MULTI-STATE DATA COLLABORATIVE
ANALYTICS FOR PUBLIC IMPACT

2024

NETWORK HIGHLIGHTS FROM NASWA SUMMIT

Message from NASWA's President and CEO

The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) is proud to serve as the foundation supporting the collaboratives and is immensely grateful for the strong partnership with the Coleridge Initiative, the Data Integration Support Center (DISC), and dedicated state agency leaders who came together for the NASWA SUMMIT. This event offered invaluable insights, primarily through sessions that underscored how administrative and other data can shape stronger, more responsive programs and policies.

As you review this summary, we hope it inspires new ideas for leveraging data to drive change. Our commitment to building partnerships that enable cross-agency and cross-state data collaborations remains steadfast. Thank you to all the state leaders who participated in pushing forward data-informed solutions at the SUMMIT. Together, we look forward to continued progress and innovation in this critical area.

Yours in partnership,

Scott B. Sanders
President and CEO
NASWA

Introduction

This year's NASWA SUMMIT, the annual gathering of state workforce agencies, highlighted The Multi-State Data Collaborative (MSDC) alongside other critical workforce topics. With record-breaking attendance, the NASWA SUMMIT offered workshops designed to advance knowledge and practice for state leaders interested in using administrative and other data to enhance workforce policies and programs. Thank you to the state leaders and staff associated with the MSDC, including partners at the Coleridge Initiative and DISC, for helping make the NASWA event in New Orleans a success. Below are summaries of the MSDC Showcase and other workforce data sessions.

COLERIDGE INITIATIVE

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Data Integration Support Center
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Data in Harmony: The MSDC Showcase

Moderator
- Erin Joyce, Programs Director, MSDC, and Associate Director, Ohio Education Research Center

Panelists
- Matt Berry, Executive Director, Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS)
- Ellie Hartman, Chief Evaluation Officer, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
- Marty Johnson, Manager, Workforce Analysis and Dissemination, Illinois Department of Employment Security

Participants gathered during this session to celebrate innovative projects and products of the MSDC and to engage additional states in participating. The session highlighted projects that link administrative data to answer critical questions that inform state and local policy and practice, such as understanding post-secondary pathways and their workforce outcomes, Unemployment Insurance (UI) program insights and outcomes, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) outcomes (beyond core performance measures).

Representing KYSTATS, Matt Berry shared insights on the Multi-State Postsecondary Report (MSPSR), a dynamic tool connecting Kentucky postsecondary graduates with in-state and out-of-state employment outcomes. This report helps Kentucky address questions regarding post-secondary non-completers who leave the state. The MSPSR features a new perspective that evaluates completers through a distinct dashboard. This dashboard provides insights into initial enrollment, career trajectories, employment outcomes, and re-enrollment trends. KYSTATS hopes to partner with other states to grow the project together.

Data in Harmony: The MSDC Showcase

Marty Johnson shared information on Illinois' Unemployment to Reemployment Portal. Through this project, Midwest Collaborative (MWC) states work across state borders to create real-time labor market information critical for local economic response. This interactive tool draws in the latest de-identified Unemployment Insurance claims data, processed through the secure Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF) environment. The tool provides insights into claimant unemployment experience based on a longitudinal framework.

The ADRF has examined individuals receiving services through Title I and Title III of WIOA. Due to the Department of Labor Employment and Training Division's (ETA) requirements for the RESEA program for UI claimants, evaluating the services participants receive by comparing outcomes with those not receiving services is essential. This approach allows for continuous updates and assessments of the data. Preliminary results offer demographic information, including age, veteran status, and disability status, and investigate whether specific demographics do or do not receive services.

Representing Wisconsin, Ellie Hartman discussed the importance of local access to unemployment and reemployment data. During the COVID-19 pandemic, obtaining timely data on unemployment trends became crucial. At a Coleridge Initiative Applied Data Analytics course attended by Wisconsin, the dashboard developed by Illinois was presented, showcasing their data and the tool's functionality. Wisconsin then applied to replicate this project, collaborating with Illinois and local partners to access the dashboard.

