



2026-28 RESEARCH AGENDA

Promoting a Cohesive and Effective Data Landscape

Research Agenda Committee Members:

Name	Department
Nate Barrett	Coleridge Initiative
Meredith Brewer	KDE
Alisher Burikhanov	KWIB
Alicia Crouch	KCTCS
Karen Dodd	KDE
Amanda Ellis	CPE
Becky Gilpatrick	KHEAA
John Gregory	Adult Education
Jilnar Masri	CHFS
Leslie McKinney	KDE
LaKisha Miller	KY Chamber
Travis Muncie	CPE
Amy Smith	DCBS
Christopher Snyder	Economic Development
Amy Tracy	KDE

The Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) is tasked with collecting accurate, comprehensive data in the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System (KLDS) and leveraging the KLDS to research and evaluate Kentucky's education and workforce systems. Insights from this research serve to better inform decisionmakers throughout the Commonwealth. The Board of the Kentucky Center for Statistics is composed of key leadership from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), the Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC), and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS). The Board has developed this research agenda to guide the work of KYSTATS toward critical areas of need.

The Board has identified four primary objectives, linked by an overarching aspiration toward a cohesive, effective data landscape in the Commonwealth. These objectives will be pursued in the course of linking data from multiple sources (KRS 151B.133) in order to characterize the pathways taken by Kentuckians through the state's birth-to-workforce continuum (KRS 151B.132).

I. Increasing Usage and Usability

Throughout the tenure of the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System (KLDS), the pursuit of reaching more users has taken shape in a multitude of ways. It has included creating and sustaining a series of annual dashboards, ensuring compliance with federal accessibility standards, and implementing outreach for various populations across the state, among others. As the diversity of products and audiences has grown, stakeholder feedback reflects the need to prioritize thoughtful dissemination of data to its users.

KYSTATS will focus on eliminating barriers to the usage and usability of its products and services. We define these concepts as follows:

- **Usage** - promoting greater awareness and use of KYSTATS research and data amongst existing partners and making intentional connections with new and diverse partners across the state.
- **Usability** - continually working internally and with our partners to find balance between inclusiveness of information and interpretability/usability. As KYSTATS continues to grow its data partnerships, infrastructure, and capabilities it will be critical to avoid creating products which are data rich but information poor.

To do so, KYSTATS will pursue outreach to under-engaged data users, identify and address discontinuities between the complexity of specific products and the needs of their respective user bases, streamline the processes by which researchers and policymakers can derive insight from the KLDS, and promote a general awareness of the services KYSTATS is able to provide to stakeholders.

Through pursuit of this priority area KYSTATS will work to ensure that more Kentuckians have access to data, that publicly available data are made highly visible and are presented in a variety of formats, and that information produced is easily interpreted by a wide range of users. In doing so, KYSTATS will more fully advance its mission to provide data so that policymakers, practitioners, and the general public can make better informed decisions.

II. Utilizing the Position of KYSTATS as a Common Partner Among Agencies to Convene and Connect Stakeholders for a More Cohesive Data Landscape in the Commonwealth

Data usage is not confined to one single type of researcher but should be utilized by a wide array of audiences with varying expertise. Areas of study can and frequently do intersect between multiple groups who may not be aware of each other's involvement. Oftentimes, these researchers reach out to KYSTATS with similar inquiries.

As the agency which houses the KLDS, KYSTATS is uniquely positioned in the Commonwealth to be able to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and collaboration within the state's research ecosystem. The agency's cross-agency governance structure, formal partnerships with dozens of data providers, and the hundreds or thousands of annual engagements (e.g. data request fulfillment, presentations, trainings, etc.) with external entities provides insight into common areas of need, interest, and opportunity for leveraging data and research capacity amongst individuals and groups who might have complementary goals but pursue them separately.

By partnering with various state agencies, KYSTATS has the ability to identify common, emergent research interests among those agencies. Upon identifying these shared interests, KYSTATS will convene relevant stakeholders to streamline programmatic efforts, develop common understandings, and encourage multi-faceted approaches to critical research across agencies. In the same way that the KLDS unifies previously disparate data collected by the partners of KYSTATS, pursuit of this objective is intended to unify previously disparate research efforts such that partners benefit from increased efficiency and more comprehensive analyses.

III. Providing Contextual Evidence to Support Decision Making with the KLDS

Through the growth and maturation of the KLDS, the data contained therein are more distinguished and richer than ever. This allows for more varied lenses than has been previously possible.

KYSTATS will prioritize providing contextual evidence in its data reporting and analysis to better assess trends in Kentucky's education and workforce ecosystem. Pursuit of this objective will entail meeting the specific needs of partner agencies and decisionmakers as they seek to identify and quantify patterns in key outcomes among Kentuckians based on group backgrounds, experiences, opportunities, or access. Measuring the magnitude and impact (or lack thereof) of these quantifiable differences along important outcome metrics will serve to inform better decision making. This may also include the pursuit of more existing data sources or aiding in the creation of new ones.

KYSTATS will disaggregate and report data which can provide insight into differences in **backgrounds, experiences, opportunities, and access** with the following definitions as a guide to provide relevant and actionable data to its partners and the citizens of the Commonwealth:

- **Backgrounds** refer to the belonging to a group. Metrics related to backgrounds could include race/ethnicity, sex, geography, socioeconomic status, etc.
- **Experiences** are actions, accomplishments, programmatic engagements, etc. which might influence outcomes for individuals and groups over time. These could include early childhood environments, K-12 curriculum, postsecondary programs and attainment, employment types and trajectories, justice involvement, etc.
- **Opportunities** refer to the existence of educational or social programs, employment, training, and other programs in which individuals participate, and which might impact measurable outcomes. These could include job training programs, early college opportunities (AP, IB, Dual Credit, etc.), financial aid, public preschool, and Head Start, etc.
- **Access** is the ability of individuals to reach, use, or take advantage of opportunities which could be to their benefit. Metrics measuring access may include postsecondary affordability, benefit eligibility and access, early postsecondary opportunities, etc.

IV. Leveraging the KLDS to Analyze Trends and Changes at Transition Points Along the Birth to Workforce Continuum

KYSTATS is positioned to provide analyses along the birth through workforce continuum. With many of the core report series focusing on providing quickly understood snapshots, there is a need for analyses that dive deeper. This research agenda priority will focus on continually assessing changes and trends in the state and tracking these over the course of time with a focus on identifying differences for key populations. This approach will help to identify long-term impacts of these events and in the populations whom they effect. Topics of interest include differences in key metrics that are observable over time (e.g., college-going rates or key localized/regionalized economic indicators like job openings, childcare availability, and wage earnings) and changes in individual level outcomes which can be associated with the occurrence of identified events or obstacles. This analysis may take the form of in-depth statistical research and/or partnerships. Overall, it will involve a concerted effort to more fully explore key areas of interest with the aim of providing actionable information to stakeholders in the Commonwealth.