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Maryland Longitudinal Data System

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MEMORANDUM

TO: MLDS Governing Board

FROM: Ross Goldstein, Executive Director

DATE: December 8, 2025

SUBJECT: 2024 Annual Report Recommendations - Follow-up

Background

The 2024 Annual Report on the Maryland Longitudinal Data System and Center report included the following two recommendations:

1. **Deleting and Delinking**: There are two future requirements that will have important impacts on MLDS data: (1) Education Article § 24-702(c) requires the Center to unlink an individual's workforce record 20 years after that individual's last education record; and (2) The Center's data agreements with data sharing partners requires the Center to dispose of personally identifiable data 20 years after receipt of that data from the data sharing partner. The Governing Board recommends that the MLDS Center undertake a comprehensive study on the consequences of these requirements on Center research and reporting and develop plans for the implementation of the requirements.
2. **Engagement**: The Governing Board recommends that the MLDS Center develop strategies to identify and engage new and existing audiences who can shape output and benefit from the analysis and reporting provided by the MLDS Center.
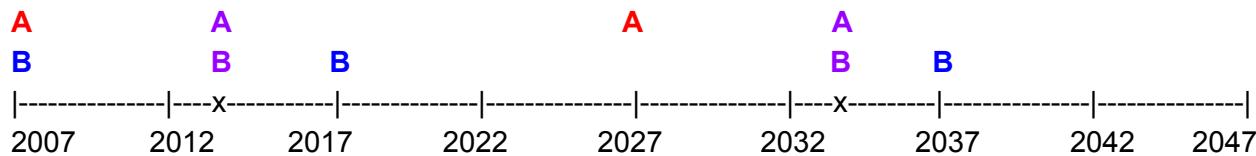
The purpose of this memorandum is to provide updates on the work conducted by the Center on the two recommendations.

1.   Deleting and Delinking

Analysis

As stated above, there are two requirements: one to delink an individual's workforce record 20 years after that individual's last education record; and there is a requirement in all of the data sharing agreements to remove personally identifiable data 20 years after receipt of that data from the data sharing partner.

The implications of these requirements can best be understood with the following timeline.

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A               A                           A               A
B               B          B                                B          B
|---------------|----x-----------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----x---------|--------------|--------------|
2007          2012         2017         2022         2027         2032         2037         2042         2047
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 In this timeline:
● Both **A** and **B** graduated from high school in 2007.
● **A** did not pursue further education, therefore MLDSC will need to *delink* **A** from workforce records in 2027.

- Because **B** has postsecondary records through 2017, the Center will not have to *delink* **B** from workforce records until 2037.
- K-12 education data for **A** and **B** were received by the MLDS Center in 2013 when the Center began operations and the MLDS was being implemented. Pursuant to the data sharing agreement, K-12 PII data must be *disposed of* 20 years after receipt of the data, which is 2033.

The delinking requirement results in graduates of the same high school class having different lengths of time for analysis (e.g. **A** and **B** will be de-linked in 2027 and 2037, respectively). This will limit the types of long-term student outcomes studies that can be conducted with MLDS data.

Disposing of PII after 20 years is administratively difficult. The PII data are used to create a master identity. Decisions will need to be made about which source data to retain, which identities require disposal, and at what point in time the disposal must take place. Requiring data loaders to perform retroactive data disposal at staggered points in time adds a layer of complexity.

Research and Policy Advisory Board (RPB)
This topic was discussed with RPB at two meetings during the year. Generally, the consensus was that a longer window (i.e., more than 20 years) is needed to understand long-term outcomes of credentials and degrees, especially given expanded educational opportunities like certifications. Concerns were also raised about losing control groups if data of individuals without further touch points are deleted, hindering the ability to compare outcomes with students that have more touch points. Current data storage capabilities allow for more meaningful longitudinal research than when the policies were first developed, arguing against deletion due to its potential to obscure long-term trajectories, especially for those who pursue education much later in life. Finally, most RPB members felt that keeping the data had numerous advantages that outweighed any perceived risks or harm.

