

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education
FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education
DATE: June 3, 2015
SUBJECT: Grants for Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems - CFDA Number 84.372

Executive Summary

Introduction

The State Board of Education (SBE) is empowered by Section 10-11 of the Connecticut General Statutes, to receive federal funds for purposes described in Section 10-4, including fulfilling its duties as related to measuring objectively the adequacy and efficacy of the educational programs offered by public schools in Connecticut.

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is inviting state educational agencies (SEA) to apply for grants to assist them in using data in statewide, longitudinal data systems (SLDS) to inform their efforts to improve education in critical areas. The long-term goal of the grant program is to enable all states to create comprehensive early learning through workforce (P-20W) data systems that:

- permit the generation and use of accurate and timely data, support analysis, and informed decision-making at all levels of the education system;
- increase the efficiency with which data may be analyzed to support the continuous improvement of education services and outcomes;
- facilitate research to improve student academic achievement and close achievement gaps;
- support education accountability systems; and
- simplify the processes used by states to make education data transparent through federal and public reporting.

This is a competitive grant with a focus on using data from the SLDS. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is the eligible applicant. The CSDE received IES SLDS grants in 2006 and again in 2009. However, of the 47 states that received SLDS grants since 2006, Connecticut ranks 43rd in the total funds received (\$4.5M over the past 10 years). Several neighboring states have received substantially greater funds during the same period (e.g., MA \$19M, ME \$10.5M, NH \$8M, NY \$27M, and RI \$8.6 M).

The CSDE is working with its partner agencies in the Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network (P20 WIN) – Board of Regents, Department of Labor, University of Connecticut, and CT Conference of Independent Colleges – in consultation with the Governor's Office and the Office of Policy and Management to prepare and submit a strong application. Applicants can select up to two priority areas and request up to \$3.5M for each area. Applications are due to IES on June 10, 2015.

Data Protection

Data Protection at CSDE

The CSDE treats data confidentiality and the privacy of student educational records very seriously. It complies with all federal laws including Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), state statutes, and guidelines to protect confidential data. The CSDE implements technical and security-related protections to ensure that confidential data are only accessible to authorized individuals or organizations. For example:

- The CSDE does not collect Social Security Numbers for students in pre-K through 12. To track students in the system, the CSDE generates a random, unique identification number for each student, called the State Assigned Student Identification or SASID.
- All confidential data are stored on secure servers behind stringent multi-level firewall protections and monitored by sophisticated intrusion detection software.
- Data are only accessible to individuals with the requisite authorization credentials and access is limited per user to very specific data elements.
- The CSDE does not permit the reporting of individual student data to the public. When publicly reporting aggregate totals, the CSDE further minimizes the risk of identification of individual students by suppressing data if the count is less than six.
- For additional information, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions document](#).

Data Protection in P20 WIN

The CSDE is a founding partner of P20 WIN – a system for securely sharing information across agencies so that data can improve the way in which the State uses limited fiscal resources judiciously and to maximum effect. Participating in P20 WIN enabled CSDE to produce the first ever report on remediation and credit attainment rates by high school. Several aspects of the P20 WIN system ensure the privacy and protection of student data.

P20 WIN does not utilize a central data warehouse or database. There is no inter-agency data repository that retains individual data. Rather, the inputs to the network are decentralized, stored and maintained by the source agencies themselves. Data are only linked when there is a specific audit or evaluation of publicly funded education programs that has been approved and all necessary documentation and data sharing agreements have been completed in accordance with the P20 WIN Data Request Management Procedure as well as state and federal law.

After an audit or evaluation has been approved and all documentation completed, data are linked through a two-step process. These two steps require separation of information needed to match records (e.g. name, date of birth) from the information needed to conduct the audit or evaluation (e.g. data from an education record or demographic data). These two types of data files are never combined and the files used to match data are destroyed once the linkage has occurred and generic group numbers and fake record numbers are in place. The process protects individual privacy by separating the data at all stages of the process, by using meaningless fake record numbers, and by destroying the data used to create the links.

History/Background

State and Federal Requirements for Data Collection and Reporting

Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-10a requires the CSDE to develop and implement a public school information system that collects data about students, teachers, and schools/districts and tracks through data sharing the enrollment and graduation of students in institutions of higher education. This information system is intended to establish a standardized electronic data collection and reporting protocol that will facilitate compliance with state and federal reporting requirements, improve school-to-school and district-to-district information exchanges, track individual student performance on each of the state-wide mastery examinations pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-14n, and maintain the confidentiality of individual student and staff data.

From the federal perspective, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) collects a wide variety of data from SEAs through a system called EDFacts, an initiative to put performance data at the center of policy, management and budget decisions. EDFacts collects aggregate data from SEAs at the SEA, local education agency (LEA) and school levels. The regulatory reference for EDFacts is 34 CFR Part 76.

