Creating Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) That Provide Useful Information

A Four-Part Webinar Series

OCTOBER 2025 -JANUARY 2026

Webinar 4: Expanding Data Partnerships

Insights from Health and Human Services

JANUARY 28, 2026

Agenda

- **Introduction of our framework**

- **Key considerations for Expanding Data Partnerships**

- **Lessons from Connecticut, Iowa & North Carolina**

- **Panel discussion**

- **Q&A**

Who we are

Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)

Data Quality Campaign (DQC)

Education Commission for the States (ECS)

WestEd's Data Integration Support Center (DISC)

What is an SLDS?

1 Systems connect data

2 Data are linked at the individual level

3 Data are longitudinal

4 Data security and privacy are core requirements

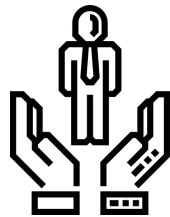# Why the Functions Framework Matters & How It Helps States

- Shows how the SLDS serves people and informs decisions, rather than being a technology project

- Encourages states to let purpose drive design, not structure

- Supports states in aligning technical, legal, and governance frameworks with the services people need

- Clarifies how data systems can be designed to provide actionable information for learners, policymakers, and communities

Webinar Series

Webinar 1

So, You Want a State Dashboard?

Webinar 2

Empowering Individuals with Data

Webinar 3

Maximizing the Power of Research & Analytics

Webinar 4

Expanding Data Partnerships

Expanding Data Partnerships:
Connecting SLDS with HHS

PROS

Opportunity to understand variance in education and workforce outcomes attributed to factors outside of school and formal training

Ability to apply lessons from a sector that has longterm training and experience in data linkage

Possibility of leveraging new resources to support data infrastructure and analytic projects

CONS

Funding for education and health and human services remains highly siloed, meaning seperate source systems remain necessary

Shared language and understanding requires time to develop, and partnership building is often under-resourced

More partners = more complexity (more lawyers, more laws implicated, more variation in technical standards, etc.)

Expanding Data Partnerships:
Key Lessons from Health & Human Services

- Doing all three functions (public reports & dashboards, supporting individuals, research & analytics) is complex but possible. Health and human service agencies are generally consolidated and therefore well-positioned and empowered to do all three.

- When more than one function is required, it is still essential to distinguish data access pathways and workflows around each.

- Aligned governance frameworks can allow systems to exchange data without centralizing data or data analytics functions.

- Advanced data management practices and ability to incorporate unstructured qualitative data may be aspirational for most SLDS but are the norm in health care and increasingly health and human services enterprise agencies, providing lots to learn from.

Expanding Data Partnerships:
Important Considerations

- You don't need or want ALL THE DATA. Think about what extract of high-value variables you would need to answer a question you can't right now.

- Connecting data from SLDS and HHS usually means bridging governance processes from two very different contexts. On the HHS side, governance is much more complex and use-case driven.

- As with all three core functions of SLDS, defining your use case will help drive a process of human centered design. In this case, the use case needs to stem from a shared purpose/priority with HHS.

- Finding common language and terms when coming to the work from very different training and subject matter expertise (chief epidemiologist vs chief accountability officer) takes time and effort.

- Navigating staffing, roles, and relationships in a massive, complex HHS ecosystem (with frequent shifts) can be hard— in an SLDS, at least you know who to call.

- It is totally possible to meet both HIPAA and FERPA requirements, but it means building literacy with a different of set of terms and mechanisms for sharing (ex: BAA, a HIPAA tool for business partners).

How can SLDS leaders expand data partnerships?

Expert Panelists

Scott Gaul & Susan Smith

Connecticut Office of Policy & Management

Connecticut Department of Social Services

Sharon Zanti

I2D2

Iowa State University

Trip Stallings

North Carolina Longitudinal Data System

Connecticut

Who We Are:

DataLinkCT (formerly P20 WIN) is Connecticut's state longitudinal data system. Our work is a collaboration of 15 participating agencies that include state agencies, higher education institutions, and nonprofits to inform sound policy and practice to ensure that individuals can successfully navigate supportive services and education pathways into the workforce. The DataLinkCT governance structure has two governing bodies, and utilizes two legal agreements (an Enterprise Memorandum of Understanding and Data Sharing Agreements), to securely share data across agencies. Data are never used to identify specific individuals.

Expanding Data Partnerships:
- Office of Policy & Management took over as the operating group for the state's SLDS in 2021
- Concerted effort to align state data strategy and build capacity to link across more partner agencies
- Data integration process split organizationally to preserve individual privacy

Iowa

Who We Are:

Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision-Making (I2D2) is a state-university partnership supporting Iowa's investments in more effective and efficient coordinated systems of care for young children and their families. Building from a legislative mandate through Early Childhood Iowa that commissioned state departments toward collaboration, I2D2 brings together leadership from the Departments of Health & Human Services, Education, Workforce Development, and the Iowa Head Start Association. I2D2 is hosted at Iowa State University with Early Childhood Iowa driving prioritization of use cases.