Next Steps
- Staff will conduct a data analysis to determine how many of the 2007 records would be delinked in 2027. Quantifying the number of records affected and unaffected will help assess the urgency of the issue. Changing the de-linking requirement would require a legislative change and could be considered for the 2027 legislative session.
- The deleting requirement is part of the Data Sharing Agreements between the data sharing partners and the MLDS Center. Since the earliest point in time when deletion is required is not until 2033, there is time to work with the partner agencies to come to a consensus about an extended period to retain PII data prior to deletion.

2. Engagement
The MLDS Center applied for and received a $100,000 grant from the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) to develop a data-driven online interactive platform aimed at supporting high school students, particularly those not pursuing a traditional college path, in making informed career and education decisions. Drawing on Maryland's rich longitudinal education and workforce data, the tool will help students, parents, and counselors understand the long-term wage and employment outcomes of various postsecondary options, including apprenticeships, certificates, and nontraditional pathways. The MLDS Center will engage stakeholders, including school counselors and students, to guide platform

design through targeted user groups and engagement opportunities. This initiative builds on the success of the MD-CLaWE platform and will leverage existing infrastructure, technical capacity, and governance structures.

The project (see attached proposal) includes engaging key personnel to develop and facilitate an implementation plan and establishes two user groups: an Advisors User Group and an End User Group. The Advisors User Group will consist of teachers, school counselors, and college advisors and the End User Group will consist of students and their parents. These groups will help inform what information should be included in the tool and in what format as well as serve as testers of the platform. The project also includes a marketing, engagement, and training strategy.

The project will deliver on one of the goals that the Governor and General Assembly had when establishing the MLDS Center in 2010 - making data available to the public to help inform their decisions about their educational and workforce pathways. While the MLDS Center's research and reporting has been heavily utilized by senior policymakers and administrators, the Center's ability to engage students and their parents has not been achieved. This project will help the Center fulfill that important goal by developing a platform that directly addresses the needs of students, their parents and advisors. Further, the resources provided by the project grant funding will allow the Center to develop the platform in direct dialogue with the intended users; facilitated by contractors with the expertise to help identify and document the platform design and content requirements. This process will ensure that the platform will directly meet the needs of the intended users.

Action
Informational.

Action Fund Project Proposal

Agency Overview

- Agency Name: *Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center*
- Project Title: *Maryland Postsecondary Academic and Workforce Explorer (MD-PAWE)*
- States Impacted: *Maryland*
- Agency Type: *State Education Agency*
- Person Submitting Proposal: *Ross Goldstein*
- Title: *Executive Director*
- Email: ross.goldstein@maryland.gov

The Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center is an independent state agency that develops and maintains a data system containing student and workforce data from all levels of public education, child and youth services, and the State's workforce. The MLDS Center uses the data system to generate timely and accurate information about student performance and outcomes that can be used to improve the State's education system and guide decision makers, including government officials, education administrators, workforce development planners, teachers, students and their families. The MLDS Center produces a variety of output including dashboards, in-depth research reports, policy briefs, and other analyses to support various projects and reporting needs by other government entities. The MLDS Center is overseen by a Governing Board made up of the principal executive of each of the agencies providing data to the MLDS, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders. The composition of the Governing Board ensures that senior state officials have a voice in the development and ongoing operation and use of the MLDS.

Project Overview

Solution Type

This project is intended to provide a statewide solution. The project is not specifically focused on any particular historically underrepresented student group. However, the MLDS Center Governing Board's [Research Agenda](#) requires all research, reports, and other output to incorporate one or more of the following cross cutting themes: Supports & Barriers, Social Determinants, and/or Equity & Inclusion.   As such, the project will carefully consider how the final output can support underrepresented student groups.

