



2026 MULTISTATE DATA COLLABORATIVE

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

March 27, 2026



Arlington, VA

Crystal Gateway Marriott



DEAR MULTISTATE DATA COLLABORATIVE (MSDC) MEMBERS AND PARTNERS,

We are pleased to share this report from the Fifth MSDC Annual Meeting, held March 27, 2026, in Arlington, Virginia. This year's convening brought together a cross-sector community of policy leaders, data innovators, and technical experts to reflect on progress across the MSDC network and identify opportunities for continued collaboration.

The conversations throughout the Annual Meeting reinforced a key theme motivating our work: multistate, cross-sector partnerships are essential for analytics that drive public impact. As states navigate new challenges across workforce, education, and human services, the need for data-informed policymaking has only grown more urgent.

Over the past year, the MSDC has continued to strengthen its role as a collaborative hub within this evolving ecosystem. Our members are advancing research in emerging occupations, exploring innovative and responsible applications of generative AI, linking data across agencies, and expanding capacity for forward-looking research.

This year's Annual Meeting highlighted some of the complexities inherent in this work. Pressing challenges related to Workforce Pell implementation, cross-program data sharing, and generative AI underscore a need for shared data models and governance frameworks. An interactive session on the MSDC Learning Agenda allowed participants to discuss how the MSDC can support knowledge exchange and collaborative projects to address shared challenges. After the Annual Meeting, we solicited input on the Learning Agenda priorities through a set of online surveys to the broader network to ensure robust participation. Full details about the 2026 Learning Agenda are included in this report.

The MSDC exists to support state leaders as they chart their own course in turning data into evidence-based insights. The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) remains committed to growing the MSDC and building on the strong momentum emerging across states and partner organizations. Grounded in NASWA's longstanding relationships with state workforce agencies, we will continue to foster cross-sector data work and state-led innovation in the years ahead.

We encourage you to dig into this report and get involved in ways that connect to your work. This is a pivotal moment to expand the MSDC network and advance its mission. We are proud to support this community of dedicated professionals, and we are grateful for your engagement as we build toward a more connected, collaborative, and data-informed future.

Scott B. Sanders

President and CEO, NASWA

Anna S. Hui

Chair, MSDC Executive Committee

Department Director, Missouri
Department of Labor & Industrial
Relations

MSDC ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

Reflecting on Progress, Shaping What's Next

The Multistate Data Collaborative (MSDC) held its 5th Annual Meeting on March 27, 2026, in Arlington, Virginia, following the Coleridge National Conference. The half-day meeting created space for states and partners to reconnect, reflect on progress, and identify priorities for the year ahead.

The meeting opened with remarks from National Association of States Workforce Agencies (NASWA) President and CEO Scott B. Sanders, who emphasized the importance of continued cross-state collaboration. Attendees also heard from MSDC Executive Committee Chair Anna Hui, whose remarks highlighted the value of shared learning and the progress made through MSDC partnerships and initiatives.

Throughout the meeting, participants revisited milestones from the past year, including progress on the MSDC Learning Agenda, advancements across the MSDC's topical working groups, and the continued growth of research partnerships. Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration, sharing lessons learned, and identifying opportunities to support more responsive, data-informed systems across states.

A consistent theme throughout the meeting was the importance of collaboration and trust in advancing data linkages and shared approaches to leveraging administrative data to generate actionable solutions that inform policy and improve programs and services.



YEAR IN REVIEW

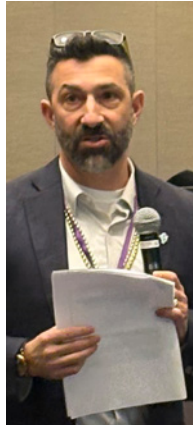
Celebrating Progress

The MSDC reflected on progress made over the past year across its major initiatives, including continued advancement of the Learning Agenda, increased engagement in working groups, and expanded partnerships among states and organizations.



Dan Rizo-Patron, MSDC Executive Committee Vice Chair and Workforce Analytics Project Manager with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, shared updates on how the Learning Agenda continues to guide research priorities, shape data access and use, and align collaborative efforts across participating states.

Working group representatives



Bryan Grady of the South Carolina Department of Labor and Workforce and **Seth Shapiro** of the District of Columbia's Office of Education Through Employment Pathways highlighted ongoing collaboration happening across states. They emphasized the role that the MSDC's working groups play in supporting knowledge exchange, problem-solving, and initiative development.

