
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

Innovative Data Sources for Regional Economic Research and Analysis: Conference and Symposium Report

May 7-9, 2012

In May 2012, the George Washington Institute of Public Policy, George Washington University, and the Department of Public Policy, the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill co-sponsored two consequent events at George Washington University concerning the nature and uses of innovative data sources for regional economic analysis. On May 7-8, “Innovative Data Sources for Regional Economic Analysis,” gave 260 attendees the opportunity to explore the data sources offered by 52 federal, commercial, academic, and nonprofit organizations in a “data fair” format. The second event was a symposium on May 9 at which 14 researchers presented findings based on the analysis of innovative data sources, demonstrating the possibilities of their use. GWIPP Research Professor Andrew Reamer and UNC Professor Maryann Feldman were the co-principal investigators for these events.

For the purposes of these efforts, the principal investigators considered a data source to be “innovative” if it relied on advanced information technology (e.g., able to process very large volumes of data), used recently developed statistical methods (e.g., synthetic data), or focused on a topic of emerging policy interest (e.g., green jobs).

The two-day conference’s primary aim was to raise the awareness of economic policymakers, practitioners, and researchers about innovative private and public data sources and tools useful for regional economic development analysis and policy. Its second aim was to offer data-providing organizations the opportunity to productively interact with users and with each other.

As originally conceived, this final report was to be in the form of “proceedings,” that is, summaries and a synthesis of plenary and small group discussions. However, for reasons to be noted, the principal investigators determined that participants’ interests were best served by eliminating planned structured discussions and turning the conference into a “data fair” in which each participant could visit with the exhibitors as she or he desired.

This report describes the conference’s rationale, development, exhibitors and participants, and activities. It includes assessments and outcomes of and suggested improvements in the conference, as provided by exhibitors and participants through two post-conference surveys. It also briefly the research symposium, “The Use of Innovative Data Sets for Regional Economic

Research.” The report ends with thoughts about future activities that build on the conference and symposium.

Conference Rationale

The beliefs motivating the conference are as follows:

- The economic health and well-being of the United States depend on its global competitiveness.
- This competitiveness is substantially determined at the regional level. More specifically, the capacity of U.S.-based firms to sell goods and services to the nation and the world is very much a function of their regional context, including capacities to support and encourage knowledge transfer, creativity and innovation, entrepreneurship and business development, a skilled workforce, capital access, a well maintained physical infrastructure, and functional public institutions.
- U.S. regions are progressively vulnerable to the increasingly sophisticated economic capabilities of developing nations.
- Consequently, an important aspect of federal economic policy is facilitating improvements in regional economic competitiveness. Among the competitiveness policy tools at the federal government's disposal, information is among the most essential and cost-effective. Policymakers and market participants require current, accurate, detailed economic statistics to monitor, assess, and respond to competitiveness issues and opportunities. Addressing these needs is a low-cost endeavor.
- Despite the nation’s competitive vulnerabilities, federal economic policy has remained tied to traditional business cycle management tools of fiscal and monetary policy. It has not concerned itself with a coherent, evidence-based structural/ competitiveness policy.
- In particular, the federal government has not addressed the value and role of national and regional economic statistics as part of a competitiveness effort. Federal economic statistical agencies do not view the provision of regional statistics that facilitate competitiveness as central to their mission. Consequently, federal regional statistics programs are underfunded and products are not well-matched to user needs.
- Recent advances in information technology provide an unprecedented opportunity to collect, organize, analyze, disseminate, and visualize large volumes of data generated from private and public administrative records. Concurrently, new statistical methods make possible the creation of microdatabases that allow new ways of studying economic behaviors while, when necessary, fully protecting confidentiality. Further contributing to new data collection efforts is an increased policy emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship, clean tech, and other such building blocks of our 21st century economy.

- As a result of these advances, a plethora of regional innovative data sources and tools is emerging, spanning federal statistical and mission agencies, commercial firms, universities, and nonprofit research organizations. These data sources have the potential to greatly increase the abilities of
 - regional businesses, governments, and advocacy organizations to understand and respond to issues in and opportunities for economic competitiveness in a timely manner
 - federal economic policymakers to understand and respond to the rapidly evolving geography of U.S. economic activity, including the economic relationships among regions
 - researchers to understand the nature of regional economies, the factors that influence competitiveness, and principles for the design national and regional policies and programs to promote regional competitiveness.
- However, regional decision-makers, federal policymakers, and researchers have not been fully aware of the innovative data sources available to support their work. Further, a number of data providers have not been aware that public sector and academic markets for their products exist. And most innovative data providers have not been fully aware of the work being done by other innovative providers.

The purpose of the conference, then, was to provide a forum which offered substantial numbers of data users and innovative data source providers multiple opportunities to learn from and develop relationships with one another. The principal investigators' belief was that these new relationships would lead to the greater use of, and improvements in, innovative data sources, to the benefit of the field of economic development and the nation's economy.

