

## GRANTS FOR STATEWIDE, LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEMS

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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS: NCES 15-01

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

<http://ies.ed.gov/funding/>

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THIS REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- I. Request for Applications
- II. Technical Assistance for Applicants
- III. Introduction and Background
- IV. Statewide Longitudinal Data System Requirements
- V. Data Use Priorities
- VI. Applications Available
- VII. Mechanism of Support
- VIII. Funding Available
- IX. Eligible Applicants
- X. Special Requirements
- XI. Contents and Page Limits of Application
- XII. Application Processing
- XIII. Peer Review Process
- XIV. Review Criteria
- XV. Receipt and Review Schedule
- XVI. Award Decisions
- XVII. Submission Requirements
- XVIII. Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement
- XIX. Inquiries Address
- XX. Program Authority
- XXI. Applicable Regulations

### I. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

#### I. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) invites State educational agencies to apply for grants to assist them in using data in statewide, longitudinal data systems (SLDS) to inform their efforts to improve education in critical areas. Applicants may apply for funds to carry out projects to address up to two of the following data use priorities: 1) Financial Equity and Return on Investment (ROI); 2) Educator Talent Management; 3) Early Learning; 4) College and Career; 5) Evaluation and Research; 6) Instructional Support. Under any of these priorities, States should consider how their proposals would enhance their ability to use their SLDS to address the needs of at-risk students, including

children and youth who are or have been homeless or in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. All States and territories are eligible to apply for this grant.

## II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR APPLICANTS

The Institute will hold webinars describing the RFA process and to discuss questions pertaining to the RFA. Based on these webinars, the Institute may create a Frequently Asked Questions sheet to assist applicants through the RFA process.

The Institute asks potential applicants to submit a Letter of Intent 60 days prior to the application submission deadline, indicating both whether the State intends to apply for the Grant, and the Priority or Priorities for which the State expects to apply. Letters of Intent are optional but strongly encouraged by the Institute. If you submit a Letter of Intent, a Program Officer may contact you regarding your proposal. Institute staff uses the information in the letters of intent to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer-review panels and to secure a sufficient number of reviewers to handle the anticipated number of applications.

## III. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Under the Statewide, Longitudinal Data Systems program, the Secretary is authorized to make competitive grants to State educational agencies to enable them to design, develop, and implement SLDS to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, disaggregate, and use individual student data. The long-term goal of the program is to enable all States to create comprehensive early learning through workforce (P-20W) data systems that permit the generation and use of accurate and timely data, support analysis and informed decision-making at all levels of the education system, increase the efficiency with which data may be analyzed to support the continuous improvement of education services and outcomes, facilitate research to improve student academic achievement and close achievement gaps, support education accountability systems, and simplify the processes used by State educational agencies to make education data transparent through Federal and public reporting.

Under previous competitions, the Institute awarded SLDS grants to 47 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These funds supported SLDS grantees in the design, development, and implementation of statewide longitudinal kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) data systems, or to expand their K-12 systems to include early childhood data and/or postsecondary and workforce data. Grants awarded also supported the development and implementation of systems that link individual student data across time and across databases, including the matching of teachers to students; promoting interoperability across institutions, agencies, and States; and protecting student and individual privacy consistent with applicable privacy protection laws.

Because States have been engaged in the process of developing these longitudinal data systems for a number of years, this competition will focus on using the data that have been linked in previous grant rounds. Grants will not be made available to support ongoing

maintenance of data systems, but they may be used to improve existing systems to make more effective use of the data contained in these statewide systems.

Supplement not supplant. The ETAA requires that funds made available under this grant program be used to supplement, and not supplant, other State or local funds used for developing State data systems.

#### IV. STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

In order to be eligible to receive funds made available pursuant to this competition, States must certify that their SLDS have certain, required capabilities.

With respect to a system that includes preschool through grade 12 and postsecondary education data:

- A unique statewide student identifier that does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system (except as allowed by Federal and State law)
- Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information
- Student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete preschool through grade 12 education and postsecondary education programs
- The capacity to communicate with higher education data systems
- A State data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability

With respect to a system that includes preschool through grade 12 education data:

- Yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments under section 1111(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
- Information on students not tested, by grade and subject
- A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students
- Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned
- Student-level college readiness test scores

With respect to a system that includes postsecondary education data:

- Data that provide information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework
- Data that provide other information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education

In order to receive funding under this program, applicants must also demonstrate that they meet the following requirements. Applications should identify which of the following requirements are in place, and if the requirements are not currently being met, describe how the requirements will be developed through the project.

