Education and Workforce Data
LEGISLATION REVIEW

What Happened in 2024?

In 2024, state legislators introduced hundreds of bills that would affect data collection, access, and use across early education, K–12, postsecondary, and the workforce. As in 2023, legislators continued to introduce and enact legislation governing cross-agency data systems. These policies are the most important step toward making statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs)— systems that connect individual-level data over time from early childhood, K–12, postsecondary, and the workforce—more accessible and useful for people. Additionally, new laws nationwide aim to facilitate transitions from high school to college and the workforce, leveraging linked data to make students' journeys more seamless.

This resource spotlights significant strides states have made toward enhancing access to data for decisionmaking. Through these legislative efforts, states are advancing their commitment to seamless education and workforce transitions supported by robust data governance, access, and use. Moving forward, continued legislative action is crucial in building and maintaining data systems that provide the necessary information to enable lifelong learning and career success.

Cross-agency data governance is the most important step to ensure that people have access to P–20W (early childhood through workforce) data. Policymakers must establish it through legislation.

From 2021 to 2024, five additional states enacted legislation to codify cross-agency data governance, joining the four states that had already done so before 2021.

2007	2010	2013	2015	2021	2023	2024
Washington	Maryland	Kentucky	North Dakota	California	Alabama	Colorado
					Montana	
					Rhode Island	

This year, Colorado joined their ranks by enacting a workforce development law that sets the stage for improved policy decisions and equitable access to data.

Colorado legislators enacted a comprehensive workforce development law that incorporates best practices like cross-agency data governance to set the conditions for improved policy decisions and equitable access to data, positioning the state as a leader in serving the needs of students and the workforce. The law establishes the Colorado Statewide Longitudinal Data System within the Office of Informational Technology and mandates a leadership-level governing board to oversee the data system. The law also secures $5 million in state funding and requires annual reports on postsecondary and workforce outcomes, supporting education-to-career pathways and workforce readiness.

HONORABLE MENTION
Kansas

This year, legislators in Kansas introduced legislation to create the Kansas Terminal on Linking and Analyzing Statistics on Workforce Pathways (KTLAS), governed by a newly established cross-agency governing board, the Kansas Workforce Council on Workforce Pathways. Although the legislation did not pass this session, it included best practice provisions like an intent to improve data access, a requirement to have members of the public on the governing board, and targeted funding. We hope to see continued momentum to improve education and workforce outcomes for Kansans.

Building and sustaining comprehensive data systems requires investment. Legislators must provide that support.

This year, state legislators took significant steps to enhance their data systems, including exploring how to improve existing frameworks to support evidence-based research and providing dedicated funding to ensure sustainability.

In **Alabama,** legislators reinforced their commitment to supporting the recently established SLDS by allocating in the annual budget $1 million and three full-time employees to the Office of Education and Workforce Statistics (the entity that houses Alabama's SLDS). By continuing to invest in these initiatives, Alabama is ensuring the long-term success and reliability of its data systems, which will facilitate better decisionmaking and improved outcomes for the state's education and workforce sectors.

New York legislators appropriated $20.4 million in first-time funding in the annual budget to support the development and implementation of an SLDS. This funding is designated for enhancing data infrastructure, including the purchase of necessary technology and equipment. By ensuring financial support for this technology, New York is taking the first, needed steps to implement its data system. This investment in infrastructure will enable more accurate data about student progress and workforce trends, leading to better decisionmaking and improved outcomes for the state's education and workforce sectors.

A new law in **Virginia** establishes a work group to recommend improvements to the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) and the Workforce Data Trust. Led by the Virginia secretary of education, the group will aim to support evidence-based research and policymaking. The work group, which includes agency leaders and members of the legislature, will assess the needs of the VLDS and Workforce Data Trust, including improvements to governance, and present their recommendations by November 1, 2024. This approach mirrors California's successful 2019 initiative that led to the establishment of its Cradle-to-Career Data System and demonstrates a commitment to transparency and robust engagement in improving the use of statewide data.

Access to data can smooth individuals' transitions among education, postsecondary pathways, and workforce opportunities. Policymakers can make this access a reality.

While enacting cross-agency data governance is the best way to ensure effective data sharing, lawmakers in six states introduced or enacted policies that demonstrate how state-level data sharing can support students through their transitions into postsecondary education.

State leaders in **Colorado** passed a new law that aims to support students who have experienced homelessness by requiring public higher education institutions to cover the remaining balance of the total cost of attendance after any private, state, or federal financial assistance has been applied. By requiring that the Department of Higher Education and Department of Education share data, the law focuses on reducing financial barriers for vulnerable student populations. The data-sharing agreement ensures that institutions can identify and support qualifying students effectively, facilitating access to necessary financial resources and support services.

In **New York,** policymakers introduced legislation that would require the City University of New York and the State University of New York community colleges to send personalized direct admission letters by October 1 each calendar year to all high school seniors in public schools who are on track to graduate. The act aims to increase enrollment, following similar initiatives in states like Idaho, by facilitating the college admissions process for high school seniors.

In **Washington,** policymakers passed legislation to automatically qualify 10th-, 11th-, and 12th-grade students who receive food benefits for the Washington College Grant. Leveraging Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) data ensures timely access to financial aid and support for these students, making postsecondary education attainable.

Data transparency is essential for empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their education and career paths.

State leaders in **Colorado** improved the state's transfer system between two- and four-year colleges and gave students greater transparency about transfer credits and costs. For the first time, students in Colorado have clear transfer pathways between two- and four-year institutions and better information as they make their choices about where to go next. This increased transparency from higher education institutions will help college students make informed postsecondary decisions about transferring, obtaining credits, and graduating on time.

COLLEGE STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO DATA

Students who are already in college need a variety of supports to help them through their postsecondary education. Whether they are trying to transfer credits to a new university, find flexible employment options while in school, or understand financial aid options, access to data can support students as they navigate their unique journeys through college.

To learn more, see our use case and recommendations.

This year, policymakers took steps to ensure that individuals have access to the data that is necessary for workforce decisions. Policymakers also took steps to facilitate data sharing so they can use data for decisionmaking.

Maryland policymakers passed a law that establishes a new process for how the Maryland Higher Education Commission approves postsecondary programs, requiring that programs meet statewide and regional workforce needs. Reworking the process to better leverage data to inform policy will provide state leaders with more up-to-date information as they make decisions.

Legislators in **Pennsylvania** introduced legislation that would update its Occupation Navigator tool to allow job seekers to compare and contrast job opportunities across career fields. With access to data to compare occupations across the state, Pennsylvanians would have more information than before to help them choose career paths based on wages and demand.

In **Vermont,** legislators established a new Office of Workforce Expansion and Development. Among its duties, the office will collect data from various agencies, draft legislative language for the creation of a data tool, and give recommendations on workforce education and training programs. The office's reports and reviews will equip policymakers with a more comprehensive understanding of Vermont's current and future workforce needs.

Looking Ahead

Since 2021, five new states—**Alabama, California, Colorado, Montana,** and **Rhode Island**—have passed legislation codifying cross-agency data governance.

We hope legislators will continue to enhance data access for people by focusing on this policy tool. Cross-agency data governance is a best-practice, straightforward policy approach that prepares states for future challenges. Effective governing bodies must be charged with safeguarding data privacy, engaging stakeholders in creating innovative tools and services, and adapting to emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.

With continued legislative support, states can build robust SLDSs that leaders can use to pursue lifelong learning and career success in their states. Every state can and should work to ensure that data works for people.

For the full list of our 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*.