

**Policy Academy**  
**Strengthening State Data Systems to Improve Outcomes for Low-Income Adults**

**Academy Organizer: Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)**

**Working Poor Families Project Conference**  
**Chicago, IL**  
**June 30, 2010**

9:00 – 10:00 AM:

*Academy Overview: Strengthening State Data Systems to Improve Outcomes for Low-Income Adults*

This overview session will introduce the three state data systems of focus (adult education, postsecondary, and workforce) and the desired characteristics within and across these systems. What questions do states want to answer regarding progress and outcomes for working poor families, and how might state data provide these answers? The session will give an overview of common challenges faced in the development and use of state data systems, ingredients for success, and the mounting pressure (and expectations) from foundations and government to improve performance measurement.

**Presenters:**

Laura Dresser, Center on Wisconsin Strategy  
Jennifer Phillips, JLP Consulting

10:00 – 10:15 AM:

*Break*

10:15 – 11:45 AM:

*Data Infrastructure: What Does an Ideal State Data System Look Like and How Do We Get There?*

This session will dig deeper into the types and potential sources of information that should be included in a state data system. Specific questions that will be addressed include: What are the essential data points of a state data system? Who are the core partners in establishing and maintaining a data system? What are some approaches to breaking out of agency silos and overcoming legal and technical hurdles in using cross-agency data for customized and productive analyses? What are the policy engagement opportunities for WFPF groups in supporting this work?

**Presenters:**

Garrett Martin, Maine Center for Economic Policy  
Bill Hurwitch, State of Maine Department of Education

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

*Lunch*

12:45 – 2:45 PM:

*From Analysis and Engagement to Policy and Systems Change: Lessons from State Examples*

Drawing on a handful of state examples, this session drills down into issues surrounding analysis, engagement, and systems change, including details regarding the role of advocacy groups in these different efforts. How can we ensure that data actually gets used and institutionalized, and connected to systems improvement and policy change? What key elements must be kept in mind to ensure success?

**Presenters:**

Jessa Valentine, Center on Wisconsin Strategy  
Ed Sivak, Mississippi Economic Policy Center

**Moderator:**

Laura Dresser, Center on Wisconsin Strategy

2:45 – 3:00 PM:

*Break*

3:00 – 4:00 PM:

*What Can We Do?: Roles for Advocates in Improving State Data Systems*

This closing session will explore where and how advocates can exert their influence to ensure that state data systems are strengthened in ways that improve outcomes for low-income adults. Issues covered include: What obstacles might stand in the way of improving state data systems, and how might advocates get around these barriers? What are the different roles that can be played by advocacy groups with varying data-analysis capacity?

**Moderator:**

Sarah White, Center on Wisconsin Strategy