

TORQ™ and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development

Mobilizing data to accelerate rapid response and empower workers in transition

In brief:

Indiana's Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) is turning to new technology to help re-employ workers and re-invest in talent development for the state's economic success.

This technology, known as TORQ™, was developed by Indianapolis-based Workforce Associates, Inc., and is already being deployed on the front lines of workforce and economic development in Southwest Indiana.

The Workforce Associates TORQ system combines regional labor market information with detailed analysis of the abilities, skills, and knowledge required by vital occupations, to improve the match between available workers and skills and the region's most important career opportunities.

TORQ—which stands for the “Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient”—assesses the “transferability” of workers from any one of more than 800 occupations to any other, based on the U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET™ database of information on workers' abilities, skills, knowledge, education, and other job requirements.

Also integrating local labor market information provided by IDWD and real-time job postings and salary information, TORQ enables IDWD users to help facilitate an even faster “Rapid Response” to mass layoffs and other employment challenges presented by today's turbulent economic conditions. Meanwhile, TORQ is helping Indiana continue to support its economic development mission by helping key stakeholders identify ready pools of transferable labor for business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

What does TORQ do?

The TORQ system uses the extensive metrics defined for every occupation in the O*NET database to produce an analytical measurement of “transferability” between and among occupations. The TORQ algorithm produces a single number (on a 1-100 scale) indicating the strength of transferability for any proposed transfer.

Then, based on the further information in O*NET on individual job attributes, TORQ can produce a more detailed assessment of the key gaps between occupations in terms of the vital abilities, skills, and knowledge needed for targeted occupations.

Based on these analyses, TORQ users can generate multiple custom transferability reports, which can be used to inform and streamline the re-employment exploration process for displaced workers.

What have Indiana's Workforce Development professionals done with TORQ?

Indiana DWD regional analysts have used the TORQ system to support front line rapid response personnel by preparing advance transferability analyses for major layoff events. What formerly took hours and days for analysts to accomplish using O*NET by itself now takes minutes, in an economic environment in which time is increasingly of the essence.

A guide to re-employment

The TORQ system has the ability to identify not only the jobs that are most closely tied to the abilities, skills, and knowledge of a worker's most recent occupation, but also to assess the feasibility of transferring the worker to jobs that show the most promise in the emerging 21st century economy. Whether these are jobs in specific categories, such as STEM, "Green," or Indiana's own list of "hot" jobs, or simply those that fit criteria for growth, TORQ can show the path to employment in promising career paths.

The path can be outlined using the detailed gap analysis of abilities, skills, and knowledge for any possible transition. The complete set of these gaps can be used as a blueprint for a training plan, and TORQ's ability to search the worker's region for training providers and current job opportunities reduces the complexity and time investment required of a more traditional employment search.

A showcase of talent

Meanwhile, there still are employers in Indiana looking to locate, expand, or retain their operations in Indiana. For this they do still need a workforce with abilities, skills, and knowledge suited to their needs. IDWD has also been using TORQ in cooperation with economic developers throughout the state to help businesses evaluate the availability of regional talent more meaningfully than other tools might allow.

Since TORQ has the power of quick analysis of comparability among abilities, skills, and knowledge, IDWD and employers can use it to evaluate not just how many people have a certain occupation within a region, but how many people are capable of performing well in that occupation in the region. In a buyer's market for talent and an especially critical time for maintaining economic momentum, this can be a key differentiator for a region.

A Trend of Innovation

Indiana's workforce system has been actively engaged in the pursuit of cutting-edge strategy, policy, and projects in workforce development for several years, recognizing the state's workforce as the most important driver of its economic success. Indiana was the earliest adopter of the TORQ system, and over the last year has helped shape it into a tool that continues to evolve to better serve the needs of a challenging labor market. Indiana hopes to set an example through its leadership, to show how technology can help the workforce system nationwide adapt and succeed.