ARE PEOPLE GETTING CREDENTIALS THAT LEAD TO JOBS?
Using Dashboards for State Workforce Planning

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Policymakers and other stakeholders have long struggled to understand how effective workforce development programs are in preparing people for middle-skill jobs. These jobs require some form of postsecondary training but not a bachelor’s degree, and make up the largest part of the labor market in the United States and in each of the 50 states. All too often, employers are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs. This report explains how states can create dashboards to help state policymakers assess key outcomes across their state’s education and workforce programs, and in turn, set workforce policies that help residents get jobs while providing employers with skilled workers.

Policymakers typically have information on the bare essentials of workforce development programs — their names, who they are meant to serve, and the funding going into them. But they often lack information on whether programs lead to credentials and jobs, and if they lead to jobs, what those jobs pay.

Policymakers often also lack the information necessary to measure outcomes for the workforce system as a whole and to accurately compare outcomes across programs. Even though many workforce development programs work together to serve the same individuals and employers, information about these programs tends to be program-specific and is often inconsistent from one program to another. It is usually impossible, or at least very difficult to compile or compare information across programs. This makes it difficult for policymakers to know system-wide outcomes or to make judgments about program effectiveness.

Dashboards help solve this information problem. Dashboards use a small number of common metrics to report education and employment outcomes across workforce development programs to the governor, state legislature, and other policymakers. They are designed to be easily understood by policy leaders who are not technical experts in methods of program measurement. Dashboards answer basic questions that policymakers have about the performance of workforce programs and the system as a whole. These questions include: Do participants complete skills training? Do they get jobs? How much do they earn?

Policymakers can use dashboards to identify programs that have strong outcomes and warrant expansion, as well as those that have weak outcomes and need improvement.

For example, a dashboard in Washington State showed impressive employment and earnings outcomes for those participating in the state’s apprenticeship system. In response, the legislature enacted several bills to increase the number of apprentices in Washington. Legislatures in Florida and Texas use dashboards to inform performance-based funding.

The format of dashboards varies from paper reports to web-based dashboards. Ohio’s dashboard for its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program for adults is indicative of the
Figure 1: Ohio's Dashboard for its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult Program

**Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult Program Summary for State of Ohio 2011-2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Program Completers</th>
<th>Employed First Quarter</th>
<th>Percent Employed First Quarter</th>
<th>Previous Year Percent Employed First Quarter</th>
<th>Year-to-Year Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Quarter</td>
<td>10,886</td>
<td>5,494</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Quarter</td>
<td>10,886</td>
<td>5,396</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Earnings**

- **Second Quarter (Annualized):** $20,200 (Median)
  - Second Quarter Employment: 5,494
  - Median Earnings Second Quarter: $20,200
  - Previous Year Median Earnings Second Quarter: $20,600
  - Year-to-Year Change: -400

- **Fourth Quarter (Annualized):** $21,200 (Median)
  - Fourth Quarter Employment: 5,396
  - Median Earnings Fourth Quarter: $21,200
  - Previous Year Median Earnings Fourth Quarter: $22,500
  - Year-to-Year Change: -1,300

**Skills Attained**

- Program Completers: 10,886
- Second Quarter College Enrollment %: 6%
- Fourth Quarter College Enrollment %: NA
- NR: NA
- OTC Credential within 4Qs %: 2%
- College Degree or Certificate within 4Qs %: NA

**Business Impact: Employee Retention**

- Second Quarter Employment: 5,494
- Employee Retention: 63%
- Previous Year Retention: 65%
- Year-to-Year Change: -2%
type of information that dashboards display. It displays in an easy-to-read format key outcomes for WIA adult program participants in regard to employment, earnings, skills attainment, and business impact.

A small handful of states have created highly functional, easily accessible, and comprehensible dashboards with rich content about a wide array of workforce and education programs and their outcomes. These states have undertaken the task of corralling workforce and education data into a logical framework that is both simple enough to be presented in a dashboard format (i.e., data provided on a few common metrics), and informative enough for policymakers and other stakeholders to quickly understand how well their states are performing. Drawing on the experience of some of these states, this report describes the steps that states can take to create dashboards, and how they can be used for state workforce planning and policymaking.

