
Sample Spotlight

Profiles of O*NET Users

Workshop on the Uses of O*NET
National Academy of Sciences

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Spotlight Profile on Keith Brandon/ Bobby Johns Local Employment Representatives

Many people featured in Spotlight aspired to be something quite different from the professionals they are now. Not the case with Keith Brandon and Bobby Johns, Local Veteran Employment Representatives in Clay County, FL. They are civilian employees of WorkSource, operated by First Coast Workforce Development, Inc. WorkSource provides a trained workforce to the 16,200 employers in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns Counties around Jacksonville, FL. Keith and Bobby are retired military career men, and both “are always on the job,” helping veterans transition to the civilian workplace, explains Keith, they long have been linked to the military life.

Today, they and 15 other Veterans Representatives with WorkSource help veterans transition to civilian life successfully. They reach out to retiring servicepersons in their geography, two years out. They contact every non-retiring serviceperson who is separating, one year out, encouraging all to avail themselves of WorkSource’s programs. “We use O*NET countless ways in our work,” Keith reports. “The first day in our TAP (Transitioning Assistance Program) classes, we introduce our vets to O*NET. We show them how to use O*NET for resumé writing, interviewing, negotiating salary. But that’s just the beginning.” They help 2,400 vets a year in 48 three-day TAP classes. “We do the TAP classes only 12 days a month. Other days we talk a lot with businesses, encouraging them to seek veterans as workers. And in working with the vets, we’re getting them to use the language of O*NET to talk about their work experience. When everyone in an interview uses that common language, they all can realize that they are talking about the same things and that the veteran has required knowledge sets, skills, abilities, and experience.”

Bobby continues, “So many vets think they don’t have skills that transfer to the civilian work world. We emphasize that this simply is not true. Using the O*NET Code Connector we go from their military occupational codes, and they see the equivalent civilian occupations—they can quickly see that the skills they have are truly transferable to many non-military occupations. Looking at the skills, the tasks—they see that so many are the same. And when you go down toward the bottom of each occupation’s O*NET summary report, you see Related Occupations—very important, because now the veterans see that there is more than simply an equivalent of their jobs. There are other occupations, fairly close in terms of required skills and tasks. Plus, you see Labor Market Information, salaries, trends.”

Bobby, Keith, and their colleagues are tireless in their outreach to veterans. “Bureau of Labor statistics say that 25% of homeless folks are veterans,” Keith points out. “So we go to the homeless shelters to find our vets. We have programs in prisons to connect with incarcerated veterans, and likewise, chemically dependent vets.”

These guys don’t even have a recreational life separate from their vet world. “Nope,” agrees Keith. “I guess in our fun times, we’re still in our veterans jobs. Bobby’s big with his VFW hall. I’m into welcome back parties for the guys and gals returning to the States. You could say that we always are advocates for our counterparts, all 17 of us. We enjoy knowing each other’s spouses and kids. This is what we do for fun.”

“We are dedicated to both sides of the employment equation. We are all about breaking down the barriers. For example, employers might think that a military police officer has skills needed only by the military. Not true. The skills those people have are the requirements for being a civilian police officer or for working in civilian security. We break down so many barriers--disabilities, financial barriers, transportation barriers, family barriers. Our job is to make the veteran more marketable to the business. O*NET figures in, in so many ways, to breaking down barriers and boosting marketability,” Keith summarizes.

Spotlight Profile on Jennifer Barnett Business Strategies Coordinator

You would have difficulty fully describing how Jennifer Barnett has used O*NET over the years. She says, “How I use O*NET changes every day since I have been in this role.” Jennifer has been Business Strategies Coordinator, heading up the Regional Team for four Workforce Investment Boards, at Louisiana Works—for more than a year.

Before returning to her “home” Katrina area, she was with the Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance—was introduced to O*NET by a co-worker when she started, as a Career Specialist. Within a few months she headed up the Wagner-Peyser Staff and had everyone on her team and the Veterans Team go thru the O*NET Academy “It was important that we had access to all the tools we could get our hands on. That’s what everyone is hungry for, having as many great tools as possible in their workforce toolboxes.”

“This was just such a great tool that could be used for career exploration, writing better job orders, helping businesses with job descriptions—so many things.” How does she use O*NET as Business Strategies Coordinator? “Oh, really, we use O*NET more ways than I could describe in a few minutes. I use it regionally when preparing briefings for the WIB Board Directors. Locally, it is used by many front-line staff. It is used as an additional resource for local area coordinators and their team leads to better understand our local industries. We use it as an important tool in developing sector strategies.”

