Education and Workforce Data
LEGISLATION REVIEW

What Happened in 2023?

Each year, state legislators introduce hundreds of bills that generate new data collections, analyses, and resources, playing a crucial role in how people access and use data. Notably, in 2023 legislators introduced and enacted bills governing cross-agency data systems—the most important step that states must take to make robust access to data possible. Legislation also addressed funding state data systems, centering privacy, and ensuring greater access to data for decisionmaking.

Establishing cross-agency data governance is the best way to ensure that state leaders have codified a shared, sustainable forum to make decisions about cross-sector data (i.e., information about people's experiences in education and the workforce that is stewarded by different state agencies). Codifying data governance into law provides state agencies a structure in which to define the roles and responsibilities needed to ensure not only clear processes for collecting and reporting education and workforce data but also accountability for data quality and security.

This resource spotlights the bills introduced and laws enacted in 2023 addressing data governance, as well as other Data Quality Campaign (DQC) recommendations for states to support data access through improved statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs).[1] It also examines some bills that demonstrate how states found "lighter touch" ways to increase transparency and access to data. While states admittedly still have a long way to go, getting people access to data is a continuum, and we are encouraged to see states taking these initial steps.

People Need Access to Data

To foster successful journeys through education and the workforce, people need access to data. Unfortunately, today's statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs), and the policies that govern them, do not provide sufficient access to information that helps individuals, the public, and policymakers answer questions and make meaningful decisions. Legislators have an important role in ensuring that everyone can access the data they need to make decisions—especially as they navigate education and workforce pathways.

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1   DQC has been tracking state legislative efforts since 2014. In 2023, we identified 10 essential policy and practice steps that states must take to make access to data from SLDSs possible. You can read the full report at https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/a-vision-to-transform-state-data-systems/.

Cross-agency data governance is the best way to foster shared decisionmaking about P–20W data, which in turn is a critical step toward expanding access to data. Three states took a critical step toward data access by passing data governance policies in 2023.

Codifying cross-agency governance structures

Legislation ensures that state agencies will collaborate, fostering lasting data governance across leadership changes. Data governance streamlines decisionmaking by involving agency leaders and users to build trust and achieve articulated goals.

The following three states join California, Kentucky, Maryland, and North Dakota to serve as models for others:

A new **Alabama** law created the Alabama Terminal on Linking and Analyzing Statistics (ATLAS), a secure system for partner agencies to exchange and analyze education and workforce data. ATLAS will improve data sharing across education and training initiatives while upholding legal protections to ensure privacy and security. **The legislation outlines clear purposes for the system, providing policymakers access to comprehensive analyses based on data including early learning, education, workforce training, and employment outcomes.** Alabama's law also created a P–20W Council, which is responsible for effectively governing the system, ensuring data security, establishing a research agenda, and approving research requests. Importantly, the law established the Office of Education and Workforce Statistics within the Department of Commerce to manage the system on behalf of the Council, a best practice for ensuring that a neutral broker is responsible for implementing the data system and fulfilling its mission.

Legislators in **Montana** created and funded the Education and Workforce Data Governing Board, which is charged with formulating policies to share and protect data among K–12, higher education, and workforce agencies while ensuring compliance with federal and state privacy laws. The law also mandates the creation and upkeep of a K–12 data system to promote data exchange among different divisions in the Office of Public Instruction and enable the state to connect K–12 data with higher education and workforce data. **The law explicitly outlines the intended value of this system by affirming that the use of education and workforce data holds promise for developing the potential of Montanans and for maximizing investments in state education and workforce systems.**

Rhode Island codified and funded the Rhode Island Longitudinal Data System (RILDS), **enabling the state to expand its data connections and establishing the system as a one-stop repository for all interagency longitudinal linked data.** Through this law, Rhode Island established the RILDS within the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner; mandates that participating agencies transfer data to the RILDS; and established the Rhode Island Longitudinal Data System Center to manage and operate the RILDS, conduct research, and evaluate programs. The law further established the Rhode Island Longitudinal Data System Governing Board, which is responsible for overseeing, supervising, and directing the operational duties of the Center, as well as ensuring compliance with data privacy and security.

What Is an SLDS?