Additional updates focused on the expansion of research partnership projects and growing opportunities for states to engage in multi-state analyses using administrative data.



Stephanie Walsh, Chair of the MSDC Data Representatives Board (DRB), previewed upcoming resources intended to support states navigating data governance and data access challenges.

CHECK-IN

MSDC Learning Agenda

Attendees participated in an interactive session focused on the MSDC Learning Agenda, facilitated by **Erin Joyce** and **Cynthia Forland** of NASWA. The discussion brought together representatives from more than a dozen states and national partners to explore emerging priorities and future opportunities.

Several common themes emerged during the conversation, including increased interest in Workforce Pell implementation, cross-program data linkages involving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) to support record linkage and policy analysis.

Participants also discussed ongoing challenges related to data governance, privacy constraints, common definitions, and shared data models necessary to support multi-sector, multi-state collaboration.

States shared examples of work involving longitudinal data systems, education and workforce linkages, corrections data integration, and the use of labor market information to better understand career pathways and outcomes.

The session reinforced the MSDC's role as a hub for collaboration, shared learning, and the development of practical tools and best practices that support collective evidence-building priorities across states.



TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP BREAKOUT

Data Linkages and Generative AI Use Cases

The Technical Working Group breakout combined members of the MSDC Data Linkages and GenAI Use Cases working groups, focusing on the realities and challenges of using GenAI for data analysis.



Led by GenAI Working Group Lead, **Baron Rodriguez** of the Data Integration Support Center, participants examined use cases where GenAI can be credibly deployed to assist with data analysis and stewardship. These instances included metadata management, data dictionary mapping across states, and anomaly detection.

Rodriguez also addressed examples where GenAI's promise currently outpaces its practical utility. He cautioned that applications such as automated data quality "fixing" and data governance require state-specific and contextual judgment and therefore need human oversight. The presentation also included a forward-looking discussion on Agentic AI and its potential to automate certain tasks and open new possibilities for data infrastructure.

Table discussions rounded out the session, with participants focusing on three themes: cross-state data sharing barriers, how states and partners are currently using GenAI on administrative data, and how Agentic AI might support future automations and data infrastructure decisions. The session highlighted one of the MSDC's core strengths: creating space for peer learning across states on both the opportunities and real-world limitations of emerging technologies like GenAI.

WORKING GROUP BREAKOUT

Emerging Industries and Occupations

The Emerging Industries and Occupations breakout focused on identifying shared research priorities and understanding how states can better respond to changing labor market conditions.

Led by Emerging Industries and Occupations Working Group Co-lead, **Bryan Grady** of South Carolina, participants discussed the need for more timely and flexible data sources, including job postings data from the National Labor Exchange (NLx) and enhanced wage records, to better capture emerging workforce trends that traditional data sources may overlook.

Discussion topics included how industries evolve, how workers transition between jobs, and how

states define and measure “good jobs” within a rapidly shifting economy. Participants were especially interested in capturing skills, including skills distribution by occupation, and understanding the workforce supply of individuals with in-demand skills.

Attendees also emphasized the need for shared data standards, common definitions, and scalable models that support multi-state analysis while still accounting for state-level differences.

Participants expressed strong interest in developing a focused set of actionable research questions and a pilot project around a shared data model that could help build momentum and support future collaboration.



LOOKING AHEAD

The annual meeting reinforced the importance of bringing states and partners together to share knowledge, identify common challenges, and collaboratively move work forward.

Discussions throughout the meeting highlighted both the progress already made and the opportunities ahead, particularly in updating, prioritizing, and advancing the Learning Agenda to align with what is most important to states, strengthening partnerships, and exploring emerging technologies and research priorities.

As the MSDC continues to grow, the collaborative remains positioned to support innovation, strengthen cross-sector partnerships, and advance a more connected and responsive data ecosystem.



