Response to information request

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Your Question:

An education leader asked for information and research related to the governance, operation and funding of statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS).

Our Response:

We compiled state examples and other resources on:

- How states have laid out roles and responsibilities for data governance.
- Comparisons of state staffing, including examples of states with staff in policy roles making data requests.
- Comparisons of funding options and of the costs of maintaining an SLDS.
- Relevant research, especially as it relates to interagency data governance.

SLDS Governance

States approach data governance with either single-agency or interagency structures, often tasking an existing department with overseeing the system or creating a new council or partnership to manage the SLDS. Below are examples of various state approaches to data governance. The "SLDS Research and Resources" section also includes reports about implementing various data governance structures.

Connecticut

The state's P20 WIN system features an inter-agency governance structure to connect and manage the 11 participating agencies. The data matching functionality for the system is conducted by the Connecticut Department of Labor, so each participating agency has a primary Memorandum of Understanding with the department. The Data Governance Manual provides a more detailed account of each of the roles and agencies involved in the governance and operation of the P20 WIN system.

Georgia

GA•AWARDS, Georgia's Academic and Workforce Analysis and Research Data System, is housed in the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, an agency affiliated with the governor's office that tracks the effectiveness of the state's pre-K through college programs and publishes data on education trends throughout the state. The Alliance of Education Agency Heads' Data Management Committee governs the data system and determines who has access to it. The committee consists of the lead data and information officers of Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care & Learning, the Georgia Department of Education, the State Charter Schools Commission, the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, the Georgia Independent College Association, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the Georgia Department of Labor, and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

Hawaii

The SLDS is governed by the Hawaii Data eXchange Partnership, a coalition of five state agencies: the Hawaii State Department of Education, University of Hawaii, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Hawaii State Department of Health and Department of Human Services. The partnership consists of three levels: executive, management and subject matter expert sub-committees. In this approach, "the SLDS is a data system that is owned by the Partnership as a whole." The data governance policy provides further detail on governance and roles. Efforts

to integrate early learning, health and human services data into Hawaii's SLDS are still in the planning stages, but the state already has a governance structure to oversee these integrations.

Idaho
An interagency governance body consisting of state and local agency representatives governs EASI, the Educational Analytics System of Idaho. The Idaho Data Management Council oversees the creation, maintenance and usage of this SLDS. The Idaho State Board of Education's Governing Policies and Procedures, Section I.O, specifies that the Council's membership shall consist of representatives from the Office of the State Board of Education, representatives from public postsecondary institutions, a registrar from an Idaho public postsecondary institution, a representative from the State Department of Education, three representatives from school districts, one representative from the Division of Career Technical Education, one representative from the Department of Labor and one at-large member.

Oregon
A governance charter document was developed to "establish a structured environment to ensure data quality and consistency, increase accountability and ownership of enterprise data, improve data security and stewardship, and optimize usage of data for business intelligence and decision making processes." The charter provides that data partner agency leads from the SLDS Governance Executive Committee and establishes sub-committees on data privacy, research and data. The research sub-committee is responsible for developing an annual research agenda for projects using the SLDS and for reviewing and approving external research requests.

SLDS Staffing

In our 2017 policy report, Examining SLDS Development and Utility, several state and SLDS leaders spoke to the importance of staff continuity in establishing or maintaining an effective data system. That said, states vary considerably in the total number of staff allocated to the SLDS and on the roles of those staff. Some states have teams of full-time staff dedicated to system maintenance, analysis and research. Others rely on staff from participating agencies to carry out data analysis and research. A small number of states have established research alliances with universities to expand their capacity for analysis and research of SLDS data. Below are examples of state approaches to staffing their SLDSs.

Georgia
One notable feature of the Georgia SLDS is its SLDS Training Team, responsible for providing training to teachers and school or district administrators on system functionality and use. Georgia education leaders have credited the grassroots training with an increased use of the SLDS, resulting in a notable increase to over 150 million system hits.

Kentucky
The Kentucky Center for Statistics, which collects and links data to evaluate the state's education and workforce efforts, employs 38 staff, including an executive director, a management team, technology staff, researchers and communications staff. These staff members create reports and interactive visualizations, handle requests for research and provide policymakers with statistical data about education efforts in the state.

Maryland
The Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center staff is comprised of an executive director and 11 other full-time positions, the majority of whom are "technical information technology staff to support the design, development and maintenance of the system to house the data." The system's Research and Policy Advisory Board is responsible for assisting staff in developing a research agenda, research plans, and prioritization, among other things.

Minnesota

Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System relies on personnel from multiple agencies to staff its efforts. According to a recent analysis performed for the California Cradle-to-Career Workgroup, "The Office of Higher Education (OHE) is the lead agency, with responsibility for managing funds, facilitating the governance process, and ensuring compliance for data security and privacy. While OHE is the lead entity and employs the state data system manager, staff from all partner entities assist with implementation on a voluntary basis." The SLDS Governance Charter lays out staff responsibilities in each participating agency.

North Carolina

When developing its SLDS, North Carolina sought to approach staffing by implementing "a staffing strategy that offers training rotations and/or dual employment in NCLDS and contributing agencies and entities to build cross-agency program and data fluency for new and existing analytic staff."