“A wonder of O*NET is that it is online. I can get information about occupations, specific in-demand occupations, and economic data by geography—so much—right now. We recently redesigned our workforce system here. We are going from 10% of our staff being dedicated to businesses, up to 40% being dedicated to businesses. O*NET will be so very helpful to the Business Service Representatives, and to their client employers. We meet with the local coordinators, monthly, and as we further develop the new business services model, O*NET will be a great asset in intelligence gathering, as well as, the more traditional uses, such as, using O*NET to write better job descriptions. I am looking forward to adding to our bundle of services for employers, O*NET’s Business Toolkit”

This is especially important now, as the Business Strategies Team needs to focus business needs and making demand-driven strategy decisions. “Additionally, want to empower local employers by showing them resources available to them that will add value to the bottom-line, such as O*NET. We are now acting more on a consulting basis, and working towards being an extension of their Human Resources arm. The *O*NET Toolkit for Business* is an excellent tool, showing businesses, step-by-step, how they can use O*NET several ways, to accomplish much with little time, money, or people. As we continue to expand and enhance our services to businesses, I would like to have our local Business Service Reps promote the *Toolkit* when working with individual businesses.”

Jennifer rapidly names many other ways she has used O*NET: career mapping; career lattices; understanding industry sectors and seeing how workforce realities are shifting; explaining to the Workforce Investment Boards how they can enhance a service that they offer to the business community. The common thread in these O*NET applications is research. “Yes, these days we are using O*NET occupational information to meet constantly evolving research needs. O*NET Online has become a resource that I use all the time, though I no longer am helping someone write a resume or job description.”

When Jennifer is not boosting the economy of the New Orleans area, she is taking pictures of her newborn, Sara. The folks at work feel that Sara is theirs, too, as does the team back in Tampa Bay. Her growing household includes Jennifer’s husband, who also worked with the Tampa Bay Workforce Alliance.

Spotlight Profile on Jacqueline Benitez Compensation Analyst

Spotlight felt simultaneously exhausted and totally energized, upon learning how much Jacqueline Benitez uses O*NET and how much she accomplishes in her life. Jacqueline uses the flexible tool in her work at Trustmark Insurance Companies in Lake Forest, IL, where she is a Compensation Analyst. But long before she arrived at Trustmark, Jacqueline was using O*NET to help college students, in her volunteer work with SHRP (Society of Human Resources Professionals) and DePaul University's ASK (Alumni Sharing Knowledge), she also used O*NET at her former employer.

"In Human Resources we have been compiling job descriptions from all areas of the company. Our firm is about 2,400 employees, with approximately 800 people in our Home Office. Job descriptions had not been centralized," Jacqueline told Spotlight. "Thus, they were not standardized, and in some cases they were not very well done or were so esoteric as to not be helpful when trying to benchmark the jobs to compensation survey jobs."

"We don't beat people up for good job descriptions, demanding a specific deliverable within crushing timeframes," explained the upbeat Benitez. "As managers approach us to do a project for them, we ask them to create or update their job descriptions-to accomplish the requesting department's specific compensation project goal."

"We are consistently aligning the jobs within the organization," Jacqueline continues. "An example project-One of our managers was evaluating sales support positions within her area. I was able to assist her by providing descriptions of tasks associated with sales support activities. In O*NET, I found several occupations that would be useful in writing the job description, I generally share with the managers the extensive occupation information in O*NET. I encourage them to tweak the information that I send them from O*NET, taking out what is not accurate in their specific case, and incorporating what is 'missing,' based on the needs of their specific areas. Then we are able to study salary surveys, benchmarking the manager's job titles to appropriate occupations across industries, and using common language, tasks, skills, etc., consistently."

"This type of project progresses very well," Jacqueline concludes. In some cases, we work with our Organizational Development Team who performs assessments of the requirements of the job. It is a relatively painless process to look at completed job descriptions and accompanying information available from O*NET Online, validated with my department's salary survey data-and to determine appropriate salary ranges for positions. Yes, we have to tweak a bit—both in articulating tasks and in grounding our salary ranges where we at Trustmark want them to be, within the macro workforce ranges. But we know where we want to be, percentile-wise, so that part is easy."

Jacqueline is on the Board of Chicago's SHRP chapter. For years she has worked through its College Relations Committee, establishing relationships with colleges and universities, conducting workshops for students, and guiding soon-to-be graduates through résumé writing and interview dry runs. She uses O*NET liberally when helping students through those activities. In her work with DePaul University's ASK, she leans on O*NET while doing similar work. Jacqueline is quick to give kudos to several of these schools, citing them for caring for students and expending energy to be certain that students are prepared for professional life-especially Loyola University of Chicago, DePaul University, the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, and Robert Morris University.