LEARNING AGENDA SURVEY RESULTS

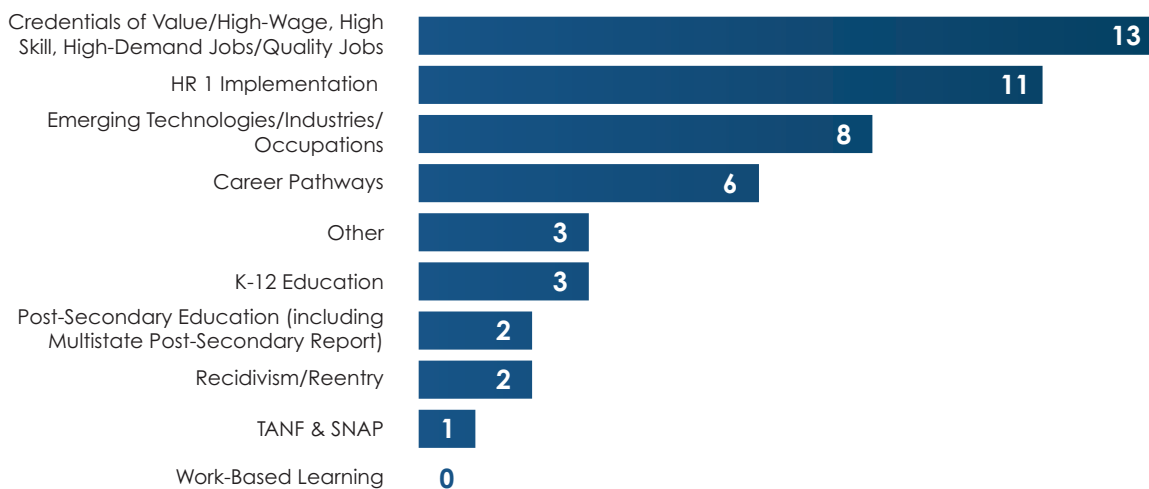
The MSDC's Learning Agenda captures the shared policy, program, and technical priorities of the collaborative's state members. It serves as a guide for MSDC activities, including working groups, research partnerships, and resource development, keeping the work grounded in what matters most to states. The Learning Agenda is updated annually in alignment with the MSDC's Annual Meeting and is designed to evolve alongside the shifting challenges and opportunities across the state administrative data landscape.

This year's Learning Agenda update combines input gathered during an in-person session at the MSDC Annual Meeting in March with

feedback from a two-part follow-up survey sent to the full network in April and May. Topics and themes that surfaced during the in-person discussion were incorporated into the survey, ensuring the Learning Agenda reflected the broader network's priorities.

The survey's first part asked respondents to rank programmatic and technical topic areas, establishing shared priorities across the network. Forty-nine state MSDC members completed the survey, and the top priorities were identified by isolating first-place rankings to highlight the areas of strongest convergence.

Figure 1. Policy and Program Priorities - Number of First Place Rankings



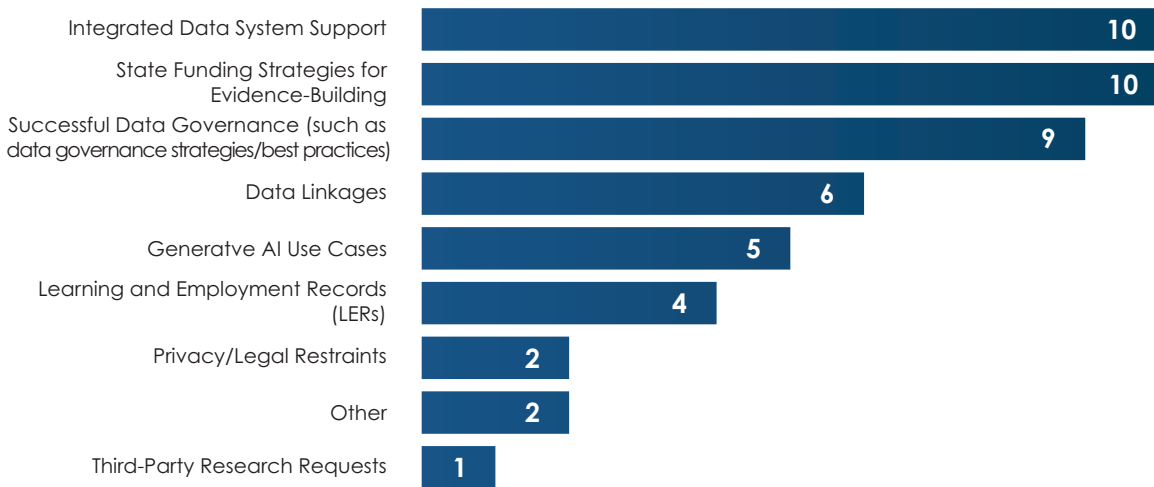
As seen in Figure 1, the top three topics that emerged on the policy and programmatic side are:

