



TRANSCRIPT

Virtual Panel: Applying the Four Pillars of Cross-Sector Data Work to Build Sustainable Career Pathways and Secure Ongoing Funding

MARA LOCKOWANDT

I am just really excited today at the diversity of folks we have on this webinar. From the Inland Empire, we have three folks that have been involved in a lot of the regional cross-sector work happening. Ann Marie Sakrekoff directs activities at Growing Inland Achievement, which is a regional intermediary organization aimed at increasing postsecondary credential attainment and adding more qualified people to the workforce to contribute to a thriving economy. She really facilitates large scale, social, and institutional change and we're very excited to have her.

Sorrel Stielstra is the Director of Research at Growing Inland Achievement also with us today and really works to support the use of data and data-informed decisionmaking among education partners in the Inland Empire. She also checks metrics of shared progress towards greater educational attainments and collaborates with partners on regional research projects to tell the region's story.

And also from the Inland Empire, we have Shelia Thornton—really excited—she is the president and CEO of OneFuture Coachella Valley, which is a nonprofit that convenes a regionwide cross-sector initiatives to increase educational attainment as a driver of economic prosperity. And they have a data alignment team, which has developed a regional plan, scorecard, and tools for measuring progress on common goals related to college and career readiness, financial aid and scholarships, and college completion and local workforce needs. So very excited to talk to her.

Representing the Central Valley we have Joy Soares with us today, who's the Director of College and Career for Tulare County Office of Education. That is a two-county collaborative comprised of K-12 postsecondary and workforce partners. They have moved from a grant-funded consortium to a partnership collaborative around about three years ago. And just over the last 12 months, she has worked with that collaborative to secure over \$12 million to support postsecondary transitions, workforce readiness, and increase the cross-sector work happening there to improve student outcomes and economic advancement.

From the Far North today, we have two panelists joining us. Jamie Spielmann is the Director of Planning and Development at North State Together, which is comprised of five counties and a collective impact network for far Northern rural California, and since starting there has had great success in establishing a regional shared measurement message by fostering key relationships including increasing data sharing agreements across the counties, building cradle-

to-career data gaps, and creating regional data cradle-to-career web pages across North State Together's success indicators.

And James Crandall, who is the Data Specialist for North State Together is also here, very excited to have him. He has extensive technology background and skills in data mining, visualization, and interpretation, and has tremendous amounts of knowledge when it comes to data and data analysis as a self-proclaimed data geek, as he says.

So really excited to have them all. The way we're going to work this panel is that we have a series of questions and we will ask different panelists to respond to them and share a little bit about what has been happening within their region and what strategies and tools they can bring to share for this group on really this idea of sustaining cross-sector data work around these pillars.

So our first question is: What strategies and tools have you used to strengthen your cross-sector data infrastructure? So it's really around our first pillar, and I'd like to invite North State Together to be the first to talk about what strategies and tools they've been using.

JAMIE SPIELMANN

Thank you. Thank you. So, just a little background on North State Together. So we have utilized that four-pillar model that you showed earlier that folks were talking about that they hoped you shared out. We hadn't seen it until you had shared it with us, and not knowing it, we kind of followed those stages ourselves in establishing a regional cross-sector data-to-career partnership up in far, far Northern California, couple of hours even north of Sacramento.

So we serve five counties, as you mentioned, with its own collective impact team, working on their own county-led initiatives to increase educational outcomes. So our philosophy is local problems, local solutions within a regional support framework. And each of our five counties are in a different place in that cradle-to-career work and different stages in their data partnerships. And some of our counties still find themselves early in the process while others with expertise are always on the lookout for ways to further refine their systems and processes. So our goal at North State Together is to have a regional model in the Far North State where we can come along and build a great foundation—which we have—and then that sustainable foundation going forward to data sharing and data partnering across our cradle-to-career sectors here.

So when we first started, we somewhat put the cart before the horse and started growing our data sharing agreements and MOUs. So that's in that infrastructure pillar that you talked about without having a lot of the technical infrastructure in place. So, for an example, in just in 2018, we had data sharing agreements, but we were driving around to high school districts and remote mountain towns with a flash drive to gather K-12 student-level data from the school site secretary. So, we don't recommend this. This is not a sustainable model to share data across our 20,000-square-mile region in the Far North State. So we began researching ways to create a secure FTP environment where we could cross-share data, that when we shared it would be FERPA and HIPAA compliant.

We needed to have something that was very easy for our schools and for our other partners to share the data with us because in remote areas, we do not have the capacity that other places have. And so the school district secretary might be the yard duty attendant, might be the data

analyst, might be the cafeteria aide all in the same day. So we have to be sensitive to that when they're sharing.

So that was what we were looking for in a tool to share data between partners. So we were actually able, when James came on board, our data specialist, to find a tool that was very easy, HIPAA and FERPA compliant, and very inexpensive, which was shocking. So once we were able to implement that, we could kind of really move forward, right, and focus back on expanding that data sharing agreements and getting more of them in place across our region. And then we also realized we needed a secure server environment to store the data and to purchase and learn software that would enable us to create that data pipeline that we're looking for, for us, and display it in an interactive and filterable way.

So we purchased and trained with Tableau. And so James, our data specialist, has become the expert and he's created some great online interactive regional data dashboards that are filterable at different levels of disaggregation.