Additionally, Wisconsin received a UI Equity Grant, which enabled the state to enhance its dashboards with an equity perspective. This included information on stay rates, reemployment duration, and the likelihood of applying for unemployment insurance. Wisconsin can access industry trends that can be further refined to the employer level.

During a Q&A, the speakers answered questions about how they utilize champions inB their respective states to get traction on projects.

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Igniting the Spark: Creating a Culture and Infrastructure for Evidence-Building
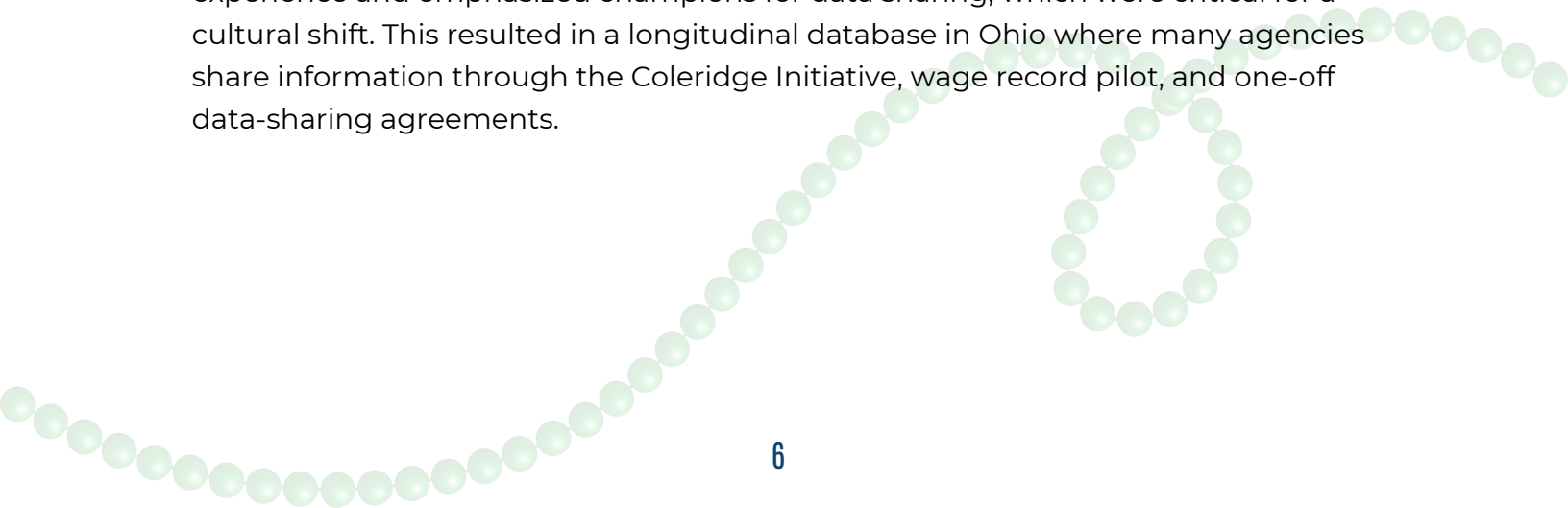
Moderator
- Cynthia Forland, State Engagement Director, MSDC, and Principal, Forland Consulting LLC

Panelists
- Jessica Cunningham, Vice President of State Programs, Coleridge Initiative
- Ellie Hartman, Chief Evaluation Officer, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
- Byron Archer, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office of Workforce Development
- Baron Rodriguez, Executive Director, DISC

This expert panel shared the importance of building and using evidence to improve programs and services. Panelists emphasized this topic is more important than ever to make the best possible use of data to inform funding investments and improve outcomes. Panelists unanimously agreed that administrative data is critical to improving programs across the workforce ecosystem.

Panelists discussed legal, mechanical, and cultural challenges related to evidence-building and agreed that these challenges are magnified when states work to analyze data across state lines. Ellie Hartman discussed evidence-building infrastructure funded by a Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant. She shared legal challenges her state experienced to get approval for data sharing, which ultimately required extensive education regarding use cases, value, security, and relationship building with legal staff and decision makers across agencies. Ohio shared a similar experience and emphasized champions for data sharing, which were critical for a cultural shift. This resulted in a longitudinal database in Ohio where many agencies share information through the Coleridge Initiative, wage record pilot, and one-off data-sharing agreements.

