional questions, please email us or contact us at etaperforms@dol.gov. And with that, thanks, again, everyone, for joining us today. Please stick around to answer a few survey questions in the room. So with that, Jon, take it away.

MR. VEHLOW: Thank you so much, Cesar. And I just want to thank all of our participants and presenters today. Just please stay logged in the room for just a minute longer to provide us with some feedback. You'll see that feedback window where you let us know what you thought of today's webinar. So please take a second now to share what you thought. Let us know what you liked or what we can improve on. There is also on additional topics window where you can let us know what you'd like to hear in future webinars.

Just a reminder, a recording of today's presentation, as well as a transcript and executive summary, will be made available on the WorkforceGPS event page in about three business days. Also, to better connect with your WorkforceGPS colleagues, please take a few minutes and sign up for the member directory on WorkforceGPS. That link is located at the top of the feedback window. Again, I want to thank everyone for joining us. Have a wonderful rest of your day, everyone.

(END)