



### Call for Applications: Join the Value Data Collaborative (VDC)

The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) seeks project proposals from state higher education agencies, institutions, and systems of institutions interested in using data to understand and improve the delivery of postsecondary value to all students.

Participants in the Value Data Collaborative (VDC) will conduct original research that evaluates student outcomes through the lens of postsecondary value, build technical expertise and capacity in analytics and data infrastructure, learn alongside peers in other states or institutions, and engage in Community of Practice events to make meaning of their research and use their findings to inform changes in policy and practice.

Specifically, the VDC seeks to achieve the following goals:

- **Build practice- and policy-relevant evidence through customized research** tailored to each participant's focus areas, goals, and strategic plans. VDC participants will gain in-depth and practical research insights on postsecondary value specific to their state or institution.
- **Inform state and institutional policy changes by** improving understanding of their own students' outcomes and use their results to inform policies and practices to improve postsecondary value.
- **Promote transparency by publishing information on equitable postsecondary value** through the inclusion of their data in [the Equitable Value Explorer \(EVE\)](#). VDC participants will benefit from data visualizations that communicate postsecondary value.
- **Foster peer relationships with experts across states and institutions** strengthening their capacity to sustain related work in the future.

The VDC offers several levels of participation to accommodate varying levels of capacity in terms of participants' time, staff resources, and ability to share student-level data. Participants in more time-intensive tracks will receive an honorarium to support staff engagement with the VDC work. All participants will receive analytic support and technical assistance from IHEP, the Coleridge Initiative, and Westat Insight. In addition, the Coleridge Initiative will provide participants with a secure cloud-based platform and other data infrastructure needed to conduct data analysis using student-level data.

This Call for Applications includes:

1. Background & Project Objectives
2. Value Data Collaborative Partners
3. Participation Details
4. Budget
5. Timeline
6. Application Requirements

## 1. Background & Project Objectives:

Co-chaired by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and managed by IHEP, the Postsecondary Value Commission comprised 30 diverse leaders representing college and universities, policymakers, advocates, researchers, business community members, and students. From 2019 through 2021, the Commission worked to propose a [definition](#) of postsecondary value, develop a way to [measure](#) that value, and urge [action](#) to improve value and make it more equitable.

In 2021, the Postsecondary Value Commission released the [Postsecondary Value Framework](#), which outlines the clear value-add that postsecondary education can provide to students and society, in both economic and non-economic terms. Core to the framework is a set of economic value thresholds that measure earnings and wealth outcomes over time, using a series of benchmarks (see Table 1 below for the value thresholds focused on earnings).

Assessing institutional, system, or state performance on those thresholds can uncover strong points and areas for improvement in access, attainment, and post-college outcomes. The framework incorporates measures of student investment in their education, adjusts for state-specific variation in wages, and explicitly centers access and support for diverse student populations *and* supporting those students through graduation and beyond. The Postsecondary Value Framework provides a robust assessment of value in postsecondary education.

**Table 1: Value Threshold Definitions<sup>1</sup>**

Threshold	Definition
T0 “Minimum Economic Return”	A student meets this threshold if they earn at least as much as a high school graduate plus enough to recoup their total net price within ten years.
T1 “Earnings Premium”	A student meets this threshold if they reach at least the median earnings in their field of study, which accounts for expected variations in pay across fields.
T2 “Earnings Parity”	This threshold measures whether students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and women meet the median earnings of their more advantaged peers (White students, high-income students, or men).
T3 “Earnings Mobility”	This threshold measures whether students earn enough to enter the fourth (upper middle) income quintile regardless of field of study.

The Value Data Collaborative (VDC) seeks to expand the reach and impact of the Postsecondary Value Framework by partnering with states, institutions, and systems to evaluate student outcomes through the lens of postsecondary value and continuous improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> The Postsecondary Value Framework also includes two Thresholds measuring wealth outcomes of former students, but these thresholds cannot be measured at the institution level with [currently available data sources](#).

