

Practice & Operations Advisory Group Meeting Summary

April 21, 2020

The Practice & Operations Advisory Group provides a means for the public to offer recommendations to the California Cradle-to-Career Workgroup about how the data system could address improvement efforts at the institutional and regional level, support a case management approach to service delivery, and create tools that would be useful to students, families, and teachers.

This document provides a summary of the key points that emerged from substantive discussion over the course the day. More information about the meeting, including a recording, materials referenced during the meeting, and the PowerPoint, are available at <https://cadatasystem.wested.org/meeting-information/practiceoperations-advisory-group>.

The following advisory group representatives attended the meeting:

Craig Hayward, Bakersfield College; Sara Arce, Campaign for College Opportunity; Susan Savage, Child Care Resource Center; Rick Miller, CORE Districts; Laurie Scolari, Foothill College; Anthony Dalton, Futuro Health; Michele Bowers, Lancaster Unified School District; Roneeta Guha, Linked Learning Alliance; Kathleen Porter, Poway Unified School District; Catalina Cifuentes, Riverside County Office of Education; Marcy Lauck & Joell Hanson, Santa Clara County Office of Education; Lange Luntao, Stockton Unified School District; David Rattray, UNITE-LA; and Jaclyn Pinero, uAspire.

Welcome

The meeting opened with comments by Ben Chida from the Governor's Office. He noted that the pandemic has underscored the urgency of linking data across systems, because multiple providers are needed to support Californians during the crisis. Having a strong data infrastructure in place would enable the state to better identify needs and craft collaborative solutions.

When asked by one participant how budget constraints should inform planning, Ben Chida responded that it would be helpful to identify priorities within a broader vision. Funding will be earmarked for the data system, particularly if the planning process clarifies the value of the investment related to supporting the state's economic recovery and reducing structural inequality. It is critical to keep up the momentum for this planning process, so that action isn't deferred on developing a system that addresses California's needs.

One advisory group member asked whether early care could be included in the first phase, and Ben Chida responded that the group should weigh in on what would be feasible. Another advisory group member asked whether the pandemic was making it difficult for the partner entities to engage in planning activities. The meeting facilitator clarified that work was proceeding on schedule with active participation from many partner entities. Finally, an advisory group member asked whether planning should focus on data that could help secure grant funding. Ben Chida responded that it would be helpful to identify ways that the proposed information could help California secure federal funding.

Next, Paige Kowalski from the Data Quality Campaign provided a national perspective on linked data systems during the crisis. She reported that in times of constrained resources, such as the 2008 financial crisis, states often report an increased need for data to inform decision making, particularly regarding

building stronger pipelines to employment and economic recovery. Legislators tend to support efforts that clarify how multiple constituencies can benefit from linking information or how efficiencies can be created. She also shared that Data Quality Campaign is gathering information on the types of questions that other states are leveraging their linked systems to answer during the pandemic, which will be shared back with the Cradle-to-Career planning team.

Updates

The facilitator provided an update on the proposed data system framework that had been identified over the first several months of planning. Some participants expressed concern that there was insufficient focus on the critical first five years of life. Because the term “P20W” reinforces this blind spot, there should be a specific focus on how information prior to pre-school could be integrated into the system, even if it is in a later phase.

The facilitator clarified that a parallel planning process is underway to develop a Master Plan for early care and an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) that links early care and K-12 records. Because that process is not as far along as Cradle-to-Career, the planning teams are looking for ways to ensure the two efforts are linked without preempting decisions that have not yet been made for the ECIDS. For example, early care representatives are helping to shape a Request for Information (RFI) that will be released this summer for the match engine that will be used to link individuals’ records across state agencies. This means that the ECIDS could potentially use the same technological architecture as the P20W system (as is the case in Minnesota), even if information were stored in a separate system that addresses legal and governance requirements that are unique to early care.

Tools for Practitioners and Individuals

Advisory group members broke into small groups to discuss three tools that are under consideration for the first phase of the state data system. After a report out on each tool, the full group discussed each option and content experts answered questions. Then the advisory group members voted on whether to recommend the tool to the Cradle-to-Career Workgroup. Results for each tool are listed below.

CaliforniaColleges.edu, hosted by the California Colleges Guidance Initiative (CCGI)

All fourteen members of the advisory group who were present (100%) voted “yes” to recommend this tool.

The discussion highlighted that CaliforniaColleges.edu/CCGI would streamline work for both practitioners and students while providing useful information to help ensure students are on track to go to college and ensure that K-12 districts are advancing toward funding-related goals. This option also allows a system with a proven track record to be made available for all students, thus addressing equity gaps. The group noted some areas that will be important to focus on going forward including how to make sure students who are digitally disconnected can still benefit from the tool, ensuring that parents can access information, and providing the professional development needed so that students and parents, as well as K-12 and postsecondary practitioners, can use this resource.

eTranscript California, hosted by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

All thirteen members present recommended this tool, with ten (77%) “yes” votes and three (23%) “yes, with reservations” votes. Concerns centered on whether the e-transcript service would be seen as

sufficiently valuable for education providers and the fact that the data would not be available for research purposes.

When asked about the value of this option, the group noted that—similar to CaliforniaColleges.edu/CCGI—eTranscript California/CDSS would build efficiencies that would be of particular benefit to foster youth and homeless students as they advance toward their postsecondary goals. In addition, the advisory group flagged that the ability of the new eTranscript California platform to include competency-based records, e-portfolios, and badges would be particularly important for adults who have lost jobs during the pandemic. One member noted that being able to bring in support services data is an important way to understand student needs in a more comprehensive manner.

