



Policies and Procedures Manual



National Cooperative Education Statistics System

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) established the National Cooperative Education Statistics System (Cooperative System) to assist in producing and maintaining comparable and uniform information and data on early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. These data are intended to be useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels.

The National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) is an entity of the Cooperative System and, among its other activities, proposes principles of good practice to assist state and local education agencies in meeting this purpose. The Cooperative System and the Forum are supported in these endeavors by resources from NCES.

Publications of the Forum do not undergo the same formal review required for products of NCES. The information and opinions published here are those of the Forum and do not necessarily represent the policy or views of the National Center for Education Statistics or the U.S. Department of Education.

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This publication and other publications of the National Forum on Education Statistics may be found at the websites listed below.

The NCES Home Page address is <http://nces.ed.gov>

The NCES Publications and Products address is <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>

The Forum Home Page address is <http://nces.ed.gov/forum>

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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. 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 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 the U.S. Department of Education, established the Forum to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. The Forum deals with issues in education data policy, sponsors innovations in data collection and reporting, and provides technical assistance through the development of resources.

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 the 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 this 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.

Development of Forum Products

Members of the Forum establish working groups to develop best practice 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 completes the content and reviews a document a final time, publications are subject to examination by members of the Forum standing committee that sponsors the project. Finally, the entire Forum (approximately 120 members) reviews and formally votes to approve all documents prior to publication. NCES provides final review and approval prior to online publication.

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Policies and Procedures Manual

Introduction

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. To assist in meeting this goal, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has established the National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. Full Forum members consist of federal, state, and local education representatives whose agencies have major responsibility for collecting and reporting state and national elementary and secondary education data through the Cooperative System. Associate members of the Forum consist of national-level agencies or organizations that collect and/or use elementary and secondary education data. Experts may be invited to participate in Forum activities and to offer their expertise during Forum deliberations.

The Forum serves as a vital resource in the development of the Cooperative System and the improvement of elementary and secondary education data systems. The Forum is intended to be an arena in which federal and state education representatives and others in the education community can discuss issues, address problems, identify best practices, and develop new approaches to improving data collection and utility, all while remaining sensitive to privacy concerns and administrative burden. Much of the Forum’s work is collaborative, and resources are often developed in partnership with national, federal, regional, state, and local education agencies and stakeholders. The Forum fosters the improvement of communication among NCES, the U.S. Department of Education, state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), and other providers and users of national education information on issues concerning the Cooperative System and the national data agenda. As a nationally recognized resource for education data best practices and resources, the Forum plays a major role in the creation of cooperative and efficient elementary and secondary education statistics systems that provide the federal government, states, school districts, and educators with the quality information they need to foster excellence in our nation’s schools.

Section 1: Functions and Objectives

The Forum is a voluntary, democratic, participative, federal-state-local group that works cooperatively to identify and recommend strategies and approaches to address issues of education data policy and practice. It does not implement or enforce education policies or programs. The Forum identifies and addresses matters including, but not limited to, 1) issues, concerns, and solutions affecting the collection and reporting of early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education statistics; 2) policies, procedures, and implementation strategies to assist SEAs and LEAs to improve their ability to collect and report comparable, accurate, and timely data and ways to enhance the coordination of data collection among federal, state, and local education agencies; and 3) technology strategies to address the collection, management, use, and exchange of student and staff information and the supporting technical infrastructure. In exercising these functions, the Forum considers ways to:

- **Promote uniformity and comparability in education statistical data throughout the nation.** The Forum addresses such issues as the development of standard definitions and methods for collecting, reporting, and validating statistical data; the use of new technologies to improve the comparability and uniformity of data; and the elimination of duplicative data collection among federal agencies. The Forum promotes national data standards; identifies best practices for improving the comparability, accuracy, and timeliness of data across all states; and identifies methods for states to improve their own data collection and reporting systems.