Who Is Using Dashboards and Why?
Dashboards are intended to show governors, state legislators, and other policymakers, at a glance, how the state’s education and training programs are performing. They should also show policymakers how the workforce system is doing as a whole to prepare residents for middle-skill jobs. States should design dashboards with this purpose and audience in mind.

In states like Ohio, Texas, and Washington, dashboards were created at the prompting of policymakers who were looking to better understand how education and training programs were performing as part of a workforce development system.

For example, in 1991, Washington state enacted legislation that created the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to “provide planning, coordination, evaluation, monitoring, and policy analysis for the state training system as a whole, and advice to the governor and legislature concerning the state training system, in cooperation with the state training system and the student achievement council.” Under that charge, the Workforce Board established standards for evaluating the performance of nearly 20 workforce development programs and developed a dashboard for reporting key performance outcomes. The Workforce Board regularly presents dashboard information at legislative sessions, and dashboards have informed legislative decisions to expand successful programs and retool service delivery in program areas with weaker results.

In 2003, Texas passed legislation requiring the Texas Workforce Commission to maintain and operate an automated workforce development evaluation and follow-up system to analyze program performance and help determine whether programs should be continued, expanded, or terminated. The Texas Workforce Commission regularly reports dashboard results to the legislature, and the legislature uses that information to make budgetary decisions.

In the past year, the Ohio Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation spearheaded the creation of a dashboard under the Workforce Success Measures project at the recommendation of the Governor’s Executive Workforce Board. The dashboard is intended to help policymakers and program administrators better understand existing workforce data and evaluate the state’s major workforce development programs in order to improve their effectiveness. The motto is, “What Gets Measured, Gets Better.”

While policymakers are the primary audience for dashboards, key stakeholders are integral to dashboard design. Program and technical staff from programs whose outcomes are being measured should help design dashboards. Their inclusion in the dashboard development process is critical not only to build and maintain their support for the tool, but to provide policymakers with guidance on appropriate use of the tool. Representatives from business and labor communities should also be consulted as they represent the employer and worker customers of the workforce development system.
Determining What a Dashboard Should Show

In order to produce an effective dashboard for policymakers, those designing it should begin by thinking about the types of information the dashboard should show. In particular, they should determine what metrics to use, what programs to include, and what program years to cover.

Setting Key Metrics

Dashboards require consistent metrics across programs in order to succinctly show the performance of individual programs and the workforce development system. In fact, without common metrics, individual program performance cannot be aggregated to show system-wide performance.

While there is some variation in common metrics among states, state dashboards typically have metrics that show how many or the percentage of program participants that complete training, how many find jobs, and what their earnings are. States may have additional metrics in order to glean more information on particular aspects of their workforce development system.

For example, in addition to employment and earnings metrics, Florida’s dashboard includes metrics on public assistance use and incarceration rates among workforce development participants since policymakers want to know if workforce and education programs reduce public assistance or incarceration. Washington State’s dashboard has nine metrics: in addition to metrics on employment, earnings, and credential attainment, Washington’s dashboard includes metrics on participant satisfaction, employer satisfaction, net employment impact, net earnings, impact, participant return on public investment, and taxpayer return on public investment. Net employment and earnings impact metrics give policymakers an easy way to tell whether a program is working by comparing the employment and earnings outcomes of program participants to a control group of non-participants. The metric on participant return on public investment shows policymakers at a glance how the public cost of training pays off in terms of participants’ additional lifetime earnings and employee benefits.

Agreeing on common metrics has often been a major undertaking with stakeholders debating at length about the best metrics to use. For example, Washington State’s Workforce Board began creating its dashboard by building consensus among state and local stakeholders as to the best metrics to use — a process that took two years. First, the Workforce Board agreed on the desired outcomes that the system should achieve, such as increased skills and earnings. Then, technical staff proposed to the Board how to measure those outcomes in a manner that would be valid, reliable, and would not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any of the programs.

Going forward, states can use the common metrics established in the recently enacted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to create dashboards. The WIOA common metrics are:

- Employment rate during the second quarter after participant exit
- Employment rate during the fourth quarter after participant exit
- Median earnings during the second quarter after participant exit
- Credential attainment rate during participation or within one year of exit
- Skill gains during participation in education and training programs
- One or more measures of effectiveness in serving employers (to be developed by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education)

Using the WIOA common metrics in state dashboards would help provide consistency among state and federal performance reports, and would make performance reporting much more understandable to policymakers, program administrators and staff, and other stakeholders. For example, Ohio’s dashboard metrics, just developed in 2014, are consistent with the WIOA common measures. States can supplement the WIOA common metrics with additional metrics of their own choosing in order to address policy questions not answered by the WIOA measures.