Finally, two issues that were flagged for the workgroup. First, because some colleges currently charge for transcripts, they might be reluctant to give up this revenue. Second, eTranscript California would transmit information without examining data quality, unless additional funding were earmarked to address local data clean up.

Secure Data Environment, hosted by the Silicon Valley Regional Data Trust, in partnership with Stanislaus Cradle-to-Career Initiative

About 75% of the thirteen advisory group member present recommended this tool (with nine “yes” and one “yes, with reservations”) and three (23%) voted no. Concerns focused on the fact that the technology infrastructure is still in pilot phase, that it could be too much of a stretch, and the lack of preschool and postsecondary integration.

In describing the value of the Secure Data Environment/SVRDT, the group focused on being able to access real-time information for case management which is particularly useful during a crisis like the pandemic. While some members thought this tool might be a better candidate for phase two, another noted that it would be valuable to launch the pilot in phase one to determine whether it could be scaled to other regions in phase two.

P20W Data Set Use Case

After reviewing key components of the P20W data set use case, the group provided input regarding its scope and focus. One advisory group member noted that while the data in the tools for practitioners and individuals would be kept separate from the P20W data set in phase one, it would be valuable to identify design principles—such as leveraging common data standards—so that the information could be linked in a later stage.

The group emphasized the value of including qualitative as well as quantitative data in the state system. For example, information from commonly-used surveys could be integrated, such as student engagement, school climate, or alumni surveys. Some survey data are already reported to state agencies, such as the community college CTE Outcomes Survey. In a snap vote about whether to recommend the inclusion of qualitative data, ten people voted yes and one voted no.

The discussion also identified other key information that was missing. For example, information is too limited on early care, particularly voucher-based childcare in private centers and homes, which is the type of care most used by low-income children of color. One participant suggested that California look to other states for models on integrated early care data with P20W systems.

Another participant noted that information is needed from the Department of Justice. Absent this information, it may be difficult to understand the volume of students who end up in prison rather than college. Paige Kowalski from Data Quality Campaign noted that due to the sensitive nature of justice data, some states have passed laws that prevent this information from being shared. It will be important to establish trust when integrating this data set. The facilitator clarified that the question of whether to include the Department of Justice in the process had already been raised with the Governor's Office, but it was determined that this agency should be added in phase two, so as not to slow down planning (this agency was not named in the initial legislation).

Two participants noted the value of also including contextualizing information on learning, such as work-based learning and portfolio information. One possibility would be to leverage the capacity of eTranscript California to include portfolio information at a future phase. Work-based learning information can be logged in a limited fashion in the CaliforniaColleges.edu/CCGI tools.

The group also discussed the importance of including the right variables and definitions in the general categories listed, such as breaking out Associate Degrees for Transfer from other associate degrees, or clarifying the variables related to students' migrant status.

Finally, one participant flagged how important this data set will be to understand the impact of the pandemic on college-going and completion rates.

Tools to Access the P20W Data Set

First, the group was introduced to three user stories, which use the characteristic of comfort with quantitative data to create the categories of data novice, data apprentice, and data expert. Second, the facilitator summarized recommendations from the Policy & Analytics Advisory Group, which merged together several possible models for dashboards, query tools, and firewalled analytical tools. Then, advisory group members broke into small groups to discuss tool options. After each group reported out, the full group discussed the options (highlighted below) and crafted a proposal.

The eleven members of the group who voted (100%) unanimously endorsed the following approach, which aligns closely to the Policy & Analytics Advisory Group recommendations but adds the ability to upload specific cohorts of students into the secure data environment so that specific interventions or investments can be evaluated.

- Create public dashboards that have three levels of information: infographics, more complex charts, and the ability to export summary data on key issues.
- Create a public query builder tool that allows users to link together data tables to export de-identified, summary information.
- Create a secure data environment where authorized users can access de-identified, unitary information from all partner entities to conduct analyses, if approved through the data request process, including the ability to upload a cohort of students.

Public Versus Firewalled Data

Rather than put some information—like complex dashboards and query tools—behind a firewall, the group recommended that all dashboard and query builder resources be available to the public. The only information that should be behind the firewall is unitary data.

Data Tool Design

It will be critical to ensure that the tools are designed with the input of all desired users, especially representatives from many different communities and harder-to-reach populations such as non-English speakers and foster youth. Community members should be consulted on the content of the dashboards and the query tools, in addition to their functional design. One participant noted that when testing out the query tools that were covered in the background paper, some had poor responsiveness, which made them challenging to use. If the interface is too difficult to use, the investment may not generate the intended result.

Professional Development

To ensure that the data tools get used, it will be important to invest in communications, training, and technical assistance for both practitioners and the general public. The system should include user guides and resources that help the users understand the data, particularly in ways that help them contextualize equity gaps. Alternatives need to be considered for those with limited technology access.

Identified Data

In a future phase, it may be valuable to feed data into regional tools that are already used by practitioners—particularly if the goal is to share identified information on individual students to support service delivery or to connect information from the state data system with more current information that is only found at the regional level.

[Data Request Use Case](#)

In reviewing the proposed approach, several participants wondered if there could be more streamlined options for accessing and analyzing information, particularly in emergencies.

The group also raised a concern that if the partner entities have individual veto power over whether their data is used, they may be inclined to not make it available. It will be important to establish governance processes that ensure data can be shared.