
CWICstats

**A collaborative model to address
the research and data needs of
local workforce development
policymakers**

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Policy research that benefits children, families, and their communities

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Introduction

With the recent downturn in the economy, many policymakers want to know what works among the array of programs in the workforce development system. In Chicago and elsewhere, data on program performance and information about what works is often inconsistent, difficult to obtain, and fragmented given funding and program silos. In response to this need for data and information, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago partnered with public agencies, local policymakers, and foundations to launch a research and data initiative called *CWICstats* (Chicagoland Workforce Information Collaborative).

CWICstats researchers work in partnership with state and local public agencies to conduct research on the performance of Chicago-area workforce development programs. Much of this research involves the use of individual-level administrative data on program participants, which are linked and analyzed across programs and over time to assess pathways and outcomes. Although *CWICstats* research specializes in administrative data linking and analysis, additional *CWICstats* research involving labor market data, qualitative methods, and original data collection have also been used to answer key policy questions. The collection of research provided by *CWICstats* aims to inform policymakers, program administrators, program participants, and other stakeholders about the effectiveness of Chicagoland's workforce development system.

Given the complexity of the workforce development system, including fragmented and inconsistent data, the *CWICstats* initiative serves as an innovative model of system-wide collaboration with the aim of addressing data and research gaps on workforce program outcomes. The *CWICstats* model utilizes a variety of partnership, resources, data, and research expertise to assist workforce development policymakers with data-informed decision-making.

This paper describes the development of the *CWICstats* initiative and how it serves as a collaborative model to support research and data needs of workforce development policymakers. Several recent *CWICstats* research efforts will be highlighted, including a quantitative cohort analysis study to

assess educational and employment pathways and outcomes of youth as well as a qualitative case study to assess factors associated with successful workforce programs. Policy and practice implications of *CWICstats* research are discussed throughout the paper.

***CWICstats*: Chicagoland Workforce Information Collaborative**

The *CWICstats* initiative was developed to support the information needs of policymakers and stakeholders of Chicago's workforce development system. The creation of *CWICstats* resulted from a recommendation from a two-year mayoral initiative, called Chicago LEADS (Leading Economic Advancement, Development, and Sustainability), which started in 2007. Chicago LEADS focused on aligning the publically-funded workforce training system with the labor market needs of businesses. At the conclusion of Chicago LEADS, a new non-profit entity called the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (CWIC) was created in 2009, to work in partnership with the local workforce development agencies and programs to create alignment and ultimately promote a more effective system. CWIC was chaired by Mayor Daley and included numerous influential businesses and community partners. The mission of CWIC was to ensure that Chicago has a skilled and educated workforce to keep Chicago businesses, economy, communities, and families thriving. To achieve their goals of improving the skills and earning potential of residents, meeting the labor needs of local businesses, and strengthening Chicago communities, the CWIC was focused on aligning the diverse public agencies and program funding streams within the workforce development system. They were charged with ensuring programs were effective for both residents seeking employment as well businesses needing to hire a skilled workforce. CWIC monitored over \$350 million in annual workforce investments and coordinated resources across numerous city agencies to maximize the return on public investment. In order for CWIC to pursue their goals, accurate information was needed on the conditions of the local economy, the performance of the system, as well as the experiences and outcomes of workforce program participants.

To support the information needs of CWIC and other workforce development stakeholders, local workforce development policymakers, program administrators, and foundations partnered with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to create *CWICstats*. The model for *CWICstats* emerged from the need for a workforce data consortium that could provide reliable data from a diverse and fragmented workforce development system in Chicago. Given Chapin Hall's history of social policy research with administrative data, Chapin Hall was selected as a third-party research organization with the expertise needed to navigate the challenges of accessing, managing, linking, and analyzing administrative data from numerous workforce development agencies. Chapin Hall had extensive experience partnering with state and local public agencies to establish data sharing agreements needed to access and securely maintain individual-level administrative data. Also, the *CWICstats* team at Chapin Hall combined the academic and applied research expertise needed to successfully work with agency partners and stakeholders to engage in a variety of research efforts. *CWICstats* researchers specialized in linking individual-level administrative data program data to wage data in order to analyze program performance and conduct longitudinal research assessing program participants and their employment outcomes before, during, and after participating in workforce programs.

The primary role of *CWICstats* is to provide research that would assist CWIC and its public agency partners make data-informed decisions regarding workforce policy in Chicago. The complexity of the system and fragmentation of its data, combined with strong desire for a more effective workforce development system during the recent economic downturn, made this effort a challenging but necessary endeavor.

CWIC*stats* Partners

During the first three years, the CWIC*stats* initiative engaged numerous partners in its role as a workforce data and research consortium. CWIC*stats* was created to serve as a data and research resource for the CWIC, therefore CWIC was the primary partner of the CWIC*stats* initiative. In order for CWIC*stats* to bring together fragmented data and pursue research on a diverse workforce development system, numerous partnerships had to be established with the various city and state agencies administering public workforce development programs. Specifically, CWIC*stats* researchers partnered with city and state workforce development agencies - the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, which administer the Workforce Investment Act program as well as other job training and placement programs. CWIC*stats* researchers also partnered with the Illinois Department of Employment Security to obtain data to assess employment and wage outcomes of program participants. CWIC and CWIC*stats* embraced a broad view of the workforce development system, which included the secondary and post-secondary education systems, given their role in preparing youth and adults with skills for the labor market. CWIC*stats* researchers engaged the two public education entities in Chicago - the Chicago Public Schools and the City Colleges of Chicago. While these agencies were the main partners for CWIC*stats*, several additional agency relationships and program data were, and continue to be, sought to provide as comprehensive as possible data on local workforce development programs, including data on GED, incarceration, public housing workforce programs, TANF employment and training, and vocational rehabilitation programs.

