Foreword

Institute of Education Sciences

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is the primary research and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2001 (ESRA), the Institute’s mission is to expand fundamental knowledge and understanding of education and to provide education leaders and practitioners, parents and students, researchers, and the general public with unbiased, reliable, and useful information about the condition and progress of education in the United States; about education policies, programs, and practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students; and about the effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

National Center for Education Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. It fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning and significance of such statistics; assist state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) in improving their statistical systems; and review and report on education activities in foreign countries.

National Cooperative Education Statistics System

The work of the National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) is a key aspect of the National Cooperative Education Statistics System (Cooperative System). The Cooperative System was established to produce and maintain, with the cooperation of the states, comparable and uniform education information and data that are useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels. To assist in meeting this goal, NCES within IES—a part of ED—established the Forum to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. The Forum includes approximately 120 representatives from SEAs and LEAs, the federal government, and other organizations with an interest in education data. The Forum deals with issues in education data policy, sponsors innovations in data collection and reporting, and provides technical assistance to improve state and local data systems.

National Forum on Education Statistics

Uniform, timely, and accurate education information is essential to quality decisionmaking. Such information is diverse and requires periodic examination and improvement as it is collected by local, state, and federal entities. While this information includes a wide range of general-purpose statistics, some of it is specified in federal and state education legislation. To meet the needs of the potential users and uses of crucial education information, the mission of the Forum is to plan, recommend, and develop education data resources that support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States. The Forum also discusses, and may state a position on, issues and developments related to information technology; promotes national data standards; and provides technical assistance activities and products to improve data quality and use.
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About the Forum

Welcome to the Forum!

As a member of the National Forum on Education Statistics (the Forum), you are in a position to contribute to the work of an organization that is committed to improving the quality of education data throughout the nation while, at the same time, minimizing data burden on state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and schools.

This member handbook is designed to serve as a comprehensive resource about the purpose and operations of the Forum. It is written for Forum members to improve their understanding of the Forum’s goals and objectives, the processes and mechanisms the Forum uses to accomplish those goals and objectives, and the resources it develops for the education community.

New members may find the Forum Member Handbook helpful as they prepare for their roles in the Forum, whether as a federal agency member, an SEA liaison, an LEA liaison, or an associate member. Typically, it takes some time for a new member to become familiar with the Forum’s culture, processes, and opportunities; consulting this member handbook should help expedite and simplify that process.

Seasoned members may find the Forum Member Handbook useful as they engage in new activities, serve on committees and working groups, and accept leadership roles in the organization. It may also be a useful resource to consult when mentoring new members and making presentations about the Forum and its resources to outside audiences.

Forum Background and Mission

The National Cooperative Education Statistics System (Cooperative System) was established by the Hawkins-Stafford Education Improvement Amendments of 1988 (Public Law 100-297) to “produce and maintain, with the cooperation of the States, comparable and uniform educational information and data.” It retains this responsibility under the mandate of Public Law 107-279, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) established the Forum to assist the Cooperative System in achieving its congressional mandate. The Forum held its first meeting in March 1989 and formalized its goals, objectives, functions, organizational structure, and operations in January 1990 with the adoption of a policies and procedures manual by the Forum membership. The Policies and Procedures Manual has since been revised several times. The Forum membership initially consisted of federal and state education representatives and others in the education community. In 1996, the Forum expanded its membership when it voted to add one representative from a local education agency from each state, to be appointed by the Chief State School Officer (CSSO).

The Forum provides an arena for national, state, and local leaders in the education data community to discuss issues, address problems, develop resources, and consider new approaches to improving data collection and utility. It is a voluntary, democratic, participatory federal-state-local group that identifies and addresses education data needs at the national, state, and local levels. The mission of the Forum is to plan, recommend, and develop education data resources that support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States.
States. It is committed to improving the quality, comparability, and usefulness of elementary and secondary education data while remaining sensitive to data burden concerns.

Development of Forum Products

Members of the Forum establish working groups to develop guides in data-related areas of interest to federal, state, and local education agencies. They are assisted in this work by NCES, but the content comes from the collective experience of working group members who review all products iteratively throughout the development process. After the working group develops the content of a document and reviews it a final time, publications are subject to examination by members of the Forum standing committee that sponsors the project. Finally, Forum members review and formally vote to approve all documents prior to publication. NCES provides final review and approval prior to online publication.

Forum Members

Forum members include representatives from federal offices involved with education data, including the U.S. Department of Education (ED), and representatives from SEAs and LEAs. These representatives are eligible to be full members of the Forum. Representatives of other agencies and organizations participate as associate members.

Which Education Agencies Designate Representatives to the Forum?