Conference Development

Initial support for the conference was in the form of a \$50,000 grant from the Kauffman Foundation. The grant proposal assumed conference attendance of 65-75 people, including 16-20 representatives of innovative data sources. Eventually, however, over 350 people registered for the conference (260 participants and 90 representatives of 52 data sources), five times the original estimate.

Conference participation grew well beyond expectations for several reasons. First, the principal investigators identified many more innovative data sources than they originally expected. They also found that innovative data providers have much to learn from each other in terms of data retrieval, manipulation, dissemination, and uses and, in particular, that federal statistical agencies would benefit from exposure to innovative external datasets and tools that stimulate their thinking about how best to fulfill their respective missions.

Second, the principal investigators chose an open registration process rather than one by invitation only. They thought that a by-invitation-only approach would reduce the conference's value because participants would be limited to users known to the principal investigators and

likely to each other. Conversely, they believed that open registration would bring together many people who did not know each other and so would offer a far greater opportunity to create new relationships among users and providers that could lead to improvements in data availability, usefulness, reliability, and accessibility. The principal investigators also thought that a diverse set of users would better inform data providers about the markets for their products and services and how those products and services could best serve user needs.

Third, conference registration was free, which allowed many participants to attend who otherwise would not have been able to (particularly federal employees).

The unplanned growth in the number of conference participants resulted in the project budget more than doubling. As a result, the principal investigators sought funding from additional sources and were successful in that effort. Sixty thousand dollars were raised from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Lumina Foundation, and the Council for Community and Economic Research, which allow George Washington University to cover all project costs.

Conference Exhibitors and Participants

As noted, 52 innovative data source exhibitors had a table at the conference (see Appendix A). Distribution by type of organization was as follows:

- federal statistical agencies (19)
- academic institutions (9)
- commercial vendors (20)
- membership organizations (2)
- think tanks and research organizations (2)

While most exhibitors were present both days, a small number were on the floor for only one day due to other commitments.

To aid conference attendees, the principal investigators prepared a briefing book and a web site that categorized exhibitors among topics and tools:¹

- Topics
 - Business Creation & Development (9)
 - Jobs, Workforce, Education & Labor Markets (10)
 - Longitudinal Databases (6)
 - Networks & Relationships (5)
 - Prices & Costs (4)
 - Regional Industries & Economies (15)
 - R & D, Innovation, & Commercialization (18)

¹ The briefing book and web links to innovative data sources are available through <http://www.gwu.edu/~gwipp/innovregstats2.htm>.

- Tools
 - Big Data, Open Data Platforms, & Web Services (6)
 - Data Intermediaries & Integrators (3)
 - Data Analysis & Visualization Tools (4)

Some exhibitors were listed in more than one category. The web site provided a direct link to each exhibitor, as well as a number of innovative data sources not represented at the conference.

The 260 registrants represented a diverse array of organizations, including:

- nonprofit organizations (25 percent)
- universities (21 percent)
- federal policy/program agencies (20 percent)
- federal statistical agencies (13 percent)
- state and local government agencies, economic and workforce development organizations, membership associations, consulting firms, and other organizations (21 percent)

A list of participants, in alphabetical order by organization, is in the Appendix B.

