

## MANPOWER INVENTORIES: USING VOLUNTEERS

David C. Ruesink and Mac Varley\*

A manpower inventory is an inventory of current manpower and skill levels available within a given geographic area. It consists of summaries of potential employees by age, sex, skill, educational level, income earning, present employment, occupational aspirations or distance willing to commute. It could also include other information desired by those conducting the survey.

### Need for Inventory

The primary need for a manpower inventory is to provide information for attracting industry or industrial expansion of current operations. A manpower inventory provides a basis for understanding the skills of the local work force and their potential for new skill training. In addition, state agencies can use inventory data for program development such as adult basic education, vocational training or manpower development training. Public service institutions may use inventory information for staffing needs or for local economic development programs.

Inventories should be conducted only if (1) information is needed which cannot be fulfilled in any other way and (2) local citizens desire to help carry out such a survey.

### Length of Inventory Validity

Factors determining how long an inventory is valid include

- migration in and out of the area.
- new opportunities for employment within the labor market area.
- closing down an operation utilizing large amounts of labor.
- changing the agricultural production situation.

\*Extension sociologist, Texas A&M University, and program coordinator for Texas Concerted Services, Red River County.

If conditions remain static, a well-conducted basic inventory may be relatively accurate in rural counties for 1 to 3 years. If a determining factor influences much change on the labor force, however, an inventory may be dated within a few months.

### Area to Consider for Inventory

Labor supply areas often cross county lines and encompass parts or all of more than one county. Potential labor supply areas usually include at least 30 minutes commuting time and sometimes include areas up to 60 minutes away. The main point is that an inventory should usually be at least countywide even in major metropolitan areas.

### Generating Local Support

Involve important key individuals within organized groups such as chambers of commerce, county program building committees, industrial foundations, city councils and commissioners courts. Each local situation will be slightly different depending on the community structure. Other organizations such as the ministerial alliance, school systems, women's professional organizations, civic organizations, agricultural organizations, organized labor and county action agencies occasionally should be included.

### Inventory Initiation

Inventory initiation may come from any source. Someone must take the lead and promote the idea. The leader could be an elected official, a chamber of commerce member, a government employee or any other interested citizen. The leader could also be a prospect seeking unavailable information.

### Inventory Coordination

Inventory coordination may be handled by the chamber of commerce manager, any professional agricultural worker, the county rural development committee, community action agency director, a local Texas Employment Commission representative

or any other interested person with applied research experience. Someone must be in charge who will be responsible. The following outline may be used as a guide for a person in charge.

#### Steps for Making Manpower Inventories

- I. Involve volunteers who can promote the inventory in the following ways.
  - A. Represent an advisory committee from different special interest groups.
    1. Obtain volunteer interviewers.
    2. Promote survey registration.
  - B. Inform citizenry through phone contact or meetings with organized groups.
  - C. Appeal to friends and neighbors through radio spots by identifying themselves and encouraging participation.
  - D. Contact local merchants about contributing merchandise for periodic free door prizes.
  - E. Work at designated interviewing locations, calling on people at home or meeting with groups.
  - F. Assist with checking inventory completeness.
- II. Inform citizenry of inventory importance through various methods.
  - A. Report progress of the inventory through local news media.
  - B. Spread news of the inventory through church bulletins, pulpits or newsletters.
  - C. Reach students and parents through school system letters and questionnaires.
  - D. Maintain personal contact with local organizations.
  - E. Distribute flyers at business concerns.
  - F. Place posters in business windows.
  - G. Conduct a telephone campaign.
  - H. Make use of inserts in utility bill mailings.
  - I. Inform Community Action Agency Out-Reach workers.
- III. Conduct the actual inventory by one of the following procedures.
  - A. Choose a desirable interview location.
    1. Set up interviews at strategic locations.
    2. Put a person in charge to assist the interviewer with filling out questionnaires.
    3. Locate inventories near public facilities or private settings which are basically places of high pedestrian traffic (city hall, fire station, chamber of commerce, stores, schools, etc.).
  - B. Involve organized groups such as church groups, home demonstration clubs, civic clubs and school classes in group registration.
  - C. Mail out questionnaires to be mailed or delivered in person to a central location.
  - D. Utilize door-to-door canvassing.
    1. Obtain a complete census of the area.
    2. Conduct a scientific sampling of area households.
  - E. Except for the scientific sampling technique, one or more alternatives can be utilized together.

#### Volunteers

Texas Employment Commission labor market analysts are able to provide group training sessions for volunteers who administer questionnaires. Because their availability is limited on a simple supply and demand basis, plan the sessions with the Texas Employment Commission before the inventory.

In supervising volunteers, set up a program of work and specify who is in charge of each specific geographic area. Provide back-up support by providing adequate supplies, answering questions and checking responses. If responses are weak, see what additional help is needed. If responses are adequate, provide encouragement.

The key is to organize and involve a large number of volunteers. A minimum of 50 people probably should be enlisted. Some situations may require several hundred volunteers over a period of a few days.

#### Time Allocation

Depending on the number of volunteers, complete the job within 2 weeks if possible. Allowing another 2 weeks for cleanup may be necessary. Enthusiasm will decline if the job takes too long.

#### Designing Questionnaires

Sample questionnaires and assistance for design can be obtained from the state office of the Texas Employment Commission, the Texas Industrial Commission, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service or the Texas Concerted Services. With data processing capabilities, questionnaires should have provisions for easy coding and key punching capabilities.

#### Other Assistance

Questionnaire design, technical advice, printing and data tabulation can be done by the Texas Employment Commission manpower data analysis and research department. A district labor analyst is available to provide training programs for volunteer interviewers.

It is cheaper and better to use volunteers than to hire a firm for inventories because participation and involvement generate more local interest, especially where key community leaders cooperate in obtaining data.

*Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic levels, race, color, sex, religion or national origin.*