But now that we have established the technical infrastructure earlier, like I said, we were putting our focus back on growing our data sharing agreements. We have, I think it's...so many high school districts in that 20,000 mile. We have some that have a school district with one school in it, and they might have a high school graduating class of like 10.

So we have all different varying sizes and scopes when it comes to our school districts and the K-12 sector. So, James, do you have anything you want to add on strategies or tools that we have used, or to strengthen our data and our infrastructure, since you are really the guru when it comes to that?

JAMES CRANDALL

I think the only thing I would add is that defining the data that you need for all of your partners and working with your partners to understand, so they understand what it is you're after and creating some uniformity, makes it easier, not only for them, but for us to draw that data into our SQL tables and environments and work with that data.

We're not doing one-offs all the time and reinventing the wheel every time we want to collect some data from folks. And it also gives them something to strive toward and hopefully it makes it easier for them if they know what we're after, year after year.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Great. Thank you. Thank you both. Let's hear from Growing Inland Achievement on some of the strategies or tools you have been using or thinking about for cross-sector data infrastructure.

ANN MARIE SAKREKOFF

Hi, everybody, great to be with you all today. At GIA, our strategy for strengthening data infrastructure in our region—which, by the way, is the two-county area of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, collectively known as the Inland Empire that Mara described earlier—it's really to champion existing tools and resources that may not be currently taken full advantage of.

Much of this involves more or less a cheerleader or matchmaker role, for lack of a better phrase, and where we share information or help facilitate informational webinars, or exchanges of information between organizations that have built these tools and resources, with potential users in our areas who we feel could benefit by tapping into those more.

So we've done this, for instance, with Cal-Pass Plus, which is a longitudinal K-12 to workforce data system, which is rare in California to have that longitudinal data, to really understand the student journey, how to best understand and support student transitions along their educational pipeline. Particularly in California, for those of you who don't know, because we don't have a statewide student system here yet. Another data resource that we've been actively championing with our secondary and postsecondary partners is College Next, which is a coordinated regional partnership of the California College Guidance Initiative with postsecondary institutions, state public ones, that provides a unified and a regional approach to college preparation and transitions.

And so that's really useful because student data, like transcripts and admissions placement, financial aid information can travel with them. And it really makes it...helps the students have a seamless transition as they move through, and errors and transcripts and things like that don't stop them from achieving admissions or other outcomes that they would otherwise get.

Another one of our tools is actually, or our strategies, is really just offering financial support for specific, important data resources. So, for instance, we realized that in the Inland Empire not all of our districts were using National Student Clearinghouse and the student tracker tool that can really help understand college-going trends. So the use of that was really uneven, and so we asked our governing board: Would they pay for any district in our area who wasn't currently using it, to pay for that service for a few years so that they would hopefully get familiar with the benefits of that, how it can link back to their own student-level data and really help advance student success, know where to strategize in each individual district and school.

Another National Student Clearinghouse tool that we're actually currently working to promote in our area is the postsecondary data partnership. And this is a relatively new nationwide initiative to help colleges and universities better understand leading and lagging indicators of student progress and outcomes for, in college. And also really useful for identifying equity gaps and where to focus additional resources and attention to boost student success.

And then lastly, well, we work to support all of this data sharing infrastructure. Unlike the North Far North folks, we don't actually house any student-level data. And while we do use Tableau, we've built dashboards on our website that are interactive. And by the way, we use the free public version; that's been sufficient for us.

We've tried to provide as much of this interesting information as we can from our different partners, but we don't house or share any data on that on the student level ourselves. But we do try to disaggregate information where we can try to show what's happening for different student subgroups, different regions, different districts. And we're going to be continuing to really build up and build out that tool so that we can have new dashboards that provide even better information. Especially right now, it's mostly focused on the education data and we really want to work on providing more about workforce outcomes and how the education experiences are aligning with labor market needs.

And we really try to use the Tableau as an opportunity to try to tell our story and really understand what's happening for students at that regional level.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Thank you. We're going to transition now to the next question. So thank you both. And this next question is really around the technical capacity piece. So how are rural regions able to strengthen technical capacity? You know, sometimes with no FTEs that can be dedicated to this work, and what are some strategies, what are some things that these panelists recommend? So I'm going to turn it over to Joy to share with us her insights first on this question.

JOY SOARES

Sure. Thank you. It's great to be here. So it's really valuable to listen to the Far North story and the Inland Empire story and how much they're alike, and the mirroring of. And I could say we're more like Inland Empire in that the tools and strategies...Cal-Pass Plus...we're invested in Cal-Pass Plus as well as the College Next initiative. Thank you for sharing all the benefits of those. And the core data analytics platform is something that after almost two years of really doing some deep investigation, we were able to get the funding to support having all of our districts really invest in one system. So that's been a real strength and we're just now onboarding people. We are fairly new using the Tableau tool.

I wanted to talk a little bit about somewhat, maybe a different way of how we're moving into really understanding deep data, and that's through improvement science. So in addition to all the support from the REL team and all the work of our TKCCC data work group, improvement science is becoming more significant in building our technical assistance to collect that very important qualitative data. And in empathy interviews, very specifically I just wanted to address, we've used empathy interviews with leaders around our governance document, and we just completed a whole series of empathy interviews with all of our district counseling teams. And then we also used...and use that data to inform next steps, next strategies.