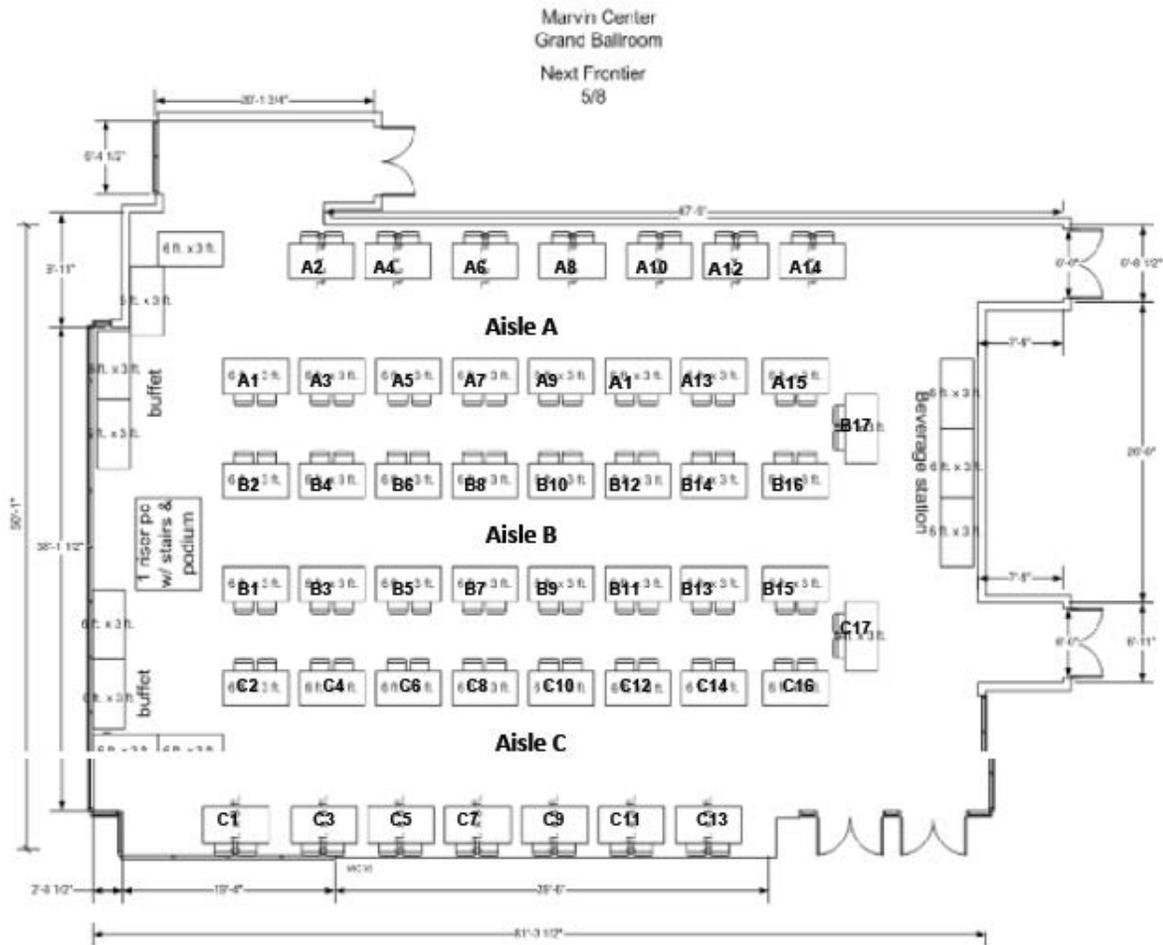
Conference Activities

The two-day conference was held in a “data fair” format in the 3,900 square-foot Grand Ballroom of the Marvin Center. (See map on following page.)

The principal investigators’ workplan for conference structure was as follows:

- Categorize each exhibitor by one or more topics, along the lines of the categories listed above.
- As part of the registration process, ask each participant to indicate the top three categories of interest.
- According to the identified categories of interest, assign the participant to three small topic-specific groups (8-10 people each), one for each of the first three half-days of the conference. Registered participants were distributed among 30 small groups for the morning of May 7, 32 small groups for the afternoon of May 7, and 32 small groups for the morning of May 8.
- At the beginning of each half-day, ask each small group to explore the exhibits covering its topic and the reconvene to assess what it had seen, posting group comments on a live conference blog and individual assessments on a confidential on-line evaluation form for each exhibitor.
- Also in each of the first three half-days, briefly interrupt proceedings with a short talk by a notable in the field of regional economic data, including Robert Groves, Director, U.S. Census Bureau; Anthony Carnevale, Director, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; and Mark Doms, Chief Economist, U.S. Department of Commerce.

- Keep the fourth half day (Tuesday afternoon) open, with no groups.
- After the conference, organize and synthesize blogs and exhibitor evaluations into conference proceedings.



After the welcome and introductory remarks, participants were asked to go to their assigned group meeting place, get organized as a group, and then go to the exhibit floor. However, it quickly became clear that without a trained facilitator for each group, the process was insufficiently structured to work well. Many people simply went to the floor as individuals, skipping the group. Among the groups that met, a number found the discussion so interesting that they found it difficult to stop and go to the floor. When some groups came to the floor, they quickly broke up as individuals felt drawn to different exhibits. Also, some people saw acquaintances and stepped aside to chat. Very few groups blogged about their experience and very few individuals posted exhibitor evaluations.

As a result, at the beginning of the Monday afternoon session, the principal investigators announced that the small groups would not meet during the remainder of the conference—participants were told they were free to visit exhibits as they wished. Throughout the first day and the morning of the second, the floor was quite crowded and bustling as participants moved among exhibitors, participants spoke with participants, and exhibitors had the opportunity to learn about other data sources. The crowd thinned out considerably on the afternoon of May 8, as by then most participants had seen the exhibits of particular interest to them.

As planned, Anthony Carnevale spoke halfway through the May 7 morning session. The themes of Dr. Carnevale's remarks were that decisions by labor market participants are more frequent and complex than has been the case previously due to greater labor market volatility and an increased emphasis on attaining a postsecondary credential; that current, reliable, detailed regional statistics are essential for intelligent decisions by employers, educators, workers, students, public purpose organizations (such as workforce boards), and governments at all levels; that advances in information technology are enabling the development of an array of new, useful data sources; and, however, insufficient federal funding for socioeconomic statistics is undercutting labor market participants' capacity for intelligent decision-making.

Census Bureau Director Robert Groves spoke on the afternoon of May 7. He noted the stagnant budgets and increasing public antipathy towards federal statistical surveys and, simultaneously, the ongoing emergence of a considerable number of administrative record-based Big Data resources in both the public and private sectors. He then indicated the necessity (from a budget perspective) and the opportunity (from a technology perspective) for federal statistical agencies to increasingly rely on administrative record-based data and for these agencies to be creative and collaborative in this effort.

Commerce Department Chief Economist Mark Doms, the scheduled speaker for the morning of May 8, was unable to attend.