### *Governance and Policy Requirements:*

- **Need and Uses.** In addition to providing information that helps to improve student achievement and reduce achievement gaps among students, a successful data system should address several of the State's other key educational policy questions. The system should provide data and data-use tools that can be used in education decision-making at multiple levels, from policy to classroom instruction.
- **Governance.** A successful data system rests upon a governance structure involving both State and local stakeholders in the system's design and implementation. Particularly when expanding the data capacity in existing K-12 systems to include other educational data, an SLDS must identify the entities responsible for the operation of the statewide data system and should include a common understanding of data ownership, data management, and data confidentiality and access, as well as the means to resolve differences among partners.
- **Institutional Support.** A successful data system requires institutional support from leadership within the SEA and from relevant stakeholders within and outside the SEA. The support must include authorization to develop and implement the SLDS, as well as the commitment of necessary staff and other resources. If the SLDS is to be expanded to include data from other systems, all involved institutions must agree to a shared vision for deliverables and objectives.
- **Sustainability.** A successful data system requires ongoing support from the SEA after it has been implemented. At a minimum, the system requires ongoing commitment of staff and other resources for system maintenance, quality control, and user training.

### *Technical Requirements:*

- **Federal Reporting.** A successful data system must be able to meet Federal reporting requirements, including those of the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) *EDFacts* system. The system should provide efficiencies that reduce the burden of Federal reporting for schools and districts.
- **Privacy Protection and Data Accessibility.** An SLDS must ensure the confidentiality of student data, consistent with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as any other applicable Federal and State laws or regulations concerning the confidentiality of individual records. The system should also include public documentation that clearly articulates what data will be accessible, to which users, and for what purposes.
- **Data Quality.** A successful data system must ensure the integrity, security, and quality of data. It should include an ongoing plan for training those entering or using the data, as well as procedures for monitoring the accuracy of information.
- **Interoperability.** The system should use a common set of data elements with common data standards to allow interoperability and comparability of data among programs such as the Common Education Data Standards (<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/ceds/>), as available and applicable. A successful data

system has the capacity to exchange data between the SEA and its LEAs, as well as among LEAs, or with other appropriate State agencies or educational entities.

- Enterprise-wide Architecture. A successful SLDS includes an enterprise-wide data architecture that links records across information systems and data elements across time and allows for longitudinal analysis of dropout and graduation rates and student achievement growth. The architecture should include, at a minimum, a system for assigning unique student identifiers, a data dictionary, a data model, and business rules. The system must make data dictionaries publicly available.

*Data Use Requirements:*

- Secure Access to Useful Data for Key Stakeholder Groups. Appropriate and secure access to data must be provided to key stakeholder groups including policymakers, SEA program staff, external researchers, district administrators, and school-level educators. Access must be balanced with the need to protect student privacy and confidentiality consistent with applicable privacy protection laws.
- Data Use Deliverables. The system must include deliverables to meet end-user needs (to inform decision-making and evaluate policies and programs) such as reporting and analysis tools. Design of these deliverables must be informed by early and sustained engagement of representatives from user groups to ensure the system will meet their information needs and continuously improve to meet evolving needs.
- Training on Use of Data Tools and Products. The system should include a professional development program to prepare end-users to effectively use the data products.
- Professional Development on Data Use. The system should include a professional development program to help end-users effectively interpret and apply the data to inform decision-making and improve practices.
- Evaluation of Data Products, Training, and Professional Development. The system should include a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the data use deliverables, and training and professional development programs.
- Partnerships with Research Community. The State must have a policy in place for the processing of requests for data for research purposes and for communicating the scope of data available for analysis. The State should establish partnerships with internal and/or external research groups to assist with answering questions that can inform policy and practice. The State should actively disseminate research and analysis findings to the public while ensuring confidentiality of individual student data.
- Sustainability Plan. The system must include a plan for sustaining the deliverables and training beyond the life of the grant.

V. SLDS DATA USE PRIORITIES

As stated above, each grant awarded under this competition will fund SLDS work in up to two of the following Priorities for SLDS data use

## **Fiscal Equity and Return on Investment (ROI)**

Applicants seeking funding under this Priority should describe how they would use school-level finance data to better understand how resources are allocated among schools and the relationship between resource allocations and student outcomes.

If funds are requested under this priority, applicants must ensure that, at a minimum, the finance data required for Common Core of Data Fiscal reporting, including the National Public Education Financial Survey (NPEFS) and the Survey of Local Government Systems: School Systems (also known as the F-33) would be linked to school-level and, where possible, teacher- and student-level data in the SLDS. Applicants must also describe how compensation information for teachers, school-based administrators and paraprofessionals would be included in the SLDS and linked to schools.

Applicants must describe how they would use school-level fiscal data to inform analyses of school-level financial investments in education and how these investments are distributed across schools and students. Specifically, applicants must identify research and policy questions that would be answered using their SLDS and how this information would be used to improve programs and policies. For example, a State could propose to examine the relationship between education resources, such as the availability of paraprofessionals, and student outcomes or the degree to which students in high need schools have access to these resources.

Applicants must identify all data that would be needed for these analyses, and how the resulting information would be used to inform programs and policies. If the data currently exist, then the application must indicate where the data are housed in the SLDS. If the data are not currently housed within or linked to the SLDS, then the application must identify the source system or data collection mechanism and describe how the data will be added to/or linked to the SLDS to support these analyses.

## **Educator Talent Management**

Applicants seeking funding under this Priority should describe how they would use human capital information to inform more effective preparation, certification, professional development, and compensation for teachers and principals.

