# Integrated Data Sharing

Legislative Report on Governance Structure

September 2023

# Executive Summary

When jobseekers and businesses seek workforce services, they are met with a complex workforce development system that includes multiple agencies with different administration and procedures. This often leads to unnecessary frustration, including confusion about where to go, wasted time in filling out the same intake information multiple times, and in some cases, participants walking away from services. Challenges persist past the intake process, where information is not readily or systemically shared across agencies, even in cases where these agencies are serving the same customer. The administrative silos across agencies impact effective service planning, where frontline workers do not have sufficient information to determine what services have been received, where service gaps exist, and what additional referrals are needed. Efforts to address these challenges have consistently identified technology and data sharing as needed steps toward removing redundancies and creating more visibility and efficiency across workforce development providers. These challenges have been identified by system partners and stakeholders as a needed step towards an integrated workforce development system.

The Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), in collaboration with other state workforce agencies, is investigating data integration solutions to address these challenges. The inception of this integrated data-sharing initiative was prompted by needs emanating from the workforce system. The initiative is in alignment with the state's strategic workforce plan: Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP). The Workforce Board is committed to improving Washington's workforce development system and addressing the pressing need for enhanced inter-agency coordination and to ensure a fluid, efficient, and robust delivery of workforce development services to both jobseekers and businesses.

The Workforce Board is presenting this report to the governor and the legislature as stipulated by RCW 43.01.036:

> "By September 1, 2023, and September 1, 2024, the board must submit a report to the governor's office and the appropriate committees of the legislature. The report should delineate the board's strategy for projects impacting the integrated data sharing initiative. Key inclusions should be: (1) Current status of any information technology projects in progress or under implementation; (2) Funding necessities for these ongoing and impending information technology projects; and (3) Subsequent courses of action for the board's information technology projects."

This report summarizes the progress and recommendations of the Workforce Board on workforce data integration. The report also provides an update on the data sharing and integration efforts that are underway or planned by the Workforce Board and its partners. The report is intended to inform the Governor's Office and the appropriate legislative committees on the status and direction of workforce services integration in Washington, pursuant to RCW 43.01.036. A highlighted progress update on the coalition model and governance structure is provided as it will lay the foundation for better service coordination and public stewardship that enables the efficient delivery of workforce development

services. The report will also highlight the need for a streamlined customer experience for those receiving workforce services, so they don't need to repeat their stories and duplicate intake processes at multiple organizations. Each section describes the current state of integration in Washington, the challenges and opportunities for improvement, a structured framework of recommendations to ensure alignment with the overarching goals of the initiative, and the next steps for implementation.

# Contents

# I. Introduction

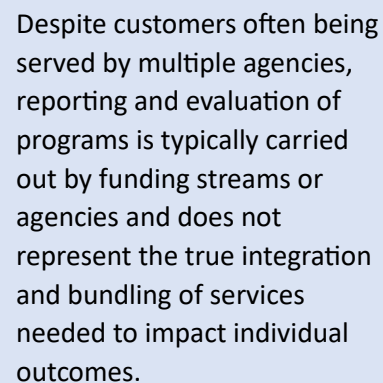## Overview and Integrated Service Delivery Vision

Washington's Workforce Board champions strategies and aligns organizations and stakeholders statewide to ensure a successful business climate and livable-wage jobs for all. The Board advises the Governor and Legislature on workforce development policy, coordinates training programs, and works to improve workforce services in Washington. To support service integration across the broad workforce system, the Workforce Board has been looking at solutions to inform the process by integrating data.

The workforce development services in Washington and nationally are made up of a complex system spread across multiple agencies and funding streams, each with their own administrative policies and procedures. Navigating these disparate processes and agencies poses a challenge—particularly for individuals with multiple or significant barriers. These individuals may have the greatest need to leverage bundled services but are also those that would experience undue hardship in navigating a fragmented system. Additionally, intake and service planning do not easily transfer from one program to the next. Customers must often start over at each stage of service delivery. This has culminated in "intake fatigue" among jobseekers, who must not only share their personal and, often times, difficult story to multiple providers but also experience redundancies of having to complete comparable forms or provide different sets of documentation for similar eligibility requirements.

Challenges persist past the intake process, where silos across administering agencies adversely impact effective service planning. Information is not readily or systemically shared across agencies, even in cases where these agencies are serving the same customer. Opacity of information across workforce agencies prevents frontline staff from knowing what services a customer would be eligible for across partner agencies, supports that have already been received, where there are still service gaps, and making additional referrals that are needed.

> Despite customers often being served by multiple agencies, reporting and evaluation of programs is typically carried out by funding streams or agencies and does not represent the true integration and bundling of services needed to impact individual outcomes.