Food and drink were made available throughout the conference, which encouraged attendees to stay in the conference area and continue to meet with others. This result was aided by direct access from the conference room to an outdoor rooftop deck with picnic tables.

Conference Assessment, Impacts, and Outcomes

During and after event, a substantial number of participants and exhibitors spontaneously told the principal investigators that they had a very positive conference experience. They said they appreciated the opportunity to learn about new data sources and new data-related technologies and methodologies and to make new professional connections. Representatives of a number of federal statistical agencies and nonprofit and commercial data providers said they were pleased to learn about, and impressed with, innovative efforts taking place in other sectors. The principal investigators are aware of several instances in which a federal agency and a commercial data provider agreed to explore collaborative possibilities. The large majority of informants requested that the principal investigators convene a similar conference in the future.

Immediately after the conference's conclusion, the principal investigators emailed an evaluation survey to attendees. Results indicate that:

- 88 percent of respondents would attend a similar data fair in the future (n=41)
- 86 percent of respondents found the data fair very informative (67 percent) or somewhat informative (19 percent) (n=42)

Participant respondents (that is, non-exhibitors) provided a substantial number of complementary comments about the data fair (see Appendix C, Section 1). Various respondents valued the breadth and diversity of exhibitors; the quality of the exhibitions; the number and quality of the attendees; the open format, which provided the opportunity to gather information about data sources and uses, engage in open-ended conversations, and build relationships; the opportunity for on-the-spot idea sharing and brainstorming; and the lack of a registration fee.

Participant respondents also identified specific interactions that they found of particular value (see Appendix C, Section 2). Collectively, respondents (n=23) highlighted 18 of the exhibitors. A number appreciated learning about the sophistication of the federal statistical agencies. Several liked having the opportunity to talk with senior government officials, leading academics, and students.

Participant respondents were mixed about the principal investigators' effort to have people work in small groups (see Appendix C, Section 3). While they saw the potential of small group activity and appreciated the contacts and discussion, they thought that the principal investigators provided insufficient structure and instructions and that the groups were too large to move easily through the data fair.

Exhibitor respondents were quite positive about the event in general, particular experiences and interactions, and the difference between this event and other exhibitions (see Appendix C, Section 4). Exhibitors appreciated the diversity of attendees and presenters; the opportunity to build a customer base; the opportunity to network and explore collaborations with other exhibitors; and the opportunity to learn about competitor products and services. Compared to other exhibitions, they found that data fair provided the opportunity to reach a broader audience; have more productive interactions; and deepen connections with existing customers.

A second survey emailed one month after the event indicated that the large majority of participant and exhibitor respondents had contacted or planned to contact people met at the data fair.

- 80 percent of attendees contacted or plan to contact an exhibitor (n=35)
- 81 percent of exhibitors contacted or plan to contact attendees (n=21)
- 63 percent of exhibitors contacted or plan to contact other exhibitors regarding possible collaboration (n=19)

Immediately after the conference, and then one month out, participant respondents identified an array of expected and actual follow-up efforts (see Appendix C, Section 5). These include: visit data websites; contact exhibitors to discuss data use; use new data sources in research and to improve work products; collaborate with new contacts on research papers; enhance research proposal; create new business partnerships; share briefing book and web links with colleagues; obtain data training; teach others how to use a data tool; and attend a specialized conference.

Exhibitors' post-conference intentions and actions include: follow up with potential data users; collaborate with other data providers; make data product improvements on the basis of conversations at data fair; and adjust data tool tutorial on the same basis (see Appendix C, Section 6).

In summary, then, according to participants and exhibitors, the data fair was very successful—in acquainting data users with new data sources, introducing exhibitors to a broader user base and other data providers, stimulating connections among data users, catalyzing action and the intention of action, and generating a widespread desire to attend similar events in the future.

Suggested Improvements

While respondents deemed the data fair a success overall, they offered a number of recommendations for any future event. These ideas can be categorized as follows:

➤ Expand the amount of space devoted to exhibits.

Several respondents thought the conference space was too small for the number of exhibits and attendees. Specific requests included more display space and wider aisles.

➤ Reduce the number of days devoted to the open data fair from two to one or one and a half.

As noted earlier, attendance fell substantially after Tuesday's lunch. A number of people thought that one or one and a half days of open time would be sufficient.

➤ Introduce structured presentations and interactions into the event. Suggestions included:

- Data provider presentations in breakout rooms
- Analyst/researcher/academic presentations on the uses of innovative data sources, in breakout rooms
- “Lightening talks” – 15-20 minute talks proposed by individual participants on the day of the event
- Expert panel discussions in breakout rooms
- Longer talks by notable speakers (e.g., Groves, Carnevale) at set times and with the opportunity for audience engagement
- Small group discussions that are more organized—ideas include
 - Have a discussion facilitator for each group, with an added responsibility for seeing that a written summary of the discussion is prepared
 - Provide a written discussion guide

- Provide each topic with its own breakout room and allow participants to self-select
 - Hold the small group discussions after giving participants several hours of open time with exhibitors
 - Have the small groups meet briefly, then disperse as individuals, then reconvene at a fixed time
- ☉ Provide participants and exhibitors with the briefing book in advance of the conference

Due to the unexpectedly large amount of time required for its preparation, the briefing book was completed and electronically distributed the evening before the conference.

