

State Policy Reforms to Improve Workforce Data

Education and training policies should prepare all U.S. residents to participate in the skilled workforce and help industries compete in a changing economy. Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC) and National Skills Coalition (NSC) advocate for inclusive, aligned, and market-relevant data systems that can advance our nation's skilled workforce and ensure economic growth and prosperity. To achieve this vision, states can use legislation and administrative policies to promote certain key features of state longitudinal data systems.

In particular, states should establish or amend their policies to:

- **Develop an Inclusive Cross-Agency Council.** States may use legislation to establish a cross-agency council tasked with overseeing statewide data collection and reporting. At a minimum, the cross-agency council should include representatives from agencies that administer or coordinate workforce programs, early childhood education, K-12, career and technical education, higher education, and social services. States should also consider including representatives from private higher education institutions, as well as business and industry. Indiana has successfully implemented a legislatively mandated cross-agency council. [IC 22-4.5-9](#) established the Indiana Career Council, which contains representatives from state agencies such as the Department for Workforce Development, the Commission for Higher Education, and the Family and Social Services Administration.
- **Capture Diverse Credentials within Longitudinal Data Systems.** States can pass legislation requiring that state longitudinal data systems include data on a range of credentials (certificates, certifications, licenses), in addition to degrees, in order to improve alignment between education and the workforce. Other states have made significant progress towards this goal. Indiana passed [legislation](#) which consolidated all of the state's licensing data into one place to better enable linkages. Furthermore, in 2012, Illinois partnered with CompTIA, a trade association that provides information technology certifications, to match individual-level certification data with other education and workforce program data. The linkages revealed that certifications increased median quarterly earnings by more than \$1,500. Following the success of the partnership, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) began spearheading a [project](#) to expand data exchange between state longitudinal data systems and industry certification organizations, with the hopes of eventually

creating a national data exchange clearinghouse for industry-recognized certifications. California, Kansas, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio and Oklahoma are participating in the first round of the project, and DC, Iowa, Kentucky, Washington and Florida are scheduled to participate in the second round.

- **Determine Whether Graduates Get Jobs.** State legislation can facilitate the calculation of employment and earnings outcomes from all education and workforce programs, including higher education, and out-of-state employment. Many states do not have information on outcomes of for-profit career school programs, for example, but laws in states like [New Jersey](#) require these schools to submit data to the state.
- **Analyze Industry Skills Gaps.** State legislation should direct a state agency to produce an annual, publicly-available report examining whether education and workforce programs are aligned with labor market demand. Such information can inform training programs and workforce development policy, as well as help students select the best program for their needs.
- **Create Scorecards for Students and Workers.** States should pass legislation which requires the state's education, workforce, and other agencies to collaborate in order to produce websites containing user-friendly, de-identified, aggregate program and institution level data that allows students and workers to compare programs and make career decisions. In 2015, Arkansas passed a [law](#) requiring the Department of Workforce Services to produce an annual report, intended for students and parents, containing employment and earning outcomes for graduates of public higher education institutions.
- **Disseminate Dashboards for Policymakers.** State legislation can encourage education, workforce, and other agencies to collaborate in order to regularize reporting to the Governor and state legislators on education and employment outcomes across all education and workforce programs. Policymakers can use this information to quickly identify programs with strong outcomes and programs in need of improvement.
- **Provide Adequate State Funding for State Data Systems:** As Alaska has done, states should include an adequate line-item in each year's budget to develop, maintain, and/or expand the state's data system. Adequate line-item funding should also be provided to enable agencies to hire staff to analyze information. Without analytical capacity, state data systems may be ineffectual.