Audiences and Beneficiaries

Each year, close to 60,000 students graduate from a Maryland public high school. All of these graduates need information, starting as early as their freshman year of high school through their senior year, to help them make informed decisions about their transition to postsecondary education and/or the workforce. Students on a college pathway have information available to them through resources such as the College Scorecard and numerous publications. Students who choose another pathway or those who

are diverted from the college pathway have less information available to them. In Maryland this is a sizable population; five years after high school graduation over 60% of Maryland high school graduates either did not go to college or had some college but did not earn a degree. Of these students who were visible in the Maryland workforce, their median annual wage five years after high school was more than $12,000 below the annual living wage calculation for Maryland. It is these students the MLDS Center aims to inform about career decisions that can help them achieve a living wage and put them on a path to success.

In recognition of the fact that high school students in 9th through 12th grade don't necessarily know that they need information for effective postsecondary education and career decisions, the project will also include as a key audience, school counselors who can both use and guide students and their parents to the information to help students understand potential career pathways and earning potential.

Summary

The Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center proposes the development of the Maryland Postsecondary Academic and Workforce Explorer (MD-PAWE), a data-driven online interactive platform aimed at supporting high school students, particularly those not pursuing a traditional college path, in making informed career and education decisions. Drawing on Maryland's rich longitudinal education and workforce data, the tool will help students, parents, and counselors understand the long-term wage and employment outcomes of various postsecondary options, including apprenticeships, certificates, and nontraditional pathways. The project directly aligns with Maryland's "Blueprint for Maryland's Future" initiative by promoting college and career readiness (CCR) by helping students meet CCR goals. The MLDS Center will engage stakeholders, including school counselors and students, to guide platform design through targeted user groups and engagement opportunities. This initiative builds on the success of the MD-CLaWE platform and will leverage existing infrastructure, technical capacity, and governance structures. Key deliverables include a user tailored platform, user engagement strategy, and an analysis of the platform after its full implementation. The project aims to empower students with actionable information while helping the state meet critical workforce needs. Long-term sustainability is ensured through ongoing support by the MLDS Center and ongoing collaboration with school counselors.

Project Details

Background and Need Statement

Each year (starting in 2018), the MLDS Center and the Governor's Workforce Development Board produces a statutorily mandated annual report for the Governor and General Assembly on the workforce outcomes of high school graduates five years after graduation. Specifically, the report must include the high school graduates' wages earned, the hours worked and the industry in which they are employed. The report provides important insights about high school graduates and their workforce outcomes within the context of whether they: attained a postsecondary degree (Bachelor's, Associates, or Certificate); had "some college" (attempted college, but stopped before achieving a degree); are "still in college" (enrolled in a degree program five years post high school); or had "no college" (i.e. went straight into the workforce, pursued workforce training or an apprenticeship).

While these reports are intended for policy makers, there are important insights and considerations that would be beneficial for high school graduates. For example, the benefits of a Bachelor's degree is demonstrated by reporting that five years after high school graduation, the median annual wage for high school graduates who earn a Bachelor's degree is almost $4,000 above the living wage. This information may help students and their families understand the value of a college degree and the need for student loans to support timely degree attainment. Conversely, the reporting also shows the pitfalls of trying college but not obtaining a degree ("some college"). **Five years after high school graduation, the median annual wage for high school graduates with "some college" (which is almost one third of all high school graduates) is approximately $14,000 below the living wage and is also below the median wages earned by high school graduates who never attended college.** That fact along with the potential for student loan debt among the "some college" high school graduates is an important data point to consider before embarking on a college pathway. The goal is not to discourage college-going; rather, it is to help make sure that college-going implications are well understood and, when indicated, provide insights into other promising pathways that avoid college such as apprenticeships or educational pathways that require less years of postsecondary education, such as certificates (a degree awarded, generally from a community college, that requires around 20-30 credits and can be completed in one academic year or less) and Associates degrees, both of which MLDS Center reporting have shown to hold promise for completers. Finally, the reports have consistently shown that the industry sector that high school graduates are in five years after high graduation is an important factor in their potential wage earning. Providing this information to students can help them plan for successful careers in well paying industries.