And then, I think, probably one of the highest leverage data collection that we've done around empathy interviews, we used to inform a GATES application about six months ago, and also the K-12 Strong Workforce 2 application. And those empathy interviews really helped us understand how K-12, postsecondary, and workforce could work together and across sector in a high-quality, effective way.

And just to wrap it up, we've really learned... The technical piece, I think, is that we learned that what is measured needs to be closely aligned to the actual work. I'll share a little bit later about the funding and the data and how those have aligned, and also how and when it's measured and it needs to be embedded in our workflow. And that's been very helpful because our structure has work groups and networks, and that is embedded within the workflow of our structure. And it needs to be accessible in a timely manner, and as was shared earlier, we live in the state of California; we're looking for a data system.

And just to wrap up, we have a couple of our partners who are on these initial committees for this new cradle-to-career discussion with Governor Newsom. So, the College Next people are there, the Cal-Pass Plus people are there, the CORE people are there. So looking forward to how that might all play out for all of us.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Yeah. Thank you, Joy. I'm going to turn it over to Sorrel to share more on how GIA is tackling this idea of technical capacity. Thanks, Joy.

SORREL STIELSTRA

Yeah. So, since GIA is such a small organization and because of our focus on collective impact, the way that we are working to strengthen technical capacity around data collection and use is really through partnership and collaboration. And in addition, because of our regional focus, our approach is to try to ask questions that individual institutions in our area might not have the resources, financial staff time, whatever, or even the mandate to pursue, but that we feel could really benefit many institutions in the area, as well as, of course, the students.

And one of the ways that we've been able to do that is by working with student interns on a handful of projects related to things like better understanding the unique transfer barriers for Inland Empire community college students. So we've been interviewing transfer-achieving students at four-year universities to understand what were the barriers they experienced, how they overcome them, things like that.

We're also doing research with an intern on dual enrollment programs and participation. And again, from a regional perspective, trying to understand whether and how GIA might work to support some coordinated expansion of early college programs in our area. Another really exciting data project that we're working on with a graduate student who has very technically advanced skills that really complement what we can do as a staff, is an exploratory computational simulation model. What we're trying to predict capacity and demand at our local four-year universities in the next 10 years, given the effect and impact of different kinds of initiatives and policies. So it's really... It's an exciting way to sort of test out a variety of "what if" scenarios based on different kinds of factors. You know, what if A-G completion goes up in this way, or what if community college transfer becomes more efficient or a shorter time to transfer? What if students do more dual enrollment in high school? How will that affect the demand in 10 years at our local universities? It's things like that, that we couldn't do without partnering with, in this case, a graduate student intern who has this interest and experience as well.

In addition to student interns, we've been working on an interesting project with a local institutional researcher from a community college in our area, and as well as the guided pathways regional coordinators along with student representatives from two local community colleges. And it was really interesting because it was actually the two students who brought this topic to our attention. They were really interested in helping to better understand the student experience with guided pathways. And so we've developed a really interesting mixed-methods, qualitative-quantitative research project to really understand more about the student voice in guided pathways.

And it's beginning with the pretty interesting innovative, qualitative interview project, and it will be followed by a quantitative one across all 12 colleges in the IE. So we hope it will really inform the decisionmaking of local colleges and, especially, I really want to emphasize that it's the regional component part of this that really is important because our students swirl, they go to different colleges and they have a lot of shared experiences. But we felt like no individual college would probably have the time or resources to try to understand it at a regional level.

Lastly, we've been partnering in the last year with WestEd, and actually REL West, to organize a series of cross-sector data conversations or workshops, the purpose of which is to really, to improve shared education and economic data literacy across our key stakeholder people and institutions in the area, to support efforts to improve regional alignment and equitable economic mobility, and develop some key indicators of alignment even.

Now, these workshops were to have occurred actually this spring and they were going to be in person. And obviously they couldn't happen due to the pandemic. They've been postponed. And while the overarching objectives will remain the same, we're actually hoping to use this as an opportunity to leverage the workshops to inform changes in how the workforce and education systems can respond to the new challenges presented by COVID and what instead has engaged MZ to build some integrated labor market and skills data sets customized for the Inland Empire. And that we're really hoping it will help us have conversations among education, workforce, and industry to help us develop a strategy to chart our way out, as a region, from this COVID recession. So that's another project we're really excited about that will be coming up this fall.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Yeah. Great examples of leveraging the cross-sector work, working with student interns, really trying to think creatively around those to build technical capacity, both from growing your own, building those professional development schools, and working with experts and folks outside the organization to bring that expertise in.

So thank you, Sorrel. Some great examples there. We're going to go on to our next question. Alice, thank you for advancing us. And this is really around, how are you all incorporating the data-driven decisionmaking processes in your collaborative work? So we really see that embedding those processes is really key to sustaining this work. And I'm going to ask OneFuture Coachella Valley to respond first here in sharing with us how you've built and developed and scaled this idea of collaborative processes.

SHEILA THORNTON

Great. Thank you. I'm Sheila Thornton with OneFuture Coachella Valley, for those of you who weren't on at the very beginning. Let's see. I think we have a slide that shows our...there you go. Yeah, I guess I can start there. So OneFuture Coachella Valley runs a regional collaborative. And when I heard the questions around technical capacity and infrastructure and culture, they all get answered almost in the same frame for us. And that is, asking good questions about educational attainment and its impact on economic development, on the individual students' economic path out of poverty, and then the workplace employers' infrastructure and capacity to attract quality workforce, and then, ultimately, what it does to our overall economy.