Igniting the Spark: Creating a Culture and Infrastructure for Evidence-Building

Panelists discussed using data to build a culture of evidence to improve programs. Collecting and publishing data is an iterative process, and panelists agreed research needs to be done based on what data is needed and the most impactful way to share it. This also requires reflection on what worked to improve processes and celebrate wins. Debunking myths related to security and legal requirements is also a part of this process. Not stopping at "no" and presenting use cases can be critical to this effort. Having a legislative champion can also be vital to changing outdated legislation that may disallow data sharing, if one exists.

As part of the value proposition presented to decision-makers, panelists emphasized a vital component of the value statement, emphasizing that PII (personally identifiable information) does not need to be shared to link across data sources and that individual flat files do not need to be shared. Part of this is communicating that linkage is not necessarily a disclosure, and disclosure is what attorneys care about. Panelists agreed that communication is everything and "simple is best" when communicating complex topics. Decision makers and legal staff need complete information that includes the ultimate output, access safeguards, and use cases.

Big Data in the Big Easy: How Jobs Data is Powering the Labor Market

Moderator
- Paul Daniels, Manager, National Labor Exchange (NLx) Research Hub

Panelists
- Lesley Hirsch, Assistant Commissioner, Research & Information, New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer and Director of Information Innovation & Insights, Texas Workforce Commission

In this session, participants learned how the NLx Research Hub provides states with labor demand information derived from job postings. This information can be integrated with traditional labor market data to comprehensively view workforce trends. The interactive session explored the potential of this unique data, demonstrated how these insights can drive data-driven decisions, and encouraged attendees to contribute ideas for shaping future offerings of the NLx Research Hub to better meet the needs of state workforce agencies and their constituents. NLx Research Hub provides access to micro-data and high-level reports on demand for labor in the United States. Using generative AI, structured data is created by parsing information from job descriptions. This job posting structure is publicly available, including access to code and models, which can be used as a foundation from which to build.

Lesley Hirsch, representing New Jersey, discussed the limitations of some traditional labor market information (LMI) , which can include data lags, a lack of sufficient skill information, and low response rates. She emphasized the need for timely information for individuals and educational institutions seeking to identify in-demand skills. Lesley explained how AI can address these challenges by continuously monitoring the labor market. With AI, the underlying patterns within vast data sets can be quickly revealed, enabling the identification of critical information.

New Jersey's Career Navigator provides AI-generated recommendations with job openings and training opportunities. It references the user's skills and education against current job openings to identify wages, skill similarity, and occupational demand for various positions. AI can identify the relationship between wage records and resumes through administrative and open data sources. Lesley emphasized the need to go beyond survey data by capitalizing on technology, NLx, and partner relationships.

Big Data in the Big Easy: How Jobs Data is Powering the Labor Market

Adam Leonard of Texas discussed the artificial intelligence (AI) industrial revolution, noting that while achieving ubiquity in the past took time, it has now occurred in less than two years with the emergence of ChatGPT. He mentioned evidence suggesting that AI will likely increase productivity, particularly among lower-level and novice workers. However, there are potential implications, such as the diminishing value of expertise. The half-life of education and training is decreasing, making lifelong learning essential as the demand for skills will evolve much more quickly than educational offerings. The initial changes in the labor market are reflected in the skill requirements found in job postings, which the NLx structure analyzes to track these skills over time.

Participants discussed the benefits of incorporating Labor Market Information (LMI) into policy priorities to help stakeholders better understand the data and how it can streamline previously complex processes and approaches to gather and share robust, accurate information.

Building and Leveraging Data Literacy

Moderator
- Cynthia Forland, State Engagement Director, MSDC, and Principal, Forland Consulting LLC

Panelists
- Jessica Cunningham, Vice President of State Programs, Coleridge Initiative
- Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer and Director, Information Innovation & Insight, Texas Workforce Commission
- Scott Powell, Director, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget

Panelists answered questions on the value and process of sustaining a data-literate culture and how various stakeholders and leaders impact this process.