- The education agencies of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (hereafter referred to as “the states”)
- One LEA within each of the states, selected by each CSSO
- NCES, which designates the NCES commissioner (ex officio), the associate commissioners of major NCES divisions, and the office of the NCES chief statistician
- The principal offices of ED, or programs within these principal offices that collect or use elementary/secondary education data
- The U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity
- The education agencies of certain extra-state jurisdictions of the United States—American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands—which may designate representatives to participate as associate members

Attributes and Qualities of Forum Members

As representatives to the Forum, Forum members are expected to be actively engaged in Forum activities and contribute valuable perspective and experience concerning their agency’s education data needs. Forum members share common attributes, including, but not limited to

- experience with and knowledge of education data;
- a firm understanding of data issues, standards, privacy, and research;
- a willingness to learn about changes and innovations in education data;
- the ability to use data to support continuous improvement to education systems; and
- the ability to reach out and share Forum materials and knowledge on data-related issues with colleagues.

Federal Representatives

Federal education agency representatives contribute valuable perspective and experience concerning federal education data needs. Each federal representative is expected to participate in all Forum meetings as a full member and is
authorized to hold office in the Forum and vote on issues that come before the Forum. A federal representative’s responsibilities include

- attending and participating in Forum meetings and the STATS-DC Data Conference;
- serving as a member of one Forum standing committee (NESAC, PPI, or TECH);
- volunteering to participate in the work of one or more Forum subcommittees and/or working groups;
- reviewing and providing comments on Forum products during the Forum resource development and review process, including coordinating the review of Forum products in collaboration with subject matter experts in the member’s agency;
- voting on any resources and issues that may come before the full Forum for approval;
- regularly reviewing the Forum website and its resources; and
- promoting and disseminating Forum products to staff and subject matter experts within the member’s agency through relevant activities, networks, and professional meetings.

**State Education Agency (SEA) Liaisons**

SEA representatives contribute valuable perspective and experience concerning state education data needs. An SEA representative is formally appointed by the CSSO of each of the states and is expected to speak on behalf of the member’s agency regarding education data issues. The SEA representative is expected to participate in all Forum meetings as a full member and is authorized to hold office in the Forum and vote on issues that come before the Forum. The SEA representative may designate a permanent alternate representative who will attend meetings and manage other Forum responsibilities in the representative’s absence. In the absence of the SEA representative, the permanent alternate representative has the same voting and participation rights as a full member, but is not eligible to hold elected office. An SEA representative’s responsibilities include

- acting as a representative in the coordination and promotion of federal data collections at the state level and in other matters concerning the Cooperative System to promote the efficiency, quality, and usefulness of data;
- designating coordinators for NCES data collections to promote cooperation with federal data collections;
- serving as the principal contact for all Cooperative System contracts awarded to states, including managing work related to contracts for basic participation awards. Under the Cooperative System Basic Participation Award, SEA liaisons oversee the submission of the following to NCES: (1) a list of their agency’s survey coordinators (including Common Core of Data [CCD] fiscal and nonfiscal coordinators), and (2) a list of participants from their agency at the Forum meeting and the STATS-DC Data Conference;
- maintaining contact and working in coordination with the member’s home state LEA liaison on data issues;
- attending and participating in Forum meetings and the STATS-DC Data Conference;
- serving as a member of one Forum standing committee (NESAC, PPI, or TECH);
- volunteering to participate in the work of one or more Forum subcommittees and/or working groups;
- reviewing and providing comments on Forum products during the Forum resource development and review process, including coordinating the review of Forum products in collaboration with subject matter experts in the member’s agency;
- voting on any resources and issues that may come before the full Forum for approval;
• regularly reviewing the Forum website and its resources; and
• promoting and disseminating Forum products to staff of the member’s agency, to LEAs, and to subject matter experts within the member’s home state through relevant state and local activities, networks, and professional meetings.

Local Education Agency (LEA) Liaisons

LEA representatives contribute valuable perspective and experience concerning local education data needs. An LEA representative is formally appointed by the CSSO of each of the states and is expected to speak on behalf of LEAs within the member’s home state regarding education data issues. The LEA representative is expected to participate in all Forum meetings as a full member and is authorized to hold office in the Forum and vote on issues that come before the Forum. An LEA representative’s responsibilities include

• maintaining contact and working in coordination with the member’s home state SEA liaison on data issues;
• attending and participating in Forum meetings and the STATS-DC Data Conference;
• serving as a member of one Forum standing committee (NESAC, PPI, or TECH);
• volunteering to participate in the work of one or more Forum subcommittees and/or working groups;
• reviewing and providing comments on Forum products during the Forum resource development and review process, including coordinating the review of Forum products in collaboration with subject matter experts in the member’s agency;
• voting on any resources and issues that may come before the full Forum for approval;
• regularly reviewing the Forum website and its resources; and
• promoting and disseminating Forum products to LEAs and subject matter experts within the member’s home state through relevant state and local activities, networks, and professional meetings.