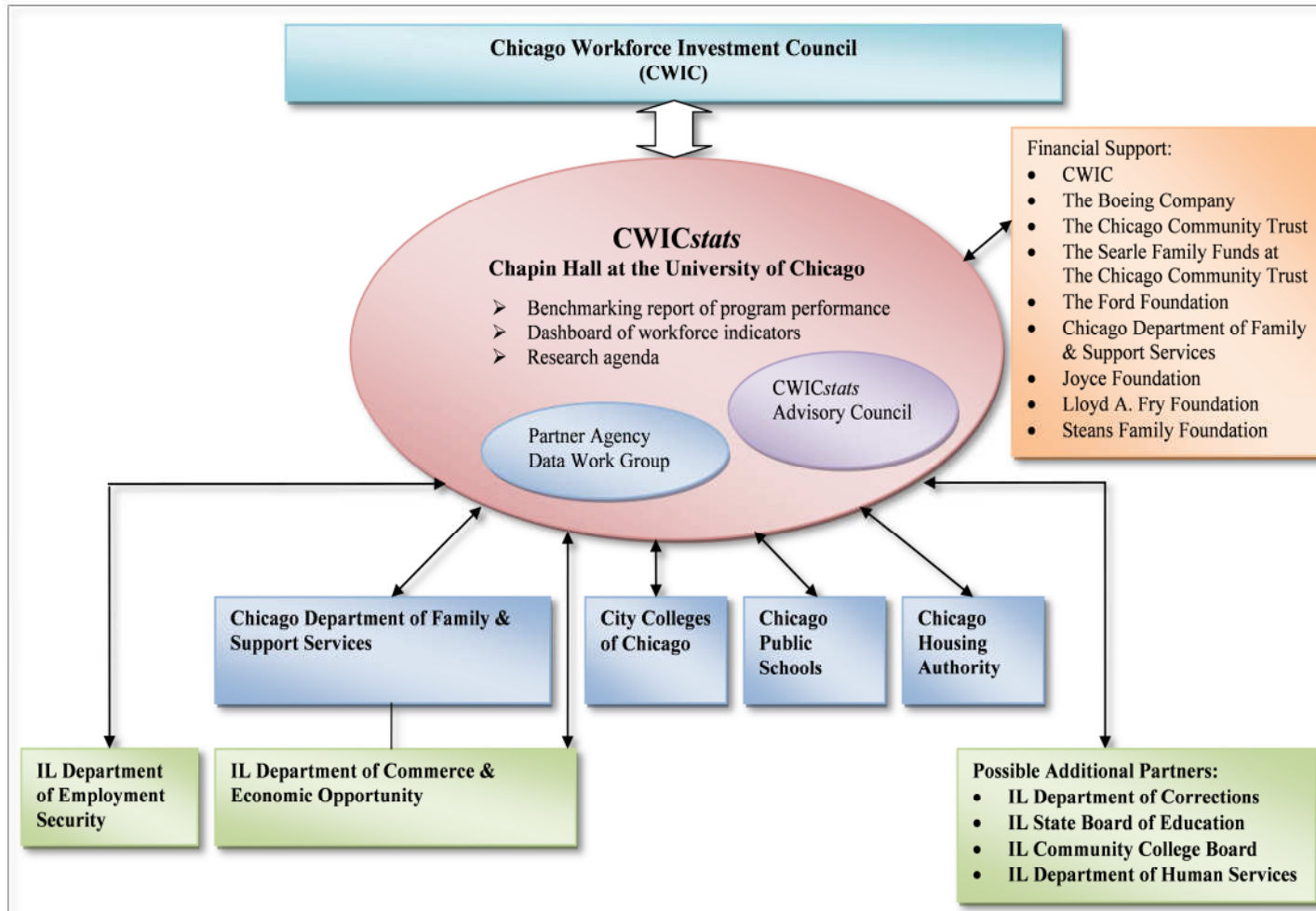
The process for engaging agency partners took time, sometimes years, since it involves relationship building, understanding how CWIC*stats* can meet the research needs of each agency partner, and establishing legal data sharing agreements. In order for CWIC*stats* researchers to obtain and use program administrative data, Chapin Hall established data sharing agreements with each public agency partner. These agreements stipulate the policies and procedures that dictate the security, access, and use of

program administrative data, including what research can be pursued with the data and allowing for agency review before findings can be disseminated.

Once public agency partners were formally engaged and operating with data sharing agreements, there was regular communication with agency staff. *CWICstats* researcher would periodically convene a Partner Agency Data Work Group which provided guidance and input into the *CWICstats* research activities. There was also ongoing communication with agencies regarding proper use and interpretation of administrative data, which can be nuanced given these data were not collected for research purposes. Also, *CWICstats* research regularly met with agency program managers and leadership to discuss their research needs and how *CWICstats* data could be used to answer policy questions.