- Credentials of Value/High-Wage, High-Skill, High-Demand Jobs/ Quality Jobs
- HR 1 Implementation (including Workforce Pell, Medicaid work requirements, and changes to SNAP eligibility)
- Emerging Technologies, Industries, and Occupations

On the technical side, Figure 2 shows the top three topics that support the infrastructure and capacity underpinning the work:

- Integrated Data System Support
- State Funding Strategies for Evidence-Building
- Successful Data Governance

Figure 2. Technical Priorities - Number of First Place Rankings



To expand on these findings, the survey included questions that aimed to identify opportunities for peer learning, resource sharing, and technical assistance to help MSDC network members address shared challenges in key priority areas. Twelve state members completed this portion of the survey. For each of their top-ranked topics, respondents also selected which types of activities what they most wanted the MSDC to support.

First, respondents rated their agencies on a spectrum from “learner” to “doer” and shared the research questions most relevant to their work. Across the policy and programmatic priorities, state agencies’ placement on the learner-to-doer spectrum varied by topic. Credentials of Value showed an even split between learners and doers, with fewer states in the middle. HR 1 Implementation skewed towards the learner and middle of the spectrum, consistent with active

planning for this legislation to go into effect in July 2026. States rated their agencies primarily as learners or in the middle of the spectrum on Emerging Technologies, Industries, and Occupations, suggesting this is an area where the network is still developing capacity.

Like the policy and programmatic priorities, the distribution from learner-to-doer varied across technical topics. Integrated Data System Support leaned toward the middle and doer end. Meanwhile, State Funding Strategies for Evidence-Building showed more respondents categorizing their agencies as learners, with an even split between middle and doer. Data Governance respondents clustered toward the middle, with learners and doers evenly distributed on either side. These distributions reflect varying levels of technical capacity across the network, pointing to peer learning or technical assistance partnerships as potential avenues for engagement in the year ahead.

The responses from both the survey and the in-person discussion reflect what states are focused on and what they are looking for from the MSDC. Some priorities, like Credentials of Value and Emerging Technologies, Industries, and Occupations, represent continued areas of focus. Others, including HR 1 on the programmatic side and data systems, funding, and governance on the technical side, point to where the landscape is shifting. The learner-to-doer breakdown, research questions, and input on preferred activities will help the MSDC shape content and prioritize programming in the year ahead.

If you consider your agency a 'doer' in any of these priority topics, we want to hear from you. Reach out to datacollabs@naswa.org to discuss how we might feature your work in webinars, working groups, or case studies in the year ahead.



COLERIDGE 6TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Data Beyond Borders

Prior to the MSDC Annual Meeting, MSDC staff and members participated in Coleridge's 6th Annual National Conference, contributing to sessions focused on cross-state data collaboration, governance, and applied research.

Throughout the conference, MSDC members and partners shared lessons learned, highlighted innovative approaches to administrative data use, and emphasized the importance of multi-state collaboration in advancing data-driven policy and research efforts.

Cynthia Forland, NASWA, participated in the preconference workshop, *Data Collaboration: From Shared Goals to Shared Impact*. Cynthia also highlighted the MSDC during the lunchtime session, *Lunch + Lightning Talks: Tools, Training, and Trusted Partners: A Tour of the Coleridge Ecosystem*. **Erin Joyce**, NASWA, participated in the panel, *Scaling Evidence Across Borders: Trust, Governance, and Data Infrastructure*. Additionally, Cynthia and Erin co-facilitated an interactive, participant-driven session, *What's Top of Mind: Participant-Driven Conversations on Data, AI, and Policy Impact*.

During the conference, **New Jersey** was named Coleridge's Data Champion of the Year in recognition of its leadership in advancing the use of administrative data to inform policy and improve outcomes. The award highlighted the state's ongoing efforts to strengthen cross-agency data sharing, build data infrastructure, and support evidence-based decision-making through partnerships such as its collaboration with the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development.

The MSDC's participation throughout the conference reinforced its role in connecting states, partners, and ideas to support continued advancement in this work.



SEE YOU IN 2027!

Contact Us

datacollabs@naswa.org

naswa.org/multi-state-data-collaborative

