

Status report on NCES's progress to advance its strategic goals and objectives:

A snapshot of current plans, strategies, processes, interagency coordination and collaboration, and resources

This document summarizes NCES's approach to and progress in advancing its strategic goals and objectives (available at [National Center for Education Statistics - About Us](#)). For each of NCES's strategic goals and objectives, this document presents three corresponding sections: (1) what NCES has done to date, (2) what NCES is currently working on, and (3) what NCES would do with more resources to meet the goal and objectives.

It is important to note that the activities listed under each of the first two sections, *what NCES has done* and *what it is currently working on*, represent the Center's best efforts toward achieving its goals, given NCES's urgent need for additional staff and its declining purchasing power in the face of increasing responsibilities in recent years. In contrast, the activities listed under the third section, *what NCES would do with more resources*, are inherently more innovative, ambitious, and impactful and represent what could be achieved with adequate staff and resources.

Goal 1. Develop and disseminate relevant, timely, and innovative products that align with the needs of today's education data ecosystem.

Objective 1.1: Keep the Center's scope of work aligned with the needs of the 21st-century education data ecosystem to ensure the relevance and value of the Center's work.

Objective 1.2: Execute a robust and coordinated dissemination strategy for the Center's data products through a range of formats and platforms to engage and inform key audiences.

Objective 1.3: Monitor the use and impact of NCES products to understand how they address the nation's data needs within the U.S. data ecosystem.

To meet this goal, NCES has

- Used its School Pulse Panel to ask principals about topics of concern to them, which have generated ideas for topics to be asked about in future data collections.
- Expanded outreach to stakeholders and engagement with key audiences (*see appendix A below*).
- Launched phase 2 of a new Center-wide tracking system to
 - collect data on the development, production, dissemination, and impact of its data products;
 - facilitate the coordination of dissemination strategies;
 - streamline technical reviews; and
 - assess its data products' alignment with data needs.
- Hired a data modernization fellow to examine ways to ensure IPEDS remains relevant and meets the needs of all users.
- Continued to improve its library of geospatial data and geo-enabled web services and APIs, with the number of requests for NCES's geospatial "EDGE" data almost doubling from 12 million in 2022 to over 22 million in 2023.
- Integrated NCES's existing restricted-use data licensing program with the Standard Application Process (SAP). NCES received 106 applications for access to confidential data through the SAP application portal in the year since the portal's launch date (December 8, 2022).

- Constituted a steering committee (in fall 2023) to advise NCES on the set-up, infrastructure, and running of a Standing Committee to serve as a nimble advisory body for NCES (as recommended by NASEM). The steering committee drafted a charter for the Standing Committee and developed a nomination process. The scope of the charter for the Standing Committee is broad, including
 - reviewing and recommending approaches to meet the goals of NCES’s strategic plan,
 - helping NCES prioritize topics for data acquisition to align with the Center’s strategic priorities,
 - providing technical expertise and advice on statistical and methodological issues,
 - recommending ways NCES can promote strengthening state capacity and linkages across data systems,
 - offering guidance on options for Research and Development, and
 - representing the perspectives of NCES’s various stakeholders and technical experts.
 NCES anticipates issuing a call for nominations early this year with the goal of convening the first meeting of the Standing Committee in summer 2024.

NCES is currently in the process of

- Creating systems to support the evaluation of the scope and relevance of its data collections, data tools, indicators, and reporting, with input from NCES expert panels and stakeholders and the forthcoming Standing Committee (recommended by NASEM) to help prioritize NCES’s work.
- Expanding its library of geospatial data and geo-enabled web services and APIs to make NCES data assets more findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (in accordance with federal FAIR data principles).
- Instituting systems to monitor the use, relevance, and impact of products, by
 - attaching Digital Object Identifiers to its products, and
 - participating in a pilot of the [Democratizing Data](#)’s monitoring system along with other statistical agencies.

With additional staffing and resources, including those requested as part of support for the Evidence Act, NCES would be able to improve our alignment with the education data ecosystem, via

- data collections with greater granularity (e.g., data at lower geographic levels, data with more racial/ethnic coverage).
- ongoing tracking of other federal, state, and local work to collect and disseminate information about education (to strengthen cross-agency efforts, reduce burden when possible, and increase data utility).
- capacity building for districts and states to develop geospatial data infrastructure to support local decision-making and provide supplemental data to ED/NCES.
- regular monitoring of the use, relevance, and impact of NCES data across a greater range of both internal ED stakeholders and public sources.

Goal 2. Improve and innovate the Center’s operations, management, and support for legislative and regulatory requirements.