These compounding challenges lead to confusion navigating services, wasted time across intake and service planning, unnecessary frustration, and even cases of participants walking away from services. Surveys, community forums, focus groups, and administrative data review have reaffirmed the known systemic barriers for efficient and effective service delivery. Efforts to address these challenges have consistently identified technology and data sharing as a needed step towards an integrated workforce development system. Integrated data sharing would remove redundancies that occur at intake, allowing information to follow customers across agencies for needed services. It would also enhance visibility of the full spectrum of services a customer has or needs to be receiving for effective service planning.

Administering entities have also experienced challenges due to the disconnected data and technology systems. Reporting and performance accountability also reflect the disjunction across the state's

workforce agencies. Despite customers often being served by multiple agencies, reporting and evaluation of programs is typically carried out by funding streams or agencies and does not represent the true integration and bundling of services needed to impact individual outcomes. Washington is committed to developing a true "system" of workforce education and training service delivery, including the integration of performance accountability.

The efforts to integrate performance accountability is a commitment beyond the existing reporting requirements within the workforce system. This approach will provide aggregated data by population type, in unduplicated counts, across all the core programs. The integration of service data is necessary to reflect how the components of that system collectively affect the outcomes of different types of clients, regardless of the mix of resources involved.

## Purpose

Efforts at integrating data across the workforce system, both intake as well as outcomes, has a long history at the Workforce Board. Past efforts are listed below in a timeline. The Workforce Board has, on multiple occasions, identified this as a high priority for the system. However, despite being identified as a continued top priority for the workforce system, it has been difficult to make progress. Agencies operate from different funding streams, under different regulations, and have different objectives. Thus, to varying degrees they operate in silos, and this tendency is even stronger when it comes to data systems and confidential data. Staff turnover is another barrier in working more closely together as established relationships and trust must be continually restarted. A lack of sufficient and consistent funding further compounds these complications.

This report chronicles the efforts to date, charting significant milestones like the establishment of the Common Intake Committee in 2016, collaboration with Community Attributes Inc. (CAI) in 2017, and the hiring of a full-time Workforce Board Data Integration Manager in 2023. Insights from research studies, feedback from the Integrated Services Delivery (ISD) workgroup, and collaboration with stakeholders have shaped our strategies and recommendations, particularly concerning governance. By acknowledging the challenges, from agency silos to technical constraints, and celebrating the achievements, this report hopes to provide a clear picture of the state's need, commitment, and progress of this work. The Workforce Board is committed to improving the coordination and integration of workforce development services across the state, to better serve customers, reduce duplication and fragmentation, and increase efficiency and effectiveness. We believe that a unified system will not only bolster Washington's economic competitiveness but can also catalyze innovation, collaboration, and foster an inclusive and equitable environment for all Washingtonians.

## Workforce System Data Integration Efforts

The Workforce Board has pursued several initiatives in support of an integrated data system following the Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP) state strategic workforce plan, where data sharing was identified as a high Board priority, starting in 2016. These initiatives have included:

- In 2016, a Common Intake Committee was established as a part of TAP implementation. The intent was to identify necessary data to fulfill state and federal reporting requirements and enable richer data and evaluation across programs, regions, and populations served. To support

this work, the Workforce Board contracted with Community Attributes Inc. (CAI) to conduct a research study on best practices and models for workforce services integration in other states and regions. This study culminated in a report (2019) which identified four key dimensions of integration: governance, funding, data sharing, and service delivery. The study also provided examples of successful integration initiatives and recommendations for potential actions for Washington.

- In 2020, the Workforce Board established an Integrated Services Delivery (ISD) workgroup, composed of Workforce Board members and staff, as well as representatives from various workforce partners and stakeholders. The ISD workgroup was tasked with reviewing the CAI study findings and developing a vision, goals, and strategies for advancing workforce services integration in Washington.

- In 2021, the Workforce Board hired a contractor to develop a governance structure for workforce services integration, based on the coalition model recommended by CAI. The contractor conducted stakeholder interviews, facilitated workgroup meetings, and drafted a preliminary report with recommendations for a governance framework that would support collaboration, alignment, accountability, and innovation among workforce partners.

- In 2022, the Workforce Board received funds to undertake the analysis and mapping functions of a potential workforce system data solution. The contractor drafted a report in 2022 (submitted to the legislature) with recommendations for a governance framework that would support collaboration, alignment, accountability, and innovation among workforce partners.

- In 2023, the Workforce Board received funding to hire a full-time Data Integration Manager. The position has been filled as of August 2023 and work has begun to bring together stakeholders for a proposal of data integration approaches.