Tennessee

The Tennessee Education Research Alliance, a partnership between Vanderbilt University's Peabody College and the Tennessee Department of Education, undertakes research to inform policy and practice at the state, district and school levels. Scholars at Vanderbilt and other leading universities in the state carry out the research, often in response to questions or concerns posed by state leaders.

Costs of Maintaining an SLDS

The upfront and annual costs of establishing, operating and maintaining an SLDS vary widely from system to system based on a variety of factors, including system structure (federated, centralized, or hybrid), state size and student population, funding sources and staffing. Some states rely heavily on federal grants, others have dedicated annual state appropriations, and still others rely on department or agency budgets.

Many states rely on annual appropriations from the state general fund, though some states specify funding guidelines in statute. Federal grant funding amounts vary between states, and with limited grant years, states depend on other sources to maintain their systems. While it can be difficult to provide an estimated cost of maintaining an SLDS, the following examples provide an idea of how other states fund their system and what they appropriate to do so each year.

Arizona

In 2010, the state legislature enacted A.R.S. §15-249 to establish the Arizona Education Learning and Accountability System (ALEAS) to compile, maintain and report student-level data, subject to the appropriation of state dollars or the receipt of federal dollars. A.R.S. §15-249.02 establishes the education learning and accountability fund to provide legislative appropriations and fees collected from universities and community college districts to support the system. According to the FY 2022 Baseline Book, $5,277,600 was appropriated to ALEAS in 2020, with $5,351,900 set as the baseline for 2022 (pg. 168). The baseline includes $5.35 million and 24.2 full-time employee positions from the General Fund for "continued maintenance and operation of ELAS, but not for further ELAS development" (pg. 182).

Maryland

The Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center is "supported primarily through state funds with additional funding from federal grants." According to the MLDSC budget, the general state budget has ranged from $1.38 million to $2.77 million between FY 2014 and FY 2022. The appropriated state funds for fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022 were

$2.77 million, $2.47 million, and $2.39 million, respectively. Actual expenditures fell in the $1 to $2.5 million range. Federal funds for the system have ranged from anywhere between $70,000 and $2,500,000.

Minnesota
Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System is supported by state funds that totaled $3.5 million, according to the 2020 SLEDS Annual Report. Of that sum, $2.6 million went to IT staffing, software and hardware, $211 thousand went to outreach and training to schools and colleges, $156 thousand went to staffing and administration, and $129 thousand went to data purchases. (As noted above, this system uses a decentralized staffing system, so the staffing and administration budget may understate actual costs.)

SLDS Research and Resources

Below are reports and resources highlighting a variety of key factors related to SLDS governance and operation from peer organizations.

California Cradle-to-Career Data System
California is in the process of developing, for the first time, a statewide longitudinal data system. This website, managed by the data and research nonprofit WestEd, offers an ongoing account of policies and strategies state leaders are adopting as they work to build a best-in-class P20W data system. While California's systems will be much larger and more complex than those in most other states and territories, the December 2020 and April 2021 Interim Reports, together with the June 2021 Final Report to the Legislature, contain a helpful overview of one state's strategies for addressing data infrastructure, data governance, staffing, and privacy, among other important topics.

Data Quality Campaign, Roadmap for Cross-Agency Data Governance
This 2018 report identifies and recommends six key areas of focus in establishing cross-agency data governance: a defined mission and vision; composition and membership; roles and responsibilities; data decisions; committee processes; and sustainability.
- A related report (The Art of the Possible: Data Governance Lessons Learned from Kentucky, Maryland, and Washington) highlights state data governance approaches.

Data Quality Campaign, Creating a Longitudinal Data System
While some of the counts from this 2013 guide are dated, it contains valuable suggestions for creating and improving data systems, including 10 essential elements for an SLDS.

Hunt Institute, CONNECTING THE CONTINUUM: Longitudinal Data Systems in North Carolina
This report "explores the history, purpose, and future of statewide longitudinal data systems. While the focus of this report is on North Carolina, it also draws on national lessons from other states, especially Kentucky and **Washington**." The report offers an in-depth account of how one state developed its SLDS — along with strategies for addressing hurdles in reaching the state's goals.

Institute for Education Sciences, SLDS Technical Assistance Program
The Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program offers "a wide and growing range of support to help state education agencies in the design, development, and use of longitudinal data systems." The website includes a wide array of resources to help those creating or sustaining an SLDS. Recent resources include approaches to engaging stakeholders, guidance on records retention and destruction policies, state approaches to cloud technology and ideas for integrating health and education data.

Institute for Education Sciences, SLDS Best Practices Brief: P-20W+ Data Governance

This SLDS Best Practices Brief provides an overview of data governance and discusses the effective practices of states with experience in P-20W+ data governance.

Institute for Education Sciences, Data Governance Toolkit
The toolkit features an overview of data governance, as well as provisions for data governance structures and implementation. It provides data governance roles for both single-agency and interagency data governance structures. It also provides model templates for data governance charters and manuals.

National Reporting System for Adult Education, NRS Guide to State Longitudinal Data Systems
While some sections are focused on adult education, this guide provides a comprehensive look at establishing, maintaining, and using an SLDS, providing definitions and case studies for important components.