## 2. Value Data Collaborative Partners

**The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP):** IHEP drives systemic change in higher education to advance equitable outcomes and generational impact for communities historically marginalized on the basis of race, ethnicity, or income. IHEP achieves this change through research, advocacy, policy development, and field engagement. IHEP serves as the project lead for the VDC, including coordination with all participants and other VDC partners, providing expertise on the Postsecondary Value Framework and support on research projects, preparing data for display on the Equitable Value Explorer web tool, and hosting Community of Practice events.

**The Coleridge Initiative:** The Coleridge Initiative is a nonprofit organization working with governments to ensure that data are more effectively used for public decision-making. Coleridge does this both by providing a platform to securely link confidential data within and across states and agencies, and by providing data literacy training to agency staff. Their platform is the Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF) which is a secure, FedRAMP-authorized, cloud-based environment that enables government agencies to link their longitudinal data with other states and agencies. The Coleridge Initiative serves as the data infrastructure partner, including providing technological infrastructure for participants to share and link data across agencies (e.g., workforce records and postsecondary enrollment and completion data). Coleridge also leads and coordinates Applied Data Analysis (ADA) trainings for state agency and institutional staff to use modern data analysis methods to answer real-world questions related to postsecondary value and develop open-source tools that can be used after training ends to improve decision making.

**Westat Insight:** Westat Insight seeks improvement in the lives of historically underserved and economically disadvantaged populations through research. Its design and implementation of user-friendly research and evaluation tools for learning, improvement, and planning support a broad range of policies, programs, and services that benefit these populations. Westat Insight serves as the analytic lead for the VDC. Westat Insight staff provide content, research design, and coding expertise to assist states' implementation of the postsecondary value framework. Westat Insight also conducts analysis for displaying VDC participants' data on the Equitable Value Explorer.

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## 3. Participation Details

Successful proposals will detail participants' ability to commit to one of the following tracks for the Value Data Collaborative (see Table 2 on the following page). Funding and technical assistance from VDC partners will align with the proposed track's scope.

Participant teams, ideally consisting of four to five individuals, are strongly encouraged to collaborate across agencies or departments. For example, state teams should include representatives from postsecondary and/or education agencies, state workforce agencies, and other relevant agencies. Each team must include at least one member comfortable working with data in some form and another with close knowledge of state policy and/or institutional practices. Applicants who plan to share data should also involve at least one member well-versed in data availability, definitions, and governance.