> Technology and data sharing have consistently been identified as needed steps toward removing redundancies and creating more visibility and efficiency across workforce development providers.

These efforts will be overviewed in the next section.

## II.    Background

### Alignment

States are increasingly working to build connected data systems. As of the end of 2021, 19 states had adopted a P20W longitudinal data system, or data that spans early learning, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce program data.[1] The state of Washington is among these states, having established a P20W data system through the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC). Other states have since begun developing their own P20W data systems, including California's Cradle-to-Career project, which is slated to complete in 2026.[2]

Data integration with workforce development programs is not without challenges. Only 48% of states with longitudinal data systems incorporate workforce program data[1]. For Washington's P20W data

system, the integrated workforce data includes Washington UI wage and employment data, Labor & Industries (LNI's) apprenticeship program data, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) student data.[3] The workforce system data integration efforts will not only meet the needs of workforce development staff and enhance service delivery to customers but can align with and support existing data initiatives, like ERDC's P20W, by further consolidating workforce program data towards successful program implementation and evaluation.

## Landscape

Integrating workforce program data has proven challenging. It is complex, with multiple administrators, differing eligibility requirements, and varying definitions of key terms. In addition, data systems contain confidential information, raising the risk of exposure any time data are connected with external agencies.

To further complicate these efforts, many system partners have recently undergone upgrades or replacement of their Management Information Systems (MIS). These include Employment Security Department's WIT replacement, the State Board for Community and Technical College's (SBCTC's) new ctcLink, and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR) new WAVES. The changing landscape of technologies touching the workforce system has generated shifting targets and challenges in identifying a viable, integrated data system.

Conversely, the shifting technology landscape also creates opportunities for innovation and modernization, both within and between systems. Through these independent efforts that leverage technology solutions, workforce development partners will be better able to share data through a modernized technology stack.

**Workforce Professionals Center (WIT Replacement Project)**

WIT is defined as the Efforts-to-Outcomes (ETO) and the labor exchange technology that is used by Washington WorkSource. The WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT) Replacement Project is a statewide initiative that is critical for re-employment service delivery to employers and job seekers as well as meeting state and federal reporting requirements. Target date to complete the project is mid- to late-2024. Scope includes replacing the WIT case management system for WorkSource system staff, which include ESD employees, partners, and stakeholders. The effort will also replace the public facing WorkSource WA labor exchange system, which job seekers and employers use to access WorkSource system services. This new data system will have enhanced case management, expense, and performance reporting functionality.

**CTC Link (SBCTC's data system upgrade)**

Initial efforts began in 2011 to upgrade SBCTC's data system. As of May 2022, all 34 Washington community and technical colleges and the SBCTC agency were successfully deployed on ctcLink, a single, centralized system of online functions and data management for students, faculty, and staff.

The ctcLink implementation project moved colleges from the 42-year-old HP Legacy system to Oracle PeopleSoft products, as well as a new Online Admissions Application Portal (OAAP), CampusCE for continuing education, and Oracle Planning and Budgeting Cloud Services (PBCS).

The ctcLink Customer Support team, Project Management Office (PMO) team, and systemwide ctcLink governance groups have multiple efforts underway to address outstanding requirements, including a centralized Enhancement Requests (ERs), a single-solution, third-party student success software for the Guided Pathways (GP) program, accessibility, and "scope transfer" of outstanding and prioritized work needed for a full implementation of an upgraded system.

**Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) System Transition Project**

The Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is replacing their current case management system, STARS, with the advanced WAVES platform. Scheduled to go live on October 31, this transition aligns with DVR's strategic objectives to modernize its electronic case management framework and introduce a new customer portal. This enhancement is not only crucial for streamlining DVR's internal operations but also pivotal in ensuring seamless service delivery to clients, stakeholders, and partners. The WAVES system promises to offer an integrated and user-friendly interface, coupled with enhanced case management, expense tracking, and performance reporting features, reinforcing DVR's commitment to operational excellence and client satisfaction.

## III.    Past Initiatives

In 2016, the Workforce Board contracted with Community Attributes Inc. (CAI) to conduct research on common intake and workforce services integration. The primary focus of this research was to:

1. Identify common data needed to remove redundancies of data collection for customers being served across multiple programs.
2. Identify overlapping eligibility requirements, documentation, and assessment tools that are used across various programs.
3. Determine data that would assist frontline staff to effectively and efficiently provide supports and services to customers.
4. Identify new tools and resources staff seek to improve services to customers.