So in our work, we focused on education as economic development from the very beginning. And the data that we used to cross came from all different sectors. We're truly a cross-sector collaborative. So we went into... We work with the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership to understand the labor market data, but then we also have alignment teams who were engaged with employers so that we understand the qualitative and that informs the iterative work on a regular basis. But everything we do has to do with our regional plan for college and career success.

Our work is all unified around the regional plan for college and career success. So we have three school districts, we have multiple college partners and nonprofit partners in the region, cities and employers, all at the same table and on one regional plan that we established in 2012. And it was the first time that we had come together and put it into a framework. And the focus is on making sure it's a cradle-to-career concept, but the focus is really on how we take the existing resources and assure that we are aligning those resources with the best potential option for students to progress through and end up in high-wage jobs.

So we found from the very outset that what was needed was really strategy teams, and we used the alignment USA model to break the work up into cross-sector teams, across various areas of strategy. And each of those teams is responsible for doing a context setting at the very outset and bringing data to the table that comes from each of their sectors to inform both the issue and then inform the strategies to address it.

We also found that while we had strategy teams, we also needed a data team, a data alignment team. That's what you see in the circle there. And that is comprised of the institutional research directors for the colleges, for the K-12 school districts, and then the Riverside County Office of Education and others. And that team is really about...they are the infrastructure, the relational infrastructure for us being able to go to them for anything that is related to one of our long-term outcomes.

So we're focused on increasing high school graduation rate or A-G completion. That data team is responsible for pulling that data. They take it from their existing systems, and then they report it out to the various teams and on a regular basis, on an annual basis, we bring this whole collaborative together and they bring data to the table that informs what the next year's strategies are going to be.

So the focus for us has been on increasing career academies, increasing college readiness. We have an aligned scholarship-giving initiative that matches funds from OneFuture with between 15 and 20 nonprofits. OneFuture holds that data and collects that data for all the nonprofits and then puts out reports to each of them each year so that they can see how their students are doing, and that infrastructure also informs what we do on financial aid and scholarship-giving across the region for the general population of students.

But what I would say is the most critical component of this is the relational piece of it. And that is that each one of these teams has their own strategy area and brings data to the table, but that there is this intersectional thinking about how the data both affects the progress of the student across segments of education, but aligns ultimately with the workforce needs as they currently are, and as they emerge for our economy.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Great. Thank you. And I do recognize the slide's a little hard to read, so folks can look through this later, but I'm going to turn it now over to Joy to also share with us some insights on the processes used in...

JOY SOARES

Thank you. I will make this very brief just to add onto this...the whole idea of this regional approach...and the Tulare-Kings College and Career Collaborative has a very similar organizational structure that we just saw. I wanted to echo when it was shared, asking

questions: How do you do this? How are you incorporating it? It's really about getting curious. It's about getting curious with all of the sectors. It's about bringing folks together and asking those questions and looking at data.

Probably, what's really been super helpful to us, is that our structure allows for a steering council, and also has a dean and director network, which are more of our middle management folks. And then we have a counselor network and we have a data work group, and we have an industry engagement work group, and these are groups that come together to really focus on specific things.

And what's really exciting is that they're looking at, like, data and they're discussing it from their perspective and how they could use that data to make improvement in their specific work. So I'd say getting curious; I would say that we use our system to actually move the work forward by understanding in various parts of the system what the data looks like, and all of this connects to our TK regional metrics that are really our North Star, so that we are working towards those things that the presidents of our colleges, our superintendents of our K-12 districts, and our WIBs and industry partners believe are the critical leverage points to address workforce readiness and student success.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Thank you, Joy. We're going to, in the interest of time, move on to our next question, which is around this idea of creating a strong culture of data-driven decisionmaking. And this, again, as we mentioned at the beginning, we have found to be really critical. Folks are already putting in the chat, this requires partnership, it requires trust, and we want to hear from our panelists and the strategies and tools they've used to build and cultivate this in their region. North State Together, if you could start us off, we'd love to hear from you and sharing a bit about the work you've been doing around this.

JAMIE SPIELMANN

Yeah, thank you. So we are in the process of creating that regional culture that encourages critical thinking and curiosity, which I think was already mentioned before, that curiosity piece. So we recently developed a data decision guide that encourages our cross-sector county network partners to have those conversations that start with data right from the get-go when they sit down at the table. So the guide has them review data, think about it individually, having them fill in at the various prompts. It can be the folks that are sitting at the table looking at the data, it can be at any spectrum of data literacy to do this, so I think that was really important for us.

So they fill in the blanks about what stood out for them and what they maybe wondered about behind the data, etc. And then they discuss the data that they looked at individually in a team component. That is like the "Here's What" portion of the data guide, and then they move on to interpreting the data in a section called "So What?" which has them answer questions like what might be contributing factors and what questions does the data generate in general? So then they can move on to the "Now What?" portion, which is where it gives them guiding questions, which helps them develop the all-important plan of action. What are we going to do about the data that we saw, or if we already have an intervention in place, how do we tweak that intervention according to what we just looked at?

I think Joy mentioned the importance of not just looking at data on an annual basis in the chat; looking at it ongoing. We implemented something six months ago, right? We need to see how it's going so we can tweak the intervention as we go along.