Consequently, a number of respondents said they were unable to make good use of it before the event (lack of time) and during the event (hard to read on smartphone).

Symposium: Use of Innovative Data Sets for Regional Economic Research

After the principal investigators had set the conference dates and started planning, they were asked by GWIPP Director Hal Wolman to consider ways in which an academic symposium might complement the conference. Each year, the GW Provost's Office provides GWIPP with approximately \$25,000 to hold a day-long academic symposium on a public policy topic of its choice. The principal investigators proposed, and Professor Wolman accepted, a focus on the "Use of Innovative Data Sets for Regional Economic Research." Their thought was that the symposium could serve as a forum in which researchers from the U.S., Canada, and Europe would share cutting-edge work and meet like-minded peers. The symposium was scheduled for May 9, the day following the data fair. GWIPP agreed to pay for speaker and discussant travel and hotel costs.

With the title and date set, the principal investigators identified and arranged for 16 academic researchers to provide 14 presentations organized around six topics—labor force, university R&D, companies, patents, regional industries, and regional economies. Two discussants were lined up as well, one for the morning presentations and one for those in the afternoon. Each presenter was asked to provide a short paper for distribution to others beforehand. The principal investigators also arranged for speakers who had developed their own innovative dataset to exhibit at the data fair.

The symposium agenda, with speakers and presentation titles, is provided in Appendix D. The sequence of topics was intended to flow from the micro (workers, firms, universities, and patents) to the regional (industries and economies).

The principal investigators worked with Professor Wolman to prepare a symposium invitation list. In addition, Professor Feldman suggested to Martin Kenney of the University of California at Davis, a speaker and the editor of *Regional Policy*, that he devote a special issue of the journal to the papers presented at the symposium. Professor Kenney readily

agreed. The principal investigators understand that the development of this issue is in process.

Attendance at the symposium, including speakers, was about 50, with a plurality from the academic community. The papers were well received, discussion was lively, and the audience learned about a number of innovative data sources, innovative analytic methods, and new findings regarding the workings of regional economies. Participants, particularly the speakers, appreciated the opportunity to connect with others with similar interests and strongly expressed the desire to hold a similar event in the near future.

Looking Ahead

In light of the success of the conference and symposium in achieving their goals and the strong interest in having similar events, the principal investigators will seek funding to organize another conference on innovative economic data sources in the late 2013. Their thought is that a hiatus of 18 months provides sufficient time to allow new and improved innovative data sources to emerge and yet is short enough to maintain a sense of community and continuity.

The conference sponsors were very pleased with the results of their investment and have expressed interest in discussing possible funding of a future event.

In the meantime, the principal investigators are maintaining the web page of innovative data sources and gathering candidates for addition. If new funding becomes available, they will update the website on a regular basis and periodically send an email to conference participants and exhibitors that identifies new innovative data sources and provides an update, if appropriate, regarding any future event.

Conclusion

The principal investigators very much appreciate the sponsors' investment in the conference. This funding made possible the development, and hopefully the institutionalization, of a new productive mode for appreciably increasing awareness and use of innovative data sources and catalyzing ideas and relationships that can lead to further innovative data developments. The result over the long run, the principal investigators, will be more effective public and private sector decisions that support the economic competitiveness of the nation's regions.

Innovative Data Sources for Regional Economic Analysis Conference

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Washington, DC | May 7-8, 2012

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Appendix C: Comments from Participants and Exhibitors

Section 1: Overall Experiences of Conference Participants

- “I very much enjoyed the conference. There were many very knowledgeable participants and exhibitors all concerned in very similar areas. This was a major strength. I enjoyed the table format where exhibitors could highlight the data.”
- “I enjoyed the exposure to data and interesting colleagues. The data fair part was very informative. I found that focus to be refreshing as opposed to the usual format of hearing an academic paper with a few follow-on questions.”
- “It was terrific -- the data fair brought together a remarkable number of exhibitors, and there was plenty of time to talk to them.”
- “I only experienced the data fair and it was a useful setup that generated substantial idea sharing. I think it was a success and would recommend a similar format for future events.”
- “The data fair was extremely useful. I have a stack of notes, flyers, and updates on existing sources with which I'm already familiar and also new sources that have either been rolled out recently or are in the queue. Other conferences do not offer the mix of federal, academic, and private data providers. Plus, the fact that the conference was free was a huge incentive to attend.”
- “My overall experience of the conference was great. It provided me with an opportunity to network with people and learn more about the industry and different ways in which data are compiled and presented. Also, it gave me an idea how I can enhance my data analysis skills and help my agency to advance its research efforts. The exhibitors did a wonderful job with the demos and presenting their information. Having a laptop and big monitors that an attendee could follow while the exhibitors were conducting demo of data analysis was a plus and made the presentations more powerful for me.”
- “The exhibits were great for me. I was interested in the exhibits and in thinking how LMI could be used by my organization, a national education association, to help our members know more about the work they are preparing students for.”
- “Loved the data fair.”
- “People interactions were more pronounced at this event compared to other conferences and events. The ‘open format’ of the data fair was key. The mix of data displays was very good. Unusually good interactions with data vendor or representatives.”
- “I thought this was an EXCELLENT conference. It was EXTREMELY informative and meeting with the exhibitors on a one-on-one basis was very helpful in seeing how their data would be useful to us individually.”