These agency relationships and research activities would not have been possible, however, without the financial support of numerous funding organizations that have supported the development and ongoing research efforts of the *CWICstats* initiative. During the development and initial years of *CWICstats*, funding for *CWICstats* research and data efforts was provided by CWIC, the Boeing Company, The Chicago Community Trust, The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, the Ford Foundation, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, the Joyce Foundation, the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, and the Steans Family Foundation. Many of the program officers with these foundations provided more than financial support for *CWICstats*. They shared their knowledge of workforce development, leveraged relationships, and helped shape the research agenda of *CWICstats* to promote a more effective workforce development system. Representatives of many of these foundations along with other workforce development experts and stakeholders, provided formal insight and guidance for the research agenda as members of the *CWICstats* Advisory Council. The *CWICstats* partners from the first three years of the initiative are graphically depicted in Figure I.

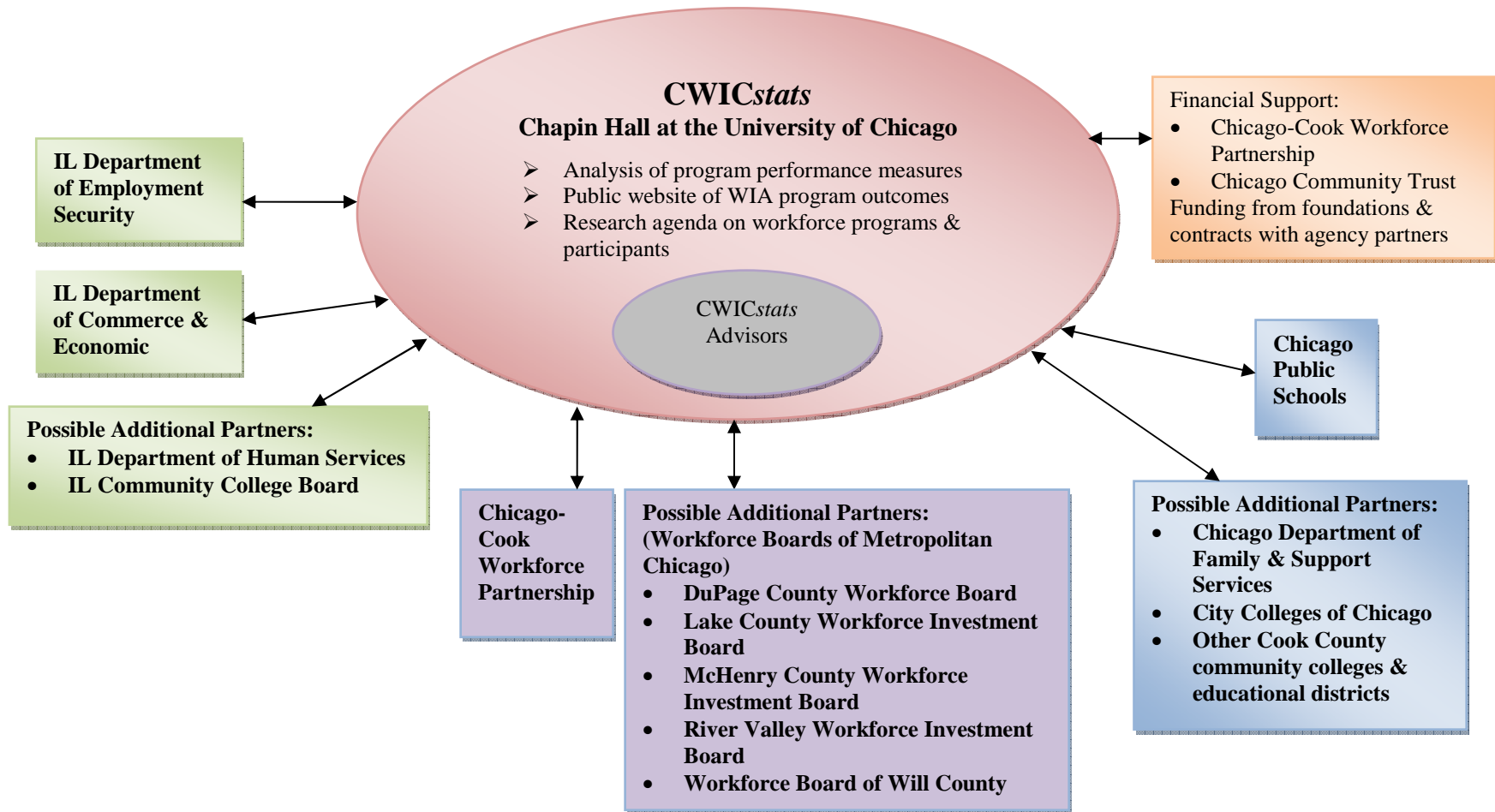
Figure I: CWICstats initiative partners during the first 3 years (2009-2012)



Three years after CWICstats started, the local Chicago workforce development system experienced a period of transformation, however CWICstats has been able to adapt and be responsive to the changing needs of the system. In mid-2012, after the mayoral transition, the CWIC organization transformed as four local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) in Chicago and Cook County consolidated under one WIB. The resulting organization, called the Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership (the Partnership), began overseeing Workforce Investment Act programs for all of Cook County. CWICstats continued to work collaboratively with the Partnership as it did the CWIC to support their performance measurement and research needs.

