Using State Data to Support Post-Secondary Access, Completions & Return on Investment

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DQC 20 YEARS

Powering Potential:
Using Data to Support Postsecondary Access, Completion, and Return on Investment

Read the Report HERE

Our Findings

Existing Uses of PS and WF Data

From research and interviews, we found that states most **commonly report using postsecondary data** in the following ways...

Existing PS and WF Data: How it is Used

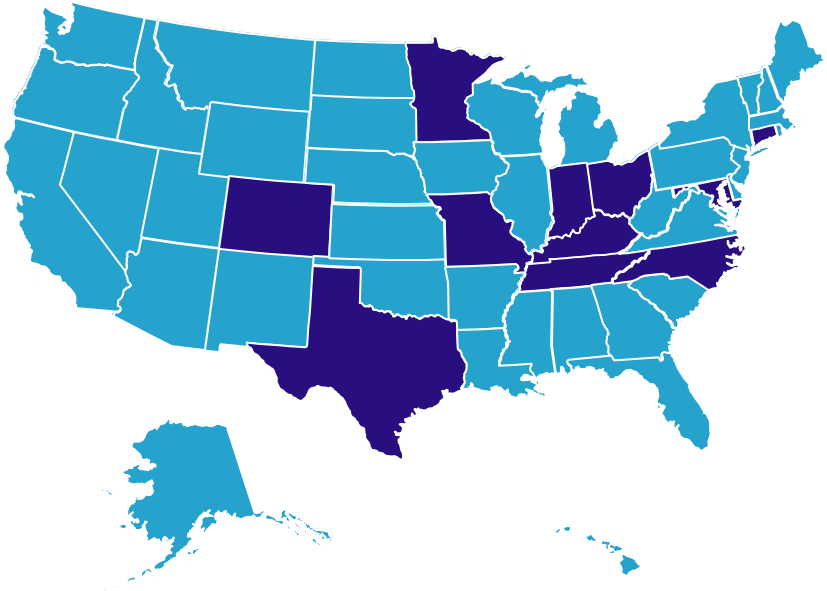
1. Support Workforce Alignment
2. Assessing ROI of Postsecondary Pathways
3. Enhancing Opportunity
4. Developing Student Success and Support Tools
5. Informing State-Level Attainment Goals
6. Addressing Post-Pandemic Enrollment Challenges

Data Challenges

Many states are working to build cross-sector data systems to support postsecondary access, completion, and ROI, but **key challenges must be addressed to accelerate progress,** including...

Data Challenges

1. Siloed Data
2. Data Matching
3. Barriers to Access
4. Limited Use of Workforce Data
5. Governance Gaps
6. Interstate Data
7. Timely Data and Action
8. Data Quality
9. Privacy



Actions State Can Take to Proactively Use Data in Cooperation with PS Institutions

Actions State Can Take to Proactively Use Data in Cooperation with PS Institutions

1. Ensure that Data is Used to Inform Policy and Practice

When policy and practice are grounded in connected data, leaders can better **design pathways that support individual success and drive economic growth**. By analyzing trends in completion, employment, and student outcomes, states and institutions can:

Create Guided Pathways: Use data to design programs that boost completion and connect students to high-demand, high-wage careers.

Align Education to Workforce Needs: Identify labor market gaps and align programs with in-demand occupations.

Support Underserved Students: Address equity gaps by targeting supports based on disaggregated data and tailoring interventions to community needs.

Actions State Can Take to Proactively Use Data in Cooperation with PS Institutions

2. Use Data to Evaluate Institutional and Programmatic Outcomes

Cross-sector data helps leaders **evaluate and strengthen programs** to deliver better outcomes for future students. States should:

Analyze Student Outcomes:
Use data on graduation, employment, and debt to assess program effectiveness and drive improvements.

Invest in What Works:
Target resources toward programs that show strong outcomes, using performance data to guide investments and boost student ROI.

Actions State Can Take to Proactively Use Data in Cooperation with PS Institutions

3. Provide Students with Support to Succeed

When institutions and states collaborate, real-time student data and statewide insights can drive better supports and outcomes. States and institutions should:

Simplify Admissions and Financial Aid:
Use data to streamline processes, align offerings with workforce needs, and ease enrollment for students.

Support At-Risk Students:
Identify students at risk of not completing and design targeted, timely interventions.

Share SLDS Data with Institutions:
Provide actionable insights from SLDSs to help institutions improve student support and inform state policy.

State Example:
Idaho's Direct Admissions program preadmits high school seniors to state colleges based on academic performance, removing barriers to enrollment and simplifying the admissions process. By eliminating the need for individual applications, Idaho helps more students access postsecondary opportunities and focus on choosing the right institution.

[Graduate Employment Outcomes / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development]

Data

- Data Tools
  - Career & Education Explorer
  - Career Pathways
  - College Major to Career Connector
  - College Major to Industry of Employment
  - Cost of Living
  - County Profiles
  - Current Employment Statistics
  - Employment Outlook Projections
  - Graduate Employment Outcomes
    - About
    - Outcomes by Race
    - Glossary
    - Methodology
  - Graduate Earnings & Cost Calculator
  - High School Technical Education Pathways & Outcomes
  - Job Vacancy Survey
  - Job Openings & Labor Turnover Survey
  - Local Area Unemployment Statistics
  - Match Jobs to Experience
  - Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics
  - Occupations in Demand
  - Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages
  - Quarterly Employment Demographics
  - Quarterly Workforce Indicators
  - Unemployment Insurance Statistics
- Monthly Highlights
- Regional Labor Markets
- Research & Publications
- Economic Analysis
- Workforce Data
- Data for Job Seekers
- Data for Businesses