If funds are requested under this priority, applicants must demonstrate that the SLDS includes:

- A unique educator identifier;
- A unique teacher preparation program identifier;
- Information on educator characteristics, including: demographic information, educational attainment, program completed, placement and retention, credentials awarded, the type of subject of State credential or licenses held, professional development experiences, years of experience, and promotions;

- Educator salary data; and
- Educator evaluation data.

Applicants must describe how the SLDS would link the unique educator identifier to data on K-12 courses, students, and student learning outcomes. If graduates of teacher preparation programs and the schools or districts that employ them have been surveyed about the quality of these programs, then these data should also be added or linked to the SLDS, where possible.

Applicants must describe specific research and policy questions that would be addressed under this priority. For example, applicants could propose to analyze learning outcomes for students taught by teachers prepared through different teacher preparation programs to inform State policies and facilitate reporting requirements under Title II of the Higher Education Act. Applicants could also propose to examine the relationship between different types of professional development for in-service teachers and student learning outcomes. Other applicants might propose to use teacher evaluation data to examine the extent to which students, especially low-income and minority students, have access to effective educators.

Applicants must identify all data that would be needed for these analyses, and how the resulting information would be used to inform programs and policies. If the data currently exist, then the application must indicate where the data are housed in the SLDS. If the data are not currently housed within or linked to the SLDS, then the application must identify the source system or data collection mechanism and describe how the data would be added to/or linked to the SLDS to support these analyses.

### **Early Learning**

Applicants seeking funding under this Priority must describe how they would use grant funds to link early childhood data to K12 student data in order to better understand the characteristics and quality of early learning services provided in the state, access to and use of these services by particular children and families, and the relationship between participation in early learning programs and subsequent student outcomes. Applicants must describe how these analyses would enable them to direct investments in early learning more effectively to improve child outcomes.

If funds are requested under this priority, applicants must demonstrate that the SLDS would include or be linked to an early learning data system that includes:

- (a) A unique statewide child identifier or another highly accurate, proven method to link data on an individual child;
- (b) A unique statewide early childhood educator identifier;
- (c) A unique program site identifier;
- (d) Demographic information on children and their families; and

- (e) Demographic information on early childhood educators, including data on their educational attainment, State credential or licenses held, and professional development received.

If the following data are available, applicants should describe how the SLDS would include or be linked to:

- (a) Program-level data such as structure, quality, discipline, staff retention, staff compensation, and work environment;
- (b) Child-level program participation and attendance data; and
- (c) Kindergarten entry assessment data.

All of these data elements are consistent with the requirements for recipients of the Department's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grants.

Applicants must describe specific research and policy questions that would be addressed under this priority. For example, an applicant could propose to analyze how many children are being served in high-quality early learning programs and what types of services they are receiving or whether children in the State have access to high quality early learning programs and other health, education, and family services.

Applicants could also propose to examine the relationship between early learning programs with particular characteristics and the outcomes for children served by those programs, including the certifications and professional development received by early childhood educators in those programs. Other applicants might propose to study which outcomes and interventions are associated with the largest improvements in student outcomes over time.

Applicants must identify all data that would be needed for these analyses, and how the resulting information would be used to inform programs and policies. If the data currently exist, then the application must indicate where the data are housed in the SLDS. If the data are not currently housed within or linked to the SLDS, then the application must identify the source system or data collection mechanism and describe how the data will be added to/or linked to the SLDS to support these analyses. If an existing early childhood data system(s) would be expanded to include education data, then the application must identify the entities responsible for the operation of the early childhood data system and demonstrate that those entities and the SLDS have a common understanding of data ownership, data management, and data confidentiality and access, as well the means to resolve differences among partners.

### **College and Career**

Applicants seeking funding under this priority must describe how they would use the SLDS to assess students' college and career readiness in order to improve their postsecondary education and workforce outcomes.

States are encouraged to rely on their own postsecondary data linkages and not simply purchase this data from an organization external to the agencies partnering under this application.



Applicants must describe specific research and policy questions that would be addressed under this priority. For example, applicants could propose to develop reports for secondary and postsecondary education programs with information on college entry and completion rates, employment, and earnings for their former students in order to help these programs better prepare current and future students. Other States could propose to use their SLDS to help meet the new reporting requirements in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 or provide students and parents with better information on the cost, student success rates, and workforce outcomes for postsecondary institutions and programs. Applicants could also propose to use their SLDS to determine whether the number of people enrolled in education or training programs is aligned with the current and anticipated needs of the State's workforce.

Applicants must identify all data that would be needed for these analyses, and how the resulting information would be used to inform programs and policies. If the data currently exist, then the application must indicate where the data are housed in the SLDS. If the data are not currently housed within or linked to the SLDS, then the application must identify the source system or data collection mechanism and describe how the data would be added to/or linked to the SLDS to support these analyses.

## **Evaluation and Research**

Applicants seeking funding under this priority must describe how they would improve the ability of the SEA and local educational agencies within the State to conduct research and evaluations to inform efforts to improve outcomes in pre-school, K12, and post-secondary systems.