- ***Research, develop, demonstrate, evaluate, and disseminate information about new technology for education data.*** Through its recommendations and sponsorship of programs and projects under the Cooperative System, the Forum addresses such topics as using technologies to facilitate data collections and identifying best practices for data collection and data use. The Forum assists NCES in identifying innovative state projects that can serve as models for other states in the area of information technology. These may include projects to ensure that data collection activities respond to the emerging information needs of the federal government, states, and the education community, and assessment of the results and implications of statistical initiatives.
- ***Provide SEAs and LEAs with effective approaches to improve the quality, comparability, and timeliness of the data they submit to the federal government.*** The Forum identifies and addresses areas where SEAs and LEAs need assistance. This may include promoting effective approaches to providing technical assistance, developing training materials, and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of technical assistance programs. The Forum documents and promotes “best practice” guidelines in education data collection, reporting, and use.

Section 2: Participation

Participants in the Forum include federal, state, and local agencies, education and statistical organizations, and other organizations that are involved in the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. Only federal, state, and local agencies may be members of the Forum. Others may participate as associates.

Members

The member organizations of the Forum consist of the state education agencies of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (hereafter referred to as “the states”); one local education agency selected by each Chief State School Officer; the NCES Commissioner (ex officio); the Associate Commissioners of major NCES divisions; the office of the NCES Chief Statistician; and the principal offices of the U.S. Department of Education, or programs within these principal offices that collect or use elementary/secondary education data.

State education agencies, local education agencies, and federal agencies that collect or report elementary and secondary education information are eligible to be members of the Forum. Members must commit themselves to participate in the Cooperative System. Participation by member organization representatives will include attendance at Forum meetings; leadership or other effort in Forum committees, subcommittees, or working groups; and reporting of Forum action and recommendations to the leadership of the member organizations. Federal agencies outside the U.S. Department of Education that collect or report elementary or secondary education data, or that have expertise in an area of interest to the Cooperative System, are also eligible for membership. Agencies meeting the criteria for membership may apply for this status to the Forum Steering Committee, or may be invited to apply by the Steering Committee, and shall become members upon approval of a recommendation to this effect from the Steering Committee by the Forum members.

Members are full partners in all Forum activities. They attend Forum meetings; participate in discussions and consensus building; take an active role in committee, subcommittee, and working group activities; vote on approving and amending Forum policies and procedures; elect officers; and may hold office. With the exception of NCES, each federal principal office or program of the U.S. Department of Education or other federal agency that is a member may have one Forum representative, designated by the head of that principal office or program. Each state will have one state and one local representative appointed by the Chief State School Officer; the state representative will also serve as the state liaison to the Cooperative System and will speak for the Chief State School Officer in Forum and Cooperative System activities. The state liaison may designate a permanent alternate who will attend meetings and manage other Forum responsibilities in the liaison’s place. In the absence of the state liaison, the permanent alternate has the same voting and participation rights as a full member.

Associates

To be an associate, an agency or organization must collect or be a major user of elementary and secondary education information. Organizations meeting the criterion for associate status may apply to the Forum Steering Committee for associate status, or may be invited by the Steering Committee to apply. Upon recommendation by the Steering Committee and approval by the Forum, the organization shall be granted associate status. Associates are invited to appoint one representative to the Forum.

Associates participate in Forum 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 decisionmaking of the full Forum, and they do not vote for Forum officers or on policies and procedures. They may not hold elected office. Federal agencies that are associates may become members, but associations may not.

Section 3: Organization

Activities take place within the Forum as a whole, the Steering Committee, the three standing committees, additional subcommittees, and working groups. The following describes the responsibilities and functions of the major levels.

Forum

The entire Forum membership participates in the election of officers as well as the approval of reports and products, the Forum strategic plan, and amendments to Forum policies and procedures. The Forum leadership consists of a Chair and Vice Chair who also serve as the leaders of the Steering Committee. The Chair serves as moderator for all Forum deliberations and activities.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee oversees and coordinates all Forum activities. Its members are the Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum, the immediate past chair of the Forum, and the chairs and vice chairs of the three standing committees. It is moderated by the Forum Chair.

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. Membership in standing committees will be limited to members and associates of the Forum. The Forum Chair makes committee assignments after inquiry of members as to their preference. 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 will discuss and address the topic according to the committee's focus.

