SLDS Sustainability Toolkit

Best Practices & Resources

State Support Team

This document is intended to serve as a companion to the Sustainability Planning Guide and the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool, and follows the same four-section structure: Stakeholder Support, Ensuring Widespread Use, Financial Support, and Return on Investment.

The following resources and best practices will benefit states as they focus on developing sustainable systems. All resources are available in the GRADS360° Public Domain Clearinghouse (PDC) Documents at https://slds.grads360.org, unless otherwise noted.[1]

Figure 1. The four sections of this document, Planning Guide, and the Self-Assessment Tool

[1] An overview of the PDC and detailed instructions for uploading documents are available at https://nces.grads360.org/app/downloads/PDC_intro_Docs_instructions.pdf.

Stakeholder Support

Best Practices

Arkansas: Funded by the state's SLDS grant, the Arkansas Research Center (ARC) provides the legislature with regular reports from the SLDS, resulting in strong support from the legislature.

Georgia: Georgia's SLDS team views local SLDS users as its customers, and is designing an SLDS driven by their needs. Through its SLDS Governance Board, the SLDS team consults its districts early and often about the system's design and inclusion of data elements to ensure the system meets its users' needs. Additionally, the CIO holds a monthly conference call with districts across the state.

Mississippi: The SLDS team engaged stakeholders in building the state's P-20W SLDS, LifeTracks (to be released Summer 2013). Strong stakeholder support for the system convinced the Governor to ensure its continued funding.

New Mexico: The state has created a user-friendly Data Dashboard Toolkit in its SLDS for policy makers and the public to access relevant data and reports, building support for the SLDS.

North Dakota: By including legislators on its SLDS governance board, the state has been able to respond effectively to legislative priorities and gain its support. The state's SLDS team engages the legislature through multiple channels, including districts, education organizations, and P-20W executive leadership.

Resources

Engaging Legislators to Secure Support for the SLDS (PPT Presentation). Georgia shared their strategy of integrating SLDS efforts with the legislature's initiative to integrate technology into education; North Dakota discussed the Governor's Commission on Education Improvement; and New Mexico spoke about its Data Dashboard Toolkit and House Bill 70, which established a data system partnership between the Public Education Department and the Higher Education Department.

Engaging P-20W Stakeholders (PPT Presentation). Strategies for engaging P–20 stakeholders were discussed, including who is engaged and why, how stakeholders with varying backgrounds are engaged, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and lessons learned from engaging P–20 stakeholders.

Sustainability Tip

Chances are that some state legislative interests align with the goals of the SLDS project. Pay attention to policy debates and legislative mandates in the state, and identify areas where the SLDS may fit into the discussion.

Engaging Postsecondary Stakeholders (SLDS Spotlight): The effective engagement of postsecondary stakeholders is crucial to the development of a successful P-20W (preschool through workforce) data system. While many states have mandated postsecondary participation in P-20W systems, all states should cultivate strong relationships among the different P-20W institutions, ensuring that postsecondary stakeholders (for-profit colleges, four-year universities, community colleges) for instance, share in the benefits of P-20W data linkages. This Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Spotlight discusses the challenges faced and lessons learned by Washington, Connecticut, Illinois, and Maine in their efforts to engage with the postsecondary community.

Engaging Stakeholders Resource List: Comprehensive list of resources developed to assist in engaging stakeholders of various types at various levels in LDS development.

Florida Department of Education Communications Management Plan: This plan addresses the communication needs of the various stakeholders associated with the SLDS Program and how those needs will be met. By defining the needs and outlining a plan for producing and disseminating the needed information, a system will be in place to keep stakeholders informed in a timely manner.

Georgia Legislative Reports: Georgia uses SLDS data to build customized reports for state legislators, empowering them to understand and promote the SLDS.

Kansas Communication Matrix Template: A template that can be completed and modified for various projects. The template allows the user to detail multiple means of communication including a description, purpose, author, audience, frequency, and the preferred method for updates/communication.

Sustainability Tip

Help stakeholders to become aware of SLDS resources that they already use by applying the state's SLDS name and graphic to every product.

Mississippi LifeTracks Demonstration (SLDS Webinar Presentation): LifeTracks is designed to help meet data needs for reporting requirements and to answer critical policy questions relevant to education, workforce, and economic development. Moving the state beyond patchwork data sharing, Mississippi LifeTracks is an interoperable data system that securely and efficiently facilitates research and analysis and provides linkages between early childhood, K12, postsecondary education, and the workforce.