Applicants seeking funding under this priority should demonstrate how they would build capacity to conduct research on data that already exists within or is linked to the SLDS. For example, applicants could propose to use opportunistic experiments<sup>1</sup> and other quick turnaround evaluation methods to study how new State or local policies and programs are implemented and the results they are achieving so that adjustments could be made quickly to improve effectiveness before the policies or programs are expanded. In this way, States could help ensure that evaluation methodology would yield reliable results on a shorter time frame. Other applicants might propose to develop or expand research partnerships between SEA staff and external researchers in order to expand the State's capacity to analyze data and develop reports and tools that can inform policies and programs. Another way in which applicants might respond to this priority is to improve access to

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<sup>1</sup> Opportunistic experiments are types of randomized controlled trial that study the effects of a planned intervention or policy change with minimal added disruption and cost. In 2014, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance released a report under the Regional Education Laboratory program that defines opportunistic experiments and provides examples, discusses issues to consider when identifying potential opportunistic experiments, and outlines the critical steps to complete opportunistic experiments. The report is available online at: [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/REL2014037/pdf/REL\\_2014037.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/REL2014037/pdf/REL_2014037.pdf)

data by researchers through enhanced systems for providing restricted use data licenses and other mechanisms that facilitate research to improve education in the State while ensuring that the privacy and integrity of data is safeguarded.

### **Instructional Support**

Applicants seeking funding under this priority must describe how they would use data portals and other instructional supports to enable educators to access information from the SLDS more quickly and easily to support and improve instruction for students, particularly for high needs students.

Applicants must identify data use needs of educators within the State that would be addressed and demonstrate how the instructional support(s) developed under this priority would be used to help identify learning gaps and student needs and inform instructional and program improvement at the classroom-, grade-, school-, and district-levels. For example, applicants could propose to develop dashboards that combine data from SEA and LEA sources to provide educators with real-time information on their students' performance, including formative, summative, and classroom data. This information could be linked to online instructional materials and professional development resources that would enable teachers to more easily identify and help fill student learning gaps. Other applicants could propose to combine student performance data with other information, such as attendance and behavior data, to provide an early warning system that schools and districts could use to quickly identify students who need additional support and intervene quickly to assist the students.

Applicants must identify all data that would be needed for the instructional support(s). If the data currently exist, then the application must indicate where the data are housed in the SLDS. If the data are not currently housed within or linked to the SLDS, then the application must identify the source system or data collection mechanism and describe how the data will be added to/or linked to the SLDS to support the development of the instructional support(s).

To ensure that the instructional support(s) will meet the information needs of educators, applicants must describe how their design and development efforts will be informed by early and sustained engagement of representatives from user groups. Applicants must also describe how they will ensure that the instructional supports continue to meet the evolving needs of educators within their State. Design of the instructional support(s) must be informed by early and sustained engagement of representatives from user groups to ensure the system will meet their information needs and continuously improve to meet evolving needs.

### **VI. APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE**

Application forms and instructions for the electronic submission of applications will be available for this program no later than March 19, at the Grants.gov system. Applicants should refer to this site for information about the electronic submission procedures that must be followed and the software that will be required.

## VII. MECHANISM OF SUPPORT

The Institute intends to award grants in the form of *cooperative agreements*. Applicants should note that *cooperative agreements* allow Federal involvement in the activities undertaken with Federal financial support. The Institute intends to work with grantees to identify best practices in designing and implementing statewide, longitudinal data systems, establish partnerships among States, and disseminate useful products or “lessons learned” through these grants. The specific responsibilities of the Institute and the grantee will be outlined in the cooperative agreement.

## VIII. FUNDING AVAILABLE

Applicants may request no more than \$3.5 million per Priority for the entire grant period, which is limited to no more than 48 months. Applicants may propose to address up to two Priorities, in which case the maximum amount requested over 4 years may not exceed \$7 million. The size of individual grants will depend on the scope of the proposed project.

## IX. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Only State educational agencies are eligible to apply. By law, for this program, the State educational agency is the agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of elementary schools and secondary schools. The State educational agencies of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are eligible; however,

A State educational agency must propose to work jointly and collaboratively with other agencies in the State. For example, if a State submits an application that proposes an analysis including early childhood education data, it would be expected that the agency capable and responsible for such data would be a partner in the grant application. Despite the requirement that the K-12 State educational agency, as defined above, be the applicant and the fiscal agent for the grant, the design, development, and subsequent implementation of the grant-funded work must be carried out by the most relevant and capable State agency in partnership with the other participating organizations.

Individual States may also propose to collaborate with other States. Each State educational agency participating in a collaborative should submit its own application for its own activities and funding. If the collaborating States determine that funding for the joint activities cannot be easily and clearly apportioned among them, or that such apportioning would result in inefficiency and higher costs, one State could serve as the fiduciary agent for the joint activities. In that case, funding for the joint activities should be included in the application of the State acting as fiscal agent. If proposing collaboration with other States, the response must also identify any legal or regulatory issues that may prevent there being a successful cross-State collaboration, or provide agreements or laws

that demonstrate that the States have agreed that the collaborate and data sharing may proceed.

**X. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants should budget for travel and accommodations for two senior project staff to attend a two-day meeting each year in Washington, DC with other grantees and Institute staff to discuss accomplishments, problems encountered, and possible solutions/improvements.