National Education Statistics Agenda Committee

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 committee identifies issues and solutions bearing on the development of common, comparable, and effective 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

The Policies, Programs, and Implementation Committee (PPI) 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

The Technology Committee (TECH) 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 and Working Groups

Standing committees may establish subcommittees to address ongoing issues beyond the scope of regular committee work. 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 are developed 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, associates, and non-Forum invited experts, with a chairperson established by the standing committee proposing the new working group. One of the first tasks of each working group is to complete a Request to Form a Working Group (see Appendix), which outlines the group's scope of work, its relationship to Forum goals, and any needed resources. Working groups will be acknowledged by the Steering Committee.

NCES Staff Support

NCES will assign support staff to each committee of the Forum to coordinate the activities of the committees, subcommittees, and working groups. If a committee requests a report or additional information on a particular topic, NCES staff will assist in meeting the request. In addition, NCES staff will provide assistance in the preparation of the committee, subcommittee, and working group reports.

Section 4: Governance

Selection of Forum Officers

The Steering Committee will nominate a slate of officers annually, each of whom will be voted upon by the full membership in a Forum election. A quorum must be present for an election to be held; officers will be elected by a majority vote of those present. The slate will include the Forum/Steering Committee Chair, the Forum/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.

Quorums

At least half of all members must be present at a Forum meeting in order to hold an election or vote on an amendment to the policies and procedures. If a quorum is not present, the election or amendment process must be postponed until at least half of the members are present.

Forum Officers

The Forum Chair is the chief officer of the Forum as well as chair of the Steering Committee. As such, the Chair represents the Forum in all communications with the Commissioner of Education Statistics and other individuals or groups, unless the Chair designates the Vice Chair or another Forum member to serve in his or her capacity. In addition, the Chair serves as moderator for all Forum activities, including elections, discussions, and votes on reports and amendments to policies and procedures.

Committee Officers

Each standing committee will have a chair and vice chair who are elected by a vote of the full Forum. Subcommittee and working group chairs are appointed by their committee chairs. Committee chairs may appoint vice chairs of subcommittees or working groups if they deem it necessary.

Terms and Tenure

Forum and committee officers will be elected for a period of one year and will take office immediately following the Forum meeting at which they are elected. There is no limit to the number of terms an officer may serve.

Approving and Amending Policies and Procedures

Forum members have the authority to approve and amend the policies and procedures of the Forum. Members may amend the policies and procedures at the initiation of the Steering Committee and by consensus or a majority vote of the members present.

The following procedures are used in the amendment process: 1) the Steering Committee recommends amendments; 2) amendments proposed by the Steering Committee are made available in writing to all Forum members at least three weeks prior to the Forum meeting at which the vote will take place; and 3) members vote on the recommendation during a Forum meeting or via electronic vote. Other committees or individual members may propose amendments in policies and procedures to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee must report each proposed amendment to the full Forum regardless of the committee's recommendation.

Attendance

When a state joins the Cooperative System, the Chief State School Officer makes a commitment to designate a state and a local liaison to represent the state in the Cooperative System and serve on the Forum. Consequently, the state and local liaisons make a commitment to attend Forum meetings each year and to attend in-person or virtual meetings and other activities of the committees, subcommittees, and working groups of which they are members.

For federal members and associates, the agreement to participate in the Forum brings with it a commitment to attend in-person and virtual Forum meetings and to participate in committee, subcommittee, and working group meetings and other activities.

Section 5: Discussion of Issues, Resolutions, and Reports

Consensus Process

To the extent possible, reports from committees, subcommittees, and working groups should reflect the views of all their members. Wherever feasible, this broad agreement will be determined by using consensus as the decisionmaking process for the Forum's actions. Consensus is defined as the requirement that all individuals party to a decision agree to the decision before it can be considered approved. It should be noted that a decision reached through consensus may not reflect each participant's favored resolution, but it will reflect a resolution by which each participant can abide. However, in cases where consensus is not possible, approval to present a report to the next level of the Forum will be determined by a majority vote of the committee members present. If there is disagreement on a report, a member may issue a minority statement or report. The chair of a reporting committee determines the proper format for minority reports.

When consensus cannot be achieved for decisions of the full Forum, majority rule as determined by vote will be used. 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 to hold an election or to vote on an amendment to the policies and procedures). The Chair of the Forum will determine the proper format for minority reports accompanying products that represent the entire Forum.

