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MULTI-STATE DATA COLLABORATIVES

NASWA SUMMIT NETWORK HIGHLIGHTS

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ANALYTICS FOR PUBLIC IMPACT

Message from the President

The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) is delighted to be the backbone administering organization that supports the multi-state data collaboratives, and we were truly appreciative of our collaboration with the Coleridge Initiative, the Data Integration Support Center (DISC) at WestEd, and state agency leaders during the 2023 NASWA SUMMIT. The SUMMIT was significantly enriched by the sessions that spotlighted access to and use of administrative data to enhance programs and policies. We invite you to explore this summary of those sessions and encourage you to look to NASWA as we continue to cultivate robust partnerships that facilitate cross-agency and cross-state data projects and products.

Thank you to the many state leaders who engaged in advancing data-informed solutions at the SUMMIT. We look forward to continued collaboration and innovation in this realm.

Yours in partnership,

Scott B. Sanders
President and CEO
NASWA

Introduction

THE MULTI-STATE DATA COLLABORATIVE NETWORK HIGHLIGHTED AT THE 2023 NASWA SUMMIT EVENT

Multi-state data collaborative members, in addition to staff from the administering and platform organizations, attended the 2023 NASWA SUMMIT in Los Angeles, California to support several sessions focused on the value of both within-state and cross-state data sharing and spur participation in the multi-state data collaborative network. Panel discussions featuring leading data experts provided participants with unique insight on the various entry points to the data sharing community, as well as opportunities to ask pressing questions related to data access and use.

This report includes summaries from the sessions that highlighted the work the collaborative network, which includes the Midwest Collaborative (MWC), the Southern Regional Data Collaborative (SRDC), and the Eastern States Longitudinal Collaborative (ESLDC).

EXPERT PANEL: Real Talk

This session provided the opportunity for participants to speak directly with experts from organizations partnering to support states in accessing and using administrative data: Baron Rodriguez, Executive Director, DISC at WestEd; LeAnn Fong-Batkin, Senior Project Manager, WestEd; Jessica Cunningham, Vice President of State Programs, Coleridge Initiative; Cynthia Forland, Multi-State Data Collaboratives; and Erin Joyce, Multi-State Data Collaboratives.

Participants posed questions relating to specific aspects of data sharing both in-state and across state lines. In response, expert panelists highlighted where their organizations may be particularly valuable. Baron Rodriquez and LeAnn Fong-Batkin emphasized DISC's ability to serve as a neutral party in advising on what may be possible in data sharing. Jessica Cunningham described the safety and security of the Coleridge Initiative's data platform that allows states to control access to, and use of, their data. Cynthia Forland and Erin Joyce shared how the multi-state data collaboratives enable states to work together to tackle common challenges and questions that may be addressed with available data and information.

The session closed with the invitation to work directly with each of the partner organizations represented on the expert panel.

BRIEFING: Attorney Workgroup

Legal experts in state workforce agencies are instrumental as state agencies seek to expand data access and use practices and build their state's evidence-building infrastructure. The Chair of the NASWA Attorney Workgroup, Kevin Lovellette of Illinois, joined a panel that featured technical assistance and service providers at the SUMMIT. The panel featured staff from NASWA, DISC at WestEd, the Coleridge Initiative, and the multi-state data collaboratives.

Yvette Chocolaad, NASWA, started off with a call to action, emphasizing no enterprise can operate well if it fails to use its enterprise data. New opportunities stemming from federal policy changes, public and private investments, powerful new data infrastructure, and applied data analytics training are all making it easier for state agencies to make good use of their enterprise data. Kevin Lovellette then shared the experience of Illinois in using the Coleridge Initiative's Administrative Data Research Facility and answered questions related to data de-identification and the use of hashing algorithms to link de-identified data.

Baron Rodriguez, DISC at WestEd, referenced the free services and technical assistance newly available to state agencies from DISC that can address privacy, security, and legal knowledge gaps. For attorneys needing clarification and support, DISC provides specialized support. Representing the Coleridge Initiative, Vice President Jessica Cunningham shared that her nonprofit, a partner to the multi-state data collaboratives, supports data access and linkages cross-agency and cross-state. The Coleridge Initiative also provides coaching to demonstrate the importance of data sharing, privacy, and security. Thanks to new technical solutions, states can open access to data more securely than ever. The use of hashing algorithms means personally identifiable information is not included. Also, agencies can create systems for safe and tiered access, including access for external researchers supporting state projects without sending a flat file.

