

Cradle-to-Career Data Strategic Planning Committee Report

Date Report Issued: April 20, 2026
Attention: Members of the Strategic Planning Committee
Subject: **Strategic Planning Process, Goals, and Objectives (Agenda Item Three)**
Staff Contact: Roni Jones, Leading Resources Inc.

At this meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee (Committee) will have an opportunity to revisit the California Cradle-to-Career Data System's (C2C) strategic plan following the Governing Board (Board) deliberation at the February 25, 2026 Board meeting and will finalize the proposed goals and objectives before Board adoption at the May 20, 2026 Board meeting. This staff report is broken down into two main parts: section one, strategic planning process, and section two, April 29, 2026 Committee meeting.

Requested Action:

After review and consideration of this staff report, Staff recommends that the Committee approve the proposed items.

- ❖ Move to approve the proposed strategic planning goals and objectives as specified in the staff report, and if needed, authorize the Committee Chair, LRI, and the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data System (Office) to incorporate any additional amendments proposed by the Committee in preparation for presentation to the Board at the May 20, 2026 Board meeting.

Section One: Strategic Planning Process

C2C's mission, vision, and values, as well as stakeholder engagement, have informed C2C's strategic planning process, ensuring its data, tools, and resources are useful, accessible, and responsive to user needs. This section provides an overview into the background and key themes from the strategic planning process.

Section One, Part A: Background and Key Themes

At the February 25, 2026 Board meeting, the Board received an update on C2C's strategic planning process, with specific attention to the [February 11, 2026](#) Committee meeting, and deliberated on the proposed goals and objectives that were based on themes discussed by the Board and shaped by C2C's mission, vision, and values. The following key themes from both meetings informed the draft strategic plan found in Attachment A:

- ❖ **Clarity and Precision of Language:** There was a strong emphasis on refining language to ensure concepts are clearly defined and appropriately framed.
- ❖ **Measurability and Accountability:** Members called for clearer alignment between goals, objectives, and measurable indicators. Measurable indicators will be developed as part of the annual work plans.
- ❖ **Equity, Access, and Data Literacy:** Frame equity not just as access to data, but as meaningful and inclusive engagement.
- ❖ **Engagement, Co-Design, and Trust Infrastructure:** Feedback underscores the importance of public engagement, co-design, and stakeholder responsiveness.

Section Two: April 29, 2026 Committee Meeting

The Committee will reconvene on April 29, 2026 to conclude deliberation on the proposed strategic plan goals and objectives prior to Board approval at the May 20, 2026 Board meeting. This section provides an overview on April 29, 2026 Committee deliberation and next steps in the strategic planning process.

Section Two, Part A: Member Deliberation

During the April 29, 2026 Committee meeting, member deliberation will focus on refining directions, priorities, and response to revisions. After the presentation of each individual goal, Committee members will be given the opportunity to engage in discussion and provide feedback on the goal and its objectives.

Question(s) to consider for discussion include:

- ❖ Given the themes from the Board meeting, do we feel that the current version of the preamble, goal, and objectives feel complete?

After all goals have been reviewed, Committee members will have the opportunity to participate in a broader discussion to provide high-level feedback on the proposed strategic plan as a whole.

Question(s) to consider for discussion include:

- ❖ Does the revised strategic plan language reflect C2C's mission, vision, and values?
- ❖ Does this draft effectively communicate its purpose and intent?
- ❖ Is this a cross-cutting strategic plan that promotes collaboration?

Section Two, Part B: Next Steps

Following the April 29, 2026 Committee meeting, C2C leadership and staff will further consider the comments and feedback provided and will make additional revisions to the draft strategic plan language. At the May 20, 2026 Board meeting, the Board will review and take action on the Committee's recommended updates to the strategic plan for potential adoption.

Introduction

The California Cradle-to-Career Data System is a statewide, long-term data system that brings together information on early learning, TK–12 schools, higher education, social services, and employment. It provides tools and resources to help students reach their college and career goals, and delivers clear information on education and workforce outcomes. By connecting data that was once separate and difficult to access, the system allows individuals, families, policymakers, and communities to see themselves in the data and understand the factors that shape student success.

This strategic plan sets out how we will make this system even more useful, user-friendly, and accessible. We aim to put actionable information into the hands of communities, educators, and families so they can plan, make decisions, and support students at every stage of their journey. By bringing data together in one place, Cradle-to-Career (C2C) helps Californians track progress, identify opportunities, and take steps to build a more equitable and thriving education and workforce system.

Goal 1: Be California's neutral, trusted source of linked, state-wide data on how education and jobs shape opportunity and well-being.

Preamble: For C2C's data insights to be useful, Californians need to trust that the information was brought together in a transparent, neutral process.

Objectives:

- ❖ Earn Californians' trust in our data stewardship by leaning on our value of transparency.
- ❖ Build Open Science best practices and transparency into how the data system is built, data reports are run, and research data requests are handled.¹

¹ [Placeholder for publicly available document from an external entity describing Open Science practices.]