State educational agencies that receive grants must agree to participate in an evaluation of the SLDS program, if the Department decides to conduct such an evaluation. The agreement of a State to participate in such an evaluation would extend to an evaluation conducted after termination of the State’s assistance under this program.

In order to leverage the value of work supported through these grants, resulting products and lessons learned shall be made available for dissemination, except where such products are proprietary.

**XI. CONTENTS AND PAGE LIMITS OF APPLICATION**

All applications and proposals must be self-contained within specified page limitations. Internet website addresses may not be used to provide information necessary to the review because reviewers will not be able to view Internet sites for application review.

The sections described below (summarized in Table 1) represent the body of applications to be submitted to the Institute and should be organized in the order they appear in the Request for Application (RFA).

As noted above under section *V. Applications Available*, all of the required forms and instructions for the forms will be in the application package to be made available at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). The application package will also provide specific instructions about where applicants will be able to attach those application sections that must be submitted in PDF (Portable Document Format).

**Table 1. List of proposal sections and their page limits.**

| <b>Section</b>   | <b>Page Limit</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. <i>Application for Federal Education Assistance (SF 424)</i>                    | N/A               |
| 2. <i>Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424</i>              | N/A               |
| 3. <i>Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524) – Sections A and B</i> | N/A               |
| 4. <i>Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524) – Section C</i>        | No page limit     |
| 5. <i>Project Abstract</i>   | 1 page            |
| 6. <i>Project Narrative</i>  | 40 pages          |

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 7. <i>Budget Narrative (Justification)</i>   | No page limit           |
| 8. <i>Appendix A – Optional Attachments</i>  | 15 pages                |
| 9. <i>Appendix B – Current Status of State’s Longitudinal Data System</i>                            | 6 pages                 |
| 10. <i>Appendix C - Letters of Support, MOUs, and Relevant State Legislation or Executive Orders</i> | No page limit           |
| 11. <i>Appendix D – Résumés of Key Personnel</i>   | 3 pages for each résumé |
| 12. <i>Appendix E–Acronym List</i>   | No page limit           |

1. *Application for Federal Education Assistance (SF-424)*. Applicants must use this form to provide basic information about the applicant and the application.

2. *Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424*. Applicants must use this form to provide contact information for the Project Director and research on human subjects information. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has determined that the collection, maintenance, use of individual level records within typical SLDS projects is considered human subjects research. This form asks you to provide information about any research that will be conducted involving Human Subjects, including: (a) whether human subjects are involved; (b) if human subjects are involved, whether or not the project is exempt from the human subjects regulations; (c) if the project is exempt from the regulations, an indication of the exemption number(s); and, (d) if the project is not exempt from the regulations, Human Subject Assurance number which has been assigned.

- A. Are Human Subjects Involved? If activities involving human subjects are planned at any time during the proposed project at any performance site or collaborating institution, you must check “Yes.” (You must check “Yes” even if the proposed project is exempt from Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects.) If there are no activities involving human subjects planned at any time during the proposed project at any performance site or collaborating institution, you may check “No” and skip the remaining items in this section.
- B. Is the Project Exempt from Federal Regulations? It has been determined that the use of individual level data within an SLDS requires ongoing monitoring for human subjects protection and therefore cannot be considered “exempt”. Please mark this item as “no” and provide the assurance number. You must also attach a copy of the Institutional Review Board Approval and a copy of the Non-exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative to this form. The Non-exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative should describe the following: the characteristics of the subject population; the data to be collected from human subjects; recruitment and consent procedures (if applicable); any potential risks; planned procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks; the importance of the knowledge to be gained relative to potential risks. If an Institutional Review Board Approval is pending, please indicate provide an estimate of when the Approval will be completed within the narrative. If the project has not yet been submitted to an Institutional Review Board for approval please indicate

this. The U.S. Department of Education does not require certification of Institutional Review Board approval at the time you submit your application. However, your application is recommended/selected for funding, the designated U.S. Department of Education official will request that you obtain and send the certification of the Institutional Review Board approval to the Department within 30 days after the formal request.

*3. Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524)—Sections A and B.* The application must include a budget for each year of support requested. Applicants must use this form to provide the budget information for each project year. (Note: ED 524 Section A is for Federal sources of funding being requested in the grant application. ED 524 Section B identifies non-Federal sources such as State funding or foundational funding, which will contribute to the proposed work).

*4. Budget Information Non-Construction Programs (ED 524)—Section C.* The application must provide an itemized budget breakdown for each project year, for each budget category listed in *Sections A and B* (Federal and non-Federal, respectively).

The budget breakdown by project year and category must provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project:

- For each person listed in the Personnel category, include the time commitments, including an indication of the percentage of full-time equivalent (FTE) personnel by project year and corresponding cost.
- For consultants include the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs.
- For applications that include contracts for work, submit an itemized budget spreadsheet for each contract for each project year, and the details of the contract costs should be included in the budget narrative. It is understood that some level of detail may not be provided due to overall timing of the process (i.e. contracts cannot be articulated unless grants have been awarded).
- Itemized costs for equipment purchases, supplies, travel, and other related project costs should also be provided.
- Any other expenses should be itemized by category (Personnel, Fringe, etc.) and unit cost.

