Using Administrative Data to Examine the Performance of Federal Workforce Training Programs

September 2018

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Introduction

- Want to demonstrate the usefulness of administrative data by discussing two of my projects that made use of administrative data.
  - First project examined the impact of federal job training program (WIA) on participants’ earnings and probability of employment.
  - Second project examined the impact of passing the GED on employment, earnings and probability of entering post-secondary education.
Impact of Job Training on Earnings

Adult Workers

Dislocated Workers
Impact of Job Training

- Positive impact on earnings for Adult Workers, very little impact for Dislocated Workers
  - Similar finding for probability of employment
  - For Adult workers benefit appears to exceed costs
- Basis of a report for Department of Labor. Project took 15 months, cost $1.5M.
  - Launched Randomized Control Trail (RCT) at same time--2007. Cost $23M. Only releases short term (15 months) results for far.
  - Short term results match results from our study
  - Requested data from all 50 states, got data from 12
Takeaways from Study

▪ Based on findings of little benefit for dislocated workers Congress allows local training boards to move money from Dislocated to Adult worker program

▪ Strongest results on cost/benefit come from RCT, but ...
  • More expensive and time consuming
  • Aren’t good at addressing other questions

▪ Room for both, but non-RCT trails requires administrative data
Impact of Passing the GED on Earnings

GED Test Takers

Quarter

- $500
- $400
- $300
- $200
- $100
$0
$100
$200
$300
$400
$500

Female
Male
Impact of Passing the GED

- No significant impact on earnings. Find similar results for probability of employment
- Some positive impact on probability of attending post-secondary school
  - Men complete around 1-1/2 credits; women approximately 6 credits
  - No significant impact on earnings or employment, even for those who go back to school
- GED may be valuable for some people, but is not particularly valuable for most people who take it
Takeaways from Study

- Most job training programs urge high school dropouts to take GED
  - Focusing on credentials
  - Likely more valuable programs for them to participate in, particularly Adult Workers
- Need to do more work to see who can benefit from the GED
- These data are for a single state—need data for multiple states
Administrative data are invaluable for improving existing government programs, but we need to improve their use

- Ensure state collected data, particularly UI wage-record data, are available for all 50 states and are more readily accessible to researchers
- Ensure that evaluations such as this are done on a regular basis and in a timely fashion
  - Make sure studies are completed before reauthorization and used as part of the process
- Do all this in a way that enhances data protection