Associate Members

Associate members participate in Forum standing committee meetings and take an active role in committee, subcommittee, and working group activities. They participate in the discussion of issues, but they do not participate in formal Forum decisionmaking, and they do not vote for Forum officers or on policies and procedures. They are not eligible to hold elected office. An associate member’s responsibilities include

• providing the Forum with valuable input from the perspective of the associate member’s agency or organization;
• attending and participating in Forum meetings and the STATS-DC Data Conference;
• serving as a member of one Forum standing committee (NESAC, PPI, or TECH);
• volunteering to participate in the work of one or more Forum subcommittees and/or working groups;
• reviewing and providing comments on Forum products during the Forum resource development and review process, including coordinating the review of Forum products in collaboration with subject matter experts in the associate member’s agency or organization;
• regularly reviewing the Forum website and its resources; and
• promoting and disseminating Forum products to staff, members, and subject matter experts within the associate member’s agency or organization through relevant agency or organization activities and professional meetings.
Forum Organization

The Forum meets to discuss and work on data issues and specific topics related to education data in ED, SEAs, LEAs, and schools. The Forum achieves its mission and objectives primarily through the deliberations and work of the Forum Steering Committee and three standing committees designed to address the major interests of the Cooperative System (see figure 1). The committees may propose and support working groups, which are appointed for a specified time to develop products about a specific topic (e.g., data privacy, education technology, and facility information management). Committee meeting notes are available on the Forum’s website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/meeting_notes.asp.

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<thead>
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<th>National Cooperative Education Statistics System</th>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Steering Committee</td>
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<td>Forum Standing Committees</td>
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<td>National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC) Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee (PPI) Technology Committee (TE:CH)</td>
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Figure 1. Forum Organizational Chart

Forum Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups

Forum Steering Committee

The Forum Steering Committee oversees and coordinates all Forum activities. Members of the Steering Committee include the Forum chair, vice chair, immediate past chair, and chairs and vice chairs of the three standing committees. The Forum chair moderates the Forum Steering Committee.

Forum Standing Committees

The standing committees are designed to address the major mandates of the Cooperative System, to promote long-range planning, and to foster continuity in Forum activities. All members of the Forum have the responsibility to join one of the three standing committees. Membership in standing committees is limited to members (including associate members) of the Forum.

ED’s director of the Forum project makes committee assignments after asking new members for their preference. Members may select which standing committee they want to join based on their individual preference, irrespective of their professional responsibilities. Members may switch their standing committee membership at any time by contacting the Forum project director.

The following sections describe the major focus of each of the three standing committees. While all three committees may often deal with similar topics, each committee discusses and addresses each topic according to the committee’s focus. New Forum members will have the opportunity to visit all three standing committees at their first Forum meeting to familiarize themselves with each of them.
• **National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC)**—NESAC addresses ways to fulfill the Cooperative System’s legislative mandate to improve the quality of data at federal, state, and local levels. The committee has as its mission the development of a national education statistics agenda—that is, the identification of issues, concerns, and solutions bearing on the development of common, comparable, and effective nationwide elementary and secondary education data collection, reporting, and use. Agenda items identified and addressed by NESAC may include the development of data elements and indicators; changes to data collections; and issues that impact national, state, and local education such as the major areas of student, staff, achievement, fiscal, institutional, and other information that yields valuable perspective on education in the United States.

• **Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee (PPI)**—PPI Committee deliberates on the major functions and general effectiveness of the Cooperative System, focusing on strategies to assist SEAs and LEAs to improve their ability to collect and report comparable, accurate, and timely data and ways to enhance coordination among federal agencies, between federal and state agencies, and between state agencies and local districts. PPI is concerned with issues of implementation, including the development and impact of privacy policy innovations on data exchanges; methods of reducing burdens at federal, state, and local levels; and emerging issues such as data sharing and education record confidentiality.

• **Technology Committee (TECH)**—TECH Committee is concerned with technology strategies to address the collection, management, use, and exchange of student and staff information and the supporting technical infrastructure. TECH promotes the development and adoption of standards for education data, examines the impact of new technologies on information exchange and use, and considers strategies for assisting SEAs and LEAs to make effective decisions about infrastructure and process improvement. TECH also addresses issues such as data security, data quality, data use, sustainability, and the integration of information systems to support effective decisionmaking.

**Subcommittees**

Standing committees may establish subcommittees to address ongoing issues beyond the scope of regular committee work (e.g., the Forum Communications Subcommittee).

**Working Groups**

Working groups are convened to address specific issues or develop products according to the resources available. Standing committees may suggest the formation of working groups to the Steering Committee, but often working groups develop collaboratively when the three standing committees identify a need for additional research or new resources on a topic of joint interest. Working groups may consist of Forum members and associate members, non-Forum invited experts, an NCES liaison, and a consultant who is contracted to perform support work. After convening, a working group may decide that additional research about the topic is not necessary (i.e., resources are already available) or not feasible (i.e., the topic cannot be addressed in a timely or cost-effective manner).

**Current Projects**

Subcommittee and Working Group Members

Subcommittee and working group members contribute to developing Forum products on specific topics of interest to Forum members. Forum members (including associate members) with relevant experience are encouraged to volunteer to serve on Forum subcommittees and working groups, but due to constraints on the number of participants, the Forum might not be able to include all volunteers. Responsibilities of subcommittee and working group members include

- adopting a national perspective while contributing the perspectives of the member’s agency;
- working effectively as a team member;
- attending and participating in all in-person and virtual meetings, and actively participating between meetings;
- reviewing all product drafts, providing substantive comments on product drafts, and volunteering case studies and related resources;
- supporting the timeliness of the product development process by meeting all deadlines for comments, case studies, and votes;
- coordinating with subject matter experts in the member’s agency in soliciting best practices, case studies, and expert reviewers for product drafts; and
- promoting and disseminating products upon publication.