- “(1) Excellent learning process with data fair exhibitors, especially a wide diversity of organizations participating; (2) A chance to see colleagues and meet new experts and make new contacts; (3) Learn of various approaches to regional economic analysis.”
- “It was a wonderful conference! The organizers and participants all seemed to be intelligent, open-minded people with similar and complementary interests and capabilities. It was a wonderful learning experience.”
- “I enjoyed it and felt I learned about some great data sources, and had the chance to meet interesting people. It was not super structured, but I don't think it needed to be.”
- “It was great to get a refresher on the data available to analysts and to have the opportunity to engage with data representatives one on one.”
- “Format was very good for direct interaction which is usually difficult at most conferences.”
- “(T)he selection/variety of vendors was excellent and I would definitely recommend that my colleagues attend in the future (at least for a half day).”
- “Great concept. You put in a lot of effort into this conference.”
- “Thank you so much for organizing this! It was a great introduction to so many types of data!”
- “Generally this is one of the most useful and interesting conferences I have been to in a long time. Thank you for all of your efforts.”
- “Overall, it was a great event! Thanks for putting it on!”
- “Overall, I am satisfied with my experience and it was worth it for me to take a day off from work to learn about different data sources and to network with people who were contributing to the industry that I am interested in. I hope you'll organize it again in the future.”

Section 2: Valued Participant Experiences

- “Two specific sources of data were extremely useful for me as a participant. This included the business longitudinal dynamics data through the Census Bureau as well as the National Student National Clearinghouse. Also, I ran into several individuals who I have conversed with electronically, but never in person. This was great as we could discuss our overlapping interests.”
- “Seeing how far the government agencies have come in making their databases interactive and the visual presentation of their data attractive. Learning more about vendors that aggregate vast amount of workforce data such as Monster and Burning Glass.”
- “(1) One-on-one/small group time with data ‘vendors’; (2) networking with new contacts; (3) learning about new/in development data sources and discussing ways that they could be useful to my company's work.”

- “I got the most out of the presentations about GIS and statistical data analysis tools, for example the Census poverty and housing section, American Community Survey and other data analysis tools such as Sci2 were helpful. Some presentations about jobs and labor market analysis were great. Most importantly the National Student Clearinghouse presentation was something that is in line with my current research topic. Networking with people was a plus.”
- “Discovering Elsevier's SciVal team, getting to hear details about STAR metrics, getting to talk in depth about patent issues with folks from USPTO and AUTM.”
- “youreconomy.com -- spoke with the man who designed the data product, asked him questions, and he offered to send us some background data to answer our questions; BLS -- Rick Clayton asked our group what type of future information products we could from their data and was very interested to hear what we would love to have and what our applications are; Monster -- not only told us about the products they are selling, but made sure to demonstrate free data already available and how to use it.”
- “(1) The Evidence Network, interesting start-up; (2) New data available from USPTO; (3) Interesting Posters, would've liked more (seems like a good way to communicate, especially when exhibitor is not around).”
- “Several excellent discussions with the folks from the Economic Development Administration from the Department of Commerce; unexpected but very interesting conversations with Yustina of BurningGlass, Steven of Amazon WebServices, and Robert of Indiana University; wonderful to see many leading academics in attendance.”
- “There was great representation among the government agencies. I was impressed with the seniority of some of the attendees. It was also nice to talk with the students and university representatives.”
- “I'm especially excited to try using GeoIQ and ThomasNet.”
- “The most useful conversations that I had were with practitioners and government employees that implement policy, particularly SEC people. I met nice people who work with employment data as well.”
- “Thank you for the conference. I learned about a dataset that will be critical to my future work and I don't know if I would have learned about this dataset through other means.”
- “I really appreciated having the list of vendors broken down by area of interest so we could focus on those first and explore some sites that we might not otherwise explore. Also, it was very valuable to have takeaways (paper) from each of the vendors”