As a youngster, Jacqueline dreamt of being a lawyer. But learning that lawyering required many more years of education and expense, she majored in Management, specializing in Human Resources. As her career progressed, she found herself concentrating increasingly on compensation challenges. Jacqueline enjoys her work. What Jacqueline sets out to achieve, she accomplishes-leveraging hard work, experience, know-how, and zest for the task.

Spotlight Profile on Tonja Horn Disability Program Navigator-Employment Counselor

The Fairbanks Job Center is fortunate to have Tonja Horn on their team. What are the odds that Tonja, with a background in Guidance and Counseling and assessment, would arrive in Fairbanks, Alaska, just when they needed her? Serving a borough population of 90,000, the Fairbanks Job Center is one of 22 Alaska job centers. Tonja is Disability Program Navigator, Employment Counselor, and so much more. While she suggests that about half her time is dedicated to efforts with disabled clients, Tonja also is counted on to work with veterans, youth, and others. Hired as an employment counselor four years ago, Tonja's responsibilities have steadily grown in program planning.

Tonja uses O*NET in a weekly workshop, Planning Your Career. The Fairbanks Job Center serves approximately 350 clients each week. "Anyone is eligible to participate in the workshop," Tonja explains. "Youths to seniors, all are welcome. We are seeing an increase in enrollment.

"I use the paper and pencil versions of the O*NET Interest Profiler and the Work Importance Locator." Tonja administers the third complementary O*NET assessment, the Ability Profiler, as well. "It is so helpful that the results of the assessment are linked to O*NET. I give each participant the O*NET Occupations Combined List. It's easy, then, for my clients to find appropriate occupations to explore. And for each occupation, they can explore further into Related Occupations.

"Over time, I have improved my use of O*NET. Now I continually look at the update information. I use the Key Word option, under Find Occupations. I show our clients how to use the O*NET language in their resumes. It's almost mandatory that they use Related Occupations in their workshop explorations. And now the new high-demand occupation designation works into other efforts at our center," Tonja says, ticking off examples of how O*NET usage at the Fairbanks Job Center has expanded over time.

For the most part, the Center's clients explore career and job options in the Fairbanks area and up in the North Slope oil fields. "That's right," says Tonja. "Generally, people don't look far. We definitely are sensitive to that preference. We pinpoint Alaska statistics, and tailor our efforts to get people thinking about local high demand occupations. The university looks at the data and develops curriculum specifically to train people in the high demand occupations—in the oil and gas industries, in health care, and the needed skilled trades. All of our leaders in education, business, and workforce development are keenly aware of the Alaska brain drain and our need to grow our own talent."

Such focused attention, including the use of O*NET, pays off. Tonja recalls "one mature gentleman. He had a 'dated education.' His Bachelor's degree in computer science was from the 70s. He had minored in geology in college. In O*NET, we looked in the Tools and Technology section for geologist, to learn what was new. Next we learned that the university had the 'refresher' courses and training he needed to work in the occupation. My client started building the required knowledge sets and skills. He stayed on it, searching for a job in the appropriate O*NET occupations until he found a job at a remote site, as an entry level geologist. Using O*NET definitely paid off for him!"

Tonja and her husband, Shane, arrived in Fairbanks about four years ago. Shane is in the Army, stationed in Korea, following two tours of duty in Iraq. When not helping others in workforce development, Tonja develops her athletic skills. She has learned to golf, and she has taken up table tennis.

Spotlight Profile on John Dorrer **Director of the center for Workforce Research & Information**

John Dorrer is Director of the Center for Workforce Research & Information, for the State of Maine, Department of Labor. He is a champion of O*NET. Spotlight caught up with John and learned about the accomplishments he and his group have achieved in Maine:

- Attracting business to the state: “We ask potential employers to provide detailed descriptions of the KSAs (Knowledge Sets, Skill Sets, and Abilities) that workers at their businesses will need to do each job. We then use O*NET, searching for the codes of the occupations that are the closest match to those descriptions of KSAs. Then we can search our state’s employment database and stats and see where the employees in our state have these KSAs. We can recommend that the prospective employer locate the business in those locations. We make a well-founded case for the employer locating in specific places, AND inform them of how many workers in the area are prepared. We also can point out possible skills gaps, and propose how we might fill gaps, in cooperative efforts with the education and business communities.”

This is a powerful and highly successful use of O*NET.

- Helping displaced workers find employment: When an employer plans to close down or move operations, the Center for Workforce Research & Information is onsite, helping employees assess their skills, do gap analyses, develop plans for acquiring needed assets, and transition to new work.

