

Enable job seekers to navigate education and career pathways that lead to high-quality careers



RAJ WENT STRAIGHT INTO WORK IN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AFTER HIGH SCHOOL.

Now that he has a family, he wants to further his career and earning potential. After five years in his job, he looks at a career-planning tool that **helps him understand wage data, outcomes, and employers and open roles in his area**, and he sees that he needs additional training to gain new skills that complement his on-the-job experience. He enrolls in a certificate program that he can pursue at night at the technical college in his area while he works and balances his family responsibilities. Upon completion he has more advancement options, both at his own company and other employers in his region.

Everyone should have the information they need to make informed decisions about their own education and workforce pathways, support individuals navigating these pathways, and create policies that might help others navigate smoother pathways.

Right now, Raj and individuals like him don't have access to the information necessary to make this vision a reality. When states change their data systems to enable access, individuals will be able to use data to make decisions about their pathways through the workforce.

WHAT DOES ACCESS LOOK LIKE IN ACTION?

Robust state data systems that prioritize meaningful access to data will meet current and future information needs in the following ways.



JOB SEEKERS have access to data that helps them:

- **UNDERSTAND** the in-demand skills and credentials needed for the fastest-growing industries in their state.
- **DETERMINE** how their existing skills would transfer to related careers and what their career options would look like with additional education or certifications.
- **LOCATE** nearby community colleges, postsecondary institutions, and other providers of reputable education and career programs and assess the return on investment for the various options and their related employment and earnings outcomes.
- **IDENTIFY**, determine their eligibility for, and enroll in any financial aid or public benefits programs (e.g., nutrition, health care, housing) that might be available to them and could help support them.
- **KEEP** track of their existing skills, prior learning, and work experience in a standardized way and match those records with local employers and job openings.
- **IDENTIFY** employment opportunities that are available in their area.

The Families & Workers Fund, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, Irvine Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Omidyar Network, and Schmidt Futures and in collaboration with the US Department of Labor, defines a **high-quality job** as one that provides family-sustaining pay, sufficient benefits, fair schedules, training and career pathways, wealth-building opportunities, equity, respect, and voice and that adheres to labor laws including health and safety standards.

INDIVIDUAL ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data that is:

- ✓ Specific to the individual's role and the questions that they are trying to answer;
- ✓ Timely;
- ✓ Able to be manipulated and help them take action;
- ✓ Translated into languages other than English;
- ✓ Secure; and
- ✓ Longitudinal.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER COUNSELORS

have access to data that helps them:

- **IDENTIFY** the fastest-growing industries within the state and any special programs that are available or necessary to support job seekers in those fields.
- **DISCUSS** a job seeker's past experience and education, assess whether the job seeker's skills and credentials align with local and state workforce needs, and recommend high-quality education and career development opportunities.
- **ADVISE** job seekers about the costs of and outcomes from various education and career programs in the area and whether benefits are available to support job seekers during their programs and/or job searches.
- **AID** job seekers working to identify, assess their eligibility for, and enroll in any financial aid programs that can help subsidize the cost of education and career programs and any community programs that can assist them with the additional considerations that may affect their ability to attend college (e.g., materials, distance to program and transportation limitations, need for emergency financial assistance).
- **ENGAGE** with employers to connect skilled workers with quality job opportunities.
- **ADDRESS** targeted workforce needs (such as reconnecting displaced workers) through connection to workforce development programs and other opportunities.

Tools and information are available to other **individuals and organizations that offer support** to job seekers, including but not limited to:

- Disability services staff;
- Social workers;
- Workforce intermediaries;
- Nonprofit organizations working with individuals with prior justice system involvement;
- Sectoral training providers; and
- American Job Centers counselors.



THE PUBLIC (industry leaders, and community members) has access to data that helps them:

- **EXPLORE** and compare locally available career education opportunities and related requirements, costs, and outcomes.
- **EVALUATE** longer-term questions such as whether the landscape of high-quality jobs aligns with the skills and credentials held by the available workforce.
- **UNDERSTAND** and evaluate access to counselors, job center resources, and benefits designed to support individuals seeking to change careers and/or obtain additional education and training.
- **HOLD** the government accountable for providing resources and access to meaningful pathways into careers and back to postsecondary education based on the outcomes for their community.