As a backbone organization, North State Together, we recognize that our partners need to access the data, they need it in, of course, a secure way, and we also know it requires proficiency that I mentioned, and we know that data can be intimidating for many of our partners. So we provide regional data training and professional development opportunities for our partners to learn data skills. Right before, or right after, I should say, the COVID-19 stay-at-home order, we were, for example, having Riverside County Office of Education come up to our region—and they're the experts on national student clearinghouse—and to train our region. Those are the types of things that we bring to the very Far North, which often gets missed in professional development opportunities.

We are also starting a weekly data drop-in Zoom call. It's actually...our first one is next week, where our partners can come on and ask James and myself any questions they might have in a little more informal and less intimidating way. If they want to come in and just drop in and ask us a question or have them guide us through something in a not formal, around-the-table steering committee setting, they can do that. And we come to their steering committees in general, of course, to guide and facilitate their data conversations, which again, it just builds that data culture.

At North State Together, we see these are our roles to provide advocacy and a community that supports and makes data-driven decisions, and we encourage all of our collective impact teams to do the same. We also fund the five county network teams. So we are funded, and then we, in turn, fund those county collective impact teams, and part of their funding requirements ensures that they are data formed and data-driven. So, luckily, we can hold them a bit accountable in that way, by having them complete... We have county roadmaps of the outcomes they want to achieve, so they shared measurements in the first place, and then looking at the data and providing both the roadmap completion and then also the data tracking, they submit to us every six months in their progress reports.

It kind of ensures that they're doing that along the way just by having it be—I don't want to call it a requirement—but a requirement, so that it's a part of their processes when they're working. The county networks continually point back to that roadmap I mentioned, their shared measurements and desired outcomes in order to drive their work and their interventions they're implementing. That's our general overview and approach we have taken over the last couple of years to establish a more regional data culture. James, do you have anything else that you might want to add to that?

JAMES CRANDALL

I think that the interactive dashboards that we've been creating are a good place for folks to go. It creates a regional picture of what's happening. It also creates regional questions, and I think being able to help them answer those questions and work with them, and just kind of looking at their data in a different light, helps with what they're doing in their areas.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

I'm going to turn it now back to Sheila to share with us insight into how in OneFuture Coachella Valley you all have been working to create a strong culture of data-driven decisionmaking.

SHEILA THORNTON

Sure. My mind always goes to the community context, and a number of people have said it, but data is intimidating. And data and the discussions with educators is intimidating. But if we keep doing things the same way we've always done them, we're going to get the same results, right? We'll get educational institutional outcomes that folks from outside the area don't understand, and they don't even know how to formulate questions around that. So for me, data is so about the relational piece. That you're willing to come to the table, you set very specific, unifying goals, whether you're on... I'll back up... When we first set our first regional plan, we had 27 goals across the collaborative that the collaborative had come up with. And all 75 stakeholders were at the table for a year making that happen, and we all got back together and said, now what do we do? How do we address all these things? School districts are doing their work, and colleges are doing their work, and business partners are looking frustrated with not understanding why these metrics, these numbers aren't moving fast enough.

And what we decided we had to do was really hone in on a few and practice working together, understanding the data together—and all of you have already said it—but putting out sort of the... setting the context first and allowing for vulnerability in that, allowing folks from business or nonprofit sector or those who just don't understand what it means to be able to dig into that and then sort of math... add the qualitative component of it.

And that's what's really been powerful for us, because there is more than enough data out there. It is how you turn it into intelligence in that cross-sector way that really makes for excellent collaboration and even accelerated collaboration and outcomes. So I would say that the sort of powerful strategy for us was really working through that alignment team structure where these cross-sector partners are able to dig into the data, understand it from multiple lenses, and then take action on very specific year-over-year strategies that they know, that they collectively decide, well, it can move the needle on specific elements of our regional plan.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Great. Thank you! Really great examples here. We're going to move on to our next question for the panelists, which is this idea of financially sustaining the work of cross-sector data work. And to answer that question first, I am going to invite Joy again to speak from Tulare County.

JOY SOARES

Sure. So, Alice, you could bring up that H graphic and as you do, I want to just echo a repeated message and just the importance of marketing and messaging your work. And I think that is really critical, when you think about sharing data. And, and it's been said so many times, when you put an enormous amount of data in front of someone, a leader, who's trying to make decisions, it's tough. And so to try to get 12 districts, four community colleges, a CSU, a UC, a plethora of industry partners, and two WIBs to agree upon a grant application could be a very difficult task. And I'll say this was a really exciting task to put together our K-12 Strong Workforce application. And I think it's because we really took our time to message and market

that our cross-sector data work is about measuring what is important. It's about taking our cross-sector regional metrics, which you can see on the left, and align them to the K-12 Strong Workforce metrics. And that was very, very simple to do. We could point to those connection pieces.

And then the strategies that were created for our application worked perfectly because the thing is, is that our data is the work. It's not a separate, siloed effort. So messaging and marketing your data obviously is critical. I really love this idea, and it's been mentioned before, the idea of visualizations and making it simple and clear, because this particular document was seen by over 375 people to try to get them on board to really, really dig deep and put the details of the strategy together, because it does require all of our partners to participate.

And so, I think what was most exciting is our postsecondary partners were so invested in this project and they just...we've started to collect data now and analyzing that, and it directly correlates with the success of the students that will be entering their system as well as the workforce. And so our workforce partners are really engaged, too.

