

Best Practices for Postsecondary Outcomes Data Use: Provide Ongoing and Adaptive Support

States can help districts and schools use postsecondary outcomes data effectively to develop and improve programs that positively affect students’ transitions to higher education and the workforce.

QIP interviewed states that are in different stages of using postsecondary outcomes data, including making this data available to districts. These conversations provided information on five best practices to support the use of postsecondary outcomes data at all levels. To learn more about states' best practices on using postsecondary outcomes data, please see [Best Practices on Using Postsecondary Outcomes Data](#) and an [infographic](#) that expands on best practices for using postsecondary outcomes data.

This resource focuses on the best practice of providing ongoing and adaptive support to districts and schools to use postsecondary outcomes data, including real-world examples from states.

What are the Benefits of Providing Ongoing and Adaptive Support?

States can increase the impact of data reports and visualizations by providing continuous support that strategically addresses the needs and goals of districts, high school counselors, and other stakeholders in reading and using data.



Supporting districts increases buy-in from data users. The more that district and school staff understand the goals and plans for postsecondary outcomes data, the more likely they are to use that data to inform their postsecondary advising and program development. This also contributes to a feedback loop where staff who use data, such as counselors, can help state and district leaders understand which data is most useful for providing guidance to students, as well as areas where additional data or research could help address disparities revealed by the data.



Providing training to counselors and other district staff on how to use the data and involving them in program evaluation will help to serve all individuals involved in this process. Students who have not been adequately served in the past will likely benefit the most from increasing support for data users.

How Can States Provide Ongoing and Adaptive Support?

Support should be tailored to address the needs and goals of educators, parents, and other stakeholders. This could include

- increasing access to postsecondary outcomes data;
- training on how to use data reports and tools;
- developing customized reports specific to district needs and requests; and
- offering coaching on analyzing and using data to improve pathways for students.



The **Minnesota** Office of Higher Education (OHE) provides customized, on-the-ground support to data users through its Regional Coaching Network. Data coaches specific to each region in the state work with district and high school leaders to help them understand and use postsecondary outcomes data from the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Educational Data System (SLEDs) to inform decisions about counseling students on postsecondary opportunities.

Operating as trainers, data analysts, and key communicators, data coaches provide a direct connection between state-level data and local needs. Coaches are available to help districts refine questions about their data and find the data that can help answer their questions.

Want to learn more? [Download a full case study](#) on Minnesota’s Regional Coaching Network.



Created to help students in **New Mexico** attain a higher education degree, the New Mexico Educational Assistance Foundation (NMEAF) partners with K-12 education agencies to ensure that students and families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). NMEAF provides school counselors with detailed information on where their students are in the FAFSA process. This data comes from FAFSA through the state and is shared with NMEAF for distribution to high schools.



The **North Carolina** Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) supports North Carolina’s districts postsecondary outcomes data use by having staff from the North Carolina Office of Science, Technology & Innovation meet in person with district superintendents and charter leaders to review their local data. Local administrators learn how the data is compiled and are encouraged to delve into the data to analyze and consider what the data says about their schools’ performance.

NCDPI has also developed a postsecondary outcomes summary report for each district to support the use of National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data, expanding beyond the school and state reports specified in the state’s contract with NSC. This district-level report covers multiple areas, such as fall enrollment (the number of students who matriculate the semester following high school graduation) and the 25 colleges most attended by students in the district. Each report includes data visualizations, an index of figures in the report, a user guide, and full tables for district use. Users can pull images as separate files to use in presentations or district-level reports.

To learn more, [download the full case study](#) on North Carolina’s targeted support for districts and schools.



The **Arizona** Department of Education works with the Arizona State University Helios Decision Center for Educational Excellence and the Arizona Board of Regents to develop [Postsecondary Feedback Reports](#). Each report is password protected and contains only information relevant to each district. Individual district reports provide an overview of the postsecondary pathways of students matriculating from the district to a 2- or 4-year program as well as the percentage of students who are receiving financial aid and are eligible for Pell grants.

Does your state provide ongoing & adaptive support for your districts and schools to use postsecondary outcomes data? Join the K12 Community of Practice: Using Postsecondary Data (www.k12usingpsdata.com) to share with other data professionals around using this data to improve student outcomes.

