Cradle-to-Career Data Governing Board Staff Report

Date Report Issued: August 6, 2024
Attention: Members of Cradle-to-Career Data Governing Board
Subject: **FY 2025-26 Draft Budget Change Concept**
Staff Contact: Lesley Taylor, Director of Operations

At this meeting, the Governing Board (Board) will receive an update on the budgetary resources for the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data (Office) and have the opportunity to provide feedback on a budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26.

Requested Action:

For this item, Staff recommends the Board approve the areas of resource needs specified in the staff report, delegate the Board Chair and Chair Elect to work with the Office to create a multi-year budget change proposal (BCP) that requests new resources aligned to the statutory charge outlined in this report, and authorize the Office to finalize the budget request in collaboration with GovOps leadership and the Department of Finance.

- ❖ Move to approve the areas of resource needs specified in the staff report, delegate the Board Chair and Chair Elect to work with the Office to create and submit a multi-year budget request aligned to the areas of resource needs, and authorize the Office to finalize the request in collaboration with GovOps leadership and the Department of Finance and to make any related changes to the final request.

Background:

The Budget Act of 2023 allocated $15.26M ongoing to Cradle-to-Career (C2C). At its August 2023 meeting, the Board approved a budget change concept for FY 2024-25. The budget change concept was refined based on feedback from GovOps and the Department of Finance and developed into two BCPs, 0511-001-BCP-2024-GB and 0511-013-BCP-2024-GB. These requests were incorporated into the Governor's Budget and ultimately approved by the

Legislature and signed into law. C2C received position authority for a Chief Information Security Officer, and $600,000 reappropriated from FY 2023-24 to FY 2024-25 to begin implementing the statewide scaling of eTranscript California.

C2C's operating budget in the Budget Act of 2024 is $15.401M ongoing. Pursuant to Control Section 4.05 and Budget Letter (BL) 24-10, the Office has planned to implement a 7.95% ongoing budget reduction, leaving approximately $14.177M available for FY 2024-25. The one-time $600,000 reappropriation is not part of C2C's regular operating budget and may also be subject to reduction.

Education Code Section 10860 et seq. provides the statutory charge for the C2C Data System and the Office. Each year, the Office reviews the fiscal resources (funding) and human resources (positions) needed to achieve this charge to inform the development of a budget change concept for the following fiscal year.

Assessment of Resource Needs:

Security, Privacy & Data Quality

The Office is charged with managing the technical infrastructure necessary to compile, match, store, access, and visualize information from data providers. The Office works closely with data providers and is responsible for developing technical documentation to facilitate data submission, coordinating issues related to data points and definitions, and identifying standards to improve data sharing ability and data quality. Ensuring system security and protecting individual privacy and personal information are the highest priorities of the Office.

The existing staff resources for security and privacy are the Chief Information Security Officer and the Chief Privacy Officer, a role currently assigned to C2C's General Counsel. The Office also contracts with security and privacy consultants. C2C could reduce costs and increase capacity by establishing a team to run security and privacy operations in-house.

C2C presently receives IT services and support from the Department of General Services (DGS) via an interagency agreement. To bring these services in-house and provide direct control of its active directory and assets, C2C would need to establish a support services unit. Only one Information Technology Associate position is currently established for this purpose. To manage assets and access for the Office, contractors, and Board members, C2C would need to establish a data infrastructure unit. This work is presently done by DGS in collaboration with the Director of Data Infrastructure.

C2C is contracted with a System Integrator for the build of the data system, but needs to bring the overall management of the deployment of C2C's data system assets in-house to ensure all aspects of the data system are planned, tested, deployed, monitored, and patched in a timely manner. Expanded architect and engineer roles for enterprise applications could provide this expertise and be responsible for automation, orchestration, and scheduling of C2C's continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD) pipelines.

Effective Tools

In furtherance of [Executive Order N-11-23](#), the Office convened five meetings of the eTranscript California & Career Passport Task Force between February and June 2024 to achieve consensus around concrete recommendations to scale eTranscript California and to explore the idea of a Career Passport. The [Task Force recommendations](#) ([Agenda Item 17](#)) will feed into the Administration's Master Plan for Career Education. The Deputy Director for Digital Services leads this work alongside one Research Data Specialist, with contracted support from WestEd. The Office has limited bandwidth to support scaling, expanding, operating, and maintaining operational (practical) tools, and is also charged with assessing the feasibility of subsuming the operation of tools that are currently administered by other agencies, including eTranscript California and CaliforniaColleges.edu.