So how do you make the case for funding cross-sector data work? I see it as it's not anything separate. I see it as doing the work, measuring the outcomes, and sharing and reporting and celebrating and shifting as needed along the way.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Thank you. Great. Growing Inland Achievement. Ann Marie, can I ask you to please respond next to how you all have been making the case for your cross-sector data work?

ANN MARIE SAKREKOFF

Absolutely, happy to be here today, thank you, Mara. You know, one of the things... As we were thinking about these questions and talking about how would we answer these, one of the big things that came to my mind is, in a regional cross-sector collaborative, it's not about any one organization, even if occasionally they may serve as the backbone organization. So, really, it's not about getting money for Growing Inland Achievement. That's not the point. The point is finding out what are the needs of the region? What are the needs of the organizations? And also what are the needs of the potential funders? Right? All of our funders have goals that they're trying to achieve within our region, particularly local funders. And so it's kind of playing that matchmaker and thinking about, how do we smuggle data work into some of those kind of sexier funding topics, right?

Because we know we have organizations that are really into funding basic student supports, but how are we going to know if those student supports are effective if we don't have cross-sector data work as a piece of that project? And so, we've done things with Bank of America, with one of our Native American tribes, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, we've done things even with the Gates Foundation, where we're looking at what is the actual work that we're attempting to do, and knowing that in order to know if the work is effective, we need to understand what data we're collecting and making sure that people are able to understand that data and receive the appropriate professional development to use that data for their decisionmaking. And so we do a lot of collaboration on the projects that we put together in that it's leveraging the various resources that we're able to cobble together to create a holistic project.

So we may get someone to fund two or three data workshops, and then match that with funding for our director of research's salary, and match that with some additional support that we get from REL West, and some additional support we get from JFF, and then cobble all that together to have an effective project and get the support we need for our region. And so we spend a lot of time talking and thinking and working with partners. And that, I think, is really the bottom line—is forming that trust with the stakeholders to know that it's not about funding any one particular organization, but it's about funding the work that you really want to do, and knowing that you need to have a way to measure and track that that work is effective. And so the data just comes right along with any of the work that you may end up doing.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

That's great. Thanks, Ann Marie, and all of that braiding of funding to really great outcomes there. Great. Jamie or James, I would like to invite you to also respond to this question on behalf of North State Together and the ways in which you all have been thinking about the funding and financial sustainability of this work.

JAMIE SPIELMANN

Yeah, absolutely. So thinking about this question, I thought, gosh, this is a bit of a chicken and the egg, right? Which comes first? But I think funders want to see data-driven decisionmaking and quantifiable results. Sometimes they want to see that before they give money. But we've been fortunate at North State Together that our primary funder is very unique and understands the importance of both collective impact and the cross-sector collaboration and data sharing. But we were also fortunate that they were able to see data-driven wins and quantifiable results in the County Collective that was formed before North State Together was formed, so we were lucky in that way, but I think that can be translated to anybody that's looking for funding is starting out with those initial wins; that the low-hanging fruit that you can put out there and really start tracking data and getting some quantifiable results for them to look at.

But, in fact, I think the success of what we've had with our local funder and why they try to decide to invest in North State Together and the regional model is so that we can scale that same data-driven model to the other counties that weren't onboard or weren't as far in that work in the North State. So in addition, there's a lack of cross-sector data in all of California, especially, I think, in our region, so that need is high. And so once you can sell the need, I think it's great. Many of you on this call that are from California know that we are investing a lot of money at the state level to try to create some sort of cradle-to-career data pipeline. Other states have it; we don't in California, but our...I call it the remote rural advantage, is that we can, in the Far North, sit with our little model and create a cradle-to-career pipeline far faster than the state can. So we love that the state is looking at it, but we know that we are already ahead of them with the five counties that we're looking at.

In addition, we are grant funded, right? North State Together is a grant-funded collective. But we also, as I mentioned earlier, we turn around and fund our five-county collective impact teams, so we're a funder as well. And so I think from our perspective, communicating those early wins that I mentioned can help. Tracking data...I mean, we have Modoc County that has more cows than people. So for them, it's as simple as putting on a career fair, taking a picture, and then track how many of the high schoolers got a job from that career fair, or how many internships they got. So for us, we try to say, hey, it doesn't have to be complicated when you first start, it's just begin tracking some things.

We also recommend for funding purposes to keep the data tracking handy. For ours...it sounds simplistic, and if you're in a big capacity place this is what you're already doing, but for our region to have that in one central place of the data that you're tracking so that you can showcase it. Whether it's our regional data website, like North State Together has, or just in a file so that you can showcase it to potential funders when it comes time for that relationship building with them. So we use our roadmap and our data indicator tracking forms to do that so that we always have it on hand. And then, of course, our regional data webpage, which, of course, that's not its primary purpose, but it does serve. In addition, we make sure to communicate in our newsletters, and we have potential funders that are on our newsletter list, too, that we showcase our data. So that's really what we do on our end, but I think it's just a matter of communicating and starting somewhere. At least it is for us in the Far North.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

That's a great, that's a great point, especially for folks who are new to this work, just starting out or are really thinking about scaling there. I did want to give our panelists the opportunity to answer just one last question. And then for this one, I would like to hear from everyone, maybe starting with Growing Inland Achievement. But we are obviously in unprecedented times right now. I love the idea, Jamie, of the remote rural advantage. And my question is kind of around that and as it relates to COVID-19, so final question for the panelists—as participants I encourage you to ask other questions to the chat—is, how are you all leveraging your cross-sector collaborations and data to support your region in responding to the emerging needs of COVID-19? How are you leveraging this remote rural advantage and the cross-sector data work? So, Anne Marie, if you wouldn't mind starting, I'd love to hear from you first and what you all have been doing in the Inland Empire.