As Maryland's central repository for student and workforce data, the MLDS Center is well positioned to provide actionable information to students, their parents, and their advisors as they exit high school for postsecondary education and careers. The MLDS Center has comprehensive data on all aspects of public school students' academic performance, including courses, grades, attendance, and assessments. The student data is linked to child welfare, juvenile services, postsecondary, and workforce data to allow the Center to develop insightful reporting about students and the supports and barriers to their success. In addition to being a rich data source, the MLDS Center's governance practices ensures constant communication with and input from the agency data sharing partners, ensuring that the work of the Center meets the needs of key state policy makers as well as ensuring the highest level of quality and accuracy of data use and reporting.

This project also fits squarely within the context of Maryland's biggest education initiative, the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*. The *Blueprint* was passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2021 to transform public education in the state into a world-class education system. The *Blueprint* will increase state funding for education over the next 10 years, enrich student experiences and accelerate student outcomes, as well as improve the quality of education for all children in Maryland, especially those who have been historically underserved. One of the pillars of the *Blueprint* is *College and Career Readiness* (CCR), which sets a standard to prepare graduates for success in college and the workforce by ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to complete entry-level credit-bearing college courses and work in

high-wage and high-demand industries. The *Blueprint* aims to have all students meet the CCR standard by the end of their 10th grade year. The *Blueprint* also includes a goal for 45% of high school graduates to have completed a registered apprenticeship or an industry recognized credential by the 2030-2031 school year. Providing a tool to help students make informed, data driven decisions about how to meet the CCR requirements in a way that meets their needs and sets them up for success is a necessary component to the successful implementation of the *Blueprint's* CCR pillar. For example, this project could help students gain insights about career possibilities related to apprenticeship programs or industry credentials that they complete during high school. It could also help students focus their educational choices by informing them about in-demand careers in thriving labor sectors in the state and highlight educational pathways to those careers.   Additionally, this project can help the state promote careers and educational pathways that fulfill critical workforce needs.

Data Sets and Resources
<u>Overview of Education and Workforce Data</u>
The MLDS connects individual person data from across Maryland's education and workforce agencies. These data are subject to strict data management, security, and privacy requirements. The MLDS may only report aggregated, de-identified data. All research conducted by the MLDS Center focuses on what happens to students before and after critical transitions between education and workforce pathways. All research and analysis using the MLDS is cross-sector.

The MLDS contains education data on all students from Maryland public schools, including data from the National Student Clearinghouse on all high school graduates for five years post graduation; students attending Maryland public, state-aided independent and private institutions of higher education; adults completing GED® Testing or the National External Diploma Program® (NEDP®); students participating in apprenticeship programs; and adults participating in workforce training programs. Education data begin with the 2007-2008 academic year. The MLDS does not contain education data on students in private high schools. The MLDS contains limited data on students in private colleges. Further, data on unsuccessful attempts at fulfilling the GED® or NEDP® requirements are not included in the System. The MLDS contains limited information on out-of-state college enrollment and graduation for Maryland public high school graduates

The MLDS System contains workforce data from quarterly Unemployment Insurance (UI) filings beginning with the first fiscal quarter of 2008 for individuals with a Maryland educational record. UI filings are only available for Maryland employees who work for an in-state employer required to file UI and have at least one Maryland education record. Examples of employers that are not required to file UI include the federal government (including the military), certain non-profits, and self-employed and independent contractors. Individuals working in temporary employment, including federal postsecondary work-study programs, are also not subject to UI filings. The UI wages reported reflect the compensation paid during a fiscal quarter, rather than when the compensation was earned. UI wages reflect the sum of all compensation, including bonuses, commissions, tips, and other forms of compensation. The UI wage data do not distinguish between part-time and full-time employment, hourly and salaried wages, regular wages and commissions, bonuses, and other incentive pay. The UI wage data