C2C practices inclusive engagement and user-centered design in all aspects of its work, especially analytical and practical tools. In order to effectively strategize, design, and deploy tools including dashboards, a query builder, and

a research request process concurrently, the Office would need to establish dedicated bandwidth with these specialties to each type of tool. Working across data programs and engagement, these teams can develop learning agendas, establish strong feedback loops with data users, and offer compelling data stories. The resulting tools will be effective if they are able to streamline processes and support student guidance. Under the general oversight of the Director of Data Programs, a Research Manager and Research Data Specialist work in partnership with a contracted user experience/user interface (UX/UI) designer and The Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley to develop analytical tools.

C2C's equity focus, as envisioned by the Legislature, goes beyond ensuring wide, appropriate, and legal use of the data system. It includes maximizing disaggregation and access to information while protecting individual privacy. It means more than making tools and data stories available, but also providing professional development, communications, and technical assistance to build data literacy. In particular, it means elevating student voice through an annual Student Experience Audit (Report). Under the general oversight of the Director of Engagement, the Deputy Director of Communications is currently allocated one Communications Coordinator and contracts for interpretation, translation, and graphic design services. The California Education Lab at UC Davis is contracted to support the Student Experience Audit.

Data Requests & Research

C2C's research request tool is described in statute as a one-stop shop that will address the needs of academic, nonprofit, and governmental researchers to analyze data and evaluate programs to enhance policy development. The Office must design and implement the tool itself, along with all related data infrastructure, onsite physical infrastructure, and policies and procedures, including a fee structure. The C2C website must provide transparency of the criteria, status, and responses for each research request.

C2C's Research Manager is the primary staff resource responsible for initial planning of the research request tool and related policies and procedures and would be the resource dedicated to supporting and evaluating research

requests and consulting with requestors. Additional bandwidth focused on user experience and differential privacy would enhance and accelerate the Office's ability to achieve its statutory requirements.

Governance & Policy

The work of the Office is guided by the 21-member Governing Board and informed by the 16-member Community Engagement Advisory Board and 16-member Data and Tools Advisory Board. The Governing Board has operated four Committees for the Selection of Advisory Boards, Executive Director Review, Governance Manual Review, and Strategic Planning. The Office expects to convene 16-20 board or committee meetings each calendar year. Combined with supporting 53 members, this requires substantial investment by the entire Office staff. Only two resources, the Chief of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships and the Board Liaison & Governance Specialist, are dedicated to this purpose. Additional staff resources would be needed to achieve better balance in the support available to board members.

The Governing Board provides oversight through regular review of important artifacts such as the Strategic Plan, annual work plan, Governance Manual, and budget requests. Each board makes recommendations to the Office that may require substantial staff time to assess and implement from the governance perspective. For example, the boards have suggested increasing student representation in their membership, but the Office does not have capacity to support student members within existing roles.

Legal & Administrative Requirements

The Office is the neutral body charged with initiating the data system and serving as its managing entity. Complex legal agreements with data providers, memoranda of understanding, interagency agreements, and contracts are among the vehicles that bring resources into the data system.

C2C is required to comply with a host of federal and state laws and regulations, and is subject to oversight from the State's control agencies in addition to the Governing Board. The Office must build capacity for risk management and

continuity planning, and align technology-based plans and operational plans within a compliance landscape. An annual Legislative Report provides transparency to the Legislature. The Office will also be subject to periodic audits and evaluations.

The legal bandwidth allocated to the Office is one position that serves as General Counsel and Chief Privacy Officer. The Office has supplemented this bandwidth with the part-time capacity of a retired annuitant since October 2023 in order to mitigate the risk of single-person dependency in the critical area of legal services. A legal office with a second attorney and dedicated analytical bandwidth could grow C2C's institutional expertise to protect the Office and its boards from risks.

The Office's Operations team supports the whole of C2C to achieve its objectives through effective human resources, procurement, contracting, budgeting, and planning activities. Under the general direction of the Director of Operations, an Administration Manager, three analytical staff and two clerical staff perform technical work that requires effective interagency communication. An expanded Operations team would be necessary to serve and support a larger C2C staff footprint, and would allow the team to specialize in more narrow roles while providing team members more opportunities for cross-training and professional growth, ultimately strengthening the organization. An expanded Office may also benefit from key Executive roles such as a designated Chief Deputy Director and Chief of Staff.

Next Steps:
The Office invites Board discussion of the resources available to fulfill C2C's statutory charge given the overall State budget climate. At this point in the budget cycle, the timing of the forthcoming Master Plan for Career Education and future revenue projections may have a significant effect on a C2C budget request for FY 2025-26. With the Board's action, the Office would work with the Chair and Chair Elect to submit a budget request within the categories described above. The Office would finalize the request in collaboration with

GovOps leadership and the Department of Finance, a regular activity during the annual build of the Governor's proposed budget. The Board would receive an update on a more refined budget request at its November 2024 meeting.