As the main partner for CWICstats evolved, so did the messaging of how CWICstats would engage with partners. Instead of being perceived as a research and data arm primarily focused on the CWIC or the Partnership, CWICstats researchers reached out to partners and other stakeholders to convey their system-wide perspective for their research and data efforts, which was inclusive of all workforce development agencies and programs. The goal is for CWICstats to evolve into a common resource for all local workforce agencies in the Chicagoland area, including all of the metropolitan Chicago WIBs and community colleges. Figure II provides a graphic depiction of the collaboration among CWICstats current and possible future partners.

Figure II: CWICstats initiative current partners (2013)



CWIC*stats* Research

CWIC*stats* has provided a variety of useful research and information on the programs and participants of Chicago's workforce development system. During the initial three years, CWIC*stats* researchers engaged in three key research activities, including the following: (1) assessing the performance of workforce programs, (2) providing information on the current status of Chicago's workforce and labor market, and (3) engaging in research projects studying areas of innovation and the achievement of education and employment outcomes. CWIC*stats* research and information has been disseminated in a variety of formats to a diverse audience, including agency partners, other workforce stakeholders, as well as public consumers of the education and workforce development systems.

Most of these research activities involved analyzing individual-level administrative program data from partner agencies and matching this data to wage data in order to understand individual residents' work experiences before, during, and after participating in workforce programs. Administrative data was also matched across programs to establish longitudinal trajectories of individuals and assess their experiences with multiple programs within the workforce development system. In addition to working with administrative data, CWIC*stats* researchers analyzed publically available labor market data, including Census data, and conducted both qualitative and quantitative original data collection. Depending on the research needed to answer a policy question, analysis ranged from descriptive statistics to advanced statistical modeling, including risk-adjusted regression models for performance measures and use of propensity score matching for comparison samples.

Several of the key research activities were producing quarterly reporting of key information for policymakers. Specifically, CWIC*stats* researchers analyzed individual-level administrative data to produce regular program benchmarking reports with meaningful performance measures for the CWIC and agency administrators. These reports included mandated and common measures plus new measures that

captured information about participant characteristics and barriers to employment. The benchmarking report research provided an opportunity to assess alternative program performance measures including cross-system, longitudinal, and risk-adjusted performance measures.

In addition to the benchmarking reports which were produced for policymakers, *CWICstats* researchers also developed a publically-available website (www.ChicagolandWIAtraining.com) that shared performance measures and customer feedback about Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training programs in Chicago. The website shared important program descriptive information with program outcomes with those seeking to make data-informed decisions regarding where to seek workforce training. Program administrative data was also used to analyze WIA-certified training programs to depict program performance outcomes. To date the website has been expanded to include all WIA-training programs in Cook County and is in the process of expanding to surrounding counties.

CWICstats researchers also produced publically-available quarterly dashboard reports, which provided a variety of key labor market and economic indicators for Chicago in one convenient report. Each quarterly dashboard report also included a highlighted analysis, featuring a topic of interest to local policymakers, such as youth unemployment and local industry analysis. Dashboard reports were featured on the CWIC and Chapin Hall website and widely disseminated to local policymakers.

In addition to these regularly-produced research efforts, *CWICstats* researchers engaged in several qualitative and quantitative studies to inform local policymakers about the complexity, participant pathways and outcomes, as well as successful factors of the local workforce development system. Several of the studies are highlighted in the following sections.