In the study, Washington was observed to have a complex and fragmented governance structure for workforce development services involving multiple agencies, boards, councils, committees, regions, sectors, initiatives, and funding streams. This creates challenges for coordination, alignment, transparency, responsiveness, and innovation. These included:

- No clear authority or mechanism for setting statewide goals and priorities for workforce services integration.
- Limited alignment of policies and programs across different levels (state, regional/local) and domains (education/training/employment).
- Insufficient coordination of funding sources and allocation methods to support integrated service delivery.
- Inconsistent use of data and performance measures to monitor progress and outcomes of workforce services integration.
- Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities of different partners and stakeholders in workforce services integration.

Recommendations to address challenges in the intake process were split across immediate, intermediate, and long-term steps. These were as follows:

- Immediate Steps
  - Develop online, modularized orientations: Produce modularized and "just-in-time" orientations for staff to support the consistency and knowledge of workforce programs and practices among frontline staff.
- Intermediate Steps
  - Standardize referral practice and information exchange across agencies based on best practices and current state and federal regulations: Frontline staff expressed frustration around the lack of consistency in making referrals and sharing of customer information—the latter of which created duplication of requesting already provided information from customers.
  - Develop one common release of information form that customers/students need to sign only once: Significant time is dedicated to aiding customers in completing release of information forms. A universal form to release relevant information across the workforce

system will increase efficiency and help ensure customers receive the full range of services they need.

- o Allow frontline staff access to work history and salary information from the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database: Work and salary history is key information at intake to determine eligibility. Having access to the UI database would improve process efficiency, provide a reliable source of data, and improve quality of service.
- o Create an online repository of desk aids that is shareable across the state: Creating a sortable, searchable, and rated repository for shared desk aids, or customized information sheets (e.g. checklist, overview of policies and procedures), would be a helpful tool and valued feature.
- o Develop an online, sharable customer education or employment goal platform: Frontline staff want to see all the services a customer is receiving in order to identify gaps in service. An interim step would be to access education and employment goals across the system.
- o Develop an online, sharable education plan that includes a mechanism for providers to commit funding in advance and help make education plans more predictable.
- Long-Term Steps
  - o Develop a common intake form and database: Frontline staff indicated the benefit of having common intake data pre-populated (with date updated) in intake forms. It would be a cost-effective and expedient solution.
  - o Create an eligibility indicator for staff: Learning eligibility rules is a time-intensive but not value-added way for frontline staff to use time. Automating bespoke indicators for areas or by funding would allow frontline staff to dedicate more time with customers/students.
  - o Develop an eligibility document digital wallet: Participants indicated that collecting eligibility documents is both cumbersome and repetitive. Establishing an online repository of necessary documents, with the needed security, would support eligibility determinations.

The set of recommendations is wide-ranging. While many of the challenges and suggestions circled around access to information, the long-term steps specified the need for systemic integration among workforce partners. Following the efforts of this study, the Workforce Board established an Integrated Services Delivery (ISD) workgroup among the Workforce Board and workforce program partners in 2020. The ISD workgroup was tasked with reviewing the CAI study findings and developing a vision, goals, and strategies for advancing workforce services integration in Washington.

To address the challenges above, the Workforce Board was spearheading an information technology-based common intake project in partnership with local and state stakeholders as part of a National Governors Association Workforce Innovation Network (NGA WIN) initiative. The Washington NGA WIN project brought together Washington workforce system partners to develop and pilot a common technology tool, in partnership with technology company, Merit, and research and consulting firm A.I.R. that aimed to streamline program intake, enhance customer counseling, and facilitate integrated service planning. This tool would serve as a portable portfolio for customers, documenting their strengths,

assets, accomplishments, and life and career skills. The project was an exploration of what success might look like if we could standardize, streamline, and integrate across service entities, with "no wrong door" to enter--from the point of intake and service planning through to a customer's attainment of economic goals.

To achieve its objectives, the project entailed several key activities, including analyzing impacted service processes and identifying data-sharing needs and requirements across multiple agencies. It involved programs such as TANF, WorkFirst, BFET, SNAP, Wagner-Peyser, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA), Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), WIOA Title I Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, LNI Apprenticeship, DSB, DVR, the Washington College Grant program, and the Workforce Board. However, despite reaching the pilot development phase and drafting a pilot implementation plan, the project was put "on hold" during a delay in the Security Design Review process with the OCIO Office of Cybersecurity. That delay went beyond the grant end date and resulted in a lack of available funding for continued work.

The ongoing work of the data integration project is expected to incorporate the goals for common intake data prioritized in these prior initiatives. The Workforce Board's recently hired Data Integration Manager will bring technical expertise to address the outstanding data sharing, security, legal/regulatory, and technological challenges for these efforts and provide recommendations for an implementation strategy. Having in-house expertise will be more efficient for meeting intended milestones, and less dependent on seeking grants to bring on external contractors.