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

The Steering Committee nominates a slate of officers annually to be voted on by all eligible voting members in a Forum election. The slate includes the Forum (and Steering Committee) chair, the Forum (and Steering Committee) vice chair, and the chairs and vice chairs of the three standing committees. Nominations for Forum officers may also be made from the floor. A quorum (at least half of the members of the Forum) must be present for an election to be held; officers are elected by a majority vote of those present. Forum and committee officers are elected for a period of one year and take office immediately following the Forum meeting at which they are elected.

Forum Chair

The Forum chair is elected by Forum members for a 1-year term and works with the Steering Committee and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate all Forum activities. Responsibilities of the chair include

- serving for 1 year as the Forum chair and representing the Forum as necessary;
- chairing each Forum meeting;
- chairing Steering Committee meetings;
- developing agendas for the Forum and Steering Committee meetings with NCES staff; and
- serving on the Steering Committee as the immediate past chair in the ensuing year.

Forum Vice Chair

The Forum vice chair is elected by Forum members for a 1-year term and works with the Steering Committee and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate all Forum activities. The Forum vice chair is often nominated and elected to become Forum chair in the year following the term of office. Responsibilities of the Forum vice chair include

- assisting the Forum chair in meetings and in representing the Forum;
- assisting the Forum chair in developing agendas for the Forum and Steering Committee meetings;
• leading the editorial board for *The Forum Voice*;
• serving as Forum chair in the absence of the Forum chair; and
• reviewing the Forum Strategic Plan and recommending updates as necessary.

**Standing Committee Chairs**

Standing committee chairs are nominated by their committees and elected by the full Forum. The standing committee chairs work with the Steering Committee and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate the work of their specific standing committee. Responsibilities of standing committee chairs include

• serving for 1 year as standing committee chair and representing the Forum as necessary;
• chairing standing committee meetings;
• reviewing reports or products of the standing committee’s working groups;
• forwarding requests for creating working groups to the Steering Committee;
• participating in Steering Committee meetings and representing their committees; and
• developing agendas for the standing committee meetings in collaboration with NCES staff.

**Standing Committee Vice Chairs**

Standing committee vice chairs are nominated by their standing committees and elected by the full Forum for a 1-year term. The vice chairs work with standing committee chairs and NCES staff to oversee and coordinate the work of their specific standing committees. Responsibilities of standing committee vice chairs include

• assisting the standing committee chairs in meetings and in representing the Forum;
• assisting the standing committee chairs in developing agendas for the committee meetings;
• serving on the editorial board for *The Forum Voice*;
• participating in Steering Committee meetings and representing their committees;
• chairing committee meetings in the absence of the chair; and
• reviewing reports or products of the standing committee’s working groups.

**Subcommittee and Working Group Chairs**

Subcommittee and working group chairs oversee and coordinate work on specific topics of interest to Forum members. Responsibilities of subcommittee and working group chairs include

• leading subcommittees or working groups at the request of the Steering Committee, the standing committees, and Forum members;
• chairing each subcommittee or working group meeting; and
• ensuring that all members are engaged and actively participating in the work of the subcommittee or working group.

**Forum Mentors and Mentees**

Shortly after a new member is appointed to the Forum, the new member will be assigned a mentor. Mentors often have extensive experience contributing to Forum resources and leading Forum committees and working groups.
Communication between mentees and their mentor provides new members with an opportunity to ask questions about the Forum, learn about current projects, and meet new colleagues.

Mentors

A Forum member may be assigned as a mentor to a new member. Mentor responsibilities include

- calling the mentee to welcome her or him to the Forum, sharing a personal perspective on membership and meeting experiences, and providing a brief overview of the mentor’s role as an SEA, LEA, or associate member;
- answering any questions the mentee has about the Forum;
- attending the new member orientation session at the mentee’s first Forum meeting;
- meeting with the mentee in person and introducing her or him to other members during the mentee’s first Forum meeting;
- maintaining communication with the mentee every few months for 2 years; and
- sharing Forum product dissemination ideas and strategies with the mentee.

Mentees

New Forum members are assigned a mentor shortly after the new member’s appointment to the Forum. Mentee responsibilities include

- being engaged and receptive to establishing a working relationship with the mentor;
- asking the mentor any questions the mentee may have about the Forum;
- establishing contact with the mentee’s home state SEA/LEA liaison;
- attending the new member orientation session at the mentee’s first Forum meeting;
- participating in new member virtual meetings for the first 2 years;
- reviewing the Forum website and its resources prior to the mentee’s first Forum meeting;
- meeting with the mentor in person during the mentee’s first Forum meeting; and
- maintaining communication with the mentor every few months for 2 years.