Ending on a high note was Cynthia Forland, State Engagement Director, Multi-State Data Collaboratives. She provided an overview of the collaboratives' opportunities for state leaders related to networking, shared innovation, and data access and use activities. She also emphasized that collaborative leaders are focused on achieving sustainability, including through formal governance

EXPERT PANEL:
Transitioning to the Evidence Era

This session focused on state workforce agencies having critical data assets and the corresponding ability to help ignite a culture of evidence-building in their states. The session was led by Anna S. Hui, Director, Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and Interim Executive Committee member of the MWC. The panel consisted of Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer and Director, Division of Information Innovation & Insight, Texas Workforce Commission, and Interim Chair of the SRDC; George Putnam, Labor Market Information Director, Illinois Department of Employment Security, and Interim Executive Committee member of the MWC; and David Schmidt, Chief Economist, Research and Analysis Bureau, Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation.

Panelists emphasized best practices in driving an evidence-based culture:

- Listen to what problems policymakers and service providers are looking to solve;
- Provide information and insights that are timely, local, and relevant;
- Provide interactive data so that data users can develop their own information to meet their needs; and
- Harness current technology to work with deidentified data in-state and across states to better protect confidential information.

The panelists closed by emphasizing the importance of working across states since most challenges are shared across states, as well as investing in state staff to build up data analytical capability.

EXPERT PANEL: K-12 and Workforce Data: Partnerships for Student Success

This session featured states that are partnering across workforce and education agencies to create actionable insights that can support student achievement and lay the groundwork for career success. The panel featured Meihui Bodane, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Research and Strategy, Labor and Economic Analysis Division, North Carolina Department of Commerce; Andrew Weller, Senior Analyst, Education Research and Data Center, Office of Financial Management, State of Washington; and Jeff Robinson, Labor Force Statistics Manager, Employment Security Department, Washington State. Erin Joyce, Associate Director of the Ohio Education Research Center at The Ohio State University, served as moderator.

In both North Carolina and Washington, there were legislative mandates to focus specifically on connecting K-12 education and workforce data, and, in both cases, the infrastructure for cross-agency data sharing existed prior to linking K-12 education and workforce records. This mandate has yielded reports and public-facing dashboards for a variety of audiences from state-level policy leaders to local school administrators.

Panelists shared some challenges and lessons-learned, such as the different privacy requirements between education and workforce data, and the inherent "messiness" of matching K-12 and workforce administrative records. Panelists recommended investing the time and effort in building program and technical knowledge to build trust among all data partners.

EXPERT PANEL: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Wonderland

This workshop delved into the transformative potential of AI and its impact on the workforce agency of the future. Panelists discussed the opportunities and challenges presented by AI technologies and their adoption. The workshop panel featured Chris Henderson, Chief Information Officer, Indiana Department of Workforce Development; Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer and Director, Division of Information Innovation & Insights, Texas Workforce Commission; and David Schmidt, Chief Economist, Research and Analysis Bureau, Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. Amy Hiltunen, Director, Workforce Information Technology Support Center, NASWA, served as moderator.

The workshop began with a discussion of the definition of AI, in which the panelists distinguished the types of AI that are already in wide use, such as GPS apps and Netflix recommendations and new "generative AI" such as ChatGPT. States are proceeding cautiously into the realm of generative AI. Some states, such as Texas, are creating secure "sandbox" environments to experiment with generative AI, while other states, such as Indiana, have currently banned generative AI for state work while working with the state's Chief Data Officer to develop policy. Data privacy is a concern for all states, as is potential bias built into AI models.

Panelists see great opportunities for AI. One example currently in use in Nevada is to assist in computer programming. On the horizon are tools like a "workforce recommendation engine" (Indiana) that would leverage the states' longitudinal data system, a machine learning analysis of case manager notes to identify patterns of successful client outcomes (Texas), and an AI model to analyze job posting data to identify emerging skills desired by employers (Nevada).

EXPERT PANEL: Addressing Privacy, Security, and Legal Knowledge Gaps and Resource Needs

This session featured California, Texas, the DISC at WestEd, and the Coleridge Initiative. State leaders described their longitudinal data systems and shared perspectives on "getting to yes" on data sharing. They and the other panelists highlighted the value of specialized services and technical assistance available to states.

California's statewide longitudinal data system, the Cradle-to-Career Data System, involves over 15 public agencies. California negotiated data sharing agreements among data providers from education, higher education, social services, workforce, and the managing entity of its data system. California also designed its data sharing agreements to comply with both the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Texas' Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative involves the Texas Education Agency, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission. Texas' Early Childhood Data Interchange System aligns with the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative. Texas transferred to a new portal 86 existing projects that relied on a previous data sharing agreement and added seven new projects.

DISC at WestEd helps public agencies address privacy, security, and legal knowledge gaps and resource needs. The Coleridge Initiative helps states build capacity to support data sharing across agency and state lines and uses real, de-identified administrative microdata to in its applied data analytics training classes for public agency staff.

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Thank you for your continued support and engagement!

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