The budget must also be organized around the specific outcomes listed in *6. b) Project Outcomes*, with a projected cost total for each outcome. If, for example, an applicant proposes six outcomes for funding, each outcome must include an estimated total cost. In this example, the total cost for these six outcomes must equal the total requested amount for this application in *4. Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED 524) – Section A*. If staffing or equipment will be utilized to support multiple project outcomes, the applicant should either a) divide the costs of the resource among the relevant outcomes, or b) assign the total cost of the resource to one outcome but provide explanation of how that resource will also be utilized to support other outcomes in *X: 7. Budget Narrative (Justification)*.

All information provided should be displayed as a spreadsheet and should directly correspond to the written description provided in section *X: 7. Budget Narrative (Justification)*.

A page limit does not apply to this section.

*5. Project Abstract.* The *Project Abstract* must include: (1) The title of the project, (2) the Priority or Priorities for which funding is requested, (3a) the name(s) of the agency responsible for the direction and implementation of the grant, (3b) the names of collaborating States if the State proposes to participate in a multi-State collaboration, (4) a short description of the project, including goals and major activities, and (5) the expected outcomes of the project. The *Project Abstract* is limited to 1 page.

*6. Project Narrative.* This section provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the application. The narrative should describe the State's current SLDS and how the applicant proposes to use data from the SLDS to inform and improve programs and policies with respect to each Priority for which funding is requested as described in section *V*. As applicable, the applicant should address how the State either meets or proposes to make progress toward incorporating each of the capabilities and requirements outlined in section *IV. Statewide Longitudinal Data System Requirements*. The project narrative should also describe how applicant plans to implement the project and sustain the outcomes of the project beyond the end of the grant.

The narrative should be set out in five sections – (a) through (e) as described here – to facilitate reviewers' application of the five review criteria described in section *XII. Review Criteria*.

(a) Need for Project

Briefly summarize the current status of the SLDS and how these capabilities and key elements will support the State's education improvement efforts, goals, and accountability system. Briefly describe the current capacity in the State to use data in the SLDS to support improvement efforts and the unmet needs that will be addressed through the grant. Any training or technical assistance needs that will be addressed through the grant should also be described here.

In summarizing the current status of the State's system, refer to the Requirements outlined in section *IV. Statewide Longitudinal Data System Requirements*. Identify each requirement and indicate whether work on each is a) completed, b) currently in progress, or c) has not begun. With regard to the Requirements for each of the Priorities for which funding is requested, specify whether any current resources (especially grants from the Institute) are being used for design or development of the element. Display this information in chart format and attach as *Appendix B*.

(b) Project Outcomes

For each Priority that the applicant is proposing to address, describe proposed outcomes (such as analyses, tools, and research and evaluation) that will be supported through this grant. For each of these outcomes, include explanatory discussion of how the applicant will accomplish the goals (e.g., practical matters such as stakeholder involvement, collaboration with other agencies in the State, technical and organizational challenges to be overcome, or other relevant information). A proposed outcome should represent completion or substantial progress toward completion of the requirement.

Outcomes must be expressed as products (example: develop web portal), features (example: form P-20 governance structure), or benchmarks (example: integration and analysis of school-level finance data) that can be measured at the end of the grant period.

If the State proposes to participate in a multi-State collaboration, clearly identify the extent to which CEDS will be employed to facilitate the collaboration.

(c) Timeline for Project Outcomes

Briefly describe how the outcomes of the project will be achieved. The applicant may determine the format for the timeline, but the timeline must include all proposed outcomes for the project, a set of supporting events or tasks for each of the proposed outcomes, the party or parties responsible for the events or tasks, and estimated dates (month can be used) for both initiation and completion of each task.

If applicable, describe how activities supported by a grant funded by this competition will be coordinated with activities supported by an existing grant, including a State Workforce Data Quality Initiative or other grants administered by the US Department,<sup>2</sup> if applicable. In particular, please make certain to address plans for avoiding duplication.

(d) Project Management and Governance Plan

Indicate where the project will be located within the organizational structure of the State educational agency and other appropriate state agencies and identify the entities responsible for approval and oversight of project activities. Describe the management protocol that will be exercised in order to achieve the goals of the proposed project on time and within budget. In describing this protocol and the related control activities, refer to the timeline and activities described above.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Workforce Data Quality Initiative, see <http://www.doleta.gov/performance/workforcedatagrants09.cfm>



Briefly describe the governance structure for the proposed project. Identify the organizational units that will have authority regarding the project, that will be responsible for the project's operation, and that will be responsible for the subsequent operation of the statewide data system. Identify any units or agencies that will work as partners in the project, and describe how the project proposes to include other relevant State and local stakeholders. Describe how such partnerships or other working agreements will be coordinated and funded. Describe partnerships that will support implementation activities (i.e., training and technical assistance for users) and how those will be funded. Specify how the input of all intended users of the system (e.g., educators, ECE leaders, State policymakers, etc.) will be obtained and utilized.