SLDSs connect statewide information (i.e., from all schools, programs, and institutions) from early childhood through K–12 education, postsecondary education, and the workforce. These systems enable cross-sector data insights that help leaders answer pressing policy questions, direct resources, and better support individuals along their education and workforce journeys. Every state has the ability to link individual-level data over time and connect information across multiple sectors.

Legislators in **Massachusetts** introduced a bill that would codify formal cross-agency data governance through the establishment of the Massachusetts Education to Career Data System. This legislation includes the creation of an Education to Career Data Center within the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security. The Center would be tasked with operating the data system, producing data tools, facilitating research requests, and ensuring compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). If the state enacts the law, the Education to Career Data System would provide reliable and actionable information on education and workforce outcomes to address disparities, assist decisionmaking, and drive improvement. *While this bill has not yet become law, Massachusetts's legislature is still in session, and DQC will continue to monitor the bill's progress.*[2]

Codifying cross-agency data governance in state law is a step that all states should take to ensure data access for all stakeholders. But it is not the only policy legislatures pursued in 2023 to improve and expand state data.

Funding SLDSs and the source systems that contribute data to them

To provide data access that helps individuals, the public, and policymakers make decisions about education and workforce pathways, states must make access to data possible from SLDSs, connecting data across early childhood, K–12, postsecondary, and the workforce. And ensuring that these SLDSs are robust and lasting requires sustained, dedicated funding for the state data systems as well as each contributing agency system. SLDSs are only as strong as their weakest contributing data system, so state leaders should identify pain points and target investments according to the strengths and weaknesses of their early childhood data, K–12, postsecondary, and workforce systems, as well as relevant systems of other state agencies that serve people on their education and workforce journeys.

This year, in addition to Montana and Rhode Island—both mentioned previously—Louisiana, Missouri, and Washington, DC, funded their SLDSs through legislation. Missouri and Washington, DC, took an additional step to specifically provide funding to staff their data systems.

Louisiana codified and funded the Louisiana Foundational Integrated Research System for Transformation (LA FIRST), which facilitates data-sharing agreements among state agencies to improve education and workforce outcomes. Crucially, the law mandates that LA FIRST produce comprehensive annual reports covering transitions from secondary to postsecondary education, workforce readiness, and employment outcomes, with a focus on education, employment, and criminal justice system linkages.

Missouri appropriated funding, including funding for five staff, to support the state's preschool through workforce data systems, a clear example of how state leadership can prioritize these critical pieces of infrastructure.

Washington, DC's FY24 budget enables the deputy mayor for education to implement the Education to Employment Data System, a centralized system for evaluating the effectiveness of education and workforce programs. The law mandates that agencies share PK–12, higher education, adult education, and workforce data with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education to be included in the system and increased the agency's budget by $400,000 and 1.5 full-time employees to support operations.

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2   As of October 16, 2023.

Centering privacy and establishing ethical data use practices to build trust in state data systems
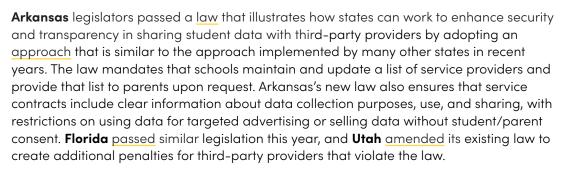
Ensuring that people's data is kept private and secure is an obligation—not an obstacle to data access. State leaders must implement and update privacy policies, safeguard against cybersecurity threats, staff data privacy leadership roles, establish ethical data use practices, and provide transparency into state data policies and practices.

This year, 17 states introduced 31 bills governing data privacy, and three of those states passed a total of three privacy laws. Most of these bills focused on mandating safeguards for student data use by regulating third parties that provide education technology services.

Arkansas legislators passed a law that illustrates how states can work to enhance security and transparency in sharing student data with third-party providers by adopting an approach that is similar to the approach implemented by many other states in recent years. The law mandates that schools maintain and update a list of service providers and provide that list to parents upon request. Arkansas's new law also ensures that service contracts include clear information about data collection purposes, use, and sharing, with restrictions on using data for targeted advertising or selling data without student/parent consent. **Florida** passed similar legislation this year, and **Utah** amended its existing law to create additional penalties for third-party providers that violate the law.

Getting more data into the hands of more people.