ANN MARIE SAKREKOFF

Sure. Alice, if you could go back to the beginning of the slides quickly. This is actually...we started really with the question to our committees: What are you all thinking about? What's the need? And they said we would like to meet regularly. And so we've set up a weekly task force meeting on COVID-19, where members from all of our committees have joined in and are continuing to meet since back in, what, February, middle of March. And they came up with three areas of support. They said we wanted support around technology and they wanted support around basic needs, and they wanted to talk about support for the transition and predominantly to not lose the class of 2020, right? Our graduating seniors who are transitioning into college, how do we do this?

And so one of the suggestions was made, "Hey, what if we could create a regional website that provided information to our students, no matter where they were located, that was phone friendly and provided support to those students?" And so I've just done a couple of screenshots of that site, and working with our director of communications—he was saying that this is the fastest he thinks he's ever put together a website—less than 30 days to get something going with all of our partners contributing information and support. You can see across the top that we have several different links of basic needs under success resources includes webinars and technology support as well as continuing a news tab. Next slide, Alice.

And then under basic needs, this actually has been one of the largest areas of support where it literally just puts everything that we're given in one location for students and families. Next slide. And then one of the areas as it regards to more of the data sharing and understanding

that the backend of websites is connecting with a student success advisor. And so these student success advisors, or ambassadors, or mentors, depending on which organization you work in the name that you use, but this is the idea of connecting students to get answers to their questions. And so we already had organizations within our region who do this, but on a smaller scale. And so Growing Inland Achievement put together some additional funding and emergency funds that allowed for expansion of those student success advisors. And so if a student goes to this website—Sorrel put it in the chat, iestudents.org—they're able to click on, get connected with a student success advisor. Next slide, Alice.

And then what they do is either they are already admitted to a college and have a question for that college, or they're not quite sure. And if they know where they're headed—next slide—they click on the link and then they choose which organization, university, or two-year college that they've already been accepted to. And so they're then directed to the advisor site. So those are all people who are participating in the task force and they are able to then answer their direct questions regarding their information for that college. Next slide.

However, if they are not already accepted to a college or university, we, of course, want to make sure that they have all of their answers for going to college and they select by city. And so they can choose either Riverside or San Bernardino County and then their city—next slide—and they're able to be matched. I chose OneFuture Coachella Valley because I knew Sheila was going to be on the call today. But if they're out in the Coachella Valley, they're matched with OneFuture. And so then what happens is they click “get connected” to that OneFuture button—and so next slide—and then they complete a form. Now, one of the conversations that we had lengthily about data, and where does this information on students live?

GIA is a pass-through organization. Sorrel shared that we try not to gather individual student-level data. We try to get de-identified data from partners as a region. And so eventually we were able to come up with the solution of having the secure Google forms that the organizations already utilize to gather information on their students and then the information lives with them. And so what will happen is as we gather this information and they're able to support students, then that de-identified information will then be sent back to GIA, that we can then better understand as a region how we're serving students and then utilize this information to target particular groups of students if needed over the summer, to make sure that they're getting the information that they need.

Next slide. And so, then, we also, as part of this website, include news and updates, and this is all information given to us through partners. This is not GIA creating a bunch of information, nor do we say that it's GIA creating a bunch of information. This really is about all of the partners saying “we're already creating all of this great stuff,” and it's nice to be able to have a repository of where that lives and its curated links that can hopefully better serve our students and families as we deal with this trying time.

So we also have a media campaign that we've put out—really quick, just wanted to share this one of the social media pieces—and note that this is for any of our partners to use; all of the social media and news release information lives on the site, and so anyone can download it and share it on their sites. One of the things that we're trying to do is have students share this information, so we're using all of our AVID connections. So it's one of our college success programs, and they're able to then share that information out. So it's just been really cool to have this ongoing, talented, really great group of people to come together to say this is what

we need and “Hey, look, we can solve these problems,” and we put it out there and it’s now a living, breathing thing, which is super cool. So thanks for listening.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Thank you so much. So beautiful and intuitive. Since you mentioned Sheila, maybe I’ll turn it over to you next to talk a little bit if you’d like to add some more details around how OneFuture is really thinking about your response to COVID-19.

SHEILA THORNTON

I was just on a Ford NGL webinar yesterday, and the head of KentuckianaWorks, the workforce development person, was on and the two of us both said we all have to acknowledge that we are in an unknown territory. There are so many unknowns; what we have to start doing is figuring out what the right questions are going to be as we emerge from this because this is a painful time. In the Coachella Valley our unemployment rate today is 32%. We know that we’re probably going to lose about a third of our retail sales and food service businesses.

It was already an area where we had drastic issues, right, around poverty. What I have seen happened, though, as a result of COVID with our alignment teams, because the infrastructure was in place, it was like business as usual. Everyone just... Obviously, the difference was go onto the Zoom, but folks started solving in the immediate and the fact that that infrastructure and that trust and the use of data...the relationship was in place, we were able to pivot pretty quickly.

