



SLDS Topical Webinar Summary

Integrating SLDS Grants with Other Data System Grant Work

By integrating statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) grant work with other data system grant work, states can leverage the resources, expertise, and work of multiple efforts and ideally accomplish more than might be accomplished with a solo grant effort. However, managing multiple goals, timelines, and staffs—even for the common good—can be a challenging and frustrating process.

This document highlights the work done in Delaware, Georgia, and Hawaii to integrate SLDS work with other grants such as Race to the Top (RTT), Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), and Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI). Each state has faced unique challenges and taken different approaches to ensure that separate systems are not being implemented that undermine the SLDS, or that are duplicative of the SLDS.

Delaware

Delaware's longitudinal data system dates back almost 30 years, when the use of unique student identification numbers was initiated. The state had a "beginning" data warehouse that started in 1998, and it has continued to update and improve its warehouse since that time. Delaware's 2012 SLDS grant (2012–2015) is K12 focused, and much of the work and funds have centered on moving disparate data sources into a single warehouse.

RTT and SLDS

A 2010 RTT grant (2010–2014) focused on building Delaware's iMart data warehouse application, delivering dashboards for Ed Insight (the state's SLDS), creating an identity management system, and creating a master person index, which is a key piece of technology that allows linking across different agency datasets and the creation of unique IDs across that data to tie records together. The tools created under the RTT grant are all inherently relevant to moving the state's SLDS forward.

Creation of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System: A Multi-Grant Effort

Another collaboration of grant efforts came with Delaware's 2012 RTT-ELC grant, which is managed by the state's Office of Early Learning (OEL). Because the grant calls for—but does not fund—an integrated data system for early childhood, OEL began working closely with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to leverage work that had already been completed for the K12 data warehouse. The K12 warehouse was fully functional, and the early childhood data system would likely be serving students that would go on to be a part of the K12 data system, so it made sense to leverage technologies completed under the SLDS and RTT grants in order to avoid duplicating services when creating the early childhood data system.

To further advance the creation of the early childhood data system and its integration with the K12 systems, Delaware approached the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) for funds to expand its K12 data warehouse into the early childhood data domain. The existing DDOE/OEL collaboration toward a standard platform and accessible data source was an attractive marketing point to the grantor, and Delaware believes the collaboration was a big differentiator when asking for the grant funds. The MSDF grant supported the extensibility of Ed-Fi into early childhood and a lot of the data necessary to build out the state's Early Learning Insight (ELI) dashboards.

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For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program or for support with system development, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds>.

Ultimately, the existing warehouse, identity management system, and dashboards were leveraged to store and display early childhood data. The DDOE provided technical support, data governance support through memoranda of understanding, and in-kind development/management support. Because OEL had no data processing resource on its side, it provided match funding from the RTT-ELC grant to help move the work forward. The project is well underway, and rollout of the first pieces of data integration between early childhood, data providers, and new dashboards is expected in February 2015.

Georgia

Integrating Two Federal Grants

Georgia was awarded an SLDS grant in the amount of \$8.9 million in 2009. These funds were to be used to “establish a new infrastructure that manages the exchange, integration, analysis, and reporting of educational data for the State of Georgia. ... A P-20 data model will be designed to track student data longitudinally and integrate information about teachers, courses, programs, schools and systems to provide better understanding of the influences on and context for student achievement.”¹ The following year, in 2010, Georgia was awarded nearly \$400 million in RTT funding, an amount which could have easily overshadowed the SLDS grant and shifted focus to other endeavors.

Instead of using the RTT funds to begin an entirely new data system project, Georgia decided to integrate the two grants to extend and improve the existing SLDS, including “adopting a common definition for teacher of record, adopting a best practice process for collecting and validating linked teacher and student data, and creating a robust, user-friendly, and automated reporting system.”² The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) worked with the different grant offices to ensure that all parties understood how the grants were being integrated, which also led to new improvements and tools for the state’s Instructional Improvement System (IIS).

Integrating a Federal Grant with a Federal Program

Georgia combined funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires that schools provide special education services to eligible students as outlined in a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), with SLDS funds to build a statewide IEP system. When each district had its own IEP system, a student’s data would have to be re-keyed every time that student moved between districts; a statewide system would

Georgia’s Best Practices on Integrating Grants

- Have a strategic plan in place.
- Ensure that grant objectives are aligned with the strategic plan.
- Ensure that all owners of the grants support the efforts.
- Have an enterprise architecture in place.
- Ensure that the program can be sustained when grant funds end.

eliminate the need for re-keying data. The case for a link between IDEA and SLDS work was clear in that 90 percent of the information needed when a child was placed into the IEP system already existed within the SLDS. Eighty-seven districts have switched to the statewide system, and non-participating districts still have access to PDF versions of the IEP system for their students.

Integrating Two Projects within One Grant

Georgia undertook a teacher evaluation project with its RTT funds, and realized it could deliver some of the functionality needed for the teacher evaluation system within the IIS. Tools within the IIS were integrated with tools for the evaluation system, thus better serving the districts by keeping the tools together in one location. Georgia found that integrating two projects under one grant was at times more difficult than integrating two grants. Because different parts of the agency had ownership over the two projects, a lot of stakeholder engagement was required to combine efforts.