Choosing Which Programs to Include

Dashboards should highlight the same set of common metrics for individual programs and for the workforce development system as a whole. In doing so, dashboards provide policymakers with a clearer picture of how each program contributes to the overall workforce development system, and how that system is performing as a whole. Accordingly, dashboards should collect common metrics for all major education and training programs that prepare workers for middle-skill jobs. These include federally-funded programs, as well as state-funded training programs.

States with more advanced dashboards provide outcomes for a broad range of education and training programs. For example:

- Washington State produces dashboards for 12 programs that account for 98 percent of federal and state workforce development spending in the state
- Texas’ dashboard shows outcomes for nine federally- and state-funded training programs.
Dashboards use a small number of common metrics to report education and employment outcomes across workforce development programs.

- Florida’s dashboard reports outcomes for K-12 education, colleges, universities, and workforce development programs.
- Ohio’s dashboard displays outcomes for seven of the state’s largest education and training programs.

States that choose to use WIOA’s common metrics in dashboards can apply them to a broad range of workforce development programs. WIOA’s common metrics must apply to programs provided under all four titles. These include WIOA programs for adults, dislocated workers and youth; adult education; employment service (Wagner Peyser); and vocational rehabilitation. Under WIOA, common metrics on employment, median earnings, and credential attainment also apply to training providers who receive WIOA funding. Moreover, states may choose to also apply the WIOA common metrics to other federally-funded programs including Perkins Career and Technical Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Employment and Training (TANF E&T) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T).7

**SHOWING OUTCOMES OVER TIME**

Dashboards that display program outcomes for multiple years can help policymakers see trends in program performance. For example, Washington State’s dashboards include graphs that display how employment and earnings results have changed over the most recent five-year period. This allows policymakers in the state to see program trends and identify which programs are succeeding over time and which need improvement.

**Collecting Outcomes Data**

Dashboards show aggregate program outcomes, and do not show data on any individuals. In order to measure programs’ aggregate education, employment and earnings outcomes, states must link “seed” records from programs to data on education and labor market outcomes. Seed records include data on individual participants, such as the education or training program they participated in and when they started and ended the program. Seed records also include social security numbers, which are used to search unemployment insurance (UI) wage records for data on participants’ employment and earnings and higher education records for data on enrollment and credential attainment. This data linking produces the dataset used to populate common metrics used in dashboards: with linked data, analysts can determine how many program participants in a given year earned a credential and found a job; they can also calculate earnings.

States and the federal government have in place safeguards to ensure individual privacy. Safeguards include prohibitions on publishing aggregate data that is based on a small number of individuals, limitations on which agencies may receive individual data from another agency, requiring agencies to encrypt data prior to sharing it with another agency, and severe penalties under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for violations of student privacy.

Florida has the longest track record of linking data in order to measure the performance of workforce and education programs. Florida created the Florida Education and Training Performance Improvement Program (FETPIP) in 1984,
long before other states were even aware of the concept or considering implementing anything like it. FETPIP’s role is codified in Florida’s statutes. All education and workforce programs requiring placement information must use FETPIP to do so, and FETPIP must have access to records required to link data. Florida statute states that “[t]he Department of Education shall have access to the reemployment assistance wage reports maintained by the Department of Economic Opportunity, the files of the Department of Children and Family Services that contain information about the distribution of public assistance, the files of the Department of Corrections that contain records of incarcerations, and the files of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation that contain the results of licensure examination.”

In the mid-1990s, Washington state’s Workforce Board staff worked with staff from various programs and the UI Division of the Employment Security Department to develop a system for linking participant records with UI wage records and other administrative databases, such as the National Student Clearinghouse. The interagency workgroup identified protocols, memorandums of understanding, data sharing agreements, and cost sharing agreements. The workgroup developed a system of batch data linking — linking the participant records with UI and other databases once a year. As Washington State updates its data system, the batch mode will be replaced with a system that can query performance information at any time.

