Building Toward a Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC)

Seeking Input toward a Comprehensive Agenda

*If **policymakers** want to know how effectively schools, colleges and training programs are preparing young people and adults for well-paying employment or further postsecondary instruction…*

*If **business leaders** want a clear picture of all the degrees and certificates awarded by area institutions, so they might validate which of those credentials are actually in demand by their industry…*

*If **students and workers** want to know which education and training programs are most adept at helping people advance along a pathway toward future study and a skilled career…*

… then **we need better education and workforce data systems** that measure effectiveness across all our workforce development, adult education, career and technical education, and postsecondary programs . With your input, we want to develop a Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC) to help promote the creation and use of such data systems across all 50 states.

Background

Since 2005, the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) has promoted state-level improvements in the collection, availability and use of high quality education data across the P-20 and Workforce continuum as a means to improve student achievement. Much of this work has focused on encouraging robust statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS), with some specific focus on maximizing the effectiveness of those systems at the K-12 educational level.

To bring additional attention to related data quality issues beyond the K-12 sphere, National Skills Coalition (NSC) is working with the DQC, and with the support of the Lumina Foundation and Joyce Foundation, to convene experts from across the workforce development, adult education, career and technical education and postsecondary spectrum . These stakeholders hope to develop a shared agenda around best practices and policies that can be promoted by an affiliated Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC), which we hope to launch in mid-2012.

Possible Issues to be Addressed

While the WDQC's agenda is just being developed, preliminary discussions indicate there are at least three data issue areas that require some greater policy and practice attention:

- Student Data on Multiple Pathways: As states continue to develop SLDS systems to better track student progress during their K-12 studies, the WDQC wants to promote expanding those systems to assess the progress of other students who are pursuing skills and learning outside the traditional educational pipeline. These would include out-of-school youth, adult workers, and "non-traditional" students who are enrolled in job training, adult basic education and/or career-tech education programs. Data to be linked would include student outcomes under WIA Title I, Adult Basic Education (WIA Title II), TAA, Registered Apprenticeships, Perkins, Voc Rehab, SNAPET and TANF, as well as technical training on

the non-credit side of postsecondary institutions. The campaign is also assessing if it will make recommendations for progress and outcome data measures for students enrolled in for-credit collegiate study, to better link them to K-12 and workforce program data and thereby fill out the P-20W continuum.

- Expanded Outcomes Data: WDQC partners want to see more types of outcomes reported as markers of student success across workforce and education programs. This could include improved measurement of employment and wages for graduates across all postsecondary workforce and education programs. It also could include counting, beyond traditional degree attainment, the full range of industry-recognized credentials awarded to students, and the validation of those credentials by industry leaders. Finally, WDQC partners may consider recommendations for better measuring the attainment of entry-level basic skills or career readiness skills in order to assess if students are on a pathway toward a skilled career.

- Alignment with Labor Market Data: Finally, WDQC partners want to promote the greater availability and use of the best available labor market and job openings data. This will allow policymakers to better assess the relevance of offered education and workforce programs to current economic needs. It also will allow students, parents and workers to make more informed decisions about their studies toward potential careers.

We hope this agenda can build upon current state SLDS efforts, and bring additional attention to already successful state and federal efforts in these areas. We welcome input into how this evolving agenda might be further improved or expanded.

Who Should be Involved

The WDQC will be looking for input from a range of stakeholders who know different aspects of these data challenges, including

- Practice and policy experts in the areas of workforce development, career and technical education, adult education and postsecondary study;
- State policymakers and data experts who are developing systems that link student data across a range of programs, and to outcomes data on employment and credential attainment;
- Industry leaders who are working to establish and promulgate credential standards to inform curriculum development and employer hiring decisions in their industry;
- Federal agencies that are supporting public investments in the creation or expansion of workforce and education data systems at the state level; and
- Researchers who know what useful policy lessons can already be drawn from existing student and labor market data systems, as well as those questions for which we need new data sources.

For more information, please contact Andy Van Kleunen at National Skills Coalition (andyvk@nationalskillscoalition.org).