provided do not indicate the number of days or the number of hours a person worked in a fiscal quarter. UI filings for a fiscal quarter may be incomplete. Employers may have filed UI wages after the data have been transmitted to the MLDS Center or have omitted individuals from their file. Missing wage data and/or corrections to previously reported wages may be provided in subsequent fiscal quarters. While there is no time limit on correcting UI filings, most changes (additions and/or corrections) are completed within one fiscal quarter.   Wage data in the MLDS include North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes for employers. This system classifies employers by sector rather than identifies the specific jobs performed by employees. For example, NAICS 62 is Health Care and Social Assistance, and NAICS 6221 is General Medical and Surgical Hospitals. Individuals who are doctors, hospital administrators, dietitians, and janitorial staff at a hospital would all have this same NAICS code. Employers select the sector and may change their sector designation at any time.

In addition to education and workforce data, the MLDS Center has data on business and occupational licenses issued by Maryland Health Commissions and Boards and the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing under the Department of Labor. The MLDS Center is also authorized to collect credential data from national certifiers. Currently the Center has data from Microsoft from its professional certificate programs. Finally, the MLDS Center also collects data on student involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

MLDS Center Resources
The MLDS Center has 15 staff members. Eight members of the staff are part of the system management team, responsible for the database management, security, data loading and analysis, data quality assurance, and website design. Three staff members have a dual appointment with the MLDS Center and with the Department of Labor, State Department of Education (MSDE), or the Higher Education Commission (MHEC). For the MLDS Center they serve as subject matter experts on their agency's data and fulfill important roles as part of the Center's management team (the MHEC Liaison is responsible for the Reporting Services Division and the MSDE liaison serves as the Data Management Coordinator). Two staff members are part of the Reporting Services Division responsible for design and implementation of Center output to fulfill agency data reporting requirements, including interactive reports, dashboards, data requests, and research briefs. The team is highly skilled at delivering interactive web-content using PowerBI. Finally, there is an Executive Director and one administrative support staff member.

The MLDS Center is also supported by its Research Branch which is provided through an intergovernmental agreement with the University of Maryland, School of Social Work. The agreement provides a Research Branch Director, a statistician, and funding to engage other faculty around the state in projects of interest to the Center and its stakeholders.

The resources of the Center will be fully available for this project. In addition, the MLDS Center has the necessary data, the technical resources, and the infrastructure to build and host an interactive platform that serves students and their advisors.

Partnerships

The MLDS Center has a shared governance structure that ensures the continued input and oversight by key stakeholders. The MLDS Center Governing Board is made up of the principal of each data sharing partner agency and other senior education officials, including: the Secretaries of Higher Education, Labor, Human Services, and Juvenile Services, the State Superintendent of Schools, the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland, the President of Morgan State University, the President of the Independent Colleges and Universities Association, the Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, a representative of the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), a representative from a Maryland Health Care Commission, and four at-large members appointed by the Governor. The Governing Board meets quarterly and has the responsibility to establish data security and safeguarding standards, set the MLDS Center's Research Agenda, approve the annual budget, review annual output priorities, and provide general oversight.

In addition to the Board, the MLDS Center has three advisory boards that meet on a more frequent basis. The Research and Policy Advisory Board meets monthly to review project proposals and consult on policy and governance issues. The Data Governance Advisory Board meets every other month to review data quality issues, establish the data sharing calendar, and review new data being collected by the Center. Finally, the Disclosure Review Advisory Board meets periodically to provide input and advice on the implementation of disclosure avoidance practices. These advisory boards help ensure ongoing input and collaboration with key stakeholders.

The MLDS Center has also been establishing partnerships with school counselors in Maryland. The Center has been working with MSDE's school counseling coordinator who is interested in this project. The Center was invited to the Maryland College Application Campaign (MCAC) Coordinator meeting. The MCAC coordinators are high school guidance counselors and it was a good opportunity to provide an overview of the MLDS Center and seek feedback on how the Center can provide research and reporting to help the counselors support their students. The MLDS Center has a commitment from the Director of School Counseling Services for Montgomery County Public Schools (Maryland's largest school system) to work with the Center on the project. The Center is also working with leaders of the Maryland School Counselor Association to formalize a partnership to collaborate on this project. Finally, the MLDS Governing Board member who is the superintendent of Anne Arundel County Public Schools and PSSAM representative is fully supportive of the project and will be instrumental in ensuring awareness and participation among the PSSAM membership.

