Cradle-to-Career Definitions Subcommittee Meeting Summary
October 13, 2020

This document provides a summary of the key points that emerged from the October 13, 2020 meeting of the Definitions Subcommittee. The suggestions from this group will be used to craft specific definitions for data points in the P20W data set. More information about the meeting, including support materials, a recording of the meeting, and the PowerPoint, are available at https://cadatasystem.wested.org/meeting-information/definitions-subcommittee (click on "Meeting Materials").

The goals of this meeting were to:

- Clarify federal policy on sharing financial aid data
- Establish public display options for the following data points:
  - Age Brackets
  - Grade Level
  - Childhood Socioeconomic Status
  - Early College Credit
  - Met a-g Eligibility
  - Types of Financial Aid
  - Applied for Financial Aid
  - Approved for Financial Aid
  - Received Financial Aid
  - Sustained Financial Aid
  - Amount of Applied for Financial Aid
  - Parental Income Level
  - Expected Family Contribution
  - Total Cost of College
  - Applied to College
  - Accepted to College

The following Definitions Subcommittee representatives attended the meeting:

Randy Tarnowski, Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities; Todd Hoig, California Community College Chancellor's Office; Jerry Winkler, Glenn Miller & Channa Hewawickrama, California Department of Education; Muree Larson-Bright, California Department of Health Care Services; Akhtar Khan & Patrick Delaney, California Department of Social Services; Janet Buehler, California Department of Technology; Rima Mendez & Amy Fong, California School Information Services; Monica Malhotra, California State University; Adrian Felix, California Student Aid Commission; Marjorie Suckow & Phi Phi Lau, California Teacher Credentialing Commission; Chris Furgiele, University of California Office of the President; Todd Britton, University of LaVerne; and Valerie Mendelsohn, West Coast University

Follow Up on September Meeting Topics

Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and CalWORKS

CDSS confirmed that the first year data are available is 2015.

Age Brackets

The subcommittee reviewed a list of potential age brackets that included groupings for individuals under the age of 18 and older than 50. After making minor edits for consistency in the display option list and clarifying that ages are as of October 15, the group agreed to include the data point.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Completed Early College Credit as "ok to include."

K-12 Grade Levels

CDE focuses on grade levels rather than age because students of various ages may be in the same grade. Therefore, the group agreed to include a data point that specifies K-12 grade levels.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized K-12 Grade Levels as "ok to include."

ACTION ITEMS: CDE agreed to provide additional notes for documentation if needed.

K-12 Elements

Free and Reduced Price Meals

Given the decision at the September meeting to not create an explicit economically disadvantaged flag, the group approved adding a data point on eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meal Status while in K-12.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Free and Reduced Price Meals as "ok to include."

ACTION ITEMS: CDE agreed to clarify the first year when data are available and to provide additional notes for documentation if needed.

Completed Early College Credit

The group discussed whether it would be preferrable to use an existing CDE data point or if the data point should be derived by combining K-12 and community college data. While the group agreed that there would be value in leveraging the data system to evaluate the accuracy of existing flags, they recommended that the Cradle to Career system use the CDE data point for its public facing tools. The integration with the California College Guidance Initiative, as part of the Cradle-to-Career implementation, will help to strengthen this data point.

The group also determined that Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate scores be included with other assessment data, rather than with the Early College Credit flag, given that colleges vary in whether they count specific scores for college credit.

Finally, the group clarified that any transcripted course would be counted as a completion, rather than setting a threshold for the course grade (such as a C).

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Completed Early College Credit as "ok to include." They also suggested that linked data be used to validate information reported by local educational agencies and community colleges.

Met A-G Course Eligibility

The group discussed whether to clarify whether students met a-g eligibility requirements that are specific to CSU or to UC, or if a more generic flag could be used. Members of the subcommittee were unclear about how differential requirements could be flagged and for what purpose. If the goal is to determine students who met a-g eligibility requirements for either system, but did not apply, the information would need to come from CDE. However, CDE representatives cautioned that a-g eligibility is a flag that is applied by local educational institutions and is not validated by the agency. This data point is likely to become more reliable with the scaling of the California College Guidance Initiative that is planned as part of the Cradle-to-Career data system.

ACTION ITEM: Additional discussion is needed to determine what information might be available from CDE.

Financial Aid

Federal Policy on Sharing Financial Aid Data

Baron Rodriguez of WestEd, who previously worked for the federal Department of Education and developed guidance for the field on using financial aid data for state longitudinal data systems, presented a set of slides that had been part of a federal community outreach campaign. The presentation clarifies federal laws that determine when and how financial aid data can be shared and allowable purposes for data sharing, including three scenarios that would make it possible for financial aid data to be integrated into the Cradle-to-Career data system.