Objective 2.1: Increase the application of R&D and data science to improve the efficiency, accuracy, and use of NCES data products in ever-evolving data ecosystems.

Objective 2.2: Apply a continuous quality improvement model to the Center’s publication pipeline to improve timeliness, relevance, usage, and, ultimately, impact of NCES data products.

Objective 2.3: Institute a systematic approach to administration, management, planning, operations, and coordination to create more flexible, nimble, and dynamic systems for meeting legislative and regulatory requirements as well as for greater efficiency and collaboration across the Center.

Objective 2.4: Make improvements to the Statistical Standards to better reflect current methodologies and data dissemination practices.

Objective 2.5: Develop Psychometric Standards to establish a common set of guidelines, criteria, and procedures across all NCES programs involving psychometric work to ensure that the programs yield data that allow reliable, valid, and fair inferences.

To meet this goal, NCES has:

- Hired its first Chief Psychometrician who has begun
 - developing NCES’s Psychometric Standards (the first complete draft for all nine chapters is expected by the end spring);
 - overseeing the psychometric work involved in NCES programs (including NAEP, ECLS: 2024, HS&B: 2022, PIRLS, and PISA) in order to unify and improve Center-wide assessment methodology and design practices; and
 - the development of a composite index of education equity (NCES will soon release an RFI to seek public input on the development of the equity index).
- Established a new system (EDPass) for states to ensure the consistent application of data quality standards across all ED*Facts* files, speeding up the release of state IDEA Child Count data files from six months after their submission to 30 days after submission.
- Automated several routine procedures for coordination, management, and oversight processes, including centralizing information on the Center’s annual slate of publications, future studies and OMB packages, and annual travel and training.
- Begun an extensive year-long process of consultation and research to update NCES’s existing statistical standards and develop new, broader standards, including psychometric standards.
- Hired staff with cybersecurity expertise to help implement Evidence Act requirements for expanded but secure access to confidential data.

NCES is currently in the process of

- Relationship-building with data science experts and survey methodologists through existing federal vehicles, such as the [America’s Datahub Consortium](#), managed by the National Center for Science and Engineering Studies.
- Examining how data science and administrative data matching may improve efficiency and reduce costs in survey operations.

- Growing the EDGE program to support data required for statutory programs like Title I. REAP, and NAEP, and to develop geospatial data and metadata assets required to address the Geospatial Data Act. (The EDGE program in 2023 developed data for internal programs, which informed more the \$18 billion in annual program allocations).
- Automating additional routine procedures for coordination, management, and oversight processes, such as
 - improving interoperability across Center study designs, indicators, and reporting; and
 - improving the integrated budgeting system for Center studies and services.
- Testing and implementing innovations to improve the efficiency of NAEP, including online NAEP, which will enable the use of less-expensive testing devices and potentially the use of schools' equipment rather than NAEP-provided devices ("device agnostic" NAEP) and a reduction in field staff needed to administer NAEP ("reduced contact" NAEP), automated scoring using artificial intelligence (AI), as well as investigating the use of AI to extend automated item generation.

With additional staffing and resources, NCES would

- Pursue an integrated R&D agenda across NCES operational units to:
 - explore new external data sources and linkages with "found data," such as from web-scraping;
 - evaluate new data collection methods, such as remote test proctoring and short-term longitudinal designs;
 - study how AI, such as chatbots, could enhance item development, data collection methods, analysis, and reporting; and
 - evaluate the application of small area estimate methodology across the Center's data.
- Expand geospatial activities to explore new indicators of poverty, employment, and neighborhood conditions to inform statutory and statistical programs.
- Institute a centralized sampling methodology to improve design, cost, and respondent burden.
- Hire additional staff to support Evidence Act requirements of the Statistical Official, CIPSEA 2018 and related mandates, such as the Standard Application Process under Title III.

Goal 3. Foster and leverage mutually beneficial partnerships with practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and government agencies at all levels.

Objective 3.1: Continue to develop and improve partnerships with states, school districts, leading education associations, and other stakeholders to increase support for participation in NCES studies and address their data needs.

Objective 3.2: Improve external communication and coordination to increase awareness and use of NCES data, products, and services—including collaborative data governance, linkages, and capacity-building.

Objective 3.3: Improve internal communications to strengthen collaboration and partnership within NCES and across IES and ED.