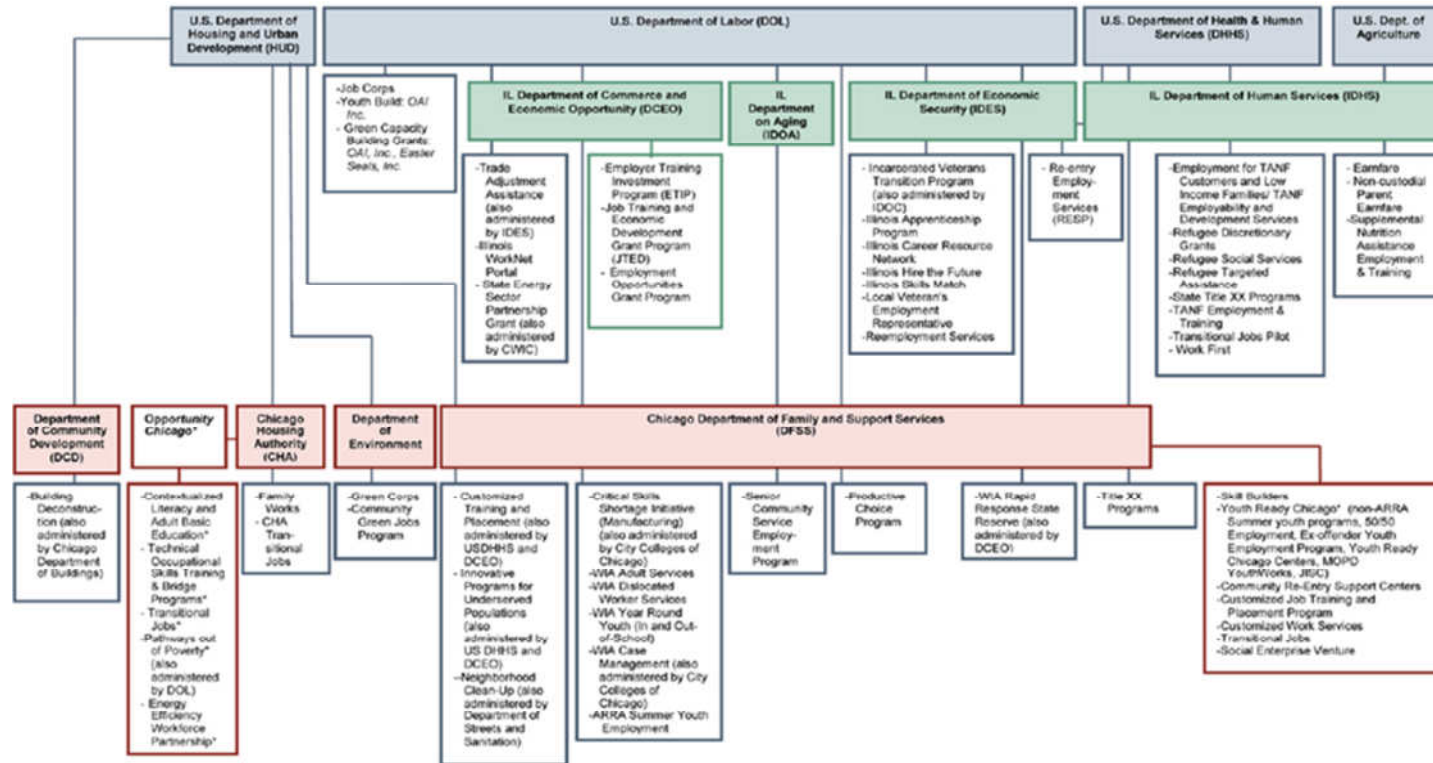
Workforce system map and inventory¹

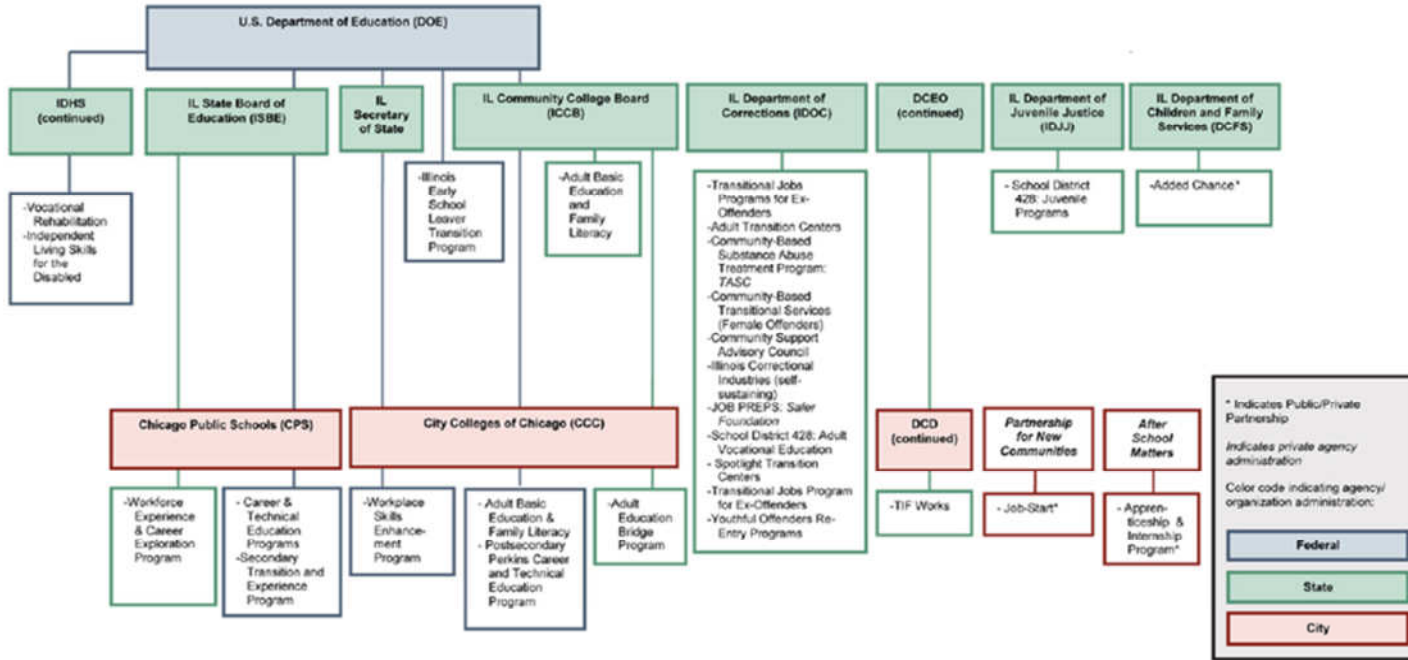
As part of these early research efforts, *CWICstats* wanted to document the array of agencies and programs that are part of the complex and diverse workforce development system in Chicago. *CWICstats* researchers developed a report that provided a graphic system map and program inventory of all federal, state, and local workforce development programs within the City of Chicago. While this effort was initially pursued to inform *CWICstats* researchers' understanding of the system and provide a context for the initiative's research efforts, this descriptive report has served as a valuable resource for CWIC's Board as well as other workforce policymakers and stakeholders. This report was also influential during

¹ Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. (2010). *Chicago Workforce Development Programs: System Map and Inventory*. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

the recent mayoral transition and part of their support for reforming the local workforce development system. The graphic of the system map is in Figure III below.