The Maine Career Center’s locations throughout the state encourage clients to use O*NET several ways. Their home page has a direct link to O*NET Online. Of course displaced workers can use that route 24/7. The more commonly used introduction to O*NET occurs during counseling sessions. And frequently-offered workshops train clients how to use O*NET in every effort from understanding their KSAs, to crafting their resumes and preparing for interviews. Spotlight noted seven distinctive such workshops scheduled.

- Helping small businesses that don’t have formal job descriptions or formal training and development programs: The Center shows businesses how O*NET is an excellent tool for accomplishing these important processes. When businesses see what they require of workers in each role, they can assess what their workers have, see any gaps, and then plan and execute programs to fill gaps.

Success in this application is breeding success, as more businesses see the process work for their fellow business community members.

John’s examples of using O*NET data are instructive. There is the boat builder that has been crafting boats for generations, but needed to move to a new site because its location no longer had a workforce with the required skills and knowledge sets. “The industry was adopting new technologies,” explained John. “The company was looking to expand their operation, but simply could not find skilled workers in their area. We were able to identify alternative locations in Maine that might be suitable. We helped the firm and identified a list of occupations with required KSAs similar to the KSAs needed in boat building.

“To develop that list, we converted the firm’s jobs to the appropriate SOC. Then we used the O*NET Skills Analyzer to learn the names of occupations with similar skill sets. Our LMI occupational data showed us where in the state there is a labor market with people who have these kinds of skills—related skill sets. We could say, ‘Here, here, and here are locations with concentrations of workers who have similar skill sets. They might be working in occupations with lower wages. If you locate in one of these locations, you should be able to attract workers with related skills. ‘The company did relocate to one of those areas. We will be checking in on them, monitoring how recruiting is going, and learning if there are other ways we can help.’”

There is the case of the Brunswick Naval Air Station. When it closes, 500 civilian workers will lose their jobs. But they needn’t become unemployed. “We looked at everyone’s job description and coded each with the appropriate occupation code,” John describes. “We put their job descriptions through an O*NET analysis. We then could show how each job’s skills related to occupations that are growing outside the base. “That process led us to write a report specifying the skills that workers must bring to the current labor market. Each person can do a skills gap analysis and develop needed skills. We are involved in providing workshops that enable each person to make good choices about what skills to develop. We can point out where one goes to acquire those skills, which courses people can take to prepare for future work.”

The Center’s ideas about how to use O*NET data to help employers and individual workers are validated by success stories. It is exciting to see smart work reap rewards.

John is highly engaged in life beyond the Center, too. Brunswick, Maine, and the Bowdoin college area, much of Maine, really, is his playground. “I do enjoy swimming, hiking, exploring Mt. Washington, going to the excellent art museum here,” he shares. John Dorrer is an open and enthusiastic fellow, which led Spotlight to ask him to share a tidbit of information about himself—something that might surprise his colleagues. Happy to play along, John revealed, “I am an immigrant! I grew up in a village of about 90 people, in Bavaria; came here in 1959. I’m going back to Germany for a visit soon.” This revelation IS a surprise. For sure, the folks at work can’t detect an old country accent. However, the folks “back home” might be impressed with John’s Maine accent.

Spotlight Profile on Janet Ormond Dean of Workforce Development at Chattahoochee Valley Community College

When a young counselor at Chattahoochee Valley Community College, in Phoenix City, Alabama, called Janet Ormond for guidance recently, Janet knew immediately where to send the counselor. “I recognized right away that O*NET was the solution for the counselor and his non-traditional student,” explains Janet, Dean of Workforce Development at the College.

The student was ex-military and planning to get an education and a diploma, *if* he could qualify for a particular financial aid program. His challenge: He was required to document that completing Chattahoochee Valley’s program in Homeland Security would result in his being prepared to secure employment. His counselor was asking Janet how the veteran could support that assertion.

“O*NET is perfect for this type of challenge,” Janet continues. “I told the counselor to jump right into O*NET Online and search on Homeland Security. I assured him that plenty of occupations would pop up in his results list. Some 200 occupations resulted from one click! Those occupations are ‘related’ to Homeland Security. They have many required skills, tasks, and work context elements in common. What an eye-opener for the counselor and the student! Ample documentation for their thesis that a diploma in Homeland Security would enable the student to secure employment was as easy as printing the list of occupations and their skills, tasks, etc., and then pointing out that our degree program addressed those very elements. “Just as important, the student was reaffirmed in his decision; he was amazed to learn that the skills and knowledge sets he was about to gain were going to give him so many career options!”

Janet made a note to herself to make certain again that all the counselors know how to use O*NET in this application. “You forget that new people come onboard and might not be aware of this great tool,” she comments. Janet also plans to incorporate learning about O*NET in *Ready to Work*, a program at the College that is funded by grants from the Governor’s Office of Workforce Development. “We are preparing people for the world of work, everything from how to interview, to how to dress, to computer skills. We have had individuals in previous *Ready to Work* classes learn how to use O*NET for career exploration, resume writing, interview prep—that sort of thing. But we need to make sure that next time the entire class learns how to use O*NET to their benefit.”