## IV.    Coalition Model

Among the core recommendations from the CAI study was that Washington adopt a coalition model for governance of workforce services integration. A coalition model is a flexible and collaborative approach that allows partners to work together on common goals while maintaining their autonomy and identity. A coalition model can help overcome barriers such as silos, competing notions of ownership, and varying interests while enabling partners to leverage their strengths, resources, and expertise. The Workforce Board hired a contractor who worked  from August 2022 to March 2023 to produce a report on a recommended data governance structure in which to pursue the long-term technology goals specified in the CAI report. Below are the conclusions and recommendations from the technology contractor.

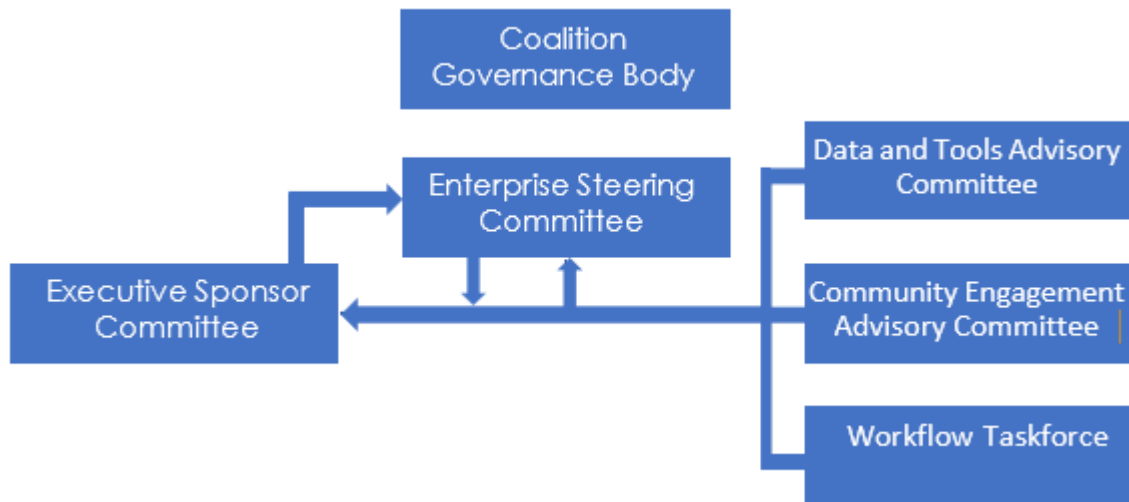### Workforce System Partners Governance Structure

Governance refers to how workforce partners collaborate to set common goals, align policies and programs, allocate resources, monitor performance, and ensure accountability. The OCIO now requires that data governance is a core component of any state-funded IT project, so that data privacy, cybersecurity, and other legal issues that affect or impact data sharing are considered by the group of data owners who are responsible for the consequences of shared data. Effective governance is essential for creating a shared vision and strategy for workforce services integration, as well as fostering trust and communication among partners.

## Governance Structure

The proposed Workforce System Partners Governance Structure[4] includes language, modeled on an example like the Health and Human Services Enterprise Coalition (HHC), specifying that the governance body shall consult with data experts and intended data users, including agency staff members, when developing data use priorities. The Workforce Board recommends this model as it reflects the specific needs of autonomous agencies.

The visual below outlines the relationship between the Coalition Governance Body entities and the coalition of Workforce System Partners: The Executive Sponsor Committee includes the Managing Entity, the Enterprise Steering Committee serves as the governance body for business alignment and operational directions, and various Advisory Committees and Task Forces as the Integrated Enterprise Project Groups.

**Figure 1. Workforce System Partners Coalition Governance Body**



## Workforce System Partners Coalition Governance Body

Under this proposed model, the Workforce Board would be the Managing Entity and act as a convenor as well as securing resources for improvements. The Coalition Governance Body would be made up of the Agency Heads of the Coalition. Specific responsibilities and structures for this Coalition Governance Body would be articulated in the – to be developed – governance manual, which could be amended.

***Coalition Governance Body Proposal***

The proposed Workforce System Partners Coalition Governance Body is based on agreement among initial participating agencies to collectively advance plans for improving services supported by research and available technology.

*Membership*

State agencies or organizations identified as data contributors are represented as follows:

1)     Employment Security Department (ESD)
2)     Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
3)     Department of Services for the Blind (DSB)
4)     Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
5)     Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
6)     State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)
7)     Department of Labor and Industries (LNI)
8)     Education Research and Data Center (ERDC)

Data contributors would be members of the governance body. The head of each agency or organization that contributes data would be accountable for its stakeholders' participation in the coalition. Each agency or organization leader would be entitled to appoint a designee to serve on the Group in their place, and may delegate decision-making to an alternate, so long as that individual has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Group member.