CSDE Performance Office Accomplishments

- *Data Collection:* The CSDE has successfully complied with the state and federal requirements by developing customized data collection applications. These applications are integrated through unique identifiers for students, teachers, districts, and schools to minimize redundancy and improve data quality. A comprehensive list of data collections is outlined in the agency's data acquisition plan. As new collections such as teacher-course-student, educator data, and restraint and seclusion have been implemented successfully (supported partially by the 2009 SLDS grant) to comply with statutory requirements, other collections have been eliminated or streamlined to reduce the reporting burden on districts.
- *Data Warehouse and Reporting:* A data warehouse integrates all data both meaningfully and longitudinally. It ensures automation, accuracy, consistency, and timeliness and serves as a single authoritative data source at the CSDE. After extensively evaluating its legacy data warehouse, CEDaR, the CSDE determined that it was developed improperly and couldn't serve as a decision support tool. Therefore, using a portion of its 2009 SLDS grant, the CSDE expanded its partnership with the SAS Institute to develop a brand new data warehouse (EdSight) that contains record level data and aligns with industry best practices. One of the first reports to be released will be a revised strategic school profile called the Profile and Performance Report.
- *Accountability, Analysis, Evaluation, and Research:*
 - After receiving ESEA flexibility, the CSDE launched an enhanced school accountability system and issued school classifications and performance reports. Based on extensive feedback from diverse stakeholder groups, the CSDE has proposed a next-generation accountability system as part of its flexibility renewal application.

- CSDE released four-and five-year cohort graduation rates.
- CSDE published college entrance, persistence, and graduation rates as well as SAT benchmark attainment by high school for the first time ever.
- CSDE also produced comprehensive reports on restraints and seclusions, teacher shortage areas, English Learners, alternative school programs, and the Condition of Education.
- *Interagency Partnerships:*
 - The CSDE has significantly expanded its partnership with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The CSDE provides information to DCF on a monthly basis to help their case managers better support the stability and success of children in state care/custody who are enrolled in public schools statewide.
 - A research partnership with the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch and Yale University is shedding light on the educational impacts of public school students who become involved with the judicial system. Additional partnerships are being planned.
 - Using a portion of the 2009 SLDS grant funds, the CSDE, the Board of Regents and the Department of Labor collaborated to establish P20 WIN – a system for securely sharing information across agencies so that data can improve the way in which the State uses limited fiscal resources judiciously and to maximum effect. Participating in P20 WIN enabled CSDE to produce the first ever report on remediation and credit attainment rates by high school.

New IES SLDS Grant Opportunity

Despite the limited budget, much has been accomplished through the dedication and commitment of staff at CSDE and in other agencies. The new IES SLDS grant opportunity provides a perfect opportunity to enhance the value and accelerate the use of data available in these systems while protecting student confidentiality. The following two priority areas have been identified and are being proposed for this grant application:

1. **Instructional Support – Early Warning System (EWS):** The CSDE is proposing to research, develop, and implement an EWS for grades K-12 to help teachers and administrators assess student risk of dropout or lack of preparation for college and career and craft interventions early in the student’s education to improve the likelihood of success. CSDE will develop a predictive model that draws upon existing student data available in the SLDS.

CSDE experts will partner with district/school practitioners and with national experts to develop this model. They will augment primary indicators of dropout risk such as attendance, behavior and course performance with other available data to produce a valid and reliable predictive model within each of three grade cohorts: a) Pre-k through Grade 4; b) Grade 5 through Grade 8; and c) Grades 9 through 12. Additionally, the EWS model will provide a four-tiered dropout risk assessment. The CSDE will also provide professional development and support (including student dashboards) for practitioners to use this model.

2. **College and Career:** Connecticut has developed and adopted a Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Connecticut which provides an overall framework for the strategic plans of each major segment of higher education in Connecticut. This master plan establishes a vision and goals for a globally competitive and regionally engaged Connecticut higher education system that is focused on education attainment, a competitive workforce, and affordability. Built into this plan are targets with numerical goals; however, in order to inform how policies, programs and practices should be improved to support change at both local and systemic levels, Connecticut needs to conduct targeted research and analysis that will provide information about points of leverage and opportunities for improvement across the sectors.

Connecticut will utilize education and workforce data available through P20 WIN to develop a set of feedback reports and targeted research reports including the following:

- Reports by high school with outcome data including readiness/success in post-secondary education, and potentially, employment
- An evaluation of the efficacy of using Department of Motor Vehicle data to enhance the connection between CSDE and DOL
- Research/policy studies to answer some of the following questions:
 - What are the characteristics and pathways of students who fall well below entrance requirements for remedial courses when transitioning from high school into postsecondary education? What about students who enroll in college but do not continue on to earn a degree?
 - To what extent do postsecondary programs lead to living wage jobs?
 - What are the effects of the Governor’s Scholarship Program and other forms of higher education financial aid (e.g., Pell grants, merit grants, Stafford Loans) on college persistence, completion and employment?
 - How do outcomes for customers who participate in federally funded workforce training differ from those who pursue other types of training?

Conclusion

In light of the reduced state appropriation for data systems, the federal grant offers the best opportunity to enhance and learn from existing data systems.

Prepared by:

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Interim Chief Performance Officer
Performance Office