These are newer O*NET applications for Janet Ormond. “My first exposure to O*NET was, oh, about 10 years ago!” she exclaims. “I learned of it at a Workforce Development conference, and I was curious. The price tag for O*NET—free—was right up my alley,” she laughs. “I saw that I could use O*NET to create an initial task list for jobs that I needed to profile, on Work Keys consulting assignments. You see, often people can’t articulate the tasks that comprise a job. Rather than struggle to create a list from whole cloth, I could go into a plant or factory workshop floor prepared, with a list to work *from*. Through observation and discussion, we could appropriately delete tasks and augment the list as well, to arrive at that particular job’s duties. But O*NET gave me the base from which to work. I could approach a job profiling project looking knowledgeable.”

Today one can use the O*NET Code Connector in such job profiling activities, searching on any job title a company uses. The results list shows most likely closest matching occupations, in descending order.

Janet must have O*NET top-of-mind, for she continually finds ways to use O*NET creatively. “Oh yes, I keep O*NET in my Favorites on my computer,” she agrees. “Just recently I made a presentation to a group—the topic was why it is important to stay in school. Not much of the message sunk in for this audience. But then I said, ‘Oh, you want to be a CSI? You want to be a musician? That’s going to take quite a lot of education. Look here, right here.’ I had in hand O*NET Summary Reports, highlighting required education, for many occupations these kids thought would be cool. O*NET made my point for me. Those kids snatched up the reports, devoured them. You know, when it comes off the computer, it speaks to the kids, more effectively than I could. We learn different ways. O*NET is a great way for many groups to learn.”

Janet is constantly learning, too. No doubt that attribute has set her up for success in education. She talks about her most impactful recent read (“not that I get to read for pleasure much”)—Thomas Friedman’s *The World Is Flat*. “I learned the importance of preaching globalization. I’m always doing it. From now until forever, we all need to learn all we can, to live effectively as world citizens.”

Spotlight Profile on Tora McConico Case Manager at Janice Capilouto Center for the Deaf-Easter Seals, Montgomery, AL

Countless job seekers incorporate O*NET's common language into their resumes to convince prospective employers to hire them. Case managers all over the country help job seekers do this, coaching them on ways to use O*NET to identify their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). These KSAs provide the common language that employers understand!

Tora McConico, Case Manager with the Janice Capilouto Center for the Deaf-Easter Seals, in Montgomery, AL, has been using O*NET since 1999, doing precisely this kind of coaching. In any given month she has between 20 and 60 customers, including clients who are deaf or hearing impaired. She has used O*NET since she started working at the Center, even before O*NET was online.

Many of Tora's consumers are not employed when they come through the door. Tora helps them prepare resumes, and develop and practice job interview skills. She uses O*NET in all of these processes. "Often, consumers don't know how to describe what they have done on a job," Tora explains. "And often they have no idea exactly what tasks, abilities, knowledge, and skills are needed to do a job. Or, they don't have a clue what kind of salary to expect. O*NET is perfect for learning all of this. The answers are right there!"

Tora used to use the O*NET Code Connector, entering the job titles her clients had in the past to learn the O*NET SOC code most closely related to a past job title. But she doesn't need to do that today, so experienced is she with the job titles she encounters. She just knows what occupations most of her clients' past job titles match with. When she and her consumers study the lists of tasks and skills that comprise the match occupation, her clients "are amazed that O*NET so perfectly describes what they did!" Tora laughs. "And I'll check with them: Did you do this, this and this? Invariably, they DID!"

Tora works with her clients by appointment, on a one-on-one basis. "Many of my consumers come in not knowing what they want to do. We begin to explore in O*NET, and they see an occupation that is interesting. If they don't have the required skills and knowledge to do work in that occupation, I can so easily prove it to them. I use O*NET to do a skills gap analysis. They can see right away what they need, what they have-and thus, what they would need to develop, to land a job in that area. O*NET works wonders as a reality check. It isn't ME telling them; it's O*NET.

"I also can use O*NET to highlight the in-demand occupations, and then move people along to see where demand is geographically, and to look at how much the occupation pays. Now THAT'S an eye-opener for people!" exclaims Tora.

When people see the information that O*NET exposes, some continue to explore further, having realized that reaching for a specific occupation in a particular Job Zone "would be so intense. But others ask, 'How can I attain those skills or that knowledge?'" relates Tora. "Then we can link right into finding appropriate training programs through O*NET."