The Coalition Governance Body may also invite and appoint members into ex officio positions to provide additional expertise and perspectives. The suggested ex officio positions could include representation from, for example, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) or the Office of Financial Management (OFM).

The Coalition Governance Body would elect a chair to serve a two-year term. In the second year of the term, the current chair would be supported by the incoming chair. Representatives of specific agencies would serve no more than one consecutive term. The Managing Entity (the Workforce Board) would enlist participation in the Coalition Governance Body.

*Decision-Making*

The Coalition Governance Body would make decisions by recommendation, assessment of need, and available resources. This allows agility for those agencies that are prepared to move forward on recommendations without requiring all partners to move forward at the same time.

The seven steps of the decision-making process include:
1. Identify the decision
2. Gather information
3. Identify alternatives
4. Weigh the evidence
5. Choose among alternatives
6. Take action

7. Review your decision

*Responsibilities*

The Coalition Governance Body would be responsible for ensuring the Workforce System Partners Coalition Governance Body data system is serving its intended purpose, including, but not limited to:

- Set, revisit, and amend the vision, mission, and strategic objectives for the Workforce System Partners data system, particularly related to opportunity and outcomes, gaps, and advancing common goals.
- Develop a theory of action to guide evaluations of the implementation of the Workforce System Partners data system(s).
- Review input from end users to evaluate the usefulness of the data system, whether the data system is fostering evidenced-based decision-making, and whether the data system is benefiting Washingtonians.
- Identify needed resources, build ongoing support, and advocate for using the data system with the public, Governor, Legislature, and data contributors.

Providing operational insight to the Managing Entity:

- Review the Decision Package requests, budget requests, and operational budgets developed by the Managing Entity.
- Agree to the operational plans developed by the Managing Entity to ensure they align with the strategic direction regarding data access and use, operational tools, and community engagement.
- Ensure the Managing Entity is implementing a user-centered design approach for Workforce System Partners data system tools.
- Review and approve professional development, technical assistance, and communications plans for end users developed by the Managing Entity.
- Review and approve the operational tools implementation plan developed by the Managing Entity.

The Washington Workforce System Partners Data System agreement states that the data system should be flexible to meet future needs, and serve the staff and target populations by doing the following:

- Identifying and tracking predictive indicators inform improvements to work processes and guide appropriate interventions and supports.
- Creating direct support tools for Workforce staff and worker populations.
- Enabling agencies to plan for and optimize educational, workforce, and health and human services programs for worker assistance.
- Advancing academic and governmental research on improving policies for Workforce advancement.

Overseeing participation in the Workforce System Partners data system and governance structure

- Evaluate and approve requests from new potential data contributors regarding their participation in the Workforce System Partners data system.
- Establish and revise governance policies and procedures for the
- Workforce System Partners data system.
- Approve members to the Data and Tools Advisory Committee and Community Engagement Advisory Committee and Workflow Taskforce.
- Define the membership and structure for additional Advisory Committees.
- Provide input to the Managing Entity on the purpose and composition of Task Forces.

# V.     Technology Working Group

In July 2023, the Workforce Board began the hiring process for a manager that would oversee the data integration project moving forward. As of early August, a candidate was selected, the job was offered and accepted. The agency's new Data Integration Manager started work on Aug. 10 and has begun developing the stakeholder group to work on data governance.

## Data Security

A recurring challenge in integrating workforce program data concerns data privacy laws and regulations. In ERDC's development of the P20W longitudinal data system, legislation specific to the sharing of workforce-related data was mentioned. The excerpt is provided below:

> "Workforce-related data are also protected and secured by federal law, such as Section 303 of the Social Security Act, for which the U.S. Department of Labor has promulgated Title 20, Part 603 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Furthermore, the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 prohibits the disclosure information collected under the auspices of the workforce development system that would 'constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.'"[5]

Federal agencies have provided data sharing guidance to meet the performance and evaluation requirements across workforce-related programs. As an example, in 2016, the U.S. Departments of Labor (DOL) and Education (ED) provided guidance to states on data matching to facilitate WIOA performance reporting and evaluation requirements. Conditional on state laws, regulations, and procedures, the joint guidance indicated that educational institutions and agencies, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, and other entities can request and obtain an individual's unemployment compensation wage data through informed (or active) consent. Additionally, there is no federal requirement that a VR agency obtain informed consent when releasing information to enhance the administration of VR programs or for evaluation and research purposes to improve the quality of administration or service. Disclosure of personally identifiable information is also permitted under FERPA for evaluation purposes.[6]  A comprehensive review of laws and regulations concerning data sharing across the workforce system will inform a viable data integration proposal.