Expanding Data Partnerships:

• Third party partner model where University must meet requirements for both education and human services data partners.

• Build trust with partners through high-value research and analytic use cases that meet a current priority or need.

• Recently built on existing capacity to quickly meet a state need to collect data for essential needs pilot program.

North Carolina

Who We Are:

The North Carolina Longitudinal Data System provides data contributors, practitioners and trusted research partners with secure access to cross-sector, longitudinal and linked record-level data for the purpose of helping them address the state's most pressing questions via data-informed decision-making, continuous improvement and performance management processes.

Expanding Data Partnerships:

• NCLDS is one of four pillars in DIT's Enterprise Data Office, along with GDAC, HIEA, and the Center for Geographic Information and Analysis.

• The NC Department of Health and Human Services is one of NCLDS's 6 current data contributors. DHHS data available via NCLDS are from the Department's Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS), which houses both education (e.g., PreK) and non-education (e.g., TANF, CPS, etc.) data elements for children ages 0-5

• The recently launched NCLDS Data Service will support data exchange and research partnership to better understand and solve cross-cutting challenges across our state's social, education and workforce sectors.

Our Questions for Panelists

AN INFORMED CONVERSATION

Q&A

PLEASE SUBMIT QUESTIONS

USING THE QUESTIONS TAB AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR ZOOM

Next Steps

WestEd will send you an email with links to other webinars in the series
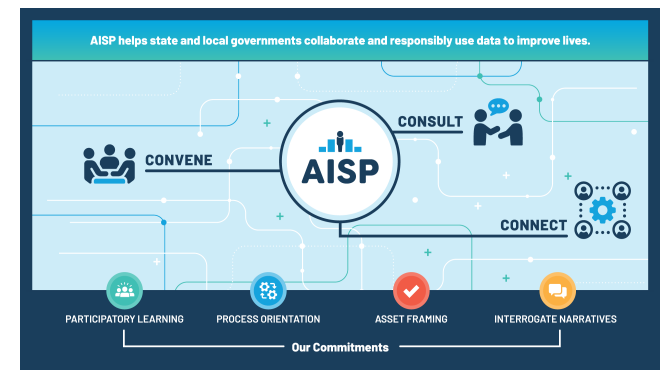
You can view and share this webinar

Read our whitepaper (Link in chat)

Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)

Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) helps state and local governments collaborate and responsibly use data to improve lives. We believe collaborations among government agencies and non-profit organizations to responsibly share and use public sector, human services data can improve policies and programs and, ultimately, the lives of the people they serve.

We support organizations working toward designing, building, systematizing, and improving cross-sector data sharing efforts through: data governance design, legal frameworks (we have a lawyer on staff!) and support expanding linkages beyond Ed/P-20

Data Quality Campaign (DQC)

For two decades, the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) has been the nation's leading voice on education and workforce data policy and use, advocating to change the role of data to ensure that data works for everyone navigating their education and workforce journeys. We work to:

- **Understand The Data Landscape**: DQC's research activities explore attempts to use data effectively, map the field's progress, and identify best practices and conditions that support high-quality data work and implementation.
- **Advise on Data Policy and Implementation**: We offer our expertise and support to local, state, and national advocates and leaders on policies and practices that help states implement data ecosystems that provide value for the people they serve.
- **Bring People Together**: We create and support networks of partners with policy guidance, recommendations, and best practices.
- **Support Organizations Working to Communicate About Data**: Our resources help organizations and leaders communicate clearly, directly, and inclusively about data in ways that engage communities and open a dialogue to find solutions.

For more information, go to our website or contact Kate Shirley Akers, Vice President, Policy Implementation and Best Practices (kakers@dataqualitycampaign.org).

Education Commission for the States (ECS)

As part of its mission to help state policymakers make better education policy, Education Commission of the States has produced extensive research on state policies and practices that foster robust education-to-workforce data systems. Recent resources include:

- 50-State Comparison: Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems: A scan of SLDS policies and resources across all 50 states and D.C.

- Strengthening State Data Systems Through the Education-to-Workforce Framework: A set of practical resources to help states use a robust Education-to-Workforce Indicators Framework to improve data collection and reporting.

- State Data Reporting Dashboard: A searchable tool linking to thousands of public reports on education and workforce data across all states and D.C.

- Sustaining State Longitudinal Data Systems: A survey of state SLDS leaders examining their views on data systems' sustainability and adaptability in the coming years.

Education Commission of the States uses these tools and research to help leaders build a stronger data infrastructure that supports more informed decisions about policies shaping pathways from education to careers.

WestEd's Data Integration Support Center (DISC)

DISC delivers state-specific data integration solutions backed by national expertise and cross-state best practices.

Most services are provided at no cost to public agencies.

Contact Us:

- Visit: disc.wested.org
- Email: info@disc.wested.org
- LinkedIn: DISC @ WestEd (https://www.linkedin.com/company/data-integration-support-center)

Thank you!