Activities and Methodology

This past year, the MLDS Center created and launched the *Maryland College Labor Sector and Wage Explorer* ([MD-CLaWE](#)). MD-CLaWE is a self-service portal that enables users to generate reports on Maryland workforce participation by Maryland college graduates. The explorer offers different methods for calculating wages; it provides wages for graduates disaggregated by academic or calendar year, as well as by industry in which the graduates are employed; and the tables in the explorer may be further disaggregated by institution, degree attainment, major, race, ethnicity, gender, and residency at the time of enrollment in college.

This product came about to fulfill a need. Institutional researchers at the Maryland colleges have long understood the value of the MLDS and how it could aid their work. They were the first (and most frequent) individuals to submit data requests, which the Center would fulfill on a per request basis. Instead of continuing to manage numerous individual requests, the MD-CLaWE portal was developed and tailored to meet the needs of these users and their various requests. User group sessions were held to further refine the platform and the end result has been tremendously successful. The platform has been enthusiastically received by the institutional researchers and it is being consistently used. Other groups have found new uses for the information provided. New content requests and enhancements have been received and are in development and the MLDS Center can leverage existing code to develop these new products.

MD-CLaWE demonstrates two important requirements for the development of a successful platform: first, data and technical resources are needed to produce meaningful, interactive content to help users make data informed decisions; and second, a well defined and motivated user base who understand the value of data and how to use the data to inform their decision making. The MLDS Center has the internal resources to meet the first requirement but needs support and additional resources to accomplish the second requirement.

Specifically, the through this project, MLDS Center would undertake the following activities:

Activity 1 - The first activity is to engage a senior business analyst (estimated cost is $45,000) and an education subject matter expert (estimated cost is $30,000) to facilitate all of the requirements gathering and joint application design sessions, help educate stakeholders about the types of questions that can be answered by the MLDS data, and ultimately translate user requirements into technical solutions that can be implemented by the MLDS Center Reporting Services Division. We anticipate the engagement for both to be limited to a 6 or 9 month period and likely half-time.

Activity 2 - Hold convenings with MLDSC staff and state and local education and workforce development policy leaders to discuss the project goals and ensure that it aligns with state college and career readiness goals and workforce development strategies and priorities. These initial meetings would also help refine the project goals and objectives.

Activity 3 - Work with stakeholders to assemble an *Advisors User Group* consisting of teachers, school counselors, and college advisors and then conduct a series of meetings with the group to determine what information is needed and the best format for providing the information. This group would continue meeting after the platform is complete to discuss opportunities to promote and build awareness about the platform, discuss enhancements and other opportunities to provide useful information.

Activity 4 - Work with stakeholders to assemble an *End User Group* consisting of students and their parents and conduct a series of meetings to review the proposed content and format identified by the Advisors User Group.

Activity 5 - After these meetings are complete and content and design have been established, the MLDS Center Reporting Services Division will develop the platform. Once complete, both user groups will reconvene for testing and refinement of the platform.

Activity 6 - Engage an outreach specialist (estimated cost is $25,000) to develop and implement a marketing, engagement, and training strategy to ensure that the targeted audiences are aware of and can effectively utilize the resource.

Innovation

The project will deliver on one of the goals that the Governor and General Assembly had when establishing the MLDS Center in 2010 - *making data available to the public to help inform their decisions about their educational and workforce pathways.* While the MLDS Center's research and reporting has been heavily utilized by senior policymakers and administrators, the Center's ability to engage students and their parents has not been achieved. This project will help the Center fulfill that important goal by developing a platform that directly addresses the needs of students, their parents and advisors. Further, the resources provided by the project grant funding will allow the Center to develop the platform in direct dialogue with the intended users; facilitated by contractors with the expertise to help identify and document the platform design and content requirements. This process will ensure that the platform will directly meet the needs of the intended users.