"The ADA links in O*NET are valuable for us, too. We have placement staff who get into the accommodations area with prospective employers.

"But the way I use O*NET most is in leveraging the language," explains Tora. A great example of the wonder of the language is a consumer I had. He, like many of my consumers, had difficulty explaining what he knew how to do, what he HAD done. We used the tasks and skills right out of the O*NET description for his resume. I had no clue about his former manufacturing job, what tasks his work entailed. But O*NET did! His resume was so together; the interviewer/boss was so impressed. My consumer had no oral speech. He wouldn't have been able to explain himself well enough to the boss. And the interpreter didn't know what the job was like. But the resume gave the boss everything he needed to work from. If it hadn't been for O*NET, I'm sure my consumer wouldn't have landed his manufacturing job at the Hyundai OEM supplier.

Spotlight Profile on Steve Hughes Disability Program Navigator

What is a man who was a journeyman auto mechanic for 11 years, and who enjoys riding his Harley Road King on weekends, doing with O*NET? Plenty! During his career as Vocational Counselor, Vocational Counselor Supervisor, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Employment and Training Program Coordinator, Disability Program Navigator, and Employment Consultant, Steve Hughes has been with the Humboldt County, CA, Department of Health and Human Services, in the Employment Training Division (ETD) of the Social Services Branch—for nearly 24 years. When he was a youngster who loved working with his hands, solving problems, and fixing things, Steve envisioned being the auto mechanic. Steve fulfilled that dream and went on to help fix and solve many clients' problems, in the realm of career exploration and employment.

“So I’ve been around since well before O*NET,” Steve explains. “We used the DOT, GATB, USES Interest Inventory, and such—for many years. Those tools were largely stand-alone aids. O*NET has improved our work and helped people do a better job by providing a universal, standardized foundation for career exploration and planning activities, and by providing authoritative information for use with our employer customers. Using the O*NET tools *in concert*, that is the Interest Profiler, the Work Importance Profiler, and O*NET Online, we get a *comprehensive* picture of our clients and how they fit into the world of work. This is helpful for everyone—for employers as much as for career planners and job seekers.”

Steve echoes a point that several recent Spotlight profilees have highlighted: “We use O*NET more frequently with employers these days, to assist with writing job announcements and job descriptions, and for developing interview questions. O*NET is also helpful in illustrating the many facets of work; it encourages employers and employees to consider aspects other than skills, that is, values, preferences, work environments, etc. Truly understanding both the job and the job applicant can help facilitate better choices, reduce turnover and training time, and improve performance.” Spotlight is noting increasing work with employers, using O*NET, in many places.

Often Steve pushes O*NET out to ‘other markets,’ spreading awareness of this great set of tools. “Most recently, I presented classes on using O*NET to employees of our Social Services Branch, with an emphasis on clients receiving public assistance, and/or with disabilities.”

As Disability Program Navigator, understandably Steve has his ear specially attuned to the needs of clients with disabilities. “One very important use of O*NET can be as a part of the good faith interactive process when a person requests a reasonable accommodation. O*NET can help us understand the basic nature of the job in question, and perhaps assist us to identify essential vs. ancillary functions. O*NET also connects directly with outside resources such as Disability 101 and the Job Accommodation Network.” Steve has thought through how to use O*NET well, leveraging its potential creatively for a variety of client groups.

“One special project I recently completed using O*NET helped describe important jobs in our area. We wanted to illustrate the skills and other factors that make up the individual jobs in a group of local industries identified by our WIB as ‘Targets of Opportunity.’ These targets are projected to grow at a faster than average rate, offer higher than average wages, and provide opportunities for advancement. We called up an O*NET Detailed Report for each appropriate occupation and supplemented all of them with wage information from linked sources. We grouped these reports by industry cluster and placed them in a binder for reference purposes. This book will also be a training tool for providers referring youth to summer jobs in those target industries.

With his long and varied experience, Steve can articulate ways O*NET is an improvement over earlier career planning aids. “First, O*NET is a departure from the focus on individual jobs in favor of an industrial/occupational and skills cluster approach. Consequently, O*NET provides both a ‘big picture’ of the work world, and relevant, specific, individual information. Secondly, I find that the O*NET ‘package of resources’ frequently excites people about the possibilities. Often when clients see their own potential, they become even more motivated.”

Spotlight asked Steve about the possibility of retirement. Not now, not yet is his message. “Sure, I’m eligible to retire. But the ETD is a fine place to be. Our WIB is so supportive, and our management is great. They are behind us in all our efforts. They encourage us to learn as much as we can. They urge us develop our interests, if that helps our clients. And we are so successful! We have well over a 90% success rate in our Dislocated Worker reemployment program.”

