

# Cradle-to-Career Data Governing Board Staff Report

Date Report Issued: May 13, 2026  
Attention: Members of Cradle-to-Career Data Governing Board  
Subject: **Strategic Plan (Agenda Item Seven)**  
Staff Contact: Roni Jones, Leading Resources, Inc. (LRI)

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

## Requested Action:

After review and consideration of this staff report, Staff recommends that the Board approve the motion.

- ❖ Move to approve the proposed strategic plan as presented in Attachment A to the staff report.

## Section One: Strategic Planning Process

C2C's mission, vision, and values, as well as community partner 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*

C2C's strategic planning process has been a multi-month effort that began in early 2025, when the Board began engaging in public conversations about future operations. Additionally, extensive stakeholder engagement, from the Board, Advisory Boards, and the public have been utilized to inform the strategic plan. Following the formation of the Committee at the [November 14, 2025](#) Board meeting and the Committee's inaugural meeting on [February 11, 2026](#), at the [February 25, 2026](#) Board meeting, the Board provided input on the proposed

goals and objectives, based on themes discussed by the Board and shaped by C2C's mission, vision, and values.

The Board has uplifted the following key themes in the strategic planning process:

- ❖ **Clarity and Precision of Language:** There was a strong emphasis on refining language to ensure concepts are clearly defined and appropriately framed.
- ❖ **Measurable 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.

The Committee reconvened on [April 29, 2026](#) to conclude deliberation on the proposed strategic plan goals and objectives. The Committee recommended strategic plan can be found on Attachment A.

## **Section Two: May 20, 2026 Board Meeting**

At the May 20, 2026 Board meeting, the Board will have an opportunity to opine and approve the strategic plan. This section provides an overview on the May Board meeting deliberation.

### *Section Two, Part A: Member Deliberation*

During the May 20, 2026 Board meeting, Board deliberation will focus on high-level feedback. Questions for member deliberation 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?

## 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 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Open Science practices center transparency throughout the research life cycle, from data requests, collection and analysis, to publication. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379949> or [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S\\_YxMZ-ld84iO89bjOChdYtiF2-5sbVO/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S_YxMZ-ld84iO89bjOChdYtiF2-5sbVO/view)

- ❖ Identify priority questions and data resources through Learning Agendas<sup>2</sup> 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 specific 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Learning agendas focus attention on building and using the research and evidence needed to solve big problems. <https://assets.performance.gov/PMA/PMA-Learning-Agenda.pdf> or [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97406/evidence\\_toolkit\\_learning\\_agendas\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/97406/evidence_toolkit_learning_agendas_2.pdf)

- ❖ Help Californians move into college and careers by incubating and accelerating collaborative projects.

**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 California Cradle-to-Career 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 community partners to collaboratively design products that address needs throughout California.
- ❖ Maximize reach, strengthen understanding, and expand community use of tools by implementing effective, community-driven 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, guidance, and industry best practices 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 prompts 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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