Include as *Appendix C* letters of support or other documentation, such as MOUs or MOAs that are evidence of the anticipated participation and coordination by all agencies or institutions that will be partners in the project (e.g., letters of support from postsecondary institution leaders, the Governor, the chief State school officer, etc.), as well as copies of relevant executive orders or legislation that describe the authority or relationships among the partners relative to this type of work.

If a multi-State collaboration is proposed, explain how it will be managed and what steps the State will take to mitigate risk and ensure that the project achieves its intended outcomes. Also identify any legal or regulatory issues that may prevent there being a successful cross-State collaboration, or provide agreements or laws that demonstrate that the States have agreed that the collaborate and data sharing may proceed. Please describe to what degree CEDS may be employed to facilitate the multi-State collaboration.

(e) Staffing

Discuss how the project will be staffed and managed. Describe the specific roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of the individuals involved with the project; this information should complement the information provided in *(d) Project Management and Governance Plan*. This section can refer to the résumés of key personnel included in *Appendix D*, to demonstrate that the proposed staff has needed qualifications, but the section should also provide specific information to describe how the key personnel are qualified to manage and implement the proposed activities.

The *Project Narrative* is limited, with one exception, to the equivalent of 40 pages, where a "page" is 8.5 inches x 11 inches, on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. States that propose participation in a multi-State collaboration are permitted an extra 5 pages which should include a description of the joint activities and functioning of the collaboration. All text in the *Project Narrative* must be single-spaced and at least 12 point font to ensure that reviewers can easily read the applications.

Use only black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. The application must contain only material that reproduces well when photocopied in black and white. Color graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts are discouraged for this reason.

*7. The Budget Narrative (Justification).* This justification narrative should correspond to the itemized breakdown of Federal and non-Federal project costs by project year that applicants are asked to provide in a spreadsheet format. See above, *4. Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED 524) – Section C.*

The budget justification should be organized around the specific outcomes listed in *6. b) Project Outcomes*. A projected cost should be shown for each outcome. If, for example, an applicant proposes six outcomes for funding, each outcome must include an estimated total cost and budget justification. In this example, the total cost for these six outcomes must equal the total requested amount for this application in *4. Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs (ED 524) – Section A*. If staffing or equipment will be utilized to support multiple project outcomes, the applicant should either a) divide the costs of the resource among the relevant outcomes, or b) assign the total cost of the resource to one outcome but provide explanation of how that resource will also be utilized to support other outcomes.

The *Budget Narrative* must provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project:

- For each person listed in the Personnel category, include the time commitments, including an indication of the percentage of FTE by project year and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel.
- For consultants include justification for the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs.
- For applications that include contracts for work, include justifications for each contract for each project year and the details of the contract costs. It is understood that some level of detail may not be provided due to overall timing of the process (i.e. contracts cannot be articulated unless grants have been awarded).
- Justifications for the itemized costs for equipment purchases, supplies, travel, and other related project costs should also be provided.
- Brief descriptions of any other expenses itemized by category (Personnel, Fringe, etc.) and unit cost.

A page limit does not apply to this section.

*8. Appendix A – Optional Attachments.* In *Appendix A* of the proposal, applicants should include any figures, charts, tables, or images that supplement section *XI. 6. Project*

*Narrative* (example: illustration of current system, or planned system or system component). *Appendix A* is limited to 15 pages.

9. *Appendix B – Current Status of State’s Longitudinal Data System.* The chart described in section *X. 6. Project Narrative* should be provided. The chart should include three columns that:

- 1) identify each of Requirements listed for your selected Priority Funding Area that are set out in section *IV. Statewide, Longitudinal Data System Requirements*;
- 2) identify the current status of each requirement as either a) completed, b) currently in progress, or c) has not begun; and
- 3) describe the current status of each requirement.

*Appendix B* is limited to 6 pages.

10. *Appendix C – Evidence of Coordination and Support.* In this appendix, applicants should provide letters of support or other documentation that are evidence of the anticipated participation and coordination by all agencies or institutions that will be partners in the project. Such evidence of support can also include key letters of agreement (e.g., memoranda of understanding) from partners and consultants, as well as copies of relevant executive orders or legislation that describe the authority or relationships among the partners relative to this type of work. Letters of agreement should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources to the project that will be required if the application is funded. A page limit does not apply to this section.

11. *Appendix D –Résumés of Key Personnel.* Abbreviated résumés should be provided for the project director and other key personnel. Each résumé is limited to 3 pages and should include information sufficient to demonstrate that personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their duties. The résumés must adhere to the margin and format requirements described above in the section *XI. 6. Project Narrative*.

12. *Appendix E–Acronym List.* Combined, alphabetical list of all acronyms used in application. A page limit does not apply to this section.

Please note that applicants selected for funding will be required to submit the certifications and assurances noted below before a grant is issued. The electronic application will provide these forms so that applicants can complete and submit them with their applications.