EMPLOYERS have access to data that helps them:

- **EVALUATE** whether the local health, education, and other social systems will attract the high-quality workforce needed to run their business.
- **IDENTIFY** the education and training providers most adept at producing the skilled workers they need.
- **GATHER** information about the local workforce and their existing skills to guide future investments.
- **GET** help sharing information about career opportunities.

PUBLIC AND EMPLOYER ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to open data, aggregate data, and dashboards that:

- ✓ Are easy to understand and navigate;
- ✓ Are available in languages other than English;
- ✓ Are disaggregated by different groups of students and by program/school;
- ✓ Are dynamic and able to be queried and customized; and
- ✓ Include best practice indicators, such as those in the [Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework](#).



POLICYMAKERS

(workforce development boards, agency leaders, and legislators) have access to data that helps them:

PLAN, allocate resources, and answer questions, such as:

- What is the existing state and local labor market landscape, and what is the marketplace forecasted to look like in coming years?
- What kinds of career education opportunities are needed to meet current and future labor market needs?
- How do employment and wage outcomes vary for students who complete different training, credential, and degree programs?
- How do outcomes vary for different populations, both within particular geographic areas and statewide?
- Do certain groups or populations face unique barriers to success when enrolling in education and training? What strategies are most effective at overcoming these barriers? For example:
 - » What impact do career training and educational programs that are available to individuals with justice system involvement have on recidivism rates, and what are the employment and wage outcomes of those programs?
 - » What are the employment and earnings outcomes for individuals reentering the civilian workforce following service in the military, and what services are needed to help them navigate reentry?
- What investments, programs, and support services are associated with job seekers who find high-quality careers?
- What social services or benefits most effectively support individuals as they navigate career transitions and education and training opportunities?
- Which training, credential, and degree programs leave students with unmanageable debt when compared to their income?
- How well are workforce, postsecondary, and K–12 systems working together to leverage/braid resources and ensure that they are all preparing learners for high-quality careers?
- What are the trends for the entire workforce and for young job seekers who are seeking employment for the first time but have not had education beyond K–12 (e.g., opportunity youth)? What are the trends by region, industry, and demographic groups, including historically underserved populations? How do we address these trends?
- What are the patterns in these trends, including for concentrations of students with similar outcomes (e.g., lack of connection to either higher education or a quality job) from particular high schools or regions, and how do we address these patterns?

POLICYMAKER ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data that:

- ✓ Can be viewed statewide and tailored to answer policymakers' specific questions;
- ✓ Enables policy creation, evaluation, and adjustments as needed; and
- ✓ Enables effective management of programs.

WHAT WILL REALIZING THIS VISION MAKE POSSIBLE?

Access to data helps people make decisions and improves state and local investments in education and workforce pathways.

When state leaders give people tailored, individual access to the data they need, they also support the success of policies and programs like these:

- Support for historically underserved and vulnerable communities in securing high-quality jobs;
- Education and training opportunities aligned with employment needs;
- Career and technical education programming with demonstrated impact on increased economic mobility; and
- Satisfying labor market needs through a better statewide understanding of workforce opportunities and gaps in both the labor market and in programs to satisfy labor market needs.

STATES GETTING STARTED

This work is ambitious. While some states and districts have created resources that allow individuals, the public, and system leaders to use data to make decisions about **pathways through education and into the workforce**, leaders must go farther to give people the kind of data access they need. Examples of how states have gotten started include the following:

- The [Indiana Credential Finder](#) allows users to search, find, and compare credential information.
- The [Washington Career Bridge](#) contains information on programs, including short-term programs, one-year certificates, and apprenticeships.
- The [Coleridge Initiative](#) is a multistate initiative that works with government agencies to enable secure access to and sharing of data across state lines.
- The [California Department of Developmental Services](#) provides assessments, determines eligibility for services, and offers case management services at regional centers across the state.
- The [Indiana Employer Connector](#) allows employers to gather information about students participating in career and technical education across the state to identify potential employees.