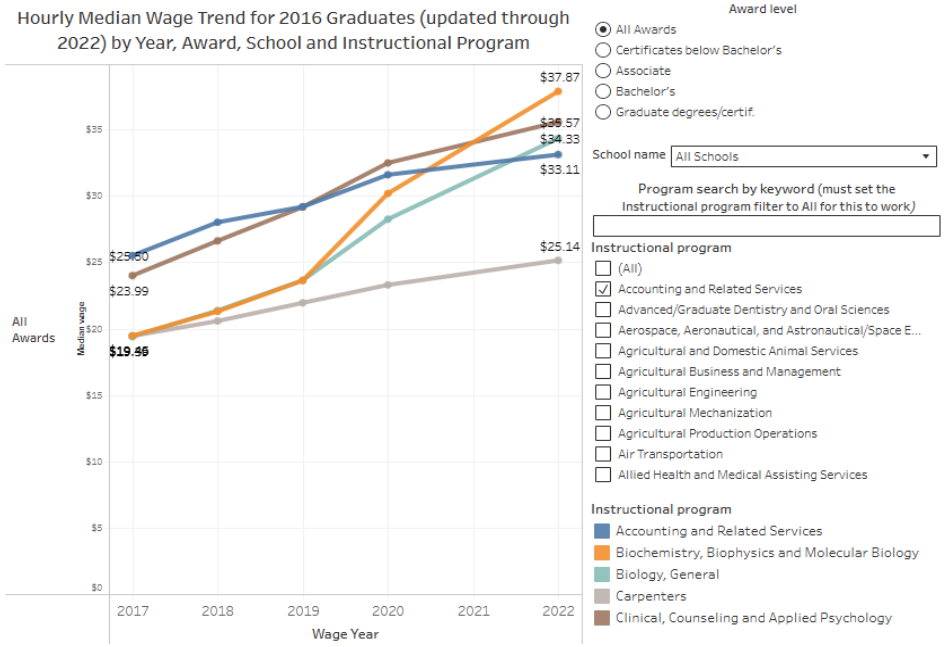
Graduate Employment Outcomes

View: **Home** | **Data Tool** | **SLEDS** | **About** | **Outcomes by Race** | **Glossary** | **Methodology**

The Graduate Employment Outcomes data tool shows how many Minnesota graduates are finding Minnesota jobs, and at what wages.

- Graduate Employment Outcomes Printable Tutorial
- Graduate Employment Outcomes Video Tutorial

For guidance on using and interpreting the tool, see this article by Alessia Leibert or contact the author.



Questions?

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Appendix

Actions States Can Take to Develop and Improve P–20W Data Systems

1. Codify and Implement Cross Agency Data Governance

States should **codify cross-agency data governance structures** in law to ensure collaboration, transparency, and sustainability across leadership changes. Governance bodies must include representatives from all contributing sectors—early childhood, K–12, postsecondary, workforce, and human services—as well as data users outside of government.

Strong governance structures align resources and policies, support privacy and security, and create accountability for decisions on data collection, sharing, and use. Without governance in place, even robust longitudinal data systems will fall short of their full potential to serve individuals, policymakers, and communities.

State Example:
California's Cradle-to-Career Data System prioritized public input by establishing advisory groups, holding open meetings, and inviting educators, families, and community organizations to directly shape the system's priorities, design, and long-term vision.

Actions States Can Take to Develop and Improve P–20W Data Systems

2. Collect and Connect Education and Workforce Data to Accomplish State Goals

Even after years of investment, many state data systems still don't meet user needs. To reach their goals, states must **define priorities and integrate high-quality, individual-level data across K–12, postsecondary, and workforce sectors**—disaggregated by key factors and connected through strong data matching.

Actions States Can Take to Develop and Improve P–20W Data Systems

3. Sustain Data Systems and Infrastructure

SLDSs are only as strong as the systems feeding into them. States must **invest in early childhood, K–12, postsecondary, and workforce data systems** alongside the SLDS to ensure data is accurate, accessible, and actionable. Sustained, dedicated state funding—not just federal grants—is critical for building effective, lasting systems that serve people.

Invest State Dollars in Data:
States like Louisiana, Missouri, and Washington, DC, have codified SLDS funding into law. Investments should cover staffing, training, infrastructure, and regular updates.

Invest in Contributing Agencies and Source Systems:
Investments should also build agency capacity through technical assistance and tools to support data analysis and use.

Actions States Can Take to Develop and Improve P–20W Data Systems

4. Provide Service to Contributing Agencies

To sustain strong participation, states must **show agencies the value of data sharing**. Engagement grows when data providers see clear benefits to their work.

Simplify and Improve Reporting:
Use the SLDS to streamline reporting processes for agencies and institutions, reducing administrative burden, cutting costs, and improving data quality.

Provide Meaningful Analysis:
Many agencies lack capacity to fully analyze data. States should use the SLDS to deliver actionable insights that support program evaluation, resource allocation, and strategic decisionmaking.

Actions States Can Take to Develop and Improve P–20W Data Systems

5. Provide Data Tools with the Appropriate Information for Intended Audiences

Effective data tools give students, families, leaders, and policymakers timely, useful information to support education and career decisions. States should **design tools that deliver the right data to the right audiences**—whether individual-level data for advising or aggregate trends for policymaking. Clear audience focus and purpose ensure data systems drive meaningful outcomes.

State Example:
Texas' My Texas Future dashboard provides students, families, and policymakers with accessible, data-driven tools to explore education and career pathways aligned to workforce needs. Developed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board with legislative support, the dashboard streamlines career exploration, connects users to advisors, and delivers insights on in-demand jobs, salaries, and educational programs.


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