

## **Strengthening and Using State Data to Drive Policy Change: Action Steps for Research and Advocacy Groups\***

1. **Become familiar with your state's existing data systems.** What measures are collected? What measures are missing? Which systems are linked? Are efforts already underway to strengthen data systems? If so, can your group become part of the process?
2. **Advocate for inclusion of more data on low-income adult students and participants** in state adult education, postsecondary, and workforce data systems.
3. **Advocate for better linking among data systems** to better track how adults move among adult education, postsecondary, and workforce training programs, and to better measure the employment and earnings outcomes associated with different education and training programs.
4. **Identify key policy questions** related to low-income adult outcomes that you need to answer to drive systems change, and the data elements and data system connections needed to answer those questions. Where possible, involve key stakeholders (e.g. college personnel, other state agency staff, legislative staff) in helping prioritize these key questions.
5. **Build a strong policy case** for how data can improve system performance and outcomes for key populations of interest.
6. **Foster state leadership across multiple agencies** to advance the development and strengthening of state data systems to improve performance measurement for low-income working adults. Help leaders set goals and address political and privacy concerns.
7. **Develop a compelling, clear, and concise message** when communicating findings from analysis in a manner that persuades stakeholders to act. Engage stakeholders in interpreting the findings and considering implications for policy and practice.
8. **Stay informed about funding opportunities** for strengthening state data systems, and encourage that these resources be used to support systems that include and measure the progress of low-skilled adults.

*\*Adapted from 'Building and Strengthening State Data Systems to Measure Community College and Workforce Outcomes', Working Poor Families Project Policy Brief, Fall 2009.*

