



# Smart Data for a Skilled, Inclusive 21st Century Workforce

State and federal elected officials face an urgent question: Are our education policies equitably serving a diverse workforce and nimbly responding to the evolving skill needs of our 21st century economy? NSC has been building political momentum around an economic imperative: Developing public data systems that allow elected officials to answer this question. With awareness and political urgency elevated, NSC is now expanding our work with advocates, practitioners, and state and federal officials to develop smart data policies, systems, and tools that tell us if we're skilling our workforce and if we're doing it in a racially equitable, inclusive way.

## Who needs workforce data? Everyone.

- **Students & workers** trying to figure out which colleges and training programs are best at helping people land a job, continue their studies or advance in the labor market.
- **Policymakers** who need to know whether education and workforce programs are preparing people for good jobs and if outcomes are equitable across racial groups.
- **Business leaders** seeking skilled workers and wondering whether education and training programs are preparing prospective employees to meet their companies' needs.
- **Educators** wanting to know the long-term education and employment outcomes of their graduates so they can continually improve their courses and curricula.

## We want smarter workforce data

NSC is working toward a future where all states and the federal government will have data systems in place to measure how well education and training programs are preparing skilled workers for the 21st century economy. The systems will track employment outcomes for graduates of all postsecondary, workforce development, and support service programs, and document the pathways whereby people combine those programs to develop new careers. The data systems will include information on all credentials—not just degrees, but also certificates, licenses, and certifications—and assess where they line up with real jobs going unfilled in the labor market. States and federal agencies will use this information to guide investments toward programs with the greatest records of success, and to assess whether programs and policies deliver racially equitable outcomes. Finally, we want to see states and federal agencies make key data available in accessible formats to help students and workers select education and career paths that lead to good jobs.

## How we'll get there

- **Working across policies:** Different skills policies exist to address the specific needs of different workers and industries. Better data helps align these programs and make it easier for workers to move across systems and get the skills they need throughout their career. We work to advance data reforms across workforce training, career and technical education, work-based learning and apprenticeship, higher education, adult literacy, safety net programs, trade adjustment assistance, transportation, energy and infrastructure training programs, and others.
- **Supporting smarter data nationally and in the states:** We develop and mobilize our networks in support of comprehensive data proposals. We seek to capture disaggregated employment and earnings outcomes at the program level so the public can see who is being well served, and who is

not, by different programs. We provide technical assistance to federal agencies implementing these policies. We work with states to include learners across all human capital programs in their longitudinal data systems so that everyone is counted, and so we can track everyone's employment and earning outcomes. And we help states develop tools to better understand the demand for skilled workers in specific occupations within regional industries, as well as which programs are most effective at filling those jobs.

## Our strategy

- **Consensus building to develop smart data policy:** NSC works with states and national partners to develop model data policies based on what is working in leading edge states. For example, NSC worked with twelve states and a group of national organizations to develop quality assurance criteria that can be written into policies to ensure public dollars are supporting student enrollment only in proven programs—including those that support the attainment of in-demand, non-degree credentials.
- **Direct technical assistance:** NSC has provided direct technical assistance to agencies and administrators in over twenty states over the last five years to build effective state data systems and tools, including cross-program dashboards, pathway evaluators, and supply-demand groups. We've advised federal agencies on implementation of new data requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, SNAP Employment & Training, and other federal skills policies.
- **Advocacy campaigns:** We work with state coalitions to win legislative changes to state data policy. We also mobilize our national network and Business Leaders United to engage the press and members of Congress in support of federal data policies, like the bipartisan College Transparency Act.

## Our key partners

- Through a Workforce Data National Advisory Panel to be launched in early 2020, NSC will convene state data administrators, local colleges, community organizations, intermediaries, unions, and employers who help shape our data policy proposals to reflect and replicate what's working in states.
- Through our SkillSPAN network of state advocacy coalitions, we work with local partners to develop and implement data policies that can make college work for today's workers and employers.
- Our network of Business Leaders United state affiliates help us shape data policies that enable workers to access the in-demand skills that businesses seek.
- NSC works with dozens of national organizations and national networks to expand the reach and impact of our data technical assistance and advocacy efforts.

## Our shared success: Smart data

- **State Policy:** In 2018, NSC helped develop and pass the Career Preparation Expansion Act, which will help Maryland measure non-degree credential attainment. NSC helped seven other states expand their data systems to capture more types of education/training providers or credentials, adopt tools to ensure that credential attainment is equitable and market-relevant, and establish quality standards for non-degree credentials. These states included Alabama, Colorado, Tennessee, California, Louisiana, Rhode Island, and West Virginia.
- **Federal Policy:** In 2018, NSC continued to advocate for federal support of state longitudinal data systems, helping to maintain investments in the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) which provides grants to support state data system infrastructure. NSC's Business Leaders United brought business leaders and their community and technical college partners from fourteen states to Washington to meet members of Congress and call for support of the College Transparency Act. NSC also worked with business leaders in key Congressional districts to place op-eds in support of the bill.

*National Skills Coalition (NSC) is a broad-based coalition 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 technical assistance, analysis, organizing, advocacy, and communications to advance state and federal policies that support these goals—policies based on the on-the-ground expertise of our members.*