To meet this goal, NCES has

- Hired its first Director of Strategic Partnerships to coordinate existing (but siloed) technical panels, outreach activities, and partnership agreements with states, districts, associations, and other stakeholders.
- Continued supporting existing NCES groups to foster partnerships and build capacity (*see appendix A*).
- Continued to work closely with the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, which includes members from major higher education associations as well as state, system, and institution level representatives.
- Made limited increases in annual funding for assistance to state education agencies to develop their data capabilities, including SLDS and the Common Education Data Standards (CEDs).
- Improved communication with States Education Agencies to support the modernization of ED*Facts* and the new ED*Pass* system, by providing new interactive “office hours,” a new real-time ED*Facts* “Bulletin Board,” broadcasts, narrowcasts, and individual outreach.

NCES is currently in the process of

- Developing a comprehensive Center-wide program to support recruitment of districts and schools, including (a) establishing a database of local and state stakeholder communications and participation (to improve evidence-based outreach strategies), and (b) implementing an external communication campaign to
 - feature accessible stakeholder products, such as infographics, dashboards, data tools, and data points;
 - highlight NCES’s annual accomplishments and activities, such as innovations, research, and development milestones; and
 - update stakeholders on upcoming data, resources, and trainings.
- Building a state-of-the art communication management system (e.g., dashboards of Center-wide activities, products, and services) to improve internal awareness and collaboration across NCES, IES, and ED.
- Piloting methods for engaging with schools and school districts to reduce burden and increase the likelihood of participation in NCES data collections, e.g., via standardized data sharing agreements, coordinated data requests, and new ways to provide feedback or reports to institutional respondents. [Recommended by NASEM, this is also preparatory work for a future “State Coordinator Group” (below)]

With additional staffing and resources NCES would

- Implement additional technical assistance including convenings of state longitudinal data experts to promote “best practices” and collaboration on the benefits of standardized data.
- Establish a “State Coordinator Group” (modeled on the NAEP State Coordinators) to broadly support data collection needs and improve two-way communications with states and districts.
- Establish an “NCES Corps” (modeled on AmeriCorps) to place data collection volunteers in needy districts and schools to assist with the administration of NCES studies, promote data for evidence building and “best practices,” and provide other support, as needed, by schools and districts.
- Re-institute and re-imagine existing NCES partnership programs, including internships, fellowships, postdocs, and other federal programs, such as the Federation of American Scientists’ Impact Fellowship Program.
- Expand collaboration with the Census Bureau to produce new policy-relevant statistical indicators from existing data investments.

Goal 4. Embed the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in all aspects of the Center’s work, studies, and data products.

Objective 4.1: Update NCES’s Statistical Standards to integrate the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Objective 4.2: Maintain and develop measures of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in education to ensure NCES data remain relevant for policymaking.

Objective 4.3: Invest in NCES’s human capital to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Objective 4.4: Monitor NCES contractors’ activities and performance to achieve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all aspects of their work.

To meet this goal, NCES has

- Assigned staff, serving as co-chairs and committee leads, to support
 - the OMB’s interagency and public training and technical assistance activities regarding the update to Statistical Directive 15.
 - the Subcommittee on Equitable Data (mandated by the White House Equitable Data Working Group, Executive Order 13985, with over 40 members of an interagency collaborative to promote a whole-of-government approach to equitable data).
 - SOGI interagency working groups to promote equitable data collections, relevant research and development, and published best practices.
- Developed a [framework](#) for collecting data and developing indicators on education technology and equity.
- Developed indicators of rurality, poverty, and district-level demographic conditions of school-age children to inform statutory and statistical programs.
- Facilitated and supported a working group composed of State SLDS teams working on equity issues in their States.
- Added new survey items to IPEDS to better understand equity, including new questions for non-first-time students, on early decision and early admission, and with “another gender” as a response option for postsecondary students.
- Released the new Equity Dashboard representing NCES data, and other relevant federal indicators, to assist in the identification of gaps in our collective capacity to understand equity in education.

NCES is currently in the process of

- Integrating DEIA requirements into Center-wide activities, by updating its statistical standards, developing new contracting templates, and conducting listening sessions to ensure compliance.
- Improving measurement by
 - Developing a composite *education equity index*, at the national and state levels, drawing on [Monitoring Educational Equity](#) (2019).
 - Developing an index of socio-economic status (SES) based on National School Lunch Program eligibility and data from NAEP student background questionnaires.
 - Instituting regular data collections for information that has not been regularly collected (e.g., on schools and students in Puerto Rico and Outlying Areas, on gender by adding ‘Another Gender’ in IPEDS).

With additional staffing and resources, NCE would

- Increase staff participation in DEIA community of practice activities at conferences and stakeholder activities promoting Center-wide data and related blended data.
- Increase outreach to Minority Servicing Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities to maximize participation in NCE internship, fellowship, and grant programs and promote statistical and psychometric talent from more diverse backgrounds.
- Build upon current work developing national and state level capacity to conduct innovative equity analyses through SLDS TA and additional trainings, workshops, and seminars.
- Develop and test experimental indicators of rurality and poverty (including a geospatial measure of poverty) to better inform statutory and statistical programs.
- Increase staff capacity to conduct and publish special analyses focused on issues concerning DEIA data.