And now the thinking in our region is, we had to ask ourselves, are the long-term goals the same and how do we stay on those long-term goals? And they are—it’s educational attainment and economic development, and we have to get stronger, we have to stay on that. But then in the meantime, where are the places where our kids need the most help? And that’s easy to get at when you’re all working together on it. So it is in the area of, as Ann Marie said, making sure that our students stay on track for enrollment in college and assured that they’ve done the very basic steps, and we’re tracking with that. We just got some really encouraging FAFSA completion rates regionally. The data just came out today and that’s exciting. We’ve actually moved it to a new high.

So in the midst of it, what we’re doing is really reaffirming that our long-term goals are the same and then pivoting—what can we do right now that are the things that are going to be the best use of our resources and our limited resources to support the key strategies? It’s in that area of young men’s support, making sure students enroll, that they get the financial aid they need, and that they have a local navigator, somebody to be with them to track into and through college.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Oh gosh, Sheila, that is such a... Those statistics are very hard to hear but I’m also glad to hear that you all are staying the course and more than ever mobilizing around the urgency here that this is creating in the region. Great. Let’s hear from North State Together around response to this question around COVID-19 and what you all are doing regionally to respond. I’d like to hear from North State Together, and then Tulare-Kings County College and Career Collaborative. Jamie and James, if you’d like to share with us.

JAMIE SPIELMANN

Thank you. I think you just touched up on that our work is needed now more than ever, right? As a backbone for those five counties and their cross-sector collective impact networks, we immediately asked ourselves, day one, where are our data gaps amidst this COVID-19 crisis? And we realized that all of our industry and educational partners are facing the same dilemma and needed to know at a glance, the broadband access at a detailed level for our region in order to provide those resources, those iPads, whatever it was going to be immediately out and distribute to all of our K-12 and college students and all the employees that are suddenly found themselves working from home and learning from home. And so you can get a picture, but not at a detailed level at the Far North of what broadband looked like.

So we immediately pivoted our...what we were looking at, what we were doing, straight to looking at, okay, what can we do—from providing resources and data to then get it into the right hands. So James is heading that work and the broadband conversation that he mentioned earlier, and that's what he's been doing and taking priority over the last seven weeks, eight weeks since this all started. So we're gearing up for discussions about our choice of data indicators as well. So, I showed you or talked about the roadmap earlier that we have, and that's cradle-to-career indicators that are now suddenly in flux.

So, most of what I spoke about earlier was all status quo as they say, right? Doing our work in a normal environment. And now suddenly we have...our county collectives have data indicators and measurement metrics that we may not have this year or next year or whatever, especially in the educational and career realms that we're talking about.

So we're going to have to be really pivoting and looking at that when we meet next, we have a county coordinator meeting upcoming. Okay, what direction are we going to go in to look at our indicators? So, James, can you add what we've been doing, especially in that broadband capacity, in the conversations that we've been having as of late?

JAMES CRANDALL

Yeah, the broadband map; I think they showed a screenshot of it earlier in the presentation and I posted a link earlier to our data site and it's there. It created a lot of conversation and it's all based on FCC data that's publicly available and it's down to the census block. So you can get it right down to the neighborhoods of where things are available at. We talked earlier about data starting a conversation and whether it's good data or bad data. And this is good data in the sense that it shows what the carriers are advertising as there... for instance, I'm one of those people that I live in an area where I can't get anything except cellular connectivity.

And so the advertised speed for me is 50 megabits per second. The reality is, I'm living on 8 megabits per second, because there are so many people working from home right now that the cell towers are saturated with what's happening, including the fact that I have both my wife and my daughter working from home as well.

So I think that having those conversations and bringing it to the forefront is a huge deal, especially in rural California, because we don't have that access. And it also comes down to affordable access. Some people can't afford this cellular connectivity. For us, it's quite expensive. Luckily, I need it for work, so I have to pay for it. But there are many folks, and I see it in my daughter's class. I see it where they don't have connectivity or there's going to be

these huge gaps in these students' learning where they didn't get to learn like everybody else. So it's been an interesting conversation and I'm glad to be a part of it finally in Northern California.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

That's great. Thank you both so much. I want to—such good points—turn it back over to Joy to respond to this last question as well, around response to COVID-19.

JOY SOARES

Sure, and I'm going to just do it very quickly. I noticed the time and I want to echo everything that has been shared. Tremendous resources, people have come together, created websites and shared resources and it's very, very heartwarming and very special to see. I guess I just want to say that we're just really...we're just talking about our willingness to be disrupted. We're talking about our willingness to do the work differently. We're talking about a 120-day plan. We have it in increments of 30 days—what's going to happen? What are we going to do? When are we going to do it together?

I am so confident, that the other collaboratives here will agree, that having a collaborative structure has made things, I believe, go so much smoother. It's the kinds of communication that we're having with workforce to help us solve the problem, and to really understand that the challenges of postsecondary has been really good.

Yesterday I was on a call with our co-chairs—the president of West Hills College and the superintendent of Cutler-Orosi School District—and we were talking about the COVID earthquake and the fiscal tsunami that's just going to keep waving through us. And we all said we're going to celebrate the work we've done. We are not going to lose this work. Students deserve it. It's a commitment that we've all made. And so, I just want to say thank you for this opportunity to bring us together. I've learned so much today from my colleagues and from the chat. And thank you so much REL, WestEd, Jobs for the Future—fantastic.

MARA LOCKOWANDT

Thank you, Joy. Thanks so much.