Although states have faced challenges, data linking for the purpose of measuring program outcomes is now commonplace among the states. The U.S. Department of Education has granted funds to states to establish State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) that track student progress across K-20 systems. Workforce administrative agencies regularly link program seed records with UI wage records to measure participants’ employment and earnings following program exit. The U.S. Department of Labor has granted funds to states through its Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI), which has helped states build and enhance their data linking efforts.

Sharing Dashboards

Dashboards were initially created as part of paper reports. Now they may be web-based, enabling users to query specific information that can be used to help answer workforce development policy questions. They also tend to be visually appealing and have simple formats.

For example, the Texas Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) division of the Texas Workforce Commission has created an easy-to-read website that provides program outcomes for nine of the state’s workforce development programs. Stakeholders and policymakers are able to select pre- and post-program employment outcomes and median quarterly earnings for each of the programs and for the system in aggregate, and those outcomes are displayed in interactive charts. The data behind these outcomes are updated on a regular basis.

A typical display from the LMCI site is shown in Figure 2. The screenshot shows how participants in the Texas workforce development system are distributed across nine different programs. It also shows the percentage of participants who find employment for each of the nine programs. This
ARE PEOPLE GETTING CREDENTIALS THAT LEAD TO JOBS?

A new dashboard system is also able to display system-wide performance. The screenshot shown in Figure 3 shows the website’s information on employment and earnings for the nine workforce programs in the aggregate.

In 2014, Ohio also developed a web-based dashboard. Ohio’s dashboard offers stakeholders and policymakers a look at the performance of the main programs comprising its workforce system. The presentation is clear, avoiding clutter that might distract from the main purpose: giving viewers succinct, accessible information about workforce system performance in a timely manner.

As shown in the screenshot of Ohio’s dashboard on p. 3, for each program, the dashboard reports the number of individuals completing the program, the number of completers employed in Ohio, their median earnings, employee retention, college enrollment, and education and training credentials earned. Moreover, the viewer is able to examine outcomes by county for each of these programs, compare county outcomes to those in the region and state, and follow color-coded indicators (e.g., red for declines, green for positive improvement) indicating performance trends.

HELPING POLICYMAKERS INTERPRET DASHBOARDS

While dashboards should be succinct, accessible, and easy-to-read, some states have found it useful to supplement dashboards with additional analysis or information to help policymakers interpret dashboards. For example, in addition to providing simple graphs, Washington State’s dashboard provides a table that includes technical definitions of each metric for users who want a deeper understanding of how each metric is defined (see Figure 4). Washington also links each dashboard to a much more detailed evaluation report of program results.

Dashboards may also be accompanied by guidance on their appropriate use and their limitations. Dashboards should not be used to compare programs that serve different populations or different purposes. For example, one should not expect the same results for vocational rehabilitation and a dislocated worker program, or for the employment service and community college training. Dashboard viewers should also avoid attributing results solely to programs since they can be a result of additional factors like changes in economic conditions.

In addition to Texas’ web-based dashboard, the Texas Workforce Investment Council provides an annual report to the governor and legislature on the performance of the workforce development system. The “System Report Card” includes system-wide results for four outcome measures (see Figure 5), and is used as part of the state’s budgeting and strategic planning process. The report card also provides guidance on interpreting the dashboard, stating “[t]he Council believes that the report card series is a useful tool to present overall system performance. System evaluation is complex and, although the four Formal measures are appropriate to provide a system snapshot, they should not be viewed in isolation from other factors. Agencies and programs have different service populations with unique needs and characteristics, which has a large effect on performance data.”