Appendix A: Examples of NCES outreach and engagement with stakeholders and key audiences

New Initiatives	Examples
Equity-related outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically Black Colleges and Universities Annual Conference (Fall 2023) White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans (Summer 2023) White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics (Winter 2023)
National summits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 2-day Reading Summit (2021) on research-based strategies and solutions for improving reading achievement and closing learning gaps (more than 1,200 attended both days) A 3-day Mathematics Summit (2023) addressed the post-pandemic declines in mathematics performance (more than 2,000 attended)
New stakeholder outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspen Institute Seminar for Congressional staff on Federal K-12 Education Policy (Fall 2023) YouTube Video of Fireside chat with Head of Census: a dialogue about partnership leading to better data collection (Fall 2023) Suburban Education Summit at Johns Hopkins University: address by the Commissioner (Fall 2023) National Rural Education Association conference (Winter 2023)
Increased stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than doubled pre-release briefings with Congressional staff ahead of releases (e.g., National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), Condition of Education, Indicators of School Crime, School Finance, NAEP, monthly School Pulse Panel results) Reinstituted public webinars on the latest data (e.g., NTPS, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Private School Universe Survey (TBA), and NTPS teacher attrition data (TBA)) Quadrupled outreach to the media (e.g., statistical press releases, media briefings to improve the media’s understanding of the data and the quality and extent of media coverage of the statistics). Commissioner’s Presentation at AERA-NSF Grants Program Holds Fall Research Conference on Emerging Data Needs and Applications of NCES Data (Fall 2023)

Ongoing Engagement and Outreach	Illustrative Examples or Description
Interagency statistical conferences and workgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) Joint Statistical Meetings and Research and Policy Conference Standard Application Process (SAP) The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) WH Subcommittee on Equitable Data (SED) Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity Federal Computer Assisted Survey Information Collection Workshop
The STATS-DC conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, STATS-DC brings together local, state, and national leaders, including EdFacts and Common Core of Data coordinators, to discuss data collection, data linking beyond K-12, data management, data privacy, data quality, data standards, data use (analytical), data use (instructional), and fiscal data
National Forum on Education Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum brings together representatives from federal, state, and local education agencies (in each of the 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and outlying areas) and national

	<p>organizations to improve the quality, comparability, and usefulness of elementary and secondary education data</p>
Fiscal Coordinators Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual training workshops for state fiscal coordinators (appointed by each state’s Chief State School Officer) that are designed to improve the efficiency and efficacy of reporting School Level Finance Survey data.
The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biannual cooperative keeps NCES informed of major changes in higher education and suggest potential improvements to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data collection
The Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program (SLDS) P-20 Best Practices Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, SLDS P-20 Best Practices Conference (next in Spring 2024) serves as a forum for dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices among representatives from the states, DC, and territories
NCES Data Institute: Using Federal Datasets to Support Research on Postsecondary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually, the Institute provides an intensive introduction to NCES datasets and research methodologies for graduate students, early- to mid-career IR professionals, faculty, and staff from state and federal agencies and other higher education organizations.
American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous Education State Leaders Network Office of Indian Education’s (OIE) Project Directors Meeting National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE) Navajo Nation Research Conference Native American Education Conference. National Johnson O’Malley Conference National Indian Education Association Convention & Trade Show
Annual conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) AASA’s National Conference on Education American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting American Statistical Association (ASA) Association for Institutional Research Annual Forum Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) Conference Council for American Private Education Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) National Conference on Student Assessment Council of Great City Schools Education Writers Association Esri International User Conference (Education Summit) National Association of Student Financial Aid Advisors National Council for the Social Studies Conference National Council on Measurement in Education Conference (NCME) Northeast Association for Institutional Research Annual meeting Southern Association for Institutional Research Annual meeting The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers SHEEO Higher Education Policy Conference
Private School Leaders meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual meetings with members of the private school community allow them to learn about recent NCES releases and discuss their needs and ways to increase the quality of NCES nonpublic school data collections.
International Networks and Governing Boards (chairs, vice-chairs, and membership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Governing Boards (e.g., Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC))

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Governing Board• OECD's Indicators in Education Systems (INES) project• OECD Network for the Collection and Adjudication of System-Level Descriptive Information on Educational Structures, Policies and Practices (NESLI)• PISA Psychometric Workgroup
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