Forum Meetings

The Forum holds in-person and virtual meetings each year. The Forum meeting—an in-person meeting in the Washington, DC, area—takes place in the days before the NCES STATS-DC Data Conference, so Forum members can attend both events during the same week. During the Forum meeting, time is set aside for in-person meetings of the Steering Committee and the three standing committees. The Steering Committee and standing committees also meet, in person or virtually, at other times as deemed necessary by their chairs and NCES. Subcommittee and working group meeting schedules—in person or virtual—are determined by NCES and each group’s chair.

Meeting Notes

Meeting notes of the full Forum and its committees can be accessed on the Forum website at http://nces.ed.gov/forum/meeting_notes.asp.
In-person Forum meetings typically include

- a new member orientation session;
- opening and closing general sessions, usually with speakers (from the federal government, national associations, and SEAs and LEAs) who update members on current and changing issues related to education data; and
- standing committee meetings, in which the ongoing business of the Forum is conducted, major Forum initiatives are planned, and continuity in Forum activities is fostered.

**Consensus and Voting Processes**

The Forum, which is primarily discussion based, endeavors to achieve consensus throughout the course of its work. To the fullest extent possible, reports from committees, subcommittees, and working groups reflect the views of all their members.

When consensus cannot be achieved for decisions of the full Forum, majority rule as determined by a vote is used. The Forum voting process allows for all individuals party to a decision to agree to the outcome before it is considered approved. Resolutions, reports for distribution to external audiences, and other actions representing the Forum as a whole must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of members present (a quorum—at least half of all members—must be present at a Forum meeting in order for the Forum to hold an election or a vote on an amendment to the policies and procedures).

**Getting Involved in Forum Activities**

The best way for members to get immersed in Forum work is to attend and participate in all meetings. By attending Forum meetings, members learn who is doing what—and how and when—in the Forum.

Working group membership provides Forum members with opportunities to contribute their expertise to the topic under consideration and to interact with colleagues from other education agencies and organizations. Working group members may meet more often than the full Forum to develop reports or products determined to be needed by SEAs or LEAs.

Another way to participate in Forum activities is to disseminate the resources produced by the Forum. Meetings and conferences within a member’s state, district, or other jurisdiction provide excellent opportunities to discuss the work of the Forum with colleagues and to bring ideas back to the Forum standing committees for discussion and possible action. The Forum maintains an outreach toolkit, with downloadable presentations and publication summaries, for members who wish to promote the Forum and its resources. The Forum Outreach Toolkit can be accessed at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp).

**Member Communications**

Forum members have several avenues they can use to communicate with one another and with the Forum’s leadership and staff:

- The full Forum and the various committees, subcommittees, and working groups meet in person and virtually throughout the year.
- The Forum website ([http://nces.ed.gov/forum](http://nces.ed.gov/forum)) provides access to Forum publications, meeting notes, and newsletters.
- Email addresses and telephone numbers for current Forum members can be accessed via the membership rosters on the website ([https://nces.ed.gov/forum/member_state.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/member_state.asp)).
- The Forum also maintains a password-protected website called Forum360 ([https://Forum360.org/](https://Forum360.org/)) where Forum members can share ideas and work together to develop Forum resources. More information and directions on how to access and use Forum360 are available on the Forum website ([https://nces.ed.gov/forum/listservs.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/listservs.asp)).
The Steering Committee, standing committees, and working groups each have closed email lists to disseminate information to their members. Each email list is restricted to registered members. A complete list of group email addresses and directions on using Forum email lists can be accessed via the member communications page of the Forum website (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/listservs.asp). A select list of groups and their email list addresses is included below.

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Appendix A: Forum Resources

The Forum website (http://nces.ed.gov/forum/) is a rich resource for both Forum members and the broader education community. It provides information about current Forum activities, The Forum Voice newsletter, meeting notes, policies and procedures for conducting Forum meetings and activities, and the Forum’s strategic plan.

The Forum develops free resources on a variety of issues that affect education agencies at the federal, state, and local levels, including the following:

- **Best practice publications.** Since 1990, the Forum has published several best practice publications on topics of interest to the education data community. Forum publications can be accessed at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp).
- **Online courses.** The Forum has developed several online courses based on Forum best practice publications. These courses are regularly used by education agencies to train staff. Forum courses can be accessed at [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/online_courses.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/online_courses.asp).
- **Videos.** The Forum has developed several videos on the Forum and the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED). These videos provide information on the work of the Forum to Forum stakeholders in federal, state, and local agencies, as well as to Forum associates and others interested in Forum resources.
- **The Forum Voice.** The Forum Steering Committee publishes an online newsletter on Forum activities and accomplishments. It includes an annual letter from the chair, timely articles on education data topics, reviews of completed projects and published resources, updates on Forum working groups, and recaps of meetings.
- **Outreach materials.** The Forum maintains an outreach toolkit for members who wish to promote the Forum and its resources. The Forum Outreach Toolkit offers several downloadable promotional tools, including presentations and publication summaries. It can be accessed at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp).

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**Free Resources**

All Forum resources are available free of charge and can be accessed through the Forum website at [http://nces.ed.gov/forum](http://nces.ed.gov/forum).
Appendix B: Forum Member Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Forum?

