The Veterans Employment Services and Outcomes Research Study Design project is being funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) under a legislative mandate to examine the provision, utilization, costs, and effectiveness of job counseling, training, and placement services for veterans.

**The Statute.** Section 502 of the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-315) requires a “study of job counseling, training, and placement services” for three groups of veterans defined by their use of public workforce development services. These groups are (1) those who receive “intensive” career services through American Job Centers (AJCs); (2) those who receive only non-intensive career services from AJCs; and (3) those who receive no career services from AJCs.

**Study Research Objectives.** The study requires a design that enables it to address four types of research questions pertaining to the specified veteran groups: (1) What services did veterans receive through the public workforce system? (2) What were the employment- and earnings-related outcomes of these veterans? (3) To what extent can their outcomes be causally linked to career services provided through the AJCs? (4) How do the benefits of these services compare with their costs?

**The Design Contract.** On September 25, 2017, DOL’s Chief Evaluation Office awarded a contract to Abt Associates Inc. and its partners, RAND Corporation and Capital Research Corporation, for the “Veterans Employment Services and Outcomes – Research Study Design.” The team is examining the strengths, limitations, and ultimately, the viability of various design options for conducting the study.

**Step 1. Knowledge Development.** To establish an informed context for examining design options, the Abt team’s work plan calls for a series of key informant interviews. These will shed light on (a) the veteran population and their labor market experiences; (b) career services offered to veterans through the public workforce system; (c) availability and quality of existing data sources; and (d) methodological and measurement issues that will shape the research design options. The Abt team will augment these interviews with a thorough review of relevant research literature.

**Step 2. Preliminary Design Options.** The team will consider various design options that can best address DOL’s objectives and research questions. The key design challenge appears to be how to identify and assemble the necessary sample of veterans that includes their contact information and the nature and intensity of career services received through the public workforce system. Resolving that challenge will, in part, determine the viability of several broad design options: (a) Designing and conducting a study-specific survey; (b) Analyzing one or more administrative data bases maintained by stakeholder agencies; (c) Analyzing existing survey data (e.g., the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey); and (d) Combining the various options noted above.

**Step 3. Design Recommendations.** These knowledge development and design review activities will lead to two documents to be publicly released in late 2018: a Knowledge Development Report and an Evaluation Options Design Report. DOL will use the findings in these reports to develop a plan to execute the longitudinal study required by the statute.

**For More Information:** Contact Andrew Clarkwest, email Andrew_Clarkwes@abtassoc.com, phone (301) 347-5065. Or visit the design project’s website: www.abtassociates.com/VetsDesign.