Section 3: Participant Views on Small Data User Groups

- “The groups were disorganized, but there was some untapped value there. I met new people and we had some interesting discussion. The group idea could work with a little more structure on the discussion.”
- “The groups were great as a means to discuss and share ideas among the group participants but unsure how they were supposed to work with the exhibitors.”
- “The small groups were chaotic and not sure what to do - this was a great idea, but more organization and direction would have been useful. The best part of the small groups was meeting the other attendees and learning about what they do, but it didn't help me with learning about the data being presented.”
- “Having attendees form groups to discuss objectives and discoveries was a good idea. It was nice to have a chance to meet a few people early in the event. The main problem with the concept was trying to get people to tour the exhibit together and you were right to abandon that part. But you don't need to abandon the whole concept.”
- “The group discussions were also sparsely attended and for one of my groups I was the only one who showed up (Prices).”
- “The groups should have had facilitators and guided questions for discussion, but it was a great way to network and brainstorm!”
- “Although the "groups" did not work well, I liked them and they allowed me to meet new people. A little more structure on the groups would be beneficial. It was too crowded to move a group with the vendors. 2-3 people was the max. Having themed groups was a good idea.”
- “It was nearly impossible to go around the fair with the groups. Also, most groups disbanded immediately. They did, however, provide a nice formal networking opportunity.”
- “(G)roups need better direction, but still they allowed unexpected interactions.”

Section 4: Exhibitor Perspectives

➤ Overall Experience

- “From an exhibitor perspective it was quite an eclectic mix of attendees. It was also interesting for us to network with other data providers - both public and private.”
- “Exhibitor both days of conference; went around individually as possible. I found the conference to be very useful and highly engaging. It is rare to have that many people interested in the same topic but from different perspectives in the same room. The diversity of opinions made me think more broadly about how my tools can best be positioned so that they respond to the various needs of the community.”
- “As an exhibitor, I was mostly tied to my booth. But during slack times -- lunch, breakouts -- the exhibitors had chances to talk, and I was able to make a few important connections. I had a number of people stop by who had heard of my topic

(STAR METRICS) but weren't exactly clear on the details, so I got a chance to have useful conversations.”

➤ Experiences and Interactions of Value

- “As a corporate data provider, I became aware of a variety of data sources and service providers we may be able to work with. Some were unexpected, like Monster and Amazon web services.”
- “New possible business partners, new possible data sources for our work, interesting ideas on how our data could be used”
- “1) The ability to speak directly with potential users of the tool will be helpful towards developing the final product; 2) The numerous connections I was able to make with other exhibitors for possible future collaborations; 3) The unusual insight into the government data collection process and limitations.”
- “It was great for us to see what types of things other organizations are working on. As we branch out and diversify our offerings, it's good to know what the competition is already doing!”
- “One fellow saying that he has spent 10s of thousands of \$ getting the data we provide; learning about the different attempts to measure and collect data for innovation.”

➤ Comparison with Other Exhibitions

- “This is the first fair I've been to. I'm pleased with the amount of interest that attendees showed in our company.”
- “It was a good opportunity to address interested participants one-on-one, rather than the typical ‘Give a powerpoint at a workshop and try to buttonhole/be buttonholed during the breaks’”
- “Nice to have a select group of exhibitors. The data fair was less commercial, and more meaningful than most such events.”
- “Above the average with respect to level of interest”
- “Several people were amazed that we provided all these data for free!”
- “Yes as it showcased our data and visualization tools against others.”
- “The data fair was a great way to talk with the people we get our data from and promote the forecasts that we create.”
- “Yes. It was a excellent group of people/organizations with common interests. We haven't participated in many forums as an exhibitor, largely just as a sideline activity at conferences where we've been on the program. This conference was very good for generating research ideas, exposure to data we want to know more about, and sharing information about our data and analytical tools with those who can use them.”
- “Created different kinds of interest compared to other exhibits. We received more attention from people further afield from our "base" -- so the potential for totally new kinds of uses and collaborations seems higher.”
- “The data fair was great to provide awareness to an audience that would not likely think to visit our site and use our data.”

Section 5: Participants' Post-Conference Intentions and Actions

☞ Intentions as of Mid-May

- “I will use several of the data sources and likely maintain contact with several individuals I met. We are likely to collaborate on several papers.”
- “(1) contacting data vendors, (2) Invite demonstrations for products, (3) purchase and use new data products”
- “I have shared the briefing book and particular websites with colleagues and will be contacting some of the exhibitors about their products.”
- “Plan to look closely at about 18 data sources I learned about during the conference. Also plan to share the briefing book with my colleagues.”
- “We hope to establish some new business partnerships, data sources and follow on sales meetings.”
- “I will update my colleagues about what I learned and we will discuss ways to incorporate relevant data into our consulting work to provide a better value-added product for our community clients.”
- “I plan to contact some of the people that I met to talk to them about my data analysis needs.”
- “I plan to use some of free data tools that were presented and share it with my research team at work.”
- “Working in Labor Markets and producing visual graphics and making sense of large data sets and information, the website/ applications/ programs available will be very beneficial. I plan to use the different data sources to allow my data to be better visually represented.”
- “(1) Utilize data to refine paper currently being prepared, (2) Further contact exhibitors via email, (3) Come back if conference held again”
- “I will set up follow up meetings to discuss partnerships and possible subscriptions.”
- “There are many datasets I learned about that sounded like they could be useful. I will be doing some follow up to see if they do have practical applications for my purposes.”
- “Use better quality data in our assessments”
- “Tracking down and using for research several of the data sources that one was not previously familiar with.”