Speakers agreed that simply training people on data literacy is insufficient; it must become a fundamental function and value in organizations. Additionally, data is just the starting point of the conversation. Regardless of the infrastructure in place, a robust system holds no value unless it is actively used to inform decisions. It's also crucial to consider how this infrastructure is funded and how individuals can utilize available systems.

Panelists emphasized the impact and necessity of a cultural shift within organizations, where individuals prioritize using data to enhance their decision-making. Leadership must be bought into the process to support this cultural shift, which includes articulating value to policymakers, workforce boards, funders, and other stakeholders. Part of the messaging is ensuring leaders understand the importance of data literacy to all organizational roles. Jessica Cunningham used the ETA Applied Data Analytics (ADA) training as an example, where 25+ multi-disciplinary teams supported projects to build a data culture in the state by using real state administrative data.

Panelists agreed that it is easier for states to support these efforts if they have more than one staff member whose primary focus is data. Those staff participate in formal training that can advance understanding. Being part of the MSDC is critical to this effort, as states can collaborate to determine best practices to support a data agenda and gain additional programmatic knowledge. This includes ensuring data quality and evidence-based successes, a benefit of communicating value to ensure informed decision-making is possible.

Parade of State Progress in Enhancing Wage Records

Moderator
- Jason Tyszko, Senior Vice President, Education & Workforce, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Panelists
- Dr. Bryan Grady, Assistant Executive Director for Labor Market Information, South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce
- Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer and Director of Information Innovation & Insights, Texas Workforce Commission
- Robert McGough, Chief Data Officer, Arkansas Department of Information Systems (DIS)

This session addressed the latest developments and challenges states face enhancing UI wage records, which provide information on employment and earnings. During the discussion, participants learned about the importance of establishing standards and benchmarks within and across states and brainstormed strategies for implementing enhancements to UI wage records.

Panelists emphasized the need to modernize data sharing and the importance of cutting the burden on the private sector. The JEDx Initiative, sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, is a public and private effort to promote data and technology standards for structuring and sharing data about jobs and employment within employer systems. JEDx phases of work have included developing a roadmap and data dictionary for jobs and employment data, identifying use cases and data enhancement priorities and evaluating the value proposition, and working with pilot states to benchmark and standardize state data, develop data tools, and pilot data pipelines. An essential goal is to reduce the burden and cost to businesses to provide more timely and relevant data for government analytics, which could ultimately become an avenue to empower workers.

Panelists shared their unique approaches to enhancing their collection of UI wage record data through their pilot efforts. Adam Leonard of Texas shared how recent state legislation enhances wage records and now requires information related to occupation.

Parade of State Progress in Enhancing Wage Records

Texas discussed its strategy to collect the data elements of job titles, address of the assigned establishment, start date and/or end date, and hours worked to improve their wage records and wage/outcomes data. Robert McGough spoke on Arkansas' participation in the U.S. Department of Labor Evaluating Enrollment to Employment Pathways program and training which included training on missing UI wage records and linkage bias. Arkansas has participated in all JEDx planning phases since 2021 and is already receiving benefits from this pilot process. Bryan Grady of South Carolina discussed recent legislation in their state to enhance their wage records by requiring employers to start submitting SOC codes and hours worked for all employees. The South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce is now in the process of data cleaning and communication with businesses that may have missing or incorrect SOC code data, and the response rate by employers imputing SOC codes in the first year of the program has been high.

All panelists noted the importance of sharing the value proposition and benefits of collecting enhanced UI wage record data, which includes an improved understanding of the pathways from education to careers and wage linkages and an enhanced understanding of regional and sector-specific labor market, employment, and wage trends. States emphasized the importance of working with employers and minimizing the burden of reporting requirements.

Adam advocated for rethinking use of the term "UI wage records," emphasizing that while they were originally collected to support the unemployment insurance system, they hold value beyond that, such as for labor market analysis and measuring program outcomes. He noted that as long as these remain "UI wage records," they may not be purposed to fully meet the needs of broader users. Viewing them as a universal resource would encourage better stewardship and ensure high-quality data is available for multiple purposes.

Discussion occurred regarding collaboration strategies, particularly working with JEDx and participating in the MSDC. Funding these efforts for states with government mandates and working with national employers were other topics of interest.