The National Forum on Education Statistics—commonly known as the Forum—is a voluntary, democratic, participatory, and cooperative body. Forum members come from diverse locations in the U.S. and its territories and represent federal, state, and local levels. The Forum works to improve the quality, comparability, and usefulness of elementary and secondary education data, while remaining sensitive to data burden concerns. The Forum’s mission is to plan, recommend, and develop education data resources that support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States. The Forum is sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Who is represented in the Forum membership?

The Forum membership includes representatives from federal offices involved with education data, including the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The Forum membership also includes representatives of state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In addition to members, the Forum includes associate members. Associate members represent education agencies in four extra-state jurisdictions, as well as national organizations with an interest in elementary and secondary education data.

I am an employee of an SEA or LEA. How do I become a Forum member?

Each Chief State School Officer (CSSO) from the education agencies of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (referred to as “the states”) may appoint one SEA Forum representative and one LEA Forum representative. To be appointed as your state’s SEA or LEA representative, your state’s CSSO must submit a signed appointment letter on agency letterhead to Ghedam Bairu, NCES Forum Project Director (Ghedam.Bairu@ed.gov). Each SEA representative may designate a permanent SEA alternate representative, who will attend meetings and manage other Forum responsibilities in the representative’s absence.

The education agencies of certain extra-state jurisdictions of the United States—American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands—are eligible to participate in the Forum as associate members. To be appointed as your agency’s associate member, your agency’s CSSO must submit a signed appointment letter on agency letterhead to Ghedam Bairu.

I am an employee of the U.S. federal government. How do I become a Forum member?

With the exception of NCES, the head of each principal office or program of ED may designate one representative to the Forum.

The NCES commissioner (ex officio), the associate commissioners of major NCES divisions, and the office of the NCES chief statistician are members of the Forum.

Agencies outside of ED that collect or report elementary or secondary education data, or that have personnel with expertise in an area of interest to the Cooperative System, may wish to have representation on the Forum. Agency leaders
may apply to the Steering Committee for membership on behalf of their agencies and become associate members upon approval by the Steering Committee.

**I am an employee of an education organization. How do I become a Forum member?**

Organizations that collect or report elementary or secondary education data, or that have personnel with expertise in an area of interest to the Cooperative System, may wish to have representation on the Forum. Organization leaders may apply to the Steering Committee for associate membership on behalf of their organizations. Organizations that have been granted associate status may appoint one representative to the Forum.

**What are my responsibilities as a new Forum member and mentee?**

As a new member, your responsibilities include

- being engaged and receptive to establishing a working relationship with your mentor;
- asking your mentor any questions you may have about the Forum;
- establishing contact with your state’s SEA/LEA liaison;
- attending the new member orientation session at your first Forum meeting;
- participating in new member virtual meetings for the first 2 years;
- reviewing the Forum website and its resources prior to your first Forum meeting;
- meeting with your mentor in person during your first Forum meeting; and
- maintaining communication with your mentor every few months for 2 years.

**As a new Forum member and mentee, what can I expect from my Forum mentor?**

Shortly after your appointment to the Forum, your mentor will call or email you to welcome you to the Forum. Your mentor will share a personal perspective on membership in and experiences with the Forum, give you a brief overview of your role as a Forum member, and share Forum product dissemination ideas and strategies with you. Your mentor will also answer any questions you have about the Forum.

You will have the opportunity to meet your mentor during the new member orientation session, during which your mentor will introduce you to other members attending the meeting. You can expect to communicate with your mentor every few months for 2 years.

**How do I participate in the Forum?**

You are encouraged to become involved in the Forum by

- attending and participating in all in-person and virtual meetings, all webinars, and the new member orientation session;
- contributing your expertise to Forum discussions and activities;
- serving on one of the Forum’s three standing committees;
- volunteering to serve in new Forum working groups;
- interacting with other Forum members during Forum meetings;
• familiarizing yourself with Forum resources, the Forum website, and Forum360;
• reviewing and commenting on Forum resources during the resource development and review process;
• soliciting feedback on Forum work or future work within your agency; and
• sharing Forum resources with colleagues in your agency and professional networks.

How do I join a standing committee?

There are three Forum standing committees (described below). You will have the opportunity to visit all three standing committees at your first Forum meeting. To join one of the standing committees, contact the NCES Forum Project Director (Ghedam.Bairu@ed.gov). Once you become a member of a standing committee, you will have access to its online workspace pages at https://forum.grads360.org/. You can change your standing committee membership at any time. Committee rosters and past meeting notes are available on the Forum website at https://nces.ed.gov/forum/committees.asp.

• The **National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC)** addresses ways to fulfill the Cooperative System’s legislative mandate to improve the quality of data at federal, state, and local levels.
• The **Policies, Programs, and Implementation (PPI) Committee** deliberates on the major functions and general effectiveness of the Cooperative System, focusing on strategies to assist SEAs and LEAs in improving their ability to collect and report comparable, accurate, and timely data and ways to enhance coordination among federal agencies, between federal and state agencies, and between state agencies and local districts.
• The **Technology (TECH) Committee** is concerned with technology strategies to address the collection, management, use, and exchange of student and staff information and the supporting technical infrastructure.