However, O*NET does figure into Steve’s retirement plan. “I’ll retire, eventually, but I won’t stop working,” he quickly asserts. His next great occupation is Vocational Expert, where he can use O*NET in yet another way. As a Diplomat of the American Board of Vocational Experts, and a professional member of the International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals, Steve can answer questions regarding residual functional capacity and employment options. In both Social Security Administration cases and private litigation, in the vocational forensic areas of disability, workers compensation, personal injury, etc. experts often are called upon to proffer their opinions about a person’s ability to work, why or why not, etc.

Spotlight Profile of Hope Clark

Director of Research & Market Development, Indiana Workforce Development

To open his first press conference, President Obama told the story of workers in Northern Indiana, laid off and needing to retool to be re-employed. But he didn't tell "the rest of the story," of how Hope Clark's work using O*NET® data is enabling workers in the region to reinvent themselves for new occupations. Hope is Director of Research & Market Development, at Indiana Workforce Development.

Due to the dramatic shifts in the economy, the process of helping employees transfer their skills from a declining occupation to one that is in demand is critical to ensure economic stability. Skill transferability initiatives are complex projects, requiring willing employers and community colleges, positive workers, passionate economists and computer wizards—and solid economic and workforce data, including the data in the O*NET database.

"My use of O*NET has evolved over the years," explains Hope. "When I started my career, I used O*NET with individual customers. I first heard of O*NET in graduate school, when I was studying for my Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling. I did my internship at Goodwill Industries of Chicago. We used O*NET as a job analysis tool, helping people to develop career plans by assessing their knowledge, skills and abilities required for various occupations. It is a very useful tool in this application. "

Following her experiences working directly with job seekers, Hope pursued a Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. "We learned all the tools of job analysis. So, I heard about O*NET again. Soon, I became familiar with new technology and more data in the world of economic and workforce analysis. Systems like TORQ™ (Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient) are new tools that leverage the data in O*NET. My early application of O*NET data was labor intensive. Users had to manually target an occupation to investigate. This new application allows the user to rapidly manipulate the entire database and allows one to quickly compare skills gaps between any two occupations.

"Today we do multiple comparisons of occupational data to determine overlap of skills," Hope illustrates. "High-level strategies using the entire O*NET database of occupational KSAs allow us to determine the degree of skills overlap or gaps that exist across occupations." Thus, when Northern Indiana RV industry workers lost their jobs, Hope and her colleagues determined the skills those workers used, and saw which skills are required to perform growth occupation jobs in the region. Then community colleges in the area could develop curriculum that trains displaced workers in the "gap skills"—skills that the up-and-coming occupations require and that are currently lacking in the regional workforce. Skills that workers can transfer from their former jobs, paired with "gap skills" developed through new training, enable workers to successfully move into the new, in-demand occupations.

Examples of in-demand occupation jobs that the RV workers can perform, armed with their transferred skills and a few "new" skills, include orthopedic products and medical devices manufacturing and healthcare occupations, including dental hygienists.

Transferability of skills tools help displaced workers as a whole. Input regional economic data, such as workforce projections, industry outlooks, and wage data into the tool. Manipulate those data elements *with* the occupational information of the O*NET database (the skills needed in regional occupations, both the declining and the growing). Study results point out which skills transfer to likely new occupations and pinpoint where skill gaps exist.

Hope enthusiastically describes how transferability of skills studies work: "We tune the TORQ analysis system to get the most leverage from the data. We can put our own labor market information in the system. The system allows us to build a bridge from O*NET to all these other data sources such as occupational and industry projections. And we can be very localized in our analysis. We apply filters to study the occupations and

geography we want to target. We can specify how we want reports to look. The result is very useful information that allows us to determine appropriate training investments for an area.”

Indiana Workforce Development can respond to alarming situations quickly. As soon as they identified skill gaps, they determined appropriate training investments. They were able to guide the community college system to create the correct curriculum. Ivy Tech developed customized training programs for those displaced workers, with re-employment as the immediate goal. “We submitted a National Emergency Grant Application for \$10.4 million, with a major investment for training,” details Hope. “We are meeting this challenge head-on, right here and now, with specific, needed training.”

Hope Clark sees partnerships of state labor market information entities with community colleges as a new market for O*NET information. “Our strategy for using O*NET data has grown. I think we will see increasing efforts to make targeted, condensed, short-term training in partnership with the community colleges.”

By using O*NET data at a macro level, workforce development professionals are learning how to impact thousands of micro situations. While career counselors continue to aid displaced workers on an individual basis, people like Hope Clark can take great satisfaction in being significant contributors to large-scale solutions. “The work I’m doing is very worthwhile, enabling me to help a lot of people,” she concludes.