## Universal Identifier

Presently, our state workforce system lacks a "universal identifier" to identify a customer or student across workforce programs. A challenge of using readily available IDs in workforce data such as the use of Social Security Number (SSN) is that more than one individual may have the same SSN. As a part of ERDC's P20W longitudinal data system initiative, an "identity resolution process" was established to uniquely identify an individual, such as in the ESD data.[3] Another dedicated effort to producing unique identification across systems took place with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Health Care Authority. This Master Person Index (MPI) Project developed unique identification across HHS Coalition programs and systems. The MPI is a foundational technology and is essential to optimize individuals' access to services throughout their continuum of care and to enable effective program planning, program development, program delivery, program integrity, analysis.

An integrated data system will, likewise, enable the Workforce Board to develop a unique identifier for customers across the state's workforce agencies. While the technical and operational structure may vary from the initiatives described above, it will be an area of exploration in the upcoming year.

## Request for Information

As of the end of 2021, 19 states have adopted a P20W longitudinal data system, or data that spans early learning, K-12, postsecondary, and workforce program data.[1] The state of Washington is among these states, having established a P20W data system through the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC). Other states have since begun developing their own P20W data systems, including California's Cradle-to-Career project, which is slated for completion in 2026.[2] Additionally, the Actional Intelligence for Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania has partnered with local and state agencies across the nation for data sharing efforts. Their mandate is to:

- "Convene and advocate on behalf of communities that are sharing and using cross-sector data for good.
- Connect to innovations, best practices, and research and funding opportunities that support ethical data sharing.
- Consult with data sharing collaborations to build the human and technical capacity to share data and improve lives."[7]

Of the 36 data sharing efforts occurring across the United States, 8 states have been identified as having integrated some data elements from workforce training programs.[8] This includes Washington's Integrated Client Data under the Department of Social and Health Services, which includes hour and wage data from Employment Security Department, TANF data from Economic Services, as well as service, training/education, case management, and vocational assessment data from Vocational Rehabilitation.

**Table 1. AISP Network Sites Incorporating Workforce Data**

| State | Data System Name |
|-------|------------------|
| CT | Connecticut P20 WIN |
| GA | Georgia Policy Labs |
| IN | Indiana Management Performance Hub (MPH) |
| KY | KYSTATS |
| MA | Massachusetts Data Sharing Framework and Statewide MOU |
| RI | Rhode Island Integrated Health and Human Services Data Ecosystem |
| WA | Washington State's Integrated Client Database (ICDB) |
| WI | Wisconsin Administrative Data Core |

A request for information from these states will be sought in the coming months to seek additional information on implementation, challenges, and best practices when integrating workforce data across systems.

## Data Governance Coalition

Implementation of the proposed data governance coalition will formally begin in the upcoming year. Initial steps are to finalize a set of partner agencies that will participate in the coalition model and begin with a working group to 1) review and affirm the coalition model for data governance and 2) begin discussion of legislative, operational, and technical considerations for the data integration effort across key workforce programs.

## Technology Solutions

A cursory exploration of technology solutions was included in the 2022 report submitted to the legislature. These included the following potential vendors. A brief description of each software-as-a-service (SaaS) technology is provided.

- Snowflake: A cloud-based system to integrate and store data. The system offers data security as well as integration with business intelligence (BI) tools like Tableau or Power BI.
- Tamr: Tamr was founded from research at MIT's Computer Science and AI Lab. It provides "built-in data quality capabilities that standardize and validate data with powerful, machine learning-driven ID linkage and enrichment capabilities."
- SaraWorks: A SaaS solution that serves as a "digital assistant" and completes the follow up, data entry, and documentation of frontline staff.
- RIPL: The organization is a non-profit organization that uses technology for social impact. It aids governments with the use of data, database design, and applications—among others. Clients have included numerous foundations and government agencies.
- Alation: Offers data products like data catalog, data lineage, data quality, data governance, and connector services.
- Okta: Okta has a functionality to integrate "data stores" and includes supporting databases and bidirectional synchronization between its Access Gateway and external data sources.

- Salesforce: An integration of data using "point-and-click" tools across systems. The Salesforce Platform utilizes APIs and touts "low code" integration tools to integrate data.

Additional exploration of a technology stack that are already supported within partner agencies will also be considered when determining a technology solution.

These five areas of work will continue in the upcoming year, with an updated status provided to the governor's office and the appropriate committees of the legislature in September 2024.