Figure III: Chicago Workforce Development System Map





Chapin Hall (2010) *Chicago Workforce Development Programs: System Map and Inventory*

Cohort analysis research²

The cohort analysis study is part of the initial descriptive *CWICstats* research to provide policymakers with information about the characteristics, pathways, and outcomes of the participants served by specific agencies and programs of the Chicago workforce development system. As mentioned earlier, *CWICstats* used broad definition of the workforce development system, encompassing workforce training and placement program as well as educational programs, including career and technical education in high schools and post-secondary education. This research has evolved over the course of several years and continues to be advanced with the inclusion of additional data. The initial research presented here focuses on following two entering cohorts of Chicago Public School (CPS) high school students through their time in high school and into the labor force and post-secondary education over ten years.

The sample included cohorts of CPS students who were first-time freshman in fall of school year 2000–01 and 2001–02 (n = 47,006). Analysis of outcomes included high school completion, career and technical education (CTE) completion, post-secondary education enrollment and persistence through 2010, and employment and earnings from calendar year 2010. By 2010, most of the sample was between the ages of 22 and 24.

Data for this research include administrative data of CPS student transcript files, National Student Clearinghouse data on post-secondary education, and Illinois Unemployment Insurance quarterly earnings data. Although not included in this paper, this analysis also included WIA program data to assess students' engagement in youth and adult workforce training programs during the study time frame.

Although each individual student is unique and the pathways to postsecondary education and the workforce vary, there are several key findings. The majority of CPS high school graduates (70%) enrolled in college at some point during the study time frame. However, only 49% enrolled in college in the fall immediately following high school graduation, suggesting that many high school graduates are taking nontraditional paths and time off before enrolling in postsecondary education. In looking beyond initial college enrollment, the analysis also explored student persistence to a second year of post-secondary education. Only 42% of CPS graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education persisted to a second year of schooling. Asian and white students had higher rates of enrollment and persistence compared with black and Hispanic students, and a higher percent of female high school graduates enrolled than males.

² Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. (2012). Exploring Postsecondary and Employment Outcomes of Chicago Public School Students: Snapshot 2010. Working paper. Available upon request.

This research also looked at CPS student who completed CTE programs during their time in high school, which was of particular interest to CPS given the recent reforms of the CTE program. CTE is a three-year sequence that students generally begin in 10th grade and complete in 12th grade. Because it takes three years to complete the program, nearly all CTE completers graduate from high school. In terms of college enrollment rates, CPS graduates who complete CTE programs (72%) were relatively similar to CPS graduates who did not complete CTE programs (70%). Persistence also looked similar, with 41% of CTE completers enrolled in college and then persisted to a second year of post-secondary education. However, these descriptive differences between CTE and non-CTE graduates must be interpreted with caution since there are likely selection differences in who participates in CTE programs. Further analysis is planned using matched comparison groups to explore the impacts of CTE on student outcomes.

Employment and earnings were also assessed with the cohort analysis study. Overall, 61% of the sample had Unemployment Insurance (UI) earnings at any point in calendar year 2010. There were significant differences in employment between graduates and dropouts. On average, 59% of graduates were employed in each quarter versus 36% of dropouts. Average earnings were also higher for graduates, and the earnings gap between graduates and dropouts increased even over this short period of time for which wage data was available (the four quarters in 2010). In the last quarter of 2010, the average earnings of CPS graduates (\$5775) was significantly higher than that of CPS dropouts (\$4790). Researchers also found striking differences with black male CPS students, especially those who dropped out of high school, since they were much less likely to be employed and have significantly lower earnings than other individuals in the sample. It is important to note that for those individuals not in the UI earnings data, it cannot be determined with certainty who was actively participating in the labor force—those individuals without employment may either have been unemployed or not actively looking for work. Furthermore, over 20 percent of graduates were still enrolled in postsecondary education in 2010, which will negatively impact their employment and earnings numbers, though college enrollment is generally seen as a positive outcome. Assessing the effects of college attendance on employment and earnings is an area for further research.

This cohort analysis research, although still ongoing, has provided policymakers with a unique opportunity to assess pathways and outcomes of high school students over time. It has highlighted the nontraditional path of many students from secondary to post-secondary education who may take time off before enrolling in college. This research has also provided valuable insight into post-high school pathways and outcomes of CTE graduates for CPS administrator, including whether their employment and educational experiences after high school are similar or different from non-CTE students and if CTE students are employed in industries related to their training.