Oregon Data Project Communications Plan: This plan template consists of several introductory sections, as well as a set of tables to help states systematically address the people and issues involved in a solid stakeholder engagement plan. Each section of this document includes a set of guiding questions to help users develop their own plan based on their unique environment

Stakeholder Communication: An SLDS Best Practice Brief: Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, and Oregon participated in a discussion with Robin Taylor of the SLDS State Support Team around stakeholder communications. The SLDS Best Practices Brief captures the strategies, best practices, and lessons learned from these states' experiences.

Stakeholder Engagement Plan Guide and Template: This plan template consists of several introductory sections, as well as a set of tables to help states systematically address the people and issues involved in a solid stakeholder engagement plan. Each section of this document includes a set of guiding questions to help users develop their own plan based on their unique environment.

Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit: This stakeholder engagement toolkit guides readers through "Stakeholder Land," an imaginary board game that helps SEAs and LEAs develop a strategic approach towards stakeholder engagement.

State Approaches to Engaging Local K12 Stakeholders (SLDS Spotlight:): Engaging with local K12 stakeholders is critical to ensuring the successful development of statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS), as well as to improving utility and sustainability. Involving staff from multiple districts helps to identify, align, and leverage existing resources. This SLDS Spotlight discusses the strategies used and lessons learned by Virginia, Oregon, Iowa, and Washington, DC through efforts to engage with stakeholders.

Washington's P-20W Program Newsflash: The state's P-20W Program's bi-monthly newsletter to stakeholders.

Ensuring Widespread Use

Best Practices

Georgia: Georgia built its system in step with the needs of its users and measures its success by their use of the system. To drive local use of the system, a team of eight state employees, all former teachers, offer regular in-person and web-based trainings to local users and to the state's Regional Education Service Agencies. These trainings are well integrated with the rest of the technology trainings offered by the state. There is also a Georgia SLDS Twitter feed (@GeorgiaSLDS) directed toward teachers.

Hawaii: The state's SLDS and Curriculum and Instruction teams have collaborated to provide data training to complex areas, complexes, and individual schools.[2] This collaborative approach emphasizes the importance of data use to improve instructional decisions. The state has 16 data coaches serving the complex areas, and data teams and specialists are prevalent in schools, facilitating a culture of data use.

Sustainability Tip

Training stakeholders to use both SLDS tools and the data itself is essential, and will drive the system's continued relevance.

Oregon: Oregon holds a Summer Assessment Institute where educators connect and discuss their use of data. Each year, the Oregon DATA Project also sponsors training sessions across the state, with opportunities for interested individuals to become certified to facilitate a team process on how to use data to improve instruction.

Washington: Focusing on creating partnerships with data contributors, Washington Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) invites stakeholders to every meeting determining which data are collected in the SLDS. Stakeholders from each partner agency are involved in all decisions about data collection and use. Strong partnerships enable ERDC to conduct and facilitate research beneficial to the state.

Resources

Arkansas Department of Education's Statewide Longitudinal Data System: Report of 2012 Survey Results: The purpose of this report is to provide ADE with insights into the quality and effectiveness of these state-operated data systems as perceived by stakeholders. The findings presented in this report emanate from the results of online surveys administered to educational staff across the state in May 2012, including classroom teachers as well as administrators at the regional cooperative, district, and school levels. The surveys were developed and administered by Metis Associates, an independent research and evaluation consulting firm retained by the ADE to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the SLDS initiative.

Communicating Data Use to External Stakeholders: Issues and Advice from States (draft)

Data Use Resource List: A list of resources available online related to data use. Sections include general data use, educator data use, program evaluation data use, researcher data use, and stakeholder engagement.

Data Use Self-Assessment and Action Plan: A self-assessment for states to use to gauge their current status regarding a comprehensive data use approach.

[2] Hawaii's complexes are composed of a high school and the intermediate/middle and elementary schools that feed into it.

Developing a Data Use Strategy (draft)

Evaluation of the Arkansas Statewide Longitudinal Data System Initiative: Qualitative Findings Report: The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has contracted with Metis Associates to develop and implement an evaluation of its Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) initiative. The purpose of this report is to provide ADE with insights into the quality and effectiveness of the state-operated data systems as perceived by stakeholders.

Georgia's SLDS Training Resources: Georgia uses both online and instructor-led training for reaching out to teachers, school administrators, and district staff.

Georgia SLDS Usage Map: To track the effectiveness of Georgia's SLDS Marketing & Training program, the agency develops a map that shows teacher usage in each LEA.