Jazz Up your LMI Shop Using Modern Data Tools: Experiences and Best Practices from NASWA's R User Group

Moderator
- Paul Daniels, Manager, NLx Research Hub, NASWA

Panelists
- Emily DiPalma – Louisiana Workforce Commission
- David Schmidt – Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation
- Nick Wallace – Bureau Chief, Office of Workforce Development, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

The session focused on how some LMI shops are modernizing traditional LMI production despite ongoing budget constraints. As workforce agencies increasingly require labor market insights, many progressive states are investing in their staff, adopting new data tools, and fostering a cross-state community for learning and innovation. Achieving progress in this area relies on the leadership of agency officials, support from technology, and the creativity of LMI staff.

Panelists discussed R-User group concepts and what drew their respective states in. Panelists emphasized efficiency and flexibility, citing examples of existing models to demonstrate turning previously time-consuming procedures around to gather external data in mere seconds. Also discussed was the ability to use data for forecasting, regression analysis, and data cleaning, resulting in a report with visualization and text. Collaboration was emphasized, as there is an expansive user community. Use cases to demonstrate value and view data in new ways were discussed.

Key takeaways were identifying repetitive or recurring processes and creating new processes to streamline them based on what other states have done. Participating in the R-user community is an excellent strategy to solve specific challenges states experience. Panelists suggested starting small, understanding there will be mistakes and lessons. During the Q&A, quality control, as was building a sustainable model to share code, was a topic of interest. Participating in communities of practice was emphasized as an avenue to collaborate on addressing these challenges. Participants also expressed interest in balancing the need for new methods with the long-established processes in LMI across government. Panelists shared their experiences, including strategies planning, demonstrating workload benefits, and increasing productivity. The role of involving leaders to buy in and to invest in staff development was emphasized.

Trumpeting Innovations and Outreach in Labor Market Information

Moderator
- Diane Watkins, Director, Office of Public Affairs, DC Department of Employment Services

Panelists
- Dawn Dovre, Deputy Secretary and Director of Policy + Public Affairs, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation
- Nicol Nicola, Director of Economic and Demographic Research, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Scott Powell, Chief Data Officer | Director, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget

During this session, representatives from South Dakota, New Jersey, and Michigan shared innovative approaches to communicating the impact and value of labor market data statewide. Panelists emphasized the critical role of communication in garnering interest and engagement. Dawn Dovre shared that in South Dakota, several approaches are used to communicate LMI to staff, leaders, and the public, including presenting at workforce development council meetings, publishing the Employer Connection newsletter, and hosting a workforce knowledge series. Another publication, South Dakota's Youngest Workers, focuses on work-based learning opportunities for young people. Specialized monthly reports that creatively and uniquely connect current events to LMI are also published.

Representing New Jersey, Nicol Nicola shared the state's collaborative efforts to communicate LMI data to internal and external audiences by starting small, connecting with the right people, earning trust, establishing mutually beneficial relationships through credible and quality data, and aligning with commissioner priorities. Internal communication focused on the Governor, Commissioner, agencies, and departments. External audiences include officials, businesses, nonprofits, scholars, and students. Examples of New Jersey's work include monthly employment highlights and Labor Market Spotlight volumes. LMI data and resources are presented outside the organization at least once weekly to broaden engagement, and encouraging participants to join the mailing list is a priority.

Trumpeting Innovations and Outreach in Labor Market Information

Scott Powell, representing the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics, provided an overview of collaboration efforts and strategies for sharing LMI data statewide. A significant part of Michigan's outreach strategy is the Occupational Outlook Conference, an annual gathering of key stakeholders that began in 2018. The event provides an opportunity to demonstrate foundational LMI products, including long-term projections and high-wage, high-demand jobs. The conference's primary objective is to demonstrate value to stakeholders, creating an understanding of how LMI data can benefit them and what they would miss if the information were not available. Attendees include professionals in workforce development, higher education, K-12 (school counselors, CTE, etc.), the Governor's office, legislature, and employers. Participants engaged in a robust discussion with the speakers about funding and approaches to partnerships aimed at communicating labor market information (LMI) and its unique value to various audiences.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement!

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