- ❖ Identify priority questions and data resources through Learning Agendas² that draw on input from communities, Advisory Boards, and partners.
- ❖ Maintain trust by continuing public governance processes for making decisions about the data system.
- ❖ Embed privacy, security, and responsible data use into all operations.

Values: Our role is to provide clear, reliable information about education and workforce outcomes that Californians can trust. We do this by being transparent about the data and staying neutral. This information is useful for making decisions that improve opportunity for all Californians. We make the information available so that students, families, educators, and leaders can base their decisions on data.

Goal 2: Create data insights and tools that Californians count on.

Preamble: The C2C Data System complements existing state data systems by creating user friendly products that display linked education, social services, and workforce data over time. Through user-centered design, C2C makes data tools and resources for a variety of decision-making audiences, including the general public, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. For each audience, C2C's aim is to make data readily available and easier to work with.

Objectives:

- ❖ Use user-centered design to discover and create meaningful data products for the public.
- ❖ Develop and release useful public dashboards and data reports that tell human stories about Californians.
- ❖ Create and provide curated data sets for the public to solve useful problems in their lives and work.
- ❖ Enable external research through a secure virtual environment, where researchers can do useful analysis that benefits the California public.

² Learning agendas focus attention on building and using the research and evidence needed to solve big problems. <https://www.evaluation.gov/evidence-plans/learning-agenda/> or https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97406/evidence_toolkit_learning_agendas_2.pdf

- ❖ Collaborate to use data to help Californians by reducing barriers and creating tools that make it easier to move into college or careers.

Values: Our role is to link existing administrative data collected by the participating agencies to real individual context and outcomes. By doing this at scale for millions of Californians, the data products can be used like flashlights that illuminate trends, gaps, and disparities.

Goal 3: Provide equitable access to information and tools for all Californians.

Preamble: The C2C Data System links the people's data, and C2C must optimize the reach of its tools and resources by ensuring meaningful accessibility for individuals in the state. By tailoring and targeting tools and resources for the state's diverse communities, C2C works to advance data literacy — the ability to read, understand, analyze, and communicate data to make informed decisions and solve problems — for all Californians.

Objectives:

- ❖ Tell a clear story about why data insights matter.
- ❖ Regularly engage stakeholders to collaboratively design products that address the needs of communities throughout California.
- ❖ Maximize reach, strengthen understanding, and expand community use of tools by implementing effective, community-defined delivery methods for California's populations.
- ❖ Develop and implement data literacy efforts that address the diverse needs of individuals across California.

Values: Our role is to build by the people of California, for the people of California, using the people of California's data. To advance equity, we work to make information easy to access and understand for communities, schools, and organizations, and ensure the people whose stories are reflected in the data have access to that information in meaningful and practical ways. When data are shared openly and transparently, people can proactively plan, ask

questions, and take action. Providing access to data gives communities the information they need to help students succeed.

Goal 4: Build a flexible and secure data system that continually adapts to the needs of Californians.

Preamble: The C2C Data System is built in accordance with industry best practices of well architected systems that are scalable, reliable, performant, and flexible. The system also adheres to strict security and privacy practices to protect Californians' data. This enables the rapid development of new high-quality products, compliance with changing statutory and regulatory requirements, and assurance that the system is protected.

Objectives:

- ❖ Build the data system for scale and flexibility so it answers questions today and in the future.
- ❖ Adapt to changes in laws, standards, and industry guidance so the system stays compliant.
- ❖ Routinely review and update security and privacy practices so the system is safe and secure.
- ❖ Continually review and identify gaps in data access and availability.
- ❖ Reduce the administrative, technical, and operational burden of sharing data between state entities.

Values: Our role is to create products that help Californians understand and use data easily. These tools transform complex information into clear insights that support learning, skills training, and career pathways. Through collaboration and curiosity, we design tools that are usable, transparent, and trusted. Scalable products allow more individuals and organizations to benefit from data insights.

Goal 5: Optimize organizational and operational culture.

Preamble: With a small team and a modest annual budget, C2C has to use resources effectively to achieve organizational objectives. This means getting

the right people in the right roles, prioritizing spending, and meeting the administrative and legal requirements that apply to State entities.

Objectives:

- ❖ Recruit and retain top talent on the C2C team.
- ❖ Operationalize C2C's shared values.
- ❖ Use current and accurate fiscal and administrative data to inform resource prioritization and decision making.
- ❖ Make meaningful partnerships inside and outside of state government.
- ❖ Define outcomes and measure what matters.
- ❖ Manage risk within a complex compliance landscape.

Values: Our role is to regularly collaborate across all program areas, prompting C2C team members to be curious and think innovatively about opportunities and constraints within fixed resources. These discoveries create transparency, shared understanding, and accountability for the team.

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