When Hope Clark is not creating re-employment solutions for thousands of displaced workers, she is totally focused on being a Mom. She spends all the time she can with nearly-three-year-old son, Mark. “I do educational things with him, like reading books and playing games. It’s very important to me to balance my career with my responsibilities as a parent. And I want to tell you--the State of Indiana offers on-site child care. I really appreciate how the State of Indiana encourages and supports working parents,” she adds.

Spotlight Profile on Yustina Saleh Director, Labor Market & Demographic Research

Yustina Saleh, Director, Labor Market & Demographic Research, New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development, draws on the O*NET database to support economic progress. New Jersey's economic revitalization projects need solid labor and workforce development research throughout the proposing and planning stages. The State calls on Yustina to design research, find data, create models, and crunch numbers. Her work enables revitalization projects to get off the drawing board, based on sound assumptions, hypotheses, and projections. For Yustina, O*NET is a must-have tool.

A fine demonstration of how Yustina's work is critical to economic revitalization projects is the Fort Monmouth (New Jersey) Reuse & Redevelopment Plan. Fort Monmouth is an 1,100+ acre Army installation located about a mile from the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by Eatontown, Tinton Falls and Oceanport. Fort Monmouth was selected for closure by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). The Department of Defense estimated that the closure would cause the loss of 9,737 jobs. The Fort Monmouth Revitalization Planning Authority has been planning and managing the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth, including examining existing employment conditions and developing assumptions regarding employment growth. Enter Yustina to answer the myriad employment and workforce development questions that emerge in planning the area's economic revitalization.

What occupations is the area's workforce employed in? What skills, abilities, education and training do those workers have? We need to attract employers, but in what industries and occupations, to leverage the workforce characteristics we have? What does the local workforce lack in terms of those occupational dimensions? What training will they need to become successfully employed with the employers we attract? Using the data in the O*NET database goes a long way to help answer those questions.

"I established that in the Fort Monmouth area we have a highly trained workforce," Yustina explained. "So many workers have masters and Ph.D.s. In Phase 1, I looked at staffing within a 10-mile radius. I took the Occupational and Employment Statistics (OES) data (of the Bureau of Labor Statistics) and saw the industry clusters that people are working in here, as well as the wages they earn. That occupational data ties into the data in the O*NET database. I learned the distribution of workers among SOC Codes. I began to quantify the economic value of jobs in those workforce segments. Then the O*NET database gives me the ability to list the skills, abilities, knowledge sets, training and education that we have in the Fort Monmouth area. I can quantify how much of each of these characteristics we have here, because I know how many of each worker we have in each occupation, and what the characteristics of each occupation are.

"But I don't want just a dump of the database," Yustina further explains. "I want to work with finer factors in my model. For example, the *abilities* of workers in some of these Information Communication Technology cluster occupations are more important than *skills*. Many of the required *abilities* are more like what we used to call soft skills, rather than the technical skills. I can assign a stronger weight to *abilities* because their *importance* factor is captured in the O*NET database. Also, I can assign a weighting point value for *frequency* and *level* of *skills* and *abilities*, because even factors that fine are in O*NET." Yustina's work benefits greatly from the O*NET Center's enhancement of the database to include *importance*, *frequency*, and *level* information for occupations' tasks, knowledge sets, skills, and other factors. These ratings inform weight values in her models.

Yustina's work makes it possible to understand what workforce the Fort Monmouth area has to work with. Her research results inform planners what industries and occupations to attract to the area. But not all the information she would like to have is gathered. "It's not possible to do a definitive skills gap analysis," she points out. "I know in a broad sense what we have, and I can determine what we would need in terms of KSAs (knowledge sets, skills, abilities), if a particular company came here, if we knew how many positions they would have in which occupations. What we *don't* know is the specific specialties that actual, individual people have. We don't know, for instance, exactly what their BAs are *in*."

True, all the information that Yustina wishes for is not sitting there. But Yustina has more tools in her box than OES and O*NET data. “Yes, I have another trick. I use the New Jersey customized training data. The State gathers data reporting how many people, by employer, have been trained in which skills. Gathering this data is part of the effort to foresee skills gaps and develop a plan to fill them. Studying this data up against O*NET data about required skills, abilities, etc., gives me clues about how many workers have gained which KSAs, which occupations require which KSAs, when, where and with what frequency training in those KSAs occurs, and other insights. Most states, if not all, have such a customized training database.”

Yustina’s life isn’t exclusively numbers. She enjoys devoting every minute she can to three-year-old son Matthew. And she burns midnight oil finishing her dissertation for a doctorate in Political Science, specializing in International Relations, from Rutgers.