Provide researchers access to the data they need to produce trusted information that **enables people to understand transitions, outcomes, and what works**

CORINNE WORKS AT A COMMUNITY-BASED COLLEGE ACCESS NONPROFIT THAT SUPPORTS STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES ON THEIR PATH FROM HIGH SCHOOL INTO COLLEGE.

She and her colleagues want to conduct research about the long-term outcomes of students in their community who came from low-income households. She uses a resource that provides her with downloadable open data sets and analytic tools to **explore and interpret de-identified college-going and career outcomes data over time for students in her area.** She uses this information to improve the nonprofit's programming to better support students across their community.

LUIS, A RESEARCHER AT THE STATE'S FLAGSHIP UNIVERSITY, WANTS TO HELP STATE LEADERS UNDERSTAND THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THEIR INVESTMENT IN JOB TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES.

He is investigating whether the current constellation of programs and supports improves economic mobility in rural areas, how people in the state are participating in the available programs, whether people are able to combine different training programs at the same time, and if the programs are improving outcomes for some types of participants or in some industries more than others. Luis is able to **access and analyze de-identified longitudinal education and workforce data to understand how the state's programs are being used and which are most effective.** When Luis and his team have completed their work, the state's governor and her staff will be able to answer questions about the state's investments and make more informed policy decisions moving forward.

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, Corinne, Luis, and researchers like them have to navigate clunky processes to get the information they need, if they can access the information at all. As a result, students, their families, and their communities lack evidence about college and career pathways, and policymakers lack the necessary information to allocate resources to the programs that work. When states change their data systems to enable access, researchers will be able to get the data they need to produce information that enables the field to understand transitions, outcomes, and what works.

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.

INSTITUTION-AFFILIATED RESEARCHERS (researchers at universities, contractors, and education and workforce program providers) have the resources they need to:

- **CONDUCT** research that helps policymakers, practitioners, and the public improve education to workforce pathways through systemic and local change.
- **REVIEW** the state's learning agenda and requirements for data request criteria and priorities.
- **ACCESS** information or training on the use and limitations of administrative data sets and individual-level data.
- **COMPLETE** relevant data use and privacy trainings required by the state.
- **ACCESS** comprehensive data dictionaries and codebooks to define and explain each indicator in their data sets.
- **CRAFT** and submit a request for data that addresses all of the ideas and components outlined by the statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) governance body.

- **OBTAIN** timely status updates on the state's review of a data request.
- Upon state approval of a data request, **SECURE** online access to any data from state systems in the SLDS, including early childhood, K–12, postsecondary, and workforce.
- **COMMUNICATE** with the relevant SLDS governance body about individual-level, cross-system data requests.
- **RECEIVE** automated access to approved P–20W data.
- **PROVIDE** ongoing updates to, share documents with, and communicate with the SLDS governing body's relevant committee as research is being conducted and interpreted.

RESEARCHER ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data in a format that is:

- ✔ Tailored to researchers' specific research needs; and
- ✔ Available through a single portal.

THE PUBLIC
(community-based researchers and advocates) has access to data that helps them:

- **UNDERSTAND** what data is available and what the data means.
- **CONDUCT** their own research.
- **EXPLORE** and interpret trends across the education and workforce sectors.
- **ANSWER** questions tailored to the needs of their community regardless of whether community questions directly align with the state's research agenda.
- **RECEIVE** timely status updates about research requests that have been fulfilled or denied (and understand why denied requests were not granted based on the P–20W governance body's criteria).
- **COMMUNICATE** easily with data stewards.

PUBLIC ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to:

✔ Open data; ✔ Aggregate data; ✔ Query tools; and ✔ Dashboards.

POLICYMAKERS
(agency leaders, SLDS governing bodies, and state legislators) have access to data that helps them:

EVALUATE whether research practices are working and generating needed evidence by answering questions such as:

- How could working with different types of researchers help answer the questions prioritized in the state learning agenda?
- Is the research our state is approving providing useful and timely insights for postsecondary, state education agency, local education agency, and workforce leaders?
- How are the findings from the research our state is approving being shared with state and local agency leaders to improve programs?
- Do the governance laws, regulations, policies, and structure facilitate the use of the SLDS for research purposes?
- Do the privacy laws and regulations prioritize individual privacy as well as enable evidence generation and program evaluation?
- Do the state's systems and processes prioritize open data that enables community-based research?

Policymakers have a unique role to play in ensuring that an SLDS is designed and governed so that it can inform education and workforce research, practice, and programs.

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:

- Research–practice partnerships, like members of the National Network of Education Research Practice Partnerships;

- Open data initiatives like Open Data DC; and

- Early warning systems, such as the one developed by the Chicago Research Consortium and Everyone Graduates Center.

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,** 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 Delaware Open Data Portal contains a searchable catalog of 25 downloadable databases and includes a data dictionary, explanation of columns, time stamps, and a portal for contacting the owner of the data set, as well as an interactive portal for suggesting new data sets.

- The Ohio Department of Education's data warehouse, DataOhio, is the public portal that provides access to aggregate public data sets and facilitates the request, approval, and delivery process to allow researchers and members of the public to easily browse and view data. The portal helps individual developers, researchers, policymakers, and interested community members to easily visualize transparent data.

- The Coleridge Initiative created and manages permissions for the Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF), which was funded by the federal Office of Management and Budget. The ADRF allows states to upload and access more than 100 data sets into a common platform.

- At the Tennessee Education Research Alliance, Vanderbilt University researchers serve as an intermediary between the state and independent researchers. The state's research–practice partnership pairs researchers at Vanderbilt with those at the Tennessee Department of Education to inform and advise state-level policymakers and affect policy decisionmaking.

- The Baltimore Education Research Consortium connects institutions of higher education; Baltimore Public Schools; and data agencies that are not education related, including the Department of Health and community organizations, to conduct research in support of students and families in Baltimore.

- The Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) is a partnership of Rice University and 11 Houston-area school districts serving more than 700,000 students combined. HERC's Gulf Coast Coronavirus (COVID-19) Community Impact Survey Data Dashboard was created to provide nonprofit, philanthropic, and educational organizations with information about the impact of COVID-19 on the community.

- RTI's Evaluation Engine is a user-friendly tool for schools to make queries and upload and use existing data to evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions.