Multi-State Data Collaboratives Annual Meeting

The Hamilton Hotel
Washington, D.C.
March 27, 2023

MULTI-STATE DATA COLLABORATIVES
ANALYTICS FOR PUBLIC IMPACT

OVERVIEW

The *2023 Multi-State Data Collaboratives' Annual Meeting*, *Pathways to Innovation*, was focused on the future of the collaboratives; specifically, it laid the groundwork for accelerating data product innovation across multiple policy sectors. During the opening welcome and throughout the afternoon, speakers highlighted recent successes in data product innovation in the collaborative network and the growing potential of the network to leverage administrative data for the public good. The meeting also highlighted significant progress across three regional multi-state data collaboratives in the establishment of priority areas of focus, data partnerships, governance, and state engagement.

As speakers celebrated the progress of the collaboratives, they simultaneously emphasized that the collaborative network is at an inflection point. The next, critical phase will require not only strengthening and expanding foundational infrastructure but also developing and advancing data and research partnerships, becoming more entrepreneurial about funding and sustainability, and, most importantly, creating new products across several policy areas that resonate with program leaders, policymakers, and other key stakeholders.

The administering organization for the collaboratives, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), hosted the meeting in partnership with the State Higher Education Executive Officers' Association (SHEEO) and the Coleridge Initiative. The meeting was on the first day of a three-day event that included the Coleridge National Convening on March 28th and 29th. Over 80 individuals and 23 states attended the meeting, along with partner organizations such as SHEEO, private foundations, the National Governors Association, California Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Partnership, and the American Public Human Services Association. The represented states were Alabama, Arkansas, California, Washington, D.C., Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

WELCOME

Welcoming state leaders to the meeting were the Managing Director of the administering organization at NASWA, Yvette Chocolaad; Coleridge Initiative President and CEO Ahu Yildirmaz; SHEEO Senior Policy Analyst, Carrie Klein; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Program Officer, Jeremy Kelley; and NASWA President and CEO Scott Sanders. The meeting commenced with a general session featuring two plenary sessions, followed by individual meetings of the three existing collaboratives: the Midwest Data Collaborative, Eastern States Longitudinal Data Collaborative, and Southern Regional Data Collaborative.

PLENARY I - STATE AGENCY VOICES: THE VALUE OF THE NETWORK

MODERATOR

Jessica Cunningham, Vice President of State Programs, Coleridge Initiative

PANELISTS

Lesley Hirsch, Assistant Commissioner, Research and Information, New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development

Anna Hui, Director, Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

Jake Walker, Chief Research Officer, Arkansas Division of Information Services

The opening plenary session of the state leaders' meeting featured three distinguished leaders who shared their perspectives on the value of the network. The panelists expressed that the network is a valuable resource for states to learn from each other's experiences, gain access to projects and products other states are developing, and collaborate through applied data analytics classes, convenings, and workgroups.

Of note was the Coleridge Initiative's Applied Data Analytics training classes for government sector staff. These classes focus on priority topics of state agencies and provide a key avenue for developing shared data products, building capacity within state agencies, and exchanging ideas and practices with other state agencies and states.

Another area of emphasis was the need to expand the community of researchers who can access agency data to conduct research in support of state projects. One leader emphasized the network of multi-state data collaboratives can help bring more equity among the researchers, both individual and organizational, that partner with state agencies, providing points of view that have been traditionally underrepresented in research using administrative data.

For state agency program and data leaders, the benefits of multi-state data collaboratives are many and depend on your agency:

The network effect of the collaboratives allows your agency to access and share ideas, practices, and products with more states.

The network prioritizes creation of timely data projects and products that can directly influence state and local programs, strategies, practices, or policies.

Cross-state data access enables deeper insights into labor markets that cross state boundaries and individuals who commute across state lines for work or move to another state.

The network supports data partnerships, including with trusted university partners.

Cross-functional and cross-agency state teams means improved in-state relationships and supports the use and enhancement of your state longitudinal data system.

Professional development opportunities, such as advanced data analytics training classes, can build your staff capacity and enhance analytical skills.

The collaboratives enable a unified national voice on issues and an opportunity to inform policy development.

Through the network, funding opportunities are available on occasion to support the development and implementation of data projects and products.

The network supports agencies where you are – it recognizes state agencies are at different stages of readiness.

The panel highlighted the crucial link between states' longitudinal data systems and the network of multi-state collaboratives. Through the collaboratives, state agencies can choose to open access to data for a specific project involving like-minded states. The network provides the necessary technology and legal infrastructure to ensure secure and effective data sharing across agencies and states.

PLENARY II: PATHWAYS TO DATA PRODUCT INNOVATION

MODERATOR

Cynthia Forland, Director, State Engagement and Special Projects, Multi-State Data Collaboratives, NASWA

PANELISTS

George Putnam, Labor Market Information Director, Illinois Department of Employment Security

Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer and Director of Information Innovation and Insight, Texas Workforce Commission

Executive Committee members from the Midwest Data Collaborative (MWC) and Southern Regional Data Collaborative (SRDC) shared their visions for the future of the collaboratives and emphasized the need to focus on creating immediate value through new data products. The states share common programs, challenges, and policy and program goals, making collaboration around solutions essential. At the same time, states are at different places in terms of cultural readiness, resource readiness, technology readiness, and data-sharing readiness. The collaboratives meet states where they are, offering different benefits based on differing needs.

The leaders reiterated that the ecosystem is at an inflection point, and data products with local value must be realized in a short time cycle and a fluid environment. To support these goals, the MWC is working to establish data partnerships with university research entities that have an applied policy focus. This includes implementing a research partner engagement strategy through a Request for Information (RFI) process.

In the SRDC, state leaders are determining how best to harness the power of data to help develop critical intelligence to steer programs and policies. To focus their efforts, the SRDC has established three workgroups: Measuring Non-Degree Credentials of Value, Outcomes and Pathways of Post-Secondary Non-Completers, and Unemployment Insurance Measures of Timeliness.

CALL TO ACTION/BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Special guest Julia Lane, Professor at the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, joined Adam Leonard to lay out a vision for Reimagining Labor Market Information that relies on the network of multi-state data collaboratives and shows the collaboratives could be far more

than what they have been imagined to be heretofore. But coupled with this vision of potential was a message of a need for urgency – for the collaboratives to be all they can be, they have to show momentum and that can best be demonstrated with new projects that become products that turn into practices.

With this inspiration, the three collaboratives were tasked by three state collaborative leaders to use their individual breakout periods to brainstorm goals and key short- and medium-term steps to achieve them. The following sections outline the approaches and results from each collaborative's breakout session. These takeaways and priorities were shared publicly at the Coleridge National Convening on March 29, 2023, during a plenary session that also featured NASWA and SHEEO leaders.

Southern Regional Data Collaborative (SRDC)

The short-term priorities of the SRDC focus on gauging the ecosystem of current data and programs that exist in the Southern states. Through identifying and sharing what is currently happening within each state, the collaborative hopes to make it easier for states to work across agencies within their own state and with other states. Increased collaboration will reduce repeated and redundant projects and allow for scalability of useful products created by other state agencies. In the short term, the SRDC is also focused on the need to communicate the benefits and value of the collaborative to create buy-in from state leadership.

Specific member-identified short-term priorities include:

- Establishing semantic consistency and operability in cross-agency work,

- Standardizing code,

- Developing a data catalog to understand what data and sources exist,

- Developing a landscape analysis of programs administered in states and how they are organized, and

- Developing materials that can be shared with state agency leadership on the value of the collaboratives.

The medium-term priorities of the SRDC include identifying and building projects and products to answer state needs around the SRDC's priorities. The SRDC plans to continue to do work in this area through the three established work groups (i.e., Credentials of Value, Post-Secondary Non-Completers, and Unemployment Insurance Measures of Timeliness) and through other member-proposed projects. An additional medium-term priority is to create a repository of projects states have completed or are currently working on to prevent redundancy and show opportunities for collaboration. Finally, the collaboratives will focus on expanding the network to include other state agencies. The SRDC plans to bring these new agencies to the table by demonstrating the value of the collaborative through new products and clear communication.