## IV. Recommendations

The necessity for an integrated workforce system, underscored by the historical milestones, emphasizes the importance of strategic collaboration, leveraging technology, and adopting proven solutions. To actualize this vision for Washington, the following recommendations are put forth:

**1. Formation of a Governance Body:** The establishment of a Governance Body serves as a fulcrum for an integrated data system, steering collaborative efforts while safeguarding the sovereignty of individual agencies.

*Recommendation 1.1:* The Governance Body should commence its operations in an advisory capacity, garnering inputs and insights from various agencies, stakeholders, and system partners.

*Recommendation 1.2:* A transition plan should be delineated, converting this body from an advisory role to a decision-making entity. This would enhance system-wide cohesion and ensure unified actions.

*Recommendation 1.3:* The autonomy and core objectives of individual agencies should remain uncompromised. Therefore, the Governance Body should establish protocols that respect the unique missions of each member agency.

**2. Streamlined Discovery and Integration:** Cross-agency collaboration remains pivotal in realizing integrated workforce solutions. A structured methodology for identifying and implementing collaborative projects can lead to enhanced outcomes.

*Recommendation 2.1:* Develop a transparent mechanism for project proposal, allowing agencies to put forth initiatives that would benefit from broader collaboration.

*Recommendation 2.2:* Regular updates should be mandated to the Governance Body, ensuring they remain informed about ongoing and future projects, ensuring strategic alignment and avoiding redundancy.

**3. Focused Research and Development:** Researching existing solutions, both within the state and outside, presents a reservoir of insights. Such endeavors reduce reinvention, promote cost savings, and ensure the adoption of best practices.

*Recommendation 3.1:* The Governance Body should allocate resources to study models like the California Cradle-to-Career Data System, seeking to understand its strengths, challenges, and adaptability.

*Recommendation 3.2:* While considering technology or methodology adoptions, precedence should be given to those already validated in the industry, ensuring reliability and effectiveness.

**4. Comprehensive Assessment:** Before ushering in any technology solution, it's vital to ensure its alignment with practical and theoretical requirements.

*Recommendation 4.1:* Introduce a structured pilot testing phase, wherein proposed solutions undergo a real-world assessment before full-scale deployment.

*Recommendation 4.2:* Engage external experts or consulting entities to provide unbiased evaluations of the proposed solutions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of potential challenges and benefits.

**5. Technological Advancements:** Modern technological platforms, such as Snowflake, TAMR, and SaraWorks, have the potential to revolutionize data integration and management.

*Recommendation 5.1:* After rigorous evaluations, align and adopt technological solutions that further the objectives of the integrated workforce system.

*Recommendation 5.2:* Dedicate resources for regular technology training, ensuring that stakeholders and system users remain adept and proficient in utilizing the introduced platforms.

**6. Continuous Review and Feedback:** Continuous improvement is paramount. By instituting regular review mechanisms, the integrated system remains relevant, efficient, and adaptive to the evolving workforce landscape.

*Recommendation 6.1:* Introduce semi-annual feedback sessions, where stakeholders at varying levels can share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions.

*Recommendation 6.2:* Based on feedback, implement system refinements and revisions, ensuring the system's alignment with the needs and expectations of its users.

**Further Recommendations Based on the Coalition Model:**

*Recommendation 7.1:* Adopt a structured governance system inspired by successful models. Recognizing the significance of data contributors and ensuring their involvement will enhance data accuracy and relevance.

*Recommendation 7.2:* Implement robust data security measures, recognizing the sensitivity and confidentiality of workforce data.

*Recommendation 7.3:* Introduce periodic reviews, focusing on data ownership clarity and processing agreements, ensuring transparent and ethical data management.

## V. Conclusion

Efforts at integrating data across the workforce system, both intake as well as outcomes, have a fairly long history at the Workforce Board. Early efforts through third-party evaluators, like Community Attributes Inc., has reaffirmed the ongoing challenges that disparate data systems across Washington's workforce programs have had on service delivery, customer experience, and on meaningful evaluation.

Efforts to act on recommendations has proven challenging, with legislation on data sharing being a recurring hurdle in prior efforts to integrate data. The previous work for this data integration project has been limited to a 6-month contract evaluating and proposing a data governance model for adoption. With dedicated personnel hired in August 2023 to continue the data integration effort, the specified areas of discovery will take place over the next 12 months. The outlined recommendations, informed by historical insights, stakeholder inputs, and industry best practices, chart a pragmatic path towards achieving an integrated workforce system for Washington. By adopting these suggestions, Washington stands poised to establish itself as a trailblazer in the realm of data-driven, integrated workforce solutions.

# VI.    References

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