Using Dashboards to Inform Workforce Development Policies

State policymakers have used dashboards to make significant policy and budgetary decisions. Dashboards have helped policymakers identify programs that are working and should be expanded. They’ve also helped policymakers identify programs with weak results that require change. Moreover, dash-
Employment – Percentage of participants who were employed, as reported to the Employment Security Department during the third quarter after leaving the program.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>69%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Earnings – Median annualized earnings six to nine months after leaving the program. (Quarterly earnings are the result of hourly wage rates and the number of hours worked in a calendar quarter. To derive annualized earnings, quarterly earnings are multiplied by four.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$24,866</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Skills – Percentage of participants who obtained an appropriate credential. (Percentage based on all participants, including those who did not receive training through the program.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>33%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Participant Satisfaction – Percentage of participants, including non-completers, who reported satisfaction with the program, as evidenced by survey responses six to nine months after leaving the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Employer Satisfaction - WIA participants in general, including Adults, Youth and Dislocated Workers (A separate survey for each WIA program was not conducted because the sample size would be too small.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>91%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Net Employment Impact – Difference between the employment rate for all participants and the control group of non-participants, measured between two and three years after leaving the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10.8 percentage points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Net Earnings Impact - Difference between the average annualized earnings for all participants and the control group of non-participants, measured between two and three years after leaving the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$4,562</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Participant Return on Public Investment – The ratio of the present values of additional lifetime participant earnings and employee benefits to public costs of the program. Additional lifetime participant earnings and benefits are additional earnings and employee benefits received (minus participant program costs, taxes on added income, and any loss in unemployment insurance benefits), when compared to the non-participant control group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$8 to 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Taxpayer Return on Investment – The ratio of the present values of projected additional lifetime taxes paid by the participant (plus any decrease in unemployment insurance benefits), in comparison to the public costs of the program. Additional taxes are those additional taxes projected to be paid in comparison to the taxes projected to be paid by the non-participant control group. Change in unemployment insurance benefits is the change in benefits paid to participants compared to the non-participant control group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$1.20 to 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Includes some out-of-state employment data but not all of it and does not include data on self-employment.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Change 2013-2014</th>
<th>Cumulative 2009-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Achievement</td>
<td>495,460</td>
<td>81.63%</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
<td>7.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered Employment</td>
<td>1,101,983</td>
<td>72.95%</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
<td>-4.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Retention</td>
<td>946,835</td>
<td>82.68%</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
<td>-0.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers Served</td>
<td>4,886,928</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>-2.94%</td>
<td>-6.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

boards have been part of performance-based funding systems that link program funding to performance. Because credential attainment, employment, and earnings are key measures in workforce dashboards, policies based on dashboards help align state policies with skill gains and the labor market.

As previously mentioned, the Texas legislature uses dashboard information to make budgetary decisions about its workforce programs. Based on recommendations by the Texas Legislative Budget Board, the state legislature sets performance targets for workforce development programs for educational achievement, entered employment, employment retention, and customers served. The dashboard report card then shows how programs actually performed compared to the target. This performance is taken into account when the legislature considers agency budget requests, and budgets are reduced if performance targets are missed by more than five percent.

In Washington State, the Workforce Board regularly presents dashboard information at legislative work sessions. The process is not as formal as it is in Texas, but lawmakers often consider dashboard information in making decisions regarding program budgets and policy changes. For example, the chair of the House budget committee declared that he supported a significant enhancement for a community and technical college retraining program due to the program’s strong dashboard results. The impressive dashboard numbers for apprenticeship were referred to repeatedly by advocates, legislators, and the governor’s office as the legislature enacted several policy bills to boost the number of apprentices in Washington. Not all dashboard results, however, are positive. The weak dashboard results for adult basic education prompted the state to investigate different ways to deliver adult basic education, which ultimately led to the creation of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) approach.

In Florida, dashboard information on employment and earnings has been used to inform performance-based funding allocations of $200 million in university funding. State-level dashboard information also inspired the development of local program scorecards, which have helped create a more informed consumer market for postsecondary education programs.12

Considerations and Caveats

DATA LINKING
States looking to create dashboards should consider some of the policy, funding, and technical challenges that other states have encountered in regard to data linking. Federal and state policy challenges to linking program participation data to labor market outcomes data have to a certain extent been addressed by recent reviews of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).13 Funding challenges have been partially addressed by state grants to support the creation of dashboards, as well as by SLDS and WDQI grants, although it is unclear whether future funding will be available to support this work.

Technical challenges are typically related to data quality and to the process of linking training outcomes data to labor market data. Cleaning and auditing data for anomalies are time-consuming, costly and labor-intensive challenges that states with more advanced dashboards have managed to address. External partners, often university partners, have proven to be instrumental in providing state agencies with services related to data handling. For example, Ohio’s Education Research Center, operated by The Ohio State University’s John Glenn School of Public Affairs, has led the creation of the Ohio’s Workforce Success Measures project.