**Table 2: VDC Participation Track Descriptions**

<p><b>Track 1:</b></p>	<p><i>Submit student-level data to the Coleridge Initiative’s Administrative Data Research Facility (ADRF):</i> Track 1 participants will submit student-level data on postsecondary educational experiences and economic outcomes to the ADRF and grant secure access to these data to a limited number of core project staff at the Coleridge Initiative, Westat Insight, and IHEP. This access will be necessary to fulfill the expectations that follow and will be used only for the purposes described here. Participants will provide final approval of all data exported from the ADRF.</p> <p><i>Participate in <a href="#">Applied Data Analytics</a> training and conduct original research on participant priorities related to postsecondary value.</i> Using the data submitted to the ADRF, participants will commit staff teams to engage in a Coleridge-led Applied Data Analytics training focused on postsecondary value. This training will develop participants’ coding and analytic skills and provide hands-on opportunities to use data to answer research questions about postsecondary value.</p> <p><i>Support publication of data visualizations on the <a href="#">Equitable Value Explorer</a>.</i> Participants’ data will be converted to summary statistics and data visualizations and published on the <a href="#">Equitable Value Explorer</a>—an interactive tool designed to facilitate data-informed decision-making. Coleridge and Westat Insight will create and validate the summary statistics using the student-level data that participants submit to the ADRF; IHEP will facilitate the transfer of aggregate data to the interactive tool; and participants will review the data and support Coleridge, Westat Insight, and IHEP to finalize the data for publication.</p> <p><i>Engage in <a href="#">Community of Practice (COP)</a> events to connect research findings with policy and practice solutions.</i> Participants will attend in-person and online meetings with national leaders and Value Data Collaborative peers to support meaning making and action based on the data analysis and research. The format, timing, length, content, and emphasis will be determined based on the needs of participants.</p> <p>To be eligible for Track 1 funding, applicants must demonstrate the ability to achieve the following during the project period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete all required legal agreements, including a data-sharing agreement (DSA) that provides Coleridge, IHEP, and Westat Insight access to the necessary higher education and workforce data, and provide all necessary data through the ADRF platform.</li> <li>• Use their own data in an Applied Data Analytics class to complete an original research project that explores postsecondary value and aligns with their policy goals.</li> <li>• Work with VDC partners to prepare aggregate data for the Equitable Value Explorer (EVE).</li> <li>• Participate in the COP, making meaning of their data for policy and practice change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Track 2:</b></p>	<p><i>Submit student-level data to the Coleridge Initiative’s ADRF:</i> Track 2 participants will submit student-level data on postsecondary educational experiences and economic outcomes to the ADRF and grant secure access to these data to a limited number of core project staff at the Coleridge Initiative, Westat Insight, and IHEP. This access will be necessary to fulfill the expectations that follow and will be used only for the purposes described here. Participants will provide final approval of all data exported from the ADRF.</p> <p><i>Support publication of data visualizations on the <a href="#">Equitable Value Explorer</a>.</i> Participants’ data will be converted to summary statistics and data visualizations and published on the <a href="#">Equitable Value Explorer</a>—an interactive tool designed to facilitate data-informed decision-making. Coleridge and Westat Insight will create and validate the summary statistics using the student-level data that participants submit to the ADRF; IHEP will facilitate the transfer of aggregate data to the interactive tool; and participants will review the data and support Coleridge, Westat Insight, and IHEP to finalize the data for publication.</p>

	<p><i>Engage in Community of Practice (COP) events to connect research findings with policy and practice solutions.</i> Participants will attend in-person and online meetings with national leaders and Value Data Collaborative peers to support meaning making and action based on the data analysis and research. The format, timing, length, content, and emphasis will be determined based on the needs of participants.</p> <p>To be eligible for Track 2 funding, applicants must demonstrate the ability to achieve the following during the project period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete all required legal agreements, including a data-sharing agreement (DSA) that provides Coleridge, IHEP, and Westat Insight access to the necessary higher education and workforce data, and provide all necessary data through the ADRF platform.</li> <li>• Work with VDC partners to prepare aggregate data for the Equitable Value Explorer (EVE).</li> <li>• Participate in the COP, making meaning of their data for policy and practice change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Track 3:</b></p>	<p><i>Participate in Applied Data Analytics training and conduct original research on participant priorities related to postsecondary value.</i> Participants in Track 3 will commit staff teams to participate in a Coleridge-led <a href="#">Applied Data Analytics</a> training, using data from another state, system, or institution. This training will help participants develop coding and analytic skills, as well as provide participants a hands-on opportunity to use data to answer research questions addressing the delivery of postsecondary value.</p> <p><i>Engage in Community of Practice (COP) events to connect research findings with policy and practice solutions.</i> Participants will attend in-person and online meetings with national leaders and Value Data Collaborative peers to support meaning making and action based on the data analysis and research. The format, timing, length, content, and emphasis will be determined based on the needs of participants.</p> <p>To be eligible for Track 3, applicants must demonstrate the ability to achieve the following during the project period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data from another state or entity in an Applied Data Analytics class to complete an original research project that explores postsecondary value and aligns with their own policy goals.</li> <li>• Optionally, independently apply learnings from the ADA class to their own data through their state longitudinal data system (SLDS) or other data system.</li> <li>• Participate in the COP, making meaning of their data for policy and practice change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Track 4:</b></p>	<p>IHEP will provide customized, ad-hoc technical assistance to participants interested in better understanding the Postsecondary Value Framework, embedding value concepts in their goals and strategic plans, or otherwise implementing the measurement framework outside of the ADRF and EVE. Track 4 participants will be invited to participate in COP events.</p>

