State Longitudinal Data Systems

Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

What is a state longitudinal data system (SLDS)?

An SLDS is a database that provides a single point of access for various stakeholders, including policymakers, the media and the public to view a wide range of education, employment and other data from various sources. Ideally, an SLDS presents data in a simple, easy-to-understand manner while maintaining individual privacy.

How can an SLDS help create or strengthen college and career pathways for learners?

An SLDS can help ensure individuals at every level of government have the information needed to make well-informed decisions on the future of their education system, workforce efforts, and other governmental programs. These systems can also assist policymakers when conducting a return-on-investment (ROI) analysis for various programs. Conducting an ROI analysis for college and career education programs helps ensure that students are adequately prepared to take their next steps beyond high school and helps ensure that taxpayer funding is being used efficiently and effectively. For more information on ROI analyses, see ExcelinEd's **Framework of Policies**.

What if states don't have all the data they need?

States should coordinate across such agencies as their Departments of Education, Economic Development and Labor, as well as local education agencies, to begin gathering and sharing available data and move toward a more comprehensive system over several years. States should collect detailed data at the state, district, school and individual level, including:

- courses taken
- career and technical education (CTE) pathways offered and taken
- postsecondary education and industry-recognized credentials earned
- employment and wage data
- Participation in government assistance programs
- Interactions with the criminal justice system

These data points can inform future policy decisions to improve the education system and workforce pathways.

How do these systems improve state policies?

Policymakers can use this data to develop strategies that improve program quality, ensure equitable access, minimize expenditures on programs that do not yield positive learner outcomes and maximize return on investment across systems.

What are states doing with their longitudinal data systems?

Spotlight on Kentucky

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) collects accurate data for the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System to link the data and generate timely reports. Data can be used to guide decision-makers in improving Kentucky's education system, training programs, and other governmental services. Several state agencies contribute data to the system, including the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Department of Education, the Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Higher Education Assistance Authority, the Commission on Proprietary Education, and other agencies on the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.

KYSTATS authors the annual Kentucky Future Skills Report, which is utilized as the state's central source for labor market information. The **2023 Kentucky Future Skills Report** allows users to view historical state and local data on the number of credentials available, the total number of people holding credentials, as well as how many people hold each certification. Users can also search based on category of credential (such as education, STEM, or trades), by specific credential (including various mechanical student certifications, athletic trainers, and subject-specific teaching credentials) and education level required. The report also provides data on employment outcomes for those working in FY 2021 following graduation and anticipated future demand for various occupations. The report is used by many agencies and groups to drive decisions regarding workforce development, economic development, education initiatives and pathway alignment projects.

Where can I find additional resources?

To read more: Excel*in*Ed, **Pathways Matter Policy Framework**. Model policy: Excel*in*Ed, **State Longitudinal Data System Model Policy**.

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