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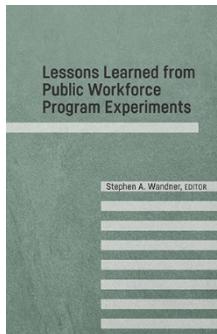
Lessons Learned from Public Workforce Program Experiments

Stephen A. Wandner, Editor

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KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Public workforce experiments have been conducted in the United States over a period of several decades. The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has sponsored a number of these experiments to seek out successful and cost-effective policy options for easing the burden of unemployment and reemployment for the nation's workforce.

A new book from the Upjohn Press chronicles many of the most important experiments and the key lessons derived from the evaluations of both existing large-scale programs and the development of new interventions—including low-cost experiments based on behavioral science methods. In *Lessons Learned from Public Workforce Program Experiments*, Stephen A. Wandner gathers contributions from a notable group of researchers who have extensive experience with USDOL workforce experiments. Together, they provide a comprehensive resource for anyone interested in designing, implementing, and evaluating public workforce experiments—and in how such experiments can be used to influence public policy.

Included are:

- *Introduction*, Stephen A. Wandner
  A former USDOL insider intimately familiar with many of the workforce experiments conducted by the Department, Wandner provides useful background on the number and types of experiments conducted and the problems facing implementation of experiments including securing funding and states or localities willing to participate; monitoring of experiments; design, implementation, and evaluation issues; and how to put the results to good use.

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- *How On-the-Ground Realties Shape the Design, Implementation, and Results of Experimental Studies*, Irma Perez-Johnson, Annalisa Mastri, and Samia Amin
  The authors discuss lessons learned from some important experiments and evaluations conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, including the Gold Standard Evaluation of the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs. Along the way, they address key decisions and issues that policymakers and researchers negotiate, and how these impact the design, implementation, and results of demonstration studies.

- *An Example of a Low-Cost Intervention to Target Services to Participants of a Local Welfare-to-Work Program*, Randall W. Eberts
  Eberts explains how small, low-cost interventions, based on principles found in behavioral economics, can be integrated into existing workforce programs. He also reviews the findings of the Work First Experiment and discusses factors that can make local public workforce offices more effective at operating workforce experiments.

- *Experimental Evaluations and the Evolution of the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment Program*, Jacob M. Benus
  Benus discusses the impact of the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment Initiative (REA) and three evaluations of different designs of the initiative. These efforts led researchers to discover ways for reducing UI duration and assisting UI claimants' return to work.

- *Incentive Experiments in Unemployment Insurance*, Christopher J. O'Leary
  O'Leary reviews the outcomes of a variety of workforce program field experiments, including reemployment bonus experiments, job search assistance experiments, and employer incentive experiments. He also describes the implementation and findings of the Michigan Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment "nudge" project.

The papers presented in this volume were originally presented at the 2015 Annual Fall Research Conference of the Association of Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM).

Stephen A. Wandner is the former director of strategic planning for the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor and served as director of research for the ETA and the Unemployment Insurance Service. Wandner is also a research fellow at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, a visiting fellow at the Urban Institute, and a senior fellow with the National Academy of Social Insurance. He earned a PhD in economics from Indiana University.

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