WAGE RECORDS
State UI wage records do not capture out-of-state or federal employment. The national Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) however, enables states to track employment in other states. WRIS was originally limited to purposes authorized by WIA. WRIS II enables states to track out-of-state employment for other programs as well, and there are now over 30 states participating in WRIS II. Similarly, the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES) allows states to track federal employment not captured by state UI records.

Additionally, as is well known, there is a time lag in obtaining employment and earnings information from UI wage records. The length of the lag varies somewhat from one state to another but is generally about six months. This can be a serious issue for managers responsible for the day-to-day operation of programs, but for state dashboards focused on the big picture for policy leaders, while not ideal, the time lag is not a major barrier.

Conclusion
States are still, for the most part, in the beginning stages of developing and using dashboards to inform policymakers about the performance of the workforce development system. The more advanced dashboards highlighted in this report are able to link participation in an array of programs to education and employment data, providing the viewer with a clear assessment of how the workforce system is tied to skill gains and higher levels of employment and earnings. While a significant number of states provide data publicly on workforce and education outcomes, relatively few make these data easily accessible, and fewer states still apply the information in making public policy.
There is probably no single state dashboard that is ideal for every state, and states should consider their unique needs in order to create a dashboard that works best for them. Still, this report describes key steps that states can take to create such a dashboard:

1. **At the outset, states should be clear on who is using the dashboard and why.** Dashboards can be used by state elected officials and state program administrators to answer key policy questions about whether workforce development program participants complete training, get jobs, and what those jobs pay. In setting the purpose and intention of dashboards, state policymakers should consider legislative authorization in order to obtain program participation and continuity.

2. **States should determine what information the dashboard will show.** In particular, policymakers, program staff, and other stakeholders should work together to set key outcome metrics, choose which programs to include, and decide how to show changes in outcomes over time. We recommend that states use WIOA common measures as key dashboard metrics and consider additional measures desired by policymakers. Since dashboards provide policymakers with information on how the workforce development system performs as a whole, we suggest that states include all major education and training programs that prepare workers for middle-skill jobs.

3. **Once states know what outcomes metrics they would like to show on a dashboard, they should develop a system for collecting that data.** This will require states to link education and training data to wage data in order to measure key outcomes. In doing so, states should build on work accomplished through their SLDS and WDQI grants, if applicable. States will also have to address policy, funding, and technical challenges associated with data collection and linking.

4. **States should determine the best platform and format for displaying dashboards and how to help policymakers and other dashboard users interpret information.** The dashboard display should be simple, intuitive, and web-based so that lay viewers can easily access and understand information. Web-based dashboards can also allow users to view key metrics for individual programs, the workforce system as a whole, and for individual local areas. States may want to consider supplementing dashboards with reports or other analysis that describe how to appropriately interpret dashboard information.

With dashboards in place, policymakers can better understand whether the state’s workforce development system is providing residents with credentials leading to jobs and can set policies to better align education and training programs with the labor market.

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**References**


Ohio Office of Workforce Transformation (2014). *Strategic Plan*, Columbus, Ohio: OWT.

Endnotes

1 WIA has been reauthorized as the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Some of the dashboards shown in this paper report results for WIA programs that occurred prior to the reauthorization and therefore are labeled as WIA programs.

2 Based on self-reported information from 40 states and the District of Columbia from the Workforce Data Quality Campaign and online research conducted for this paper, only nine states and D.C. have created dashboards for use by policymakers while about half of the states are “making progress” toward creating workforce dashboards. The ones with dashboards in place by the end of 2014 were Arizona, the District of Columbia, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, Utah, and Washington. See, “Mastering the Blueprint: Progress on State Workforce Data,” Workforce Data Quality Campaign, October 2014.

In addition to the type of dashboards discussed in this paper, a number of other states have made considerable progress towards creating outcomes dashboards, although these do not report outcomes by workforce program. Among them are Maine, Maryland and Minnesota. Maine’s Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), which serves as the state Department of Labor’s labor market information unit, has created a visually simple and intuitive dashboard that provides the user with updated data on a range of indicators related to education and training outcomes (http://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/wdqi/wdqi.html). The dashboard is divided into five tabs – summary, colleges, area of study, notes, and tips – that permit the user to identify employment and wage outcomes by school, by credential type, by CIP grouping, and by either two- or four-year institution. CWRI uses Social Security Numbers to match education and employment records, and it aggregates three academic years of data in order to improve reportability by credential and area of study. Employment outcomes are counted beginning in the third quarter post-graduation to allow time to find employment, and the usual precautions are taken to protect student identity, including the suppression of small cells and the aggregation of results. (from notes on methodology found at http://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/wdqi/wdqi.html)