How does the Forum communicate with its members?

The Forum website (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/) contains information on Forum activities, committees, and resources, including Forum publications, presentations, and online courses. Forum members receive the **Items of Note** email newsletter twice per month. It presents information, resources, and events relevant to Forum work and of interest to Forum members, including Institute of Education Sciences (IES) publications, ED news items, NCES data releases, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) events, and Federal Register notices. The Forum also publishes an annual online newsletter, The **Forum Voice**, which includes a letter from the Chair, timely articles on education data topics, reviews of completed projects and published resources, updates on Forum working groups, and recaps of meetings.

The Forum also maintains a password-protected website called Forum360 (https://forum.grads360.org/) where Forum members can share ideas and work together to develop Forum resources. Through this members-only website, Forum360 groups use electronic mailing lists (which are closed to the general public) to share information.

How do I know which Forum groups I am a member of?

After logging in to Forum360, you can see which groups you are a member of by clicking on the link to each Forum committee, working group, or other group under Forum Groups.
How do Forum members post information to Forum360?

You can send a message to a Forum electronic mailing list in two ways:

1. You can send an email to an electronic mailing list that you are subscribed to.
2. You can log in to Forum360 (https://forum.grads360.org/) and click the link of the Forum group you wish to contact. Once you are on the appropriate page, scroll to the Discussions space and click View All. Then you can create a new discussion topic or reply to an ongoing discussion.

What are some of the ways I can share and disseminate Forum resources?

As a Forum member, you are expected to share resources with colleagues in your agency or organization. You may also wish to take advantage of the Forum Outreach Toolkit web page (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/outreach.asp), which provides resources to assist you in promoting the Forum and its resources. In your role as an education leader, you may attend statewide or districtwide conferences and meetings, and these provide excellent opportunities to inform colleagues about the Forum and Forum resources. You can also contact Forum Project Director Ghedam Bairu (Ghedam.Bairu@ed.gov) for additional materials if you are interested in delivering a presentation focused on a particular Forum resource.

How do I participate in Forum working groups?

Working groups are convened to address specific issues or develop resources on topics of interest to the education data community. Working groups develop resources based on their collective experience and review all working group products iteratively throughout the development process. Working group members meet in person or virtually throughout the resource development process. Working groups provide you with the opportunity to contribute your expertise to the topic under consideration and to interact with colleagues from other education agencies and organizations. You may volunteer to serve on a Forum working group by contacting Ghedam Bairu (Ghedam.Bairu@ed.gov).

As a Forum member, you are also expected to review and provide comments on Forum resources during the development and review process and are encouraged to contribute applicable case studies and real-world examples from your agency.

What should I expect at my first Forum meeting?

The Forum holds at least one in-person meeting of the full Forum each year. Forum meetings are typically scheduled during the same week as the NCES STATS-DC Data Conference, which is regularly held during the summer in Washington, DC. Forum meetings typically include a new member orientation session; opening, closing, and general sessions of the full Forum featuring speakers from the federal government, national associations, and SEAs and LEAs; and standing committee meetings, in which the Forum conducts its ongoing business, plans major Forum initiatives, and fosters continuity in Forum activities. You will have the opportunity to visit all three standing committees at your first Forum meeting to determine which standing committee you would like to join. NCES coordinates the dissemination of detailed logistics information in advance of all in-person Forum meetings. You can expect to receive meeting dates information, agendas, hotel instructions, and travel instructions in the months leading up to Forum meetings.
What is the dress code for Forum meetings?
The dress code for Forum meetings is business casual.

I am an LEA representative. How do I pay for travel to the Forum meeting?
As an LEA representative, your travel is sponsored by NCES. You will be contacted prior to the meeting by a logistics contractor working with NCES who will help you arrange travel.

I am an SEA representative. How do I pay for travel to the Forum meeting?
NCES reimburses states up to a specified amount through the Basic Participation Contract so that SEAs can send agency staff to the Forum meeting and the STATS-DC Data Conference. The SEA handles participant travel, and ED reimburses the states after STATS-DC is over. You must complete a form to receive funding from NCES. If the amount for travel exceeds the cost in the contract, your agency will be responsible for the excess amount.

You must attend and participate in the Forum meeting to receive funding for your attendance at the Forum meeting and STATS-DC. Your agency is expected to send a Forum representative (you), an ED Facts coordinator, a Common Core of Data (CCD) fiscal coordinator, and a CCD nonfiscal coordinator. If someone holds more than one of those positions, or if someone cannot attend, then the state can send an alternate. As an SEA representative, you may designate a permanent SEA alternate representative who will attend meetings and manage other Forum responsibilities in your absence.

