



**Traveling Through Time:
The Forum Guide to Longitudinal
Data Systems, Book Two:
Planning and Developing an LDS**
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By facilitating the collection and use of detailed, high quality student- and staff- level data linked over time, longitudinal data systems (LDSs) hold promise for enhancing both the way education agencies use data to serve students and the way they do business, from the policy level to the school office and into the classroom. The *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems* series is intended to help state and local education agencies meet the many challenges involved in building robust LDSs, populating them with quality data, and using this new information to improve the education system. With special emphasis on the business-level perspective, this document explores a broad range of issues involved in establishing a successful LDS.

Book Two of Four: Planning and Developing an LDS delves into the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of an LDS project. Chapters 1 & 2 introduce the information and systems development life cycles, which are helpful concepts when developing any data system. Chapter 3 discusses the people and processes that characterize effective project management of an LDS development effort. Chapter 4 provides guidance on engaging stakeholders to define the organization's LDS vision, while chapter 5 discusses the critical relationship between the state education agency (SEA) and districts, and offers best practices on how to strengthen these ties. Chapter 6 discusses the self-assessment phase of the effort, during which an agency should identify its current system and functionalities, and chapter 7 presents the concept of "enterprise architecture," which is a helpful framework for planning and evaluating the agency's current and desired data systems. Chapter 8 discusses the needs-assessment phase, during which an agency should define its desired system based on stakeholder requirements, and chapter 9 addresses how to identify the data elements that need to be collected to meet stakeholders' information needs. Chapter 10 covers the important issues of interoperability and portability. Chapter 11 discusses strategies for gaining sustained support for the system, and chapter 12 addresses the need for, and approaches to, promoting the LDS and gaining grassroots support. Chapter 13 discusses the choice between building an LDS in-house and hiring a vendor, addressing some of the pros and cons of each approach. Chapter 14 provides an introduction to effective request-for-proposal (RFP) writing. Chapter 15 addresses system evaluation, during which an agency assesses the "success" of the system based on many criteria.

The *Traveling Through Time: The Forum Guide to Longitudinal Data Systems* series is a product of the National Forum on Education Statistics. The first book in the series was released in July 2010, with the three subsequent books published in sequence through early 2011. The project is sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, under the auspices of the National Cooperative Education Statistics System. For more information about the National Forum on Education Statistics, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/forum>.