#### 4. Budget

IHEP will provide financial support to selected participants in the form of an honorarium to enhance staff capacity to engage in each of the requirements described above. Honoraria will be provided to participating teams, in accordance with the following funding levels:

- Track 1: Up to \$50,000 per team
- Track 2: Up to \$30,000 per team
- Track 3: None
- Track 4: None

Participation in the Applied Data Analytics class will be covered for participants in Tracks 1 and 3, at no cost, regardless of the honorarium received.



## 5. Proposal Process and Timeline:

Call for Applications Opens	October 13, 2023
Prospective applicants submit any clarifying questions about the Call for Applications	November 10, 2023
Applications Due	January 2, 2023
Selected applicants notified	January-February, 2024

Once selected applicants have been notified, project teams will work with IHEP and the other VDC partners to execute project contracts, including determining detailed project milestones and timelines.

## 6. Application Requirements

Applicants should submit a thoughtful, clear, and well-organized proposal that includes the following elements:


**Project description: Proposals should clearly denote the specific track of interest and include a clear description of how the project will meet the selected track's objectives.** This includes the research question(s) related to postsecondary value and how VDC participation can help inform policy and practice change at the state, system, or institution. In their research, VDC participants will be encouraged to examine outcomes for different types of students, disaggregating data by characteristics such as race or ethnicity, economic background, and gender. As such, applicants will be encouraged to identify whether their research would include or focus on outcomes for specific student populations. For each track, the application should include a description of the proposed project teams, including any state agencies, higher education institutions, or other partners who will provide data access or contribute staff time for this work. A letter of support from all data-sharing partners is encouraged.

Applications for projects that will require sharing student-level data (Tracks 1 and 2) should also include:

- A brief description of the available data on student-level enrollment, completion, financial aid, and employment outcomes. Available data dictionaries or other documentation may be included as an appendix. Applicants should note the status of any existing or prospective data-sharing agreements with the Coleridge Initiative, including a description of what data is currently or will be available through the ADRF, and describe any other existing or prospective cross-agency data sharing agreements necessary to conduct analysis that combines postsecondary and workforce data.
- An overview of existing privacy and security requirements related to data access for external researchers, as well as a description of applicable standards for aggregate data publication and privacy suppression.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit statements of support from any partner entities whose data they intend to leverage for this work, even if an existing data-sharing agreement is already in place.

Page limits for Project Descriptions are as follows:

- Track 1: No more than 8 pages
- Track 2: No more than 6 pages
- Track 3: No more than 3 pages
- Track 4: No more than 3 pages



**Organizational mission, values, and commitments (no more than 1 page):** IHEP is committed to working with partners who have a demonstrated track record of advancing postsecondary access and success for all individuals, regardless of background or circumstance. In addition, we prioritize partnerships with organizations committed to cultivating internal work environments that reflect their mission and values. Please describe your organization’s mission, values, and commitments; identify specific strategies to advance student access, success, and post-college economic outcomes, including any strategic priority populations supported by your work; and describe how your workplace culture reflects your organizational mission.

**Background and proposed team (no more than 2 pages):** Share relevant background information about your organization and/or yourself (for individuals). Please include information about the key team member(s) who will be working on this project, including brief bio(s) that highlight their relevant expertise and a description of each team member’s anticipated role. Please see Section 3: Participation Details above for more information on the recommended team composition for successful proposals.

Proposals are due to IHEP by 5:00 pm PT on January 2, 2024. Please reach out to the IHEP team (Kim Dancy, [kdancy@ihep.org](mailto:kdancy@ihep.org) or Rehva Jones [rjones@ihep.org](mailto:rjones@ihep.org)) with questions about this call for applications. Please submit proposals to Rehva Jones ([rjones@ihep.org](mailto:rjones@ihep.org)) on or before the application deadline.