Providing tailored, individualized access for those navigating their education and workforce journeys requires a coordinated, cooperative effort from state leaders including agency leaders, governors, legislators, and others. The legislative steps outlined previously are some of the policy priorities that are essential to creating robust SLDSs and ultimately ensuring tailored access to information for individuals, the public, and policymakers. But states can also take action in specific ways to provide information to people while they continue to work to get their broader data policies in place.

The following bills focus on supporting students' academic journeys, whether by providing families with information on their student's K–12 performance or by providing students and families with information about what comes after high school. While these bills are not specific to SLDSs, they do demonstrate the legislative role to get more data in the hands of people.

Promptly providing assessment results to families: A new **Virginia** law requires the Virginia Department of Education to establish a Parent Data Portal to provide parents access to individualized data from state-issued assessments over time. This legislation includes mechanisms, such as requiring language translation, to ensure that all parents can use and understand this data.

Providing information to high school students choosing postsecondary options: New legislation enacted in **Texas** mandates that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provide comparative information about institutions of higher education on its website. This information should cover postsecondary education and career opportunities; assist prospective students in evaluating different programs; and include data on costs, student outcomes, and employment rates. In addition, legislators passed a law that requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to provide information and tools electronically to assist prospective postsecondary students in assessing the value of different degree and credential programs.

Using data to streamline students' transitions to postsecondary education: New York is considering legislation that would establish automatic applications for New York high school seniors to New York public colleges. The bill proposes the creation of a centralized database containing students' academic and demographic information in a password-protected college application. It aims to increase college attendance and address barriers faced by students who are from low-income backgrounds or are underrepresented, while also facilitating data sharing between K–12 and postsecondary institutions and offering a research tool for education improvement. *Bills introduced in the first year of New York's two-year legislative session can be carried over to the following year, and legislators may consider this bill during their 2024 meeting. DQC will continue to monitor this bill as a potential example of how connecting data across agencies can have useful impacts on students' lives.*

Looking Ahead

Ensuring that individuals navigating their education and workforce journeys have tailored access to information requires a foundation of robust SLDSs and cross-agency data governance. This year, a handful of states—Alabama, Montana, and Rhode Island—enacted data governance laws, while other states, like Virginia and Texas, demonstrated how states can make data useful and actionable right now, as people navigate the transitions between K–12 and postsecondary education.

Legislators have a clear role to play in making sure that individuals can access and use information to navigate their unique education and career pathways. Next year, we hope to see legislators continue to focus on access to data, specifically on ensuring that SLDSs are sustainably funded and that state leaders are engaging communities in determining data access priorities and gathering ongoing feedback.

For the full list of DQC's state recommendations, along with resources for implementation, visit *What Now? A Vision to Transform State Data Systems to Inform People's Pathways through Education and the Workforce*.

Appendix

Every year, DQC tracks data-related legislation across the country. The following table illustrates the number of bills we tracked in each state, as of August 31, 2023.

State	Bills Introduced	Laws Enacted
Alabama	4	2
Alaska	0	0
Arizona	1	0
Arkansas	3	2
California	2	0
Colorado	7	3
Connecticut	4	1
Delaware	1	0
District of Columbia	1	1
Florida	8	6
Georgia	3	1
Hawaii	0	0
Idaho	0	0
Illinois	16	8
Indiana	2	1
Iowa	1	0
Kansas	2	0
Kentucky	3	1
Louisiana	3	3
Maine	1	0
Maryland	4	2
Massachusetts	11	0
Michigan	3	1
Minnesota	18	3
Mississippi	12	0
Missouri	9	0

State	Bills Introduced	Laws Enacted
Montana	9	3
Nebraska	1	0
Nevada	1	1
New Hampshire	2	1
New Jersey	13	0
New Mexico	2	1
New York	17	0
North Carolina	7	1
North Dakota	0	0
Ohio	2	0
Oklahoma	6	0
Oregon	9	4
Pennsylvania	4	0
Rhode Island	10	1
South Carolina	4	0
South Dakota	0	0
Tennessee	4	1
Texas	20	2
Utah	8	8
Vermont	1	0
Virginia	12	6
Washington	10	6
West Virginia	4	2
Wisconsin	4	0
Wyoming	0	0
Total	269	72