Like Maine, the State of Maryland’s Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) has created a visually appealing and data-rich dashboard (http://www.esrgc.org/dashboards/dllr/#home). The dashboard includes options that allow users to explore job openings, data on job seekers by occupation, salary requirements and education, demographically disaggregated UI data (including mapped data on UI benefits exhaustees by county and congressional district). It also provides data on total enrollment and number of graduates by degree type for all post-secondary institutions in the state. These data are presented as either graphs or tables. Unlike Ohio’s or Texas’ dashboards, data on completions and earnings by workforce training program are also not included. And, unlike Maine’s dashboard, average wage data by degree type or area of study are not included in Maryland’s dashboard. These data are included on a separate dashboard operated by DLLR.

The State of Minnesota has created a visually simple and intuitive dashboard designed to present, at a relatively high level of abstraction, an overview of the state’s performance on a range of government activities, including education and labor market outcomes. The selection of domains – economy, education, health, community, safety, environment, mobility and government – reflect the state’s policy and programming priorities. Each domain includes five indicators, which are scored and color-coded, with green indicating “doing well,” yellow indicating “at risk,” and red indicating “doing poorly.” Additional detail on each of the five indicators in each domain – including charts, longitudinal data tables, national rankings, and data sources – can be accessed via links in their descriptions. Missing from the dashboard, however, are the workforce program-level outcomes readily found in other dashboards.


6 Based on field interviews with Florida officials.

7 States may apply the WIOA measures to other programs as part of combined plans authorized by WIOA. Dashboards with the common measures could help align the additional programs.

8 Fla. Stat. § 1008.39

9 Fla. Stat. § 1008.39(3)

10 The website is: http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/researchers/dashboard/all_reports_landing.asp


12 Although related, state dashboards differ from scorecards or consumer report cards in several respects. They are designed to be much simpler, focusing on a few common metrics at the system or state program level. They also are aimed at a different audience, i.e., primarily at policymakers rather than potential participants or students. And while they may have “drop-down” features allowing viewers to drill down for additional detail, they typically lack search features that consumers need to make informed choices about which local training program or educational major to enroll in.

13 See proceedings from the 2013 conference on FERPA, hosted by the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas, Austin for a thorough discussion of the topic at http://raymarshallcenter.org/?s=FERPA.
About State Workforce and Education Alignment Project

The State Workforce and Education Alignment Project (SWEAP), an initiative of National Skills Coalition, is helping to develop system-wide information about workforce education and training programs for state policy leaders. The goal is to create better cross-program information that allows state policy leaders to see how these programs can work together in their state, and how individuals can advance through these programs over time in the pursuit of post-secondary credentials and higher-paying employment. SWEAP will assess how state policy leaders find such information useful for the purpose of improving workforce development policy in their state, and ultimately educational and labor market outcomes for program participants.

About National Skills Coalition

National Skills Coalition is a non-partisan, broad-based coalition of employers, unions, education and training providers, and public officials working toward a vision of an America that grows its economy by investing in its people so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper. We engage in organizing, advocacy, and communications to advance state and federal policies that support these goals – policies that are based on the on-the-ground expertise of our members.

National Skills Coalition was founded in 1998 as The Workforce Alliance in response to a series of federal policies that signaled the end of national investments in the skills of America’s workers at a time when skill gaps were growing in key U.S. industries. Since then, we’ve demonstrated that investments in skills work. We’ve shown that diverse stakeholders can find agreement around specific reforms that will improve a variety of workforce education and training policies. And we have documented that the American public is strongly supportive of a deeper investment in the skills of America’s workers. We continue to mobilize support for a new national skills agenda that cuts across public policies, and simultaneously serves a wide range of U.S. workers and industries.

National Skills Coalition is governed by a Board of Directors and advised by a national Leadership Council drawn from the ranks of business, labor, community colleges, community-based organizations, and the public workforce system. More than 8,000 members, representing more than 3,000 organizations in all 50 states, comprise the broad-based membership of National Skills Coalition.

Learn more at www.nationalskillscoalition.org.