Integrating a Federal Grant with State-Funded Projects

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS), and Juvenile Court (JC) all submit data to the SLDS so teachers can view information from those agencies about their students. Initially each agency had its own system to submit data; GDOE built an interface between a federally funded project (SLDS) and state projects (DJJ, DFCS, JC) to more easily exchange information with various stakeholders.

SLDS funding was also integrated with PeachNet, Georgia’s statewide communications network supporting all University System of Georgia Information Technology Services efforts. SLDS funding, together with a \$50 million grant from the governor and funding from multiple state agencies, contributed to an increase from a 3 megabyte internet capacity per school to a 100 megabyte internet capacity per school, ultimately delivering capacity down to a child’s

¹ Georgia Department of Education 2009 SLDS Grant Project Abstract: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/2009georgiaabstract.pdf>.

² Georgia Department of Education Phase 2 Race to the Top Scope of Work: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/state-scope-of-work/georgia.pdf>.

computing device and rolling out pathways to individualized learning from a hardware infrastructure perspective.

Integrating a Federal Grant with a Foundation Data Grant
GDOE sought and was awarded a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support teacher-student data link efforts. This grant coalesced well with the SLDS project, as the only way to deliver SLDS functionality to teachers is to link them with their respective students.

Tip: Seek grant opportunities that fit well into the initial vision for the SLDS; do not adjust the SLDS purpose and vision to fit available grant opportunities.

Hawaii

Hawaii has sought to integrate the efforts of four separate grants: two SLDS grants (2009–2012, 2012–2015), RTT (2010–2014), and WDQI (2013–2016). The state developed a basic approach to grant integration that, at first, seemed it would be relatively simple to adhere to:

- Clarify scope
- Identify opportunities
- Create joint projects
- Ensure continued communication

However, as work began Hawaii realized that, in practice, this approach would be far more complicated than initially thought.

Planning and Coordination

Managing the details of four different grants was a sizable task. Hawaii brought all parties (Hawaii DOE, Hawaii P-20, University of Hawaii, and Department of Labor and Industrial Relations) to the table in the beginning stages of the joint effort in order to identify and coordinate all of the different timelines and deliverables involved in the grants. The meeting was also an opportunity to break up tasks and clarify exactly who was going to do exactly what.

Scope Issues

Because each grant was written at a different time and with a different focus, the scopes of the projects were disparate in some instances and redundant at others (e.g., both SLDS projects were working to create linkages between postsecondary and workforce institutions). Hawaii prioritized proactive communication and data governance to clarify each scope and reduce redundancies. Ultimately, the project scopes were combined in such a way as to increase the overall scope and reach of the joint effort.

Human Capital

One of the major issues Hawaii cites is the issue of human capital to 1) do the work and 2) understand the implications of the information. Developing or having the technical expertise can be an issue and a potential barrier to developing data systems. Technical expertise must be informed by functional expertise, and not all agencies have experts on both sides. Hawaii took the approach of developing human capital across agencies and looked for opportunities to leverage the work of others so as not to duplicate efforts. Naturally there were some issues related to ownership and responsibility for the different projects, but creating common goals helped to align potentially conflicting objectives. For example, Hawaii P-20 partners with the Hawaii DOE and University of Hawaii to produce the annual “College and Career Readiness Indicator Reports”; the agencies also approach the state legislature jointly to ask for funding.

Another important step was creating a consistent message across the partner agencies so that no matter which agency a stakeholder approached, that stakeholder would receive the same information. This is of particular importance when dealing with policymakers, who need to understand the full capabilities and implications of data systems.

Common Themes in Successful Grant Integration

Know your partners. What resources does each partner bring to the table? What are the primary goals for each grant? What efforts are already underway? The most efficient way to combine efforts and avoid redundancies is to know as much information up front as possible.

Data Governance is key. Clear, transparent rules and processes about who can access which data, as well as a clear understanding of who is responsible for what tasks, are critical to relationships when agencies are sharing any kind of infrastructure.

Manage expectations. Make a plan and stick to it as much as possible. Clearly delineate who will do what work, as well as who will pay for which parts of the project. Define deliverables and expectations up front.

Be proactive in communication. Each partner should be aware of what is going on with the project at all times. Failure to communicate openly will silo the partner agencies and the grant efforts, hindering overall progress.

Additional Resources

Delaware Department of Education
<http://www.doe.k12.de.us/>

Delaware Office of Early Learning
<http://www.greatstartsdelaware.com/>

Everyone On Board: How to Engage Reluctant Stakeholders and Stakeholders Experiencing Leadership Transitions
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slids/pdf/everyone_on_board_Jan2014.pdf

Georgia Online IEP
<http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Georgia-Online-IEP.aspx>

Hawaii College and Career Readiness Indicators Reports
<http://www.p20hawaii.org/resources/college-and-career-readiness-indicators-reports/>

Race to the Top Grant Program
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Program
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html>

Stakeholder Communication: SLDS Best Practices Brief
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slids/pdf/best_practices.pdf

Workforce Data Quality Initiative
<http://www.doleta.gov/performance/workforcedatagrants09.cfm>