☞ Intentions and Actions as of Mid-June

- “A lot of the information I learned at the conference was used in a proposal to NSF. I learned a lot about what's going on in the Economic Data world, particularly in the gov/beltway world.”
- “We are going to attend DataFerret training in July”
- “Utilized datasets to improve current study.”

- “I learned about an additional tool for working with Census data. I will likely provide a tutorial for using this tool at an upcoming conference.”
- “We will be more collaborative with a few of the government agencies.”
- “Attended a specialized conference -- invitation came through the GW conference”
- “Purchase data and keep tabs on several data sources/future opportunities for collaboration and exchanging information/experiences”

Section 6: Exhibitors’ Post-Conference Intentions and Actions

➤ Intentions as of Mid-May

- “Follow up with specific contacts who are interested in acquiring our data and tools.”
- “I am working to establish several collaborations with other data collectors.”
- “We will be modifying and adding to the tool based on conversations we had with potential users as well as thinking through ways to teach them how to use it. We will also be connecting with other exhibitors going forward to discuss possible collaborations.”
- “We will reach out to several people who indicated that they would like more information about our organization.”

➤ Intentions and Actions as of Mid-June

- “Got good customer feedback which will help us plan improvements in the future.”
- “Learned about other data products that may be relevant to other research not directly related to the data product we were exhibiting. Will follow up with these providers when I return to these other research projects.”
- “With some of the exhibitors we have advanced discussions on collaborations. Some of them are participating in our SDR.”²
- “Working actively with Harvard's cluster mapping project to connect information between the two projects and websites and to add new features and data to StatsAmerica.”
- “I have continued follow-up and meetings with folks that were interested in our data from the conference. So potential collaborations on projects or services provided to those met at the conference may ensue.”
- “The conference gave us an excellent idea of what other people are doing with similar kinds of data in the use and it was helpful to get feedback on what we have done to date and get some new ideas for future things we can do with the database.”

² Swap data repository, authorized by the Dodd-Frank Act.



GW INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

WASHINGTON, DC

Use of Innovative Data Sets for Regional Economic Research

May 9, 2012

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Marvin Center, Room 309

800 21st Street, NW Washington, DC 20052

Agenda

9:00 – 9:05am: Welcome and Introduction

- Hal Wolman, GWIPP Director

9:05 – 9:45am: Labor Force, Moderator: Hal Wolman; Discussant: Paul Reynolds

- Erika McEntarfer, Center for Economic Studies, U.S. Census Bureau, “Job-to-Job Flows and the Business Cycle”

9:45 – 10:30am: University R&D, Moderator: Hal Wolman; Discussant: Paul Reynolds

- Jason Owen-Smith, University of Michigan, “Doing Policy Relevant Research Using StarMetrics”
- Shanu Sushmita, UCLA, “Moving Discoveries From Science to Commerce”

10:30 – 10:45am: Break

- Coffee, pastries

10:45am – 12:15pm: Companies, Moderator: Andrew Reamer; Discussant: Paul Reynolds

- Martin Kenney, University of California – Davis, “Start-Ups, Employment Growth, and Geography: Results from Emerging Growth Company IPOs, 1996-2010.”
- Don Walls, Walls & Associates, “Which Metropolitan Markets Are Best at Fostering New Firms that Survive?”
- Maryann Feldman and Nichola Lowe, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, “Circling the Triangle: Using a Spatial Longitudinal Company Data Base to Research the Research Triangle”
- Diane Burton, Cornell University, “Entrepreneurial Firm Development in Silicon Valley: The Use of Career History Data”

12:15 – 1:15pm: Lunch

1:15 – 2:30pm: Patents, Moderator: Andrew Reamer; Discussant: Edward Feser

- David Wolfe, University of Toronto, “The Spatial Scale of Innovation”
- Dieter Kogler, University College Dublin, “Inter-Organizational Knowledge Spillovers in the Evolution of Biotechnology Invention, 1981-2010”

- Vetle Torvik, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, “A Dataset of Biomedical Author-Inventors: Probabilistic Disambiguation and Linking Names Across PubMed and USPTO”

2:30 – 3:15pm: Regional Industries, Moderator: Maryann Feldman; Discussant: Edward Feser

- Mercedes Delgado, Temple University, and Christian Ketels, Harvard Business School, “Clusters and Economic Performance: Leveraging the Cluster Mapping Database”
- Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen, University of Buffalo, “Researching Firms Using Primary and Secondary Data: A Case of Regional Bioenergy in the United States”

3:15 – 3:30pm: Break

- Coffee, cookies

3:30 – 4:15pm: Regional Economies, Moderator: Maryann Feldman; Discussant: Edward Feser

- David Rigby, UCLA, “Disentangling the Local and Regional Impacts of Globalization and Trade Using Census Bureau Micro-Data”
- Deborah Strumsky, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, “You Can’t Get There From Here: Movement in Metropolitan Inventive Spaces”

4:15 – 5:00pm: Conclusion

Discussants

- Paul Reynolds, The George Washington University, morning panels
- Edward Feser, University of Manchester, afternoon panels