Project Results - Deliverables and Outcomes

The project will provide the following deliverables:

Deliverable 1 - Onboarding the business analyst, subject matter expert, and outreach specialist. To complete this deliverable, the MLDS Center will develop a detailed statement of work to include in the procurement vehicle. The statement of work will clearly identify the required tasks and the needed skills and experiences necessary to provide effective assistance for this project.

Deliverable 2 - A revised project plan based on input from MLDS Center staff and state and local education and workforce development policy leaders. The revised plan will ensure that the project aligns with state college and career readiness goals, workforce development strategies and priorities, and addresses the needs of education administrators and policymakers.

Deliverable 3 - The creation of the Advisors User Group and End Users Group. The groups must include individuals with some familiarity with and interest in data use and be representative of Maryland's diverse population (race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and geographically).

Deliverable 4 - Conduct user group meetings, facilitated by the business analyst and subject matter expert, and develop a detailed list of user requirements based on input received during the meetings.

Deliverable 5 - Using the requirements gathered from the user groups, the business analyst and subject matter expert will create a final requirements and design document that will guide the work of the MLDS Center Reporting Services Division's creation of the platform.

Deliverable 6 - A functional platform will be provided for a final round of testing and input from the user group members.

Deliverable 7 - A clear, step-by-step marketing, engagement, and training strategy that can be implemented by MLDS Center and MSDE staff.

Deliverable 8 - A post project analysis, conducted at least six months to one year after implementation, to include system usage statistics, user feedback, and plans for maintenance and ongoing development of the platform.

Outcomes - One immediate outcome of this project is that the MLDS Center will obtain resources to develop a community of practice that will guide the development of this project and future enhancements and output. Being in direct dialogue with users (students and their advisors) assures that the project output will be utilized because it is tailored to meet their needs. The MLDS Center will ensure that this outcome is sustained by working to maintain at least an 80% attendance rate at user group meetings during and post implementation.

The development of the platform and the implementation of a focused outreach and training program to support the uptake and utilization of the platform are another key outcome. The MLDS Center will ensure utilization of the platform by continued outreach, ongoing monitoring of the use of the platform and ongoing development and refinement of the platform to continually address user needs. These efforts will result in a starting user population of 1,000 unique users in the first year and increasing usage by 10% each subsequent year for 10 years.

Finally, the long-term outcome of this project is for Maryland students to be able to seamlessly select career pathways based on data driven information that takes into consideration a variety of factors including a realistic assessment of postsecondary requirements and costs, job market demand, and wage outcomes. Of the 2018 cohort of high school graduates with full quarter wages, only 20% had wages above the MIT living wage calculation five years after high school. In ten years after implementation of the project, data informed decision making will result in a ten percentage point increase in the number of high school graduates earning a living wage.

For the State of Maryland, the project can help identify and promote the State's critical workforce needs and provide information to students about those opportunities, thereby increasing the number of students who complete workforce shortage education pathways.

Project Risks and Mitigation

The biggest challenge to this project is establishing the two user groups with motivated and knowledgeable individuals who can provide meaningful input into the development of the platform. To mitigate this issue, the project team needs to be prepared to have a plan to prompt discussion and the flow of ideas. The team also needs to be prepared to add additional user group members, hold

additional user group meetings, and conduct engagement tools like surveys to receive the needed input from these groups.

Sustainability

The MLDS Center is an independent unit of state government. Since fiscal year 2013, the MLDS Center has received an annual appropriation sufficient to maintain the system, employ a staff of 15 highly capable professionals, and fund a Research Branch. Once the plans for the platform are fully developed, MLDS Center staff will build the platform to be hosted on the MLDS Center website according to the plans and will continue to maintain and enhance the platform after the project is completed. The Center will also encourage school counselors to post links to the platform on their schools' websites to ensure continued exposure and utilization by students and their parents.