- (a) SF 424B Assurances-Non-Construction Programs
- (b) ED 80-0013 Certification Regarding Lobbying
- (c) SF LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable

## XII. APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND PROCESSING

Applications must be completely received by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date listed in the heading of this request for applications. The Grants.gov system will not accept an application for this competition that finishes transmission after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. Therefore, the Department strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process. Please note that this application process includes submission of a number of attachments. You may be submitting your application at the same time as several other states which may affect how quickly the system accepts all of your documents. You are strongly encouraged to allow adequate time for this part of the process.

Each application that is received on time will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this request for applications.

### XIII. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

All applications that are complete and responsive to this request will be evaluated and rated by peer reviewers. A panel of technical experts who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the design, development, implementation, and utilization of statewide, longitudinal data systems will conduct reviews in accordance with the review criteria stated below.

Each application will be assigned to at least two primary reviewers, who will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. At the full panel meeting, each application will be presented to the panel by the primary reviewers. After discussion of the application's strengths and weaknesses, each panel member will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score.

### XIV. REVIEW CRITERIA

Reviewers will be expected to evaluate the application on the basis of the following criteria:

- (1) Substantial need for the project. The application clearly describes the status of the State's longitudinal data system and demonstrates that the State lacks one or more Priority requirements. It provides a convincing case that the project is necessary to accelerate the State's capacity to use data from its Statewide Longitudinal Data System to make informed decisions regarding education-related policy and practice. Failure to meet the goals outlined for the project would seriously threaten or impede significant State progress toward using state data to drive improved outcomes for students.
- (2) Clear goals and appropriate and measurable outcomes. The goals of the project are clearly articulated and demonstrate a commitment to creating a robust system, which includes data access and usage, that meets the Priority

-specific requirements, and supports transparency, accountability and improvement. Proposed outcomes relate directly and logically to the stated needs with respect to the state's data use goals. The application clearly describes measurable or observable outcomes that will be accomplished by the end of the grant. These outcomes will represent completion or substantial progress toward completion of the requirements described in section *IV*, as well as appropriate attention to promoting effective use of the system described in section *V*. If the required system capabilities cannot be accomplished during the grant, the application provides a compelling explanation and indicates when each of those capabilities will be accomplished.

- (3) High-quality, logical, and feasible activities and timeline. The project activities are reasonable and well designed to achieve project goals. Proposed collaborations will promote efficiency. The timeline clearly describes work that logically will lead to accomplishment of the proposed outcomes. The work appears feasible in terms of the State's current status as described in section *XI. 6 (a) Need for the Project*, and the time and resources available for the project.
- (4) Effective management and governance plan. The management plan for the project demonstrates that there will be sufficient administrative oversight and controls to enable the work to proceed on time, as planned, and within budget. If applicable, the governance plan describes an active partnership between K-12 and early childhood or higher education agencies and with other agencies and institutions responsible for data to be included in the statewide data system, as well as the involvement of appropriate parties to promote use of the system to support reform and accountability. In particular, the plans describe any new staffing required to provide useful data back to school districts, schools, and teachers.
- (5) Personnel and financial resources. The project personnel have the qualifications and time commitment needed to implement the project within the proposed project period. If personnel will be hired or contracted for the project, the qualifications and duties of these new hires or contractors are clearly described. The proposed budget and budget justification are reasonable in terms of the activities to be carried out and commensurate with the proposed outcomes and goals of the project.

#### XV. RECEIPT AND REVIEW SCHEDULE

Application Deadline Date and Time: June 10, 2015, 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time

Earliest Anticipated Start Date: September 15, 2015

#### XVI. AWARD DECISIONS

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

1. Overall merit of the proposal, as determined by the peer review;
2. Responsiveness to the requirements of this Request for Applications;
3. Prior funding under this program and stage of development of State's system;

4. Performance and use of funds under previous Federal awards; and
5. Funding available.

## XVII. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

### A. MANDATORY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Internet using the software and application package provided on the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov/>. Applications must be received (fully uploaded and processed by Grants.gov) no later than 4:30:00 pm Washington, DC time on June 10, 2015. Applications received by Grants.gov after the 4:30:00 pm application deadline will be considered late and will not be sent forward for scientific peer review. Any questions that you may have about electronic submission via Grants.gov should first be addressed to the Grants.gov Contact Center at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov), <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/about/contact-us.html>, or call 1-800-518-4726.

Additional help with submitting an application electronically through the Grants.gov website is available at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>.

Electronic submission is required unless you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement and submit, no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. A description of the Allowable Exceptions to Electronic Submissions is provided at the end of this document.

Please consider submitting your application ahead of the deadline date (the Institute recommends 3 to 4 days in advance of the closing date and time) to avoid running the risk of a late submission that will not be reviewed. The Institute does not accept late applications.

### B. REGISTER ON GRANTS.GOV

To submit an application through Grants.gov, your institution must be registered with Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>).

Grants.gov registration involves many steps including registration in the System for Award Management (SAM- <http://www.sam.gov>; formerly known as the CCR - Central Contractor Registry). Grants.gov recommends that your institution begin the registration process at least 4 weeks prior to the application deadline date.

#### 1. Register Early

Registration involves multiple steps (described below) and takes at least 3 to 5 business days, or as long as 4 weeks, to complete. You must complete all registration steps to allow a successful application submission via Grants.gov. You may begin working on your application while completