

Panel Discussion

Transitioning to Virtual Seasonal Adjustment Training

Seasonal Adjustment Practitioners Workshop
September 2024

Kathy McDonald-Johnson, U. S. Census Bureau, with
Brian Monsell, NSR Solutions, Inc. and U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics;
Catherine Harvill Hood, Catherine Hood Consulting; and
Wendy L. Martinez, moderator, U.S. Census Bureau

Fun Facts and Acknowledgments

- Brian Monsell taught the first class I took in seasonal adjustment
- Catherine Harvill Hood trained me in providing seasonal adjustment training, and we taught many courses together
- Credit to Demetra Lytras who is always updating and improving our course materials
- Thank you to James Livsey for recording the SEATS training section

Census Bureau Seasonal Adjustment Training

- Primary course is technical
 - How to review time series and choose appropriate seasonal adjustment settings
 - Not college-level rigor, but technical with mathematical equations and references to statistical tests (F tests, t statistics, etc.)
 - Length is 4 to 5 days
 - Lectures and in-class computer worksheets
- Sometimes provide a less-technical course focused on concepts
 - Working with analysts now to create a new approach with new materials for this course

Prepandemic Environment

- In-house classrooms with computers did not allow remote connections
 - In-person training only, attend all days to receive credit – was difficult for many participants because of schedules, important meetings, etc.
- Planned (but not a high priority) to record course materials
 - For those who miss sections
 - For anyone who wants a review of only particular topics

During the Pandemic

- Provided one “live” remote course
- Based on that, we determined that we needed at-your-own-pace materials
 - Demetra reworked materials, broke them into smaller segments, easier to complete in one sitting
 - We recorded narrations and videos of each course section and the worksheets – major undertaking in time and energy
- We have provided the at-your-own-pace course twice, in the coordinated training system
 - Office hours to answer questions and offer further discussion (most participants did not bring questions – we have ideas for how to improve)
 - Individuals have used the materials, too, to apply to immediate projects

Future Courses

- Moving back into the office environment
- Hybrid environment for courses?
- At-your-own-pace recordings still needed for those who cannot fit the course into their schedule
 - Beneficial for new employees who need a course immediately
 - Beneficial for on-your-own review
 - Will require periodic updates (time and energy)