Whom should I contact if I have additional questions?
For more information about the Forum, contact Ghedam Bairu, Forum project director, at Ghedam.Bairu@ed.gov.
### Appendix C: Useful Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCD</td>
<td><strong>Common Core of Data</strong>&lt;br&gt;The CCD is a comprehensive, annual, national statistical database of information concerning all approximately 100,000 public elementary and secondary schools and approximately 18,000 public school districts (including supervisory unions and regional education service agencies), which contains data that are designed to be comparable across all states. The CCD consists of five surveys completed annually by state education agencies (SEAs) from their administrative records.</td>
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<td>CEDS</td>
<td><strong>Common Education Data Standards</strong>&lt;br&gt;The CEDS initiative is a voluntary common vocabulary, data model, and suite of implementation tools to help education stakeholders understand and use comparable education data throughout the early learning through postsecondary and workforce settings.</td>
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<td>CRDC</td>
<td><strong>Civil Rights Data Collection</strong>&lt;br&gt;The CRDC is a biennial (i.e., every other school year) survey of public schools that collects data on leading civil rights indicators related to access and barriers to educational opportunity at the early childhood through grade 12 levels. The CRDC collects data from public local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools, including juvenile justice facilities, charter schools, alternative schools, and schools serving only students with disabilities.</td>
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<td>ED</td>
<td><strong>U.S. Department of Education</strong></td>
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<td>EDFacts</td>
<td><strong>EDFacts</strong> is an ED initiative to collect, analyze, and promote the use of high-quality, pre-kindergarten through grade 12 data. EDFacts centralizes performance data supplied by K-12 SEAs with other data assets, such as financial grant information, within ED to enable better analysis and use in policy development, planning, and management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FERPA</td>
<td><strong>Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act</strong>&lt;br&gt;FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.</td>
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<td>FRSS</td>
<td><strong>Fast Response Survey System</strong>&lt;br&gt;The FRSS was established in 1975 to collect issue-oriented data quickly and with minimum response burden. The FRSS, whose surveys collect and report data on key education issues at the elementary and secondary levels, was designed to meet the data needs of ED analysts, planners, and decisionmakers when information could not be collected quickly through the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES's) large recurring surveys.</td>
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<td>HSTS</td>
<td><strong>High School Transcript Studies</strong>&lt;br&gt;HSTS have been conducted by NCES as part of the Longitudinal Studies Program and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) HSTS program since 1982. These studies collect information that is contained on the student high school record. Once collected, information is transcribed and standardized and can be linked back to the student's questionnaire or assessment data. This information can be used to examine course-taking patterns of students and to predict future education outcomes.</td>
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<td>IAP</td>
<td><strong>International Activities Program</strong>&lt;br&gt;Through the IAP, NCES conducts various international assessments and surveys in the United States. These include the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), and the International Early Learning Study (IELS).</td>
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<td>LEA</td>
<td><strong>Local Education Agency</strong> (i.e., a school district)</td>
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<td>NAEP</td>
<td><strong>National Assessment of Educational Progress</strong>&lt;br&gt;NAEP, also known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Since 1969, assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCES</td>
<td><strong>National Center for Education Statistics (ED)</strong>&lt;br&gt;NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. NCES established the National Forum on Education Statistics to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics.</td>
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<td>NESAC</td>
<td><strong>National Education Statistics Agenda Committee</strong>&lt;br&gt;NESAC is a Forum standing committee that addresses ways to fulfill the Cooperative System’s legislative mandate to improve the quality of data at federal, state, and local levels.</td>
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<td>OCR</td>
<td><strong>Office for Civil Rights</strong>&lt;br&gt;The mission of ED’s OCR is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence through vigorous enforcement of civil rights in our nation’s schools. As part of its authority to collect data that are necessary to ensure compliance with civil rights laws within the jurisdiction of OCR, the OCR also conducts the biennial CRDC.</td>
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<td>PPI</td>
<td><strong>Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee</strong>&lt;br&gt;PPI is a Forum standing committee that deliberates on the major functions and general effectiveness of the Cooperative System, focusing on strategies to assist SEAs and LEAs in improving their ability to collect and report comparable, accurate, and timely data and ways to enhance coordination among federal agencies, between federal and state agencies, and between state agencies and local districts.</td>
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<td>REL</td>
<td><strong>Regional Educational Laboratory</strong>&lt;br&gt;The REL program consists of a network of ten laboratories that serve the educational needs of a designated region by providing access to high-quality, scientifically valid education research through applied research and development projects, studies, and other related technical assistance activities.</td>
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<td>SEA</td>
<td><strong>State Education Agency</strong> (i.e., a state department of education)</td>
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| SCED         | School Courses for the Exchange of Data  
SCED is a voluntary, common classification system for prior-to-secondary and secondary school courses. It can be used to compare course information, maintain longitudinal data about student coursework, and efficiently exchange course-taking records. |
| SLDS         | Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program  
Through grants and a growing range of services and resources, the SLDS Grant Program has helped propel the successful design, development, implementation, and expansion of K-12 and P-20W (early learning through the workforce) longitudinal data systems. |
| TECH         | Technology Committee  
TECH is a Forum standing committee that is concerned with technology strategies to address the collection, management, use, and exchange of student and staff information and the supporting technical infrastructure. |