Several subcommittee members noted that their financial aid staff interpreted the federal requirements in a more conservative manner, including declining to share any information derived from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form for research purposes, even within their own institutions.

The group agreed that it would be helpful to determine which specific data points would be included in the Cradle-to-Career data system, to inform discussions about data sharing.

ACTION ITEM: WestEd staff offered to set up a training session or solicit guidance from current federal technical assistance providers to inform decisions by the partner entities about whether they can share financial aid data.

Types of Financial Aid

The subcommittee edited a list of suggested display options, adding private loans and Chafee Grant for Foster Youth to the options. However, one subcommittee member expressed concern that stat agencies won't have access to all private loan data, which could distort the picture of how students use loans to support their college education.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Type of Financial Aid as "concerns about the data." Display options should be evaluated to determine if the number of categories is too granular for the amount of available data, particularly regarding loans.

Applied for Financial Aid

The California Community Colleges representative noted that the state agency documents applications for many types of financial aid such as College Promise grants. The UC and CSU representatives noted that information may only be available for those who ultimately received aid.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Applied for Financial Aid as "ok to include."

ACTION ITEM: The subcommittee recommended that an additional element on Eligible for Aid be documented for the November meeting.

Approved for State Financial Aid

The group noted that this information would only be available for Cal Grants and Chafee Grants.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Approved for Financial Aid as "ok to include."

Received Financial Aid

The subcommittee approved the data point without comment.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Received Financial Aid as "ok to include."

Duration of State Financial Aid

The group noted that this information would only be available for Cal Grants and Chafee Grants but would need to be calculated by the Managing Entity.

The subcommittee discussed whether it was better to list the number of years or to use a median number of years and determined that the median would be more useful.

Given that information would need to be contextualized by other factors, such as whether students were enrolled continuously or if they were in school for a longer than four years, the subcommittee recommended that this data point be made available through the request process rather than displayed on the dashboard.

DECISION: The subcommittee indicated that Duration of Financial Aid should be calculated by the Managing Entity and available through the request process only.

Amount of Financial Aid

The group discussed whether it was better to list groupings of aid amounts or to focus on the median amount of aid. Given that some institutions cap the amount of aid, the group determined that it would be preferrable to include minimum, median, and maximum amount of aid. Subcommittee members also cautioned that financial aid amounts need to be contextualized by the cost of attendance and whether students are enrolled year-round.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Amount of Financial Aid as "concerns about the data." Further analysis is needed on whether to include the maximum amount of aid.

College Costs

Income Level

The subcommittee edited the title and description for this data point to clarify that the information is presented in the context of financial aid applications, and to point out that the figure refers to both financially dependent and independent students.

The group evaluated whether to include information from all students who applied for financial aid, which is available from 2014, or students who received financial aid, which is available from 1994. Given that this data point may be helpful for identifying families that earn too much for federal aid but still are seeking support to cover college costs, the group elected to focus on all students who applied.

Subcommittee members also noted that the figure will need to be adjusted for inflation.

Finally, because this data point comes from the FAFSA, there will be limitations on which students would be represented, particularly because most community college students do not fill out the FAFSA.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Income Level as "concerns about the data." Further analysis is needed on the implications for missing data from community college students, and amounts need to be adjusted for inflation.

Expected Family Contribution

The group discussed whether to use a set of ranges similar to Hawaii, which focuses on no contribution, Pell-related contribution levels, and then increments of $10,000, or ranges that advance in $1,000 increments that are posted by CSAC. The CSAC representative noted that Hawaii's data probably represents all students who applied for aid, not just those who are eligible for aid. The group felt that it would be valuable to display both value sets.

DECISION: The subcommittee recommended that two data points be created: one for Expected Family Contribution for All Students Who Applied for Aid and one for Expected Family Contribution for Students Eligible for Aid. Both data points are characterized as "concerns about the data." Further analysis is needed on the implications for missing data from community college students.

Total Cost of College

Subcommittee members reviewed concerns that were raised about the Student Expenses and Resources Survey (SEARS) as a source of information on this topic. Given that most four-year institutions post the cost of college on their websites, the group recommended that the Managing Entity work with data providers to identify these figures (both currently and historically), and load this information into the data system as a characteristic of each institution.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Total Cost of College as "ok to include," based on a list compiled by the Managing Entity.

College Applications

Applied to College

The subcommittee approved the data point without comment.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Applied to College as "ok to include."

Admitted to College

The subcommittee approved the data point after adjusting the wording from "accepted" to "admitted" and approving a caveat that would clarify that all students who apply to community college would be marked as having been admitted, given that community colleges are open access institutions.

DECISION: The subcommittee categorized Admitted to College as "ok to include."