Midwest Data Collaborative (MWC)

The MWC discussed strategic goals and identified action steps for the coming year. One key topic was governance, including a presentation from a representative of NASWA on how state agencies can become involved with the MWC by reviewing the bylaws and signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Attendees also discussed the priority research agenda items for the collaborative, which were identified through a survey, and received updates on the development of an RFI process that will guide the proposal of new projects to the MWC by external researchers partnering with states.

During the meeting, attendees engaged in small group discussions to identify the action steps for the MWC, state agency champions who will be involved in this work, and the support needed for these agencies to move forward with the governance and RFI processes. With regards to the governance structure, attendees expressed a need for clarity on why state legal staff should review the MOU and how the benefits of signing this agreement can be clearly articulated. There was also a suggestion to engage partner organizations, including those in the executive branch of state governments, to help make this effort a top-down approach. As for the RFI process, it was concluded that MWC members need more extensive education on the process so they can better explain it to their networks and research entities within their state. Attendees also discussed how to move forward with the initial RFI and proposed a pilot project approach with trusted partner research organizations to kickstart the process.

Eastern States Longitudinal Data Collaborative (ESLDC)

The ESLDC participated in an interactive, facilitated brainstorming session which resulted in a robust and diverse list of dataset and data project priorities. Questions were posed to participants to gather ideas in the following strategic focus areas: 1) priority products and projects; 2) expanding the network; and 3) opportunities and challenges. Together, these focus areas provide foundational elements for strategic objectives. The group brainstormed a variety of questions that are pain points in their work, many of which surrounded how to answer specific data-driven questions in the absence of collaboration. Other questions surrounded addressing potential barriers to getting others on board with the network. In tandem, the group discussed how priority policy and program questions could be answered through data sharing. Participants also shared priority topics on their research agendas, which could ultimately shape the ESLDC's future focus.

The ESLDC recognized partnerships as pivotal in advancing the work of the collaborative network. Participants provided insight on which partners should be involved in the collaboratives outside of state program and data staff, such as state and federal agencies and technology partners. This discussion also included brainstorming on champions of the work that members could leverage to advance data initiatives. Resoundingly, local government, workforce, and education partners were identified, in addition to the higher education system. As a follow up to this discussion, the group brainstormed specific activities that might be most attractive to engage others in the work. The group primarily identified using demonstrated success and

modeling as the most impactful in this regard. To this end, the group identified potential barriers that might prevent others from joining the work and ideas on how to overcome those barriers.

The ESLDC is the newest collaborative in the network and, therefore, took a unique approach to strategic priority setting. The ideas gathered during the breakout session were cataloged for review by the Executive Committee to frame up short- and longer-term strategy for the ESLDC in the coming months.

Post-Event Survey Results

With two outreach emails, a total of 20 respondents (more than 25 percent of attendees) participated in the post-event survey. Following are key results:

- Approximately 80 percent of respondents believed the general session provided the necessary context for the breakout sessions.

- 90 percent of respondents felt they had adequate opportunity to speak during their assigned breakout session. One respondent suggested a tool for anonymous participation would have been helpful.

- 60 percent of respondents believed the breakout sessions were too short, with the other 40 percent indicating the session time was adequate.

- 90 percent of respondents indicated they plan to participate in the event in 2024.

- 94 percent of respondents would recommend participation in the network to a colleague.

In response to open-ended questions about the event:

- Respondents indicated it was good to learn where other states are in this process of sharing data. Some respondents cited the exchange of ideas and a need for more communication with peers as their primary takeaway, especially for those in neighboring states. Some mentioned a sense of urgency/need for more involvement in the collaboratives.

- Several respondents mentioned this event provided a positive perception/ a feeling of importance in this work. One respondent indicated the key strength of the collaboratives is the variety of individuals involved in this work and that everyone has different interests and is at different places. Another described a feeling of unity that other states struggle with data sharing.

- Several respondents suggested using a different hotel for future events. Additionally, more breaks were desired. Several respondents also indicated they would like more time for state day, and they would have liked to see more state specific content such as a deeper dive into the development of specific use cases and products, and state activities in the Coleridge Initiative's data facility, the Administrative Data Research Facility, or ADRF.