



# Using Data to Strengthen Workforce Training

## Four Ways States Can Take Action

### Executive Summary

One of the main ways all levels of government in the United States support adults with low incomes and displaced workers to secure new jobs is by providing a variety of services for these individuals to undertake workforce training programs. For both training participants and policymakers, a leading goal of completing these programs is for people to secure good quality employment with long-term career and economic mobility potential.





State governments play a key role in the provision of these supports by overseeing Eligible Training Provider Lists (ETPLs), directories of workforce training programs that people who receive training subsidies through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) can enroll in. While only a small share of those enrolling in workforce training receive WIOA-funded training subsidies, these lists of state-approved programs can also be used by the broader public to assess options in the process of choosing a training program.

The programs on these lists vary widely in terms of labor market outcomes and the lists often lack critical information that would help training seekers make an informed decision. At the same time, enrolling in these programs involves a considerable investment of time, energy, and resources on behalf of individuals. Rather than finding a new job that offers family-sustaining wages and benefits, far too many people make significant investments to pursue workforce training programs, but ultimately obtain low-wage jobs with unclear paths to mobility.

To aid states in moving beyond these challenges, this policy brief presents strategies for states to create data systems and online tools that equip training seekers and others with vital information around program outcomes and quality, and to use data systems to improve the quality of training offerings.

In relation to these goals, the focus is on Eligible Training Provider (ETP) programs, which often are not subject to the same accountability systems that apply to many degree-granting programs. This brief is intended to serve as a resource for state leaders, including state labor agencies, state workforce boards, and governors and their staff, though the insights and case studies here can be helpful to a broader community of workforce development and economic mobility stakeholders. By making improvements in these areas, states can make participating in workforce training programs a better investment for the public and program participants.

Across four areas for state advancement, the brief notes critical challenges faced by states, followed by suggested strategies and case studies highlighting notable state efforts:

Area for Advancement	State Strategies	Case Studies
 <p><b>1. Build Robust State Data Systems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make answering questions on training program quality a statewide priority</li> <li>• Provide clear data definitions for training providers</li> <li>• Proactively address limitations of state wage data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Colorado</li> <li>– Minnesota</li> </ul>
 <p><b>2. Design a Program Quality Framework</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement program outcome benchmarks in collaboration with training providers</li> <li>• Avoid penalizing programs for serving participants facing pronounced labor market barriers, while still incorporating meaningful outcomes standards for such programs</li> <li>• Commit to transparency and stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Explore and utilize state regulatory authority to hold programs accountable for outcomes beyond ETP policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– New Jersey</li> <li>– Alabama</li> </ul>
 <p><b>3. Maintain a Navigable Resource on Program Quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek dedicated funding</li> <li>• Prioritize user-centric design</li> <li>• Highlight and contextualize wage outcomes to help users navigate career paths and training options</li> <li>• Disaggregate outcomes across participant demographics when possible</li> <li>• Implement a distribution plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Washington state</li> <li>– Indiana</li> </ul>
 <p><b>4. Identify and Address Gaps in the Training Landscape</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare labor supply and demand</li> <li>• Include stakeholder outreach to understand barriers to entry and completion</li> <li>• Direct resources to high-quality programs to fill gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Washington, D.C.</li> </ul>