



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

Report on Colorado's Longitudinal Data Landscape and Future

2026 report

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The Colorado Department of Higher Education
Report to the Colorado House of Representative's Education Committee and Colorado Senate
Education Committee

Statute: CRS 23-1-141

Report on Colorado’s Longitudinal Data Landscape and Future
Colorado Department of Higher Education

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), under its own authority and through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), oversees and coordinates policy for 31 public institutions of higher education (including community colleges, independent local district colleges and local area technical colleges) and authorizes and regulates private colleges, universities and occupational schools.

Mission – We support students, advocate and develop policies to maximize higher education opportunities for all.

Vision – All Coloradans will have an education beyond high school to pursue their dreams and improve our communities.



Prepared and submitted by the Colorado Department of Higher Education
under the Executive Leadership of JB Holston
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1600 Broadway, Suite 2200, Denver, CO 80202

For more information contact:

Michael Vente

CDHE@dhe.state.co.us

Introduction

Colorado is committed to creating a state where every individual can thrive by implementing bold policies, expanding innovative programs and building a truly inclusive future. Achieving these ambitions requires the responsible, well-governed use of data that spans sectors and time. Leveraging longitudinal data—collecting, connecting, and applying it effectively—empowers evidence-based decision-making and transforms these goals from vision to reality.

As required by CRS 23-1-141, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) must report on the steps taken, barriers encountered and recommendations—including any legislative changes—needed to implement a statewide longitudinal data system that links K–12, postsecondary education and workforce information. This document represents the fourth report on Colorado’s longitudinal data landscape and outlines strategies to advance this work.

Overview of Past Reports

- The [2023 report](#) provides an overview of the Colorado longitudinal data landscape along with recommendations to strengthen well-governed data connections across state agencies.
- The [2024 report](#) provides updates on work, elevates specific use cases that can benefit from a more robust longitudinal data infrastructure and provides concrete actions Colorado can take to reinforce work around longitudinal data.
- The [2025 report](#) summarizes the recommendations of a Technical Working Group convened by CDHE to better measure the value of postsecondary education and the ways better longitudinal data can support those efforts.

This 2026 report highlights the collaborative work of Colorado state agencies, led by the Office of Information Technology (OIT), to develop the Colorado Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). It

covers progress on system design, governance, use cases and data sharing efforts to achieve the SLDS's goals.

Colorado Data Connections (COData)

As Colorado integrates secondary, postsecondary and work-based learning, longitudinal data better equips institutions in designing pathways that reduce excess credits and time and connect with workforce needs. In 2024, [HB24-1364](#) charged OIT in partnership with multiple state agencies to create a statewide longitudinal data system to serve as a secure and unified source for education and workforce data.

The system's purpose is to connect disparate data systems across state agencies, including the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), CDHE and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). The [Colorado SLDS](#) (named Colorado Data Connections or COData) will provide a more centralized way for Coloradans and agencies to make informed decisions related to education and workforce readiness. The system's core function is to provide insights into program effectiveness and impact, which helps the state intentionally invest in educational opportunities. The data will be used to answer key questions, such as which high school programs lead to gainful employment and how college tuition costs align with potential long-term earnings. COData is also designed to enhance data security and privacy by minimizing the need for numerous data-sharing agreements between agencies, thereby reducing the movement of data.

Collaborative Design and Development

The bill established a governing board with executive-level voting members who began work in July 2024 and met monthly to align work around vision, mission, values and operating principles. In addition to the governing board, the governance structure of COData includes two advisory groups: 1) sustainability and 2) build and implementation. The governing board established the mission, vision

and charter and approved the final legal framework, which includes the memorandum of understanding (MOU), data sharing agreement (DSA) and [data governance policies](#).

COData Vision

Coloradans have access to high-quality, trusted, and integrated information to confidently make data-informed decisions so our individuals and communities thrive.

COData Mission

The Colorado Statewide Longitudinal Data System securely connects data across state agencies and time, and serves as the source of understandable information that supports decision makers in their efforts to improve education and workforce outcomes and address opportunity gaps.

Prioritizing Education to Career Pipelines

The governing board has endorsed initial cross-agency use cases centered on the ‘Big Three’ [postsecondary workforce readiness \(PWR\) outcomes](#)—college credit attainment, industry certification attainment and work-based learning. Early analytic questions include the impacts of participation and completion in education, program co-enrollment patterns and participation by demographic groups. Success metrics under discussion include graduation, postsecondary enrollment, retention and completion, employment, job and industry retention, and one-, five- and 10-year wage outcomes. The sustainability advisory group prioritized programs to be included in Phase I reporting. These programs are grouped into three strategic groupings:

- Strategic Grouping #1: High School Experiences through Curricular Programs to Postsecondary Education and Wage Outcomes
 - [AP \(test scores\)](#)
 - [IB Diploma](#)
 - [Concurrent/Dual Enrollment](#)
 - [CTE](#)

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- [P-TECH](#)
- [ASCENT](#)
- [CDIP](#)
- Strategic Grouping #2: Educational Attainment to Wage Outcomes for Credentials
 - High School completion
 - Certificates (<1, 1-2 years)
 - Certificates (Post Master's & Post Bachelor's/Baccalaureate)
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Postgraduate (Master's and Ph.D.)
- Strategic Grouping #3: Impact of Postsecondary Programs on Wage Outcomes
 - [Colorado Re-engaged Initiative \(CORE\)](#)
 - [Registered Apprenticeships](#)
 - [WIOA programs](#)

System Build and Next Steps

Aligned to the goals and responsibilities of COData and leveraging the MOU, DSA and data governance policies, state agencies have begun sharing data with OIT. CDHE, CDE and CDLE have worked with OIT staff to identify required data fields to meet the needs of the various reporting requirements. Each agency has shared that data with OIT (as required by HB24-1364). OIT has begun the process of linking data across student identifiers and years to create the foundation of the longitudinal data system. OIT has also completed the contracting process with its vendor partner (FocalPoint) to support SLDS system development.

The governing board (with input from stakeholders, agencies and national partners) continues to develop a research agenda for SLDS to inform future iterations of the system's work and to guide additional system development. As this agenda continues to develop, additional data elements may be

necessary from SLDS partnering agencies. Agencies will continue to work collaboratively with OIT to identify data needs and share data with OIT for SLDS purposes aligned to the established data governance processes.

Conclusion

As summarized in CDHE reports on Colorado's longitudinal data landscape, various efforts over several years have worked to elevate the importance of robust longitudinal data in evidence-based decision-making and education/training pathways development. Colorado state agencies have made considerable progress in making these long-standing goals a reality. Current efforts led by OIT position COData for success by establishing clear collaborative processes around data sharing/governance, identifying important use cases, and developing agile systems to facilitate expansion. CDHE will remain a strong supporter of these efforts and continue to work collaboratively with state agency partners to unlock insights to help policymakers better serve Coloradans, equip all Coloradans with more valuable information to thrive in their communities and enable (through data) stories of more Coloradans to be elevated.