Oregon DATA/KIDS III Projects Integrated Communications Plan: This plan details educator professional development, the development of a statewide Data Use Policy and Procedures, and the enhancement of data stores within Oregon's educational data system.

Washington ERDC Brief: Postsecondary Education Enrollment Patterns: This study describes the postsecondary enrollment patterns for a cohort of 2004–05 Washington public high school graduates by examining their postsecondary enrollment records for a period of five years following their graduation.

Washington ERDC: Workforce Participation: Washington's Workforce Participation study focuses on the overlap between enrollment and employment during high school years, and on the transitions that occur at high school graduation.

Sustainability Tip

Fully engaged stakeholders will

1. Know the system and how to use it;
2. Believe that SLDS data use will help achieve project/program goals; and
3. Use SLDS data to drive decisionmaking.

State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use (PPT Presentation). The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) annually surveys states to chart their progress toward implementing the DQC's "10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use" and toward addressing other key policy issues. In this presentation, DQC presents an overview of the 2012 survey results, and the Georgia Department of Education provides one state's perspective on taking such steps as providing teachers access to their students' longitudinal data.

Traveling through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems- Advanced LDS Usage. This fourth book in the guide series focuses on issues important to the effective use of longitudinal data, including data use training.

Financial Support

Best Practices

Arkansas: Strong support from the legislature, the Governor, and the Governor's Workforce Cabinet has enabled continued state funding to build, maintain, and expand the SLDS. In 2011 the legislature passed legislation institutionalizing the requirement to track students into employment.

Georgia: The SLDS team built its K12 SLDS in-house to ensure continued capacity to maintain and enhance the system beyond the end of the state's SLDS grant.

Kentucky: The SLDS team gained long-term state funding for its P-20W SLDS when the Governor established the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS), a new, state-funded agency to manage SLDS data and facilitate research.

Washington: The state worked with Gartner Consulting to identify and assess the total cost of the SLDS in order to make a case for additional state funding.

Resources

Alternative Sources of Support for SLDS Work: An SLDS Best Practices Brief: Critical to the longevity and ultimate success of an SLDS is the acquisition of funding or other resources from multiple sources of support. This SLDS Best Practices Brief summarizes the tips and lessons learned shared by representatives from Arkansas, Colorado, and Texas on a monthly SLDS topical webinar facilitated by Corey Chatis of the SLDS State Support Team. Topics covered include supporter identification, relationship initiation, and effective communication to ensure engagement and sustained support.

Gartner's Analysis of Washington State's K12 Education Data System: Washington worked with Gartner Consulting to identify and assess the total cost of the information technology infrastructure, application services, and program support needed to maximize and sustain K12 education data systems.

KCEWS Executive Order: This executive order established KCEWS as an independent agency, attached to the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, Office of the Secretary.

Traveling through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems - Planning and Developing an LDS. Planning and Developing an LDS is the second in a four-part series about longitudinal data systems (LDS). This installment discusses the early stages of LDS development, and will help state and local education agencies through the process of determining what they want to accomplish with their LDS and what they will need in order to achieve these goals.

Sustainability Tip

States/agencies are often asked to justify budget figures, and it is helpful to understand how much the system costs. An intensive account review/cost analysis—both before beginning work and throughout the life of the SLDS—can help mitigate any unforeseen issues that may arise.

Return on Investment

Best Practices

Arkansas: Arkansas uses its SLDS to track duplicate enrollment, saving the state millions. Currently, Arkansas is working with Pennsylvania State University in a quasi-ROI study examining higher education and wage outcomes of K12 CTE students by program area.

Idaho: By increasing data quality in its SLDS, the state more appropriately funded districts and saved money.

Iowa: Iowa is developing a "Return on Education" (ROE) to explain how the state's investment in the SLDS is benefitting education in Iowa.

Texas: Texas has a balanced approach to ROI: Quantitative ROI satisfies fiduciary responsibility, while qualitative factors ensure a comprehensive perspective of the SLDS's benefit to the state.

Wisconsin: The state quantified cost savings from both its data collection system and software licensing, and documented time savings for state and local users of the SLDS.

Sustainability Tip

SLDS project supporters want to know that they have made a worthy investment. Providing reports, screen shots, or a live demonstration will help the stakeholders understand the SLDS team's accomplishments and how this work has advanced shared educational goals.

Resources

Documenting and Quantifying ROI (SLDS Best Practice Conference Presentation): Arkansas, Texas, and Wisconsin have been strategic in determining the ROI, both quantitative and qualitative, gained from their systems.