Role of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee oversees and coordinates all Forum activities. All issue papers, products, and reports must be submitted to the Steering Committee for review. Documents may be released as official Forum publications only upon approval by the Steering Committee. Decisions of the Steering Committee may be overturned by a vote of members at a quorum meeting.

Discussion of Issues

The Forum's primary responsibility is to raise, define, examine, and respond to the issues that confront the Cooperative System. Therefore, many of its activities and deliberations will involve in-depth discussion of issues and development of alternative approaches and viewpoints rather than taking a particular position on an issue (although the Forum also has the authority to make specific proposals).

Discussion topics may be initiated by the Commissioner of NCES, the Steering Committee, any of the other committees, subcommittees or working groups, or an individual member or associate from the floor at Forum meetings. If initiated by the Commissioner or Steering Committee, the Steering Committee Chair will assign the matter to one of the standing committees for action; the committee chair, in turn, may assign the matter to a subcommittee or working group. If the topic is initiated within a committee, the committee reaches a decision on the matter before forwarding the findings to the Steering Committee. Issues arising from the floor at Forum meetings will be discussed by the full Forum at that time or referred by the Forum Chair to an appropriate committee, depending upon the will of the Forum as expressed through a vote. In all cases, a topic is first addressed at the committee level before moving to the Steering Committee level and then submitted to the Commissioner. In situations where the Forum is not making a specific resolution, it may issue a report or issue paper.

Resolutions

The Forum may make recommendations in the form of resolutions. Resolutions may be submitted to the Steering Committee by the appropriate committee and then voted upon by the Forum membership.

Resolutions may be initiated at any level of the Forum, including by individual members from the floor at Forum meetings or by communication with an appropriate committee at other times. When a resolution is raised from the floor, a vote will be taken to determine whether it is to be resolved by the full Forum at that time or referred to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may refer a matter to one of the standing committees and ask for a recommendation. A standing committee or subcommittee may initiate a recommendation on its own.

Whether a recommendation is initiated at the committee level or referred to a committee by the Steering Committee, the committee must reach agreement (see Consensus Process) before seeking action by the Steering Committee.

Reports

The Steering Committee will prepare an annual Report of the Forum. The Report will present Forum deliberations, explain the work of the Forum during the preceding year, and provide any other information the Steering Committee or Forum deems important. The Steering Committee may issue additional reports at any time.

Committees and subcommittees will submit reports at the discretion of the committee chairs. All reports must be approved by the Steering Committee and the full Forum before they are submitted to the Commissioner, the general public, or any other audience(s) external to the Forum.

Section 6: Meeting Schedule

The Forum will hold meetings each year that may be in-person or virtual. The Steering Committee and all standing committees meet in conjunction with the Forum meetings and at other times as deemed necessary by their chairs and NCES. Subcommittee and working group meeting schedules are determined by NCES and their chairs.

Section 7: Funding

NCES may provide funds, as available, through the Cooperative System to support state participation in Forum activities. The funds, which will come from the annual NCES allocation to states as members of the Cooperative System, are intended to defray in part the travel expenses and staff time for state officials who participate in Forum meetings and activities. In addition, NCES may provide additional funds through the Cooperative System, as available, to committees, working groups, or individuals to assist in carrying out special projects.

Appendix: Request to Form a Working Group

Request to Form a Working Group National Forum on Education Statistics

Contact:

Date:

1) Committee requesting working group:

2) Proposed title for working group:

3) Project rationale:

4) Proposed working group members (persons, organizations, committees, etc.):

5) Objectives of working group (please relate to Forum's Strategic Plan):

Forum Goal I: Develop a comprehensive system of comparable local, state, and federal basic data elements useful for education decisionmaking at all levels of government.

Forum Goal II: Improve coordination, integration, and consolidation of the collection and dissemination of quality education data.

Forum Goal III: Promote the Forum as a widely recognized cooperative body addressing issues of education data policy, and as a leader in setting data standards.

6) Do the objectives overlap with other Forum activities?

7) Begin Date:

End Date:

8) Deliverables/Outcomes:

9) Resources required (contractor services, travel, etc.; estimate amounts):