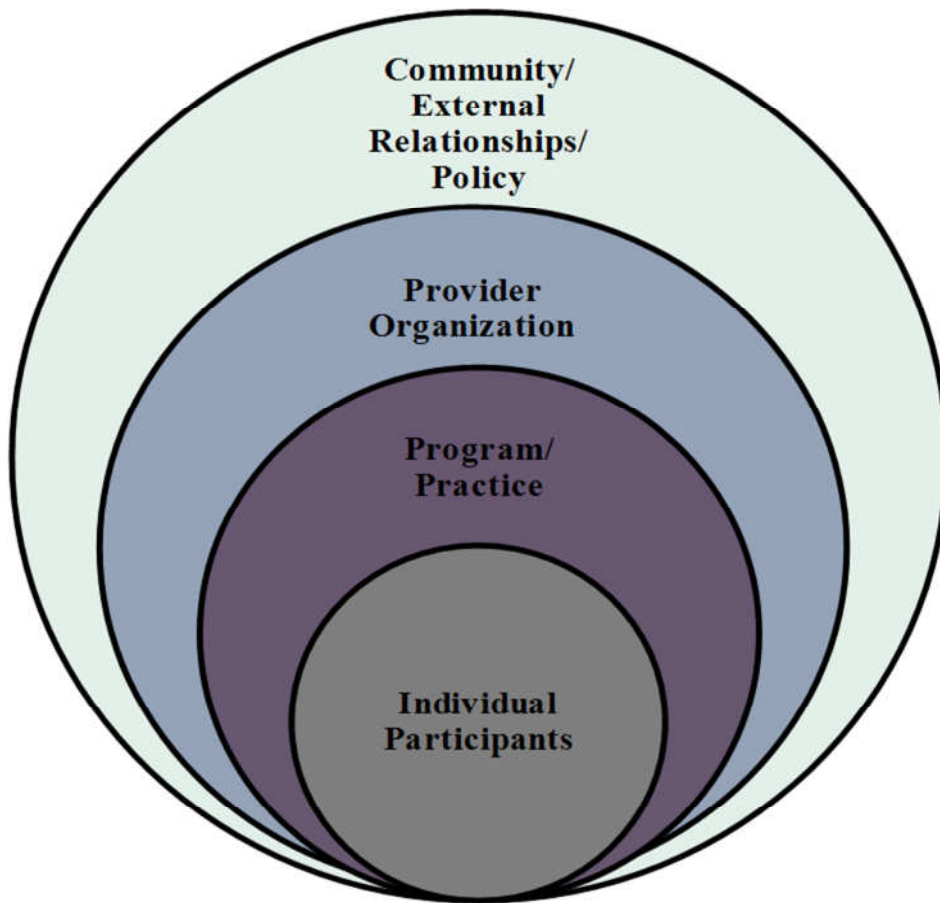
Inside the black box study³

As CWICstats researchers were pursuing studies analyzing administrative data to assess program performance and conducting research on longitudinal pathways and outcomes of participants, many questions were raised about how workforce programs achieve successful outcomes. To help answer these questions, CWICstats researchers, with support from the Ford Foundation, conducted a qualitative study to assess what factors may influence program outcomes, which was an attempt to look inside the black box of what makes workforce programs successful. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to understand why workforce development programs and services are successful and what providers do to successfully implement programs and services to achieve positive outcomes. The study focused on understanding both program processes and contextual influences of participant and community characteristics. Qualitative research methods were used for this study, including site visits to workforce programs, interviews with program providers, and document review. The goal of this research was not only to improve understanding of program inputs and processes, but to describe potential measures of individual, community, program, and organizational factors and to assess whether it is feasible to measure these factors with existing or new data collection efforts. This study was a first step in attempting to understand the factors that may explain *why* workforce programs achieve successful outcomes, and *how* influential factors may be quantified or measured to help improve the system.

CWICstats researchers developed a conceptual model to help categorize the range of factors that influence workforce programs, as depicted in Figure IV. The conceptual model is a nested ecological model, which starts with the micro-level influence of individual participant characteristics, expands to include program and practice elements and provider organizational aspects, and ultimately to the most macro-level, broader set of external relationships that include the communities and policy environment in which programs operate. Intersecting with all of these levels of factors is the role data and outcomes play in how programs achieve and understand their success. The study identified the influential factors within each of these levels that lead to programs' success, how and if these factors are currently measured, and recommends improvements to the data collection methods and data system that currently exist within the workforce development system.

³ Weigensberg, E., Schlecht, C., Laken, F., Goerge, R., Stagner, M., Ballard, P., & DeCoursey, J. (2012) *Inside the Black Box: What Makes Workforce Development Programs Successful?* Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Figure IV: Conceptual model of factors related to successful workforce programs



Weigensberg, E., Schlecht, C., Laken, F., Goerge, R., Stagner, M., Ballard, P., & DeCoursey, J. (2012) *Inside the Black Box: What Makes Workforce Development Programs Successful?* Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Selected influential factors on success at each level are outlined below. The complete set of factors is explained in more detail in the full report, including how workforce organizations measure these factors.

Participants, programs, and practice

- *Intake assessments:* The eligibility and intake assessments that programs require of all applicants are thorough and extensive, capturing as much subjective and objective information about the applicant as possible to determine their willingness and ability to complete their program. As a result, potential barriers to success and employment are identified early, and for those applicants that ultimately enroll, programs have assessed the supports that will be needed to encourage program completion and success. Although all the organizations in this study capture client

characteristics at intake and enrollment, they vary in what information they collect and how they use the information. Participant data is often used to identify and assess individual participants' needs, and some of the organizations use the information to provide individualized program offerings and support. Others use entry tests for placement in the appropriate program.

- *A comprehensive program approach:* Given the barriers some participants face, the successful programs offer a comprehensive approach to training and engaging their participants in addition to the technical and job skills training. This includes addressing psychosocial challenges, such as conflict and time management and professionalism, and addressing basic needs such as clothing, transportation, and medical assistance. Organizations often track what services clients use to help them overcome barriers, including whether clients use several services or “bundles” of multiple services, which public benefits they take up, and which services they access. This information helps providers know what services should be provided and the uptake of these services to ensure these supports are available. Data on participant characteristics are also used to assess program management and processes. Data about participants' characteristics, needs, and experiences with the program are also used by program administrators to better allocate resources, including funding and staffing.

Provider organizations

- *Flexibility in many aspects of the organizations' operations:* Successful organizations demonstrate flexibility to remain committed to their mission while responding to changing participant needs and the economic environment. The organizations in this study are flexible in their service delivery strategies in order to meet the needs of participants, whose profiles are constantly evolving, as well as the fluctuating needs of employers and local businesses. Successful provider organizations use client-level and organizational data to assess process measures and monitor how well they are doing at providing services and achieving their desired outcomes. Organizations also demonstrate flexibility in their capacity and need to diversify funding, and use data on funding in their daily operations. Organizations track where their funds are being spent to meet accountability requirements put in place by funders. As part of these efforts, providers collect and report data differently for their various funding sources and grants, which often require multiple data systems with repetitive data entry.
- *Organizational leadership and staff:* The boards and leadership staff in the organizations we studied are very active. Leadership staff and program staff are often in constant communication, with each recognizing the crucial role the other plays in participants' success. Leadership staff endorsed the motivation, attitude, and personal experiences and characteristics that program staff bring to the organization, more so than their education or professional experience. Staff

evaluations, completed by participants and/or management, are used in most organizations to monitor staff performance.

External relationships, community, and policy

- *Employer partners treated as customers and engaged in a variety of ways with the organization:* Strong employer relationships permeate the successful organizations in this study, where employers are treated as customers who receive dedicated efforts to ensure their workforce needs are met. Employers engage with training providers in a number of ways—involvement in training components, serving on the board, engaging in volunteer efforts with the organization, and even taking business service trainings from the organization. Organizations must meet employers' and industries' changing demands while ensuring enough partnerships exist to place all graduates in employment. Given the importance of building and maintaining relationships with employers, and identifying and being responsive to employer needs, about half of the programs in the study formally or systematically track their employer engagement.
- *Community partners provide many services to the organizations' clients:* Community partners, such as schools, healthcare providers, other community-based organizations, and many others, serve as a source of referrals into the program as well as provide many support services that organizations cannot provide on their own. Communities also may play a role determining where an organization is located and/or the types of programs the organization provides. In this sense, organizations often serve an economic development purpose in the communities in which they operate. With regard to measurement, organizations track community referrals, and some track engagements with community partners.
- *Engagement in policy and advocacy:* The successful organizations in this study are active in advocating for their funding and supporting their services and programs before policymakers at all levels of government. Despite facing numerous policy challenges, they understand the value of advocacy and presenting tangible evidence to lawmakers to protect their organizations and advance their mission.

Findings from this study led to several recommendations to improve the workforce development measures and to develop an integrated data management system. Specifically, recommendations were identified for common measures to establish universal standards, longitudinal measures to assess outcomes over time, risk-adjusted measures to account for harder-to-serve populations, and measures of process and contextual factors to study these influences. Recommendations for an integrated workforce development management information system were also suggested, including developing a system that can interface with other requirement systems, minimize repetitive data entry, collect data on all program

participants regardless of program funding source, analyze data for self-assessment, and improve external reporting.

This research provided an important step toward developing a conceptual understanding of the multiple levels of factors that influence workforce development programs. The development of a conceptual model of what is inside the black box of workforce programs has led to discussions about how to assess these factors and improve how data systems capture this information. The recommendations of this study to develop improved data systems was well-received among local policymakers, who are currently engaged in a multi-million dollar effort to develop a new integrated workforce information system for Chicago-Cook County. Improved data and knowledge about workforce providers' program processes and the context within which they operate are critical to evaluating program outcomes and facilitating program improvement. Measuring and understanding the factors that contribute to organizations' success among the various levels identified will ultimately help strengthen the workforce development system

Collaborative Model

The *CWICstats* initiative serves as an innovative model for promoting cross-system collaboration, addressing common research and data gaps, and supporting data-informed decision-making within a local workforce development system. During the short time *CWICstats* has been operating, these research efforts provided useful information to help policymakers and program managers make data-informed decisions about how to improve the workforce development system.

The key aspect to the success of *CWICstats* is that it functions as a true collaborative model. *CWICstats* research is pursued as a collaborative effort between Chapin Hall, agency partners, and funders with the goal of providing information to support policymakers improve the effectiveness of the workforce development system. This collaborative approach is used to identify research priorities by seeking input from partners when determining what studies or information is needed by policymakers. The collaborative engagement of public agencies facilitates sharing of administrative data and building a relationship of trust to work with their program data. *CWICstats* collaboration also extends to numerous foundation partners who assist with providing financial support and leveraging additional funding sources.

The collaborative nature of *CWICstats* is not only part of the research activities but also in sharing and disseminating research and information with partners. Therefore research is shared in a variety of ways, including traditional research reports, policy briefs, and memos, but also presentations and public websites. Many formal and informal discussions occur with *CWICstats* partners to ensure data and research are available and used to help make policy decisions. As a result a local culture of data-informed decision-making has been created, and *CWICstats* researchers are often engaged in discussions about how to use research and improve measures and data. The culture of using data to promote informed decision making has even expanded to sharing workforce program outcome data with participants seeking

information about which training programs to pursue. The collaborative model of *CWICstats* has created an environment in which fragmented data are analyzed and used in numerous research efforts, that are used by policymakers, practitioners, and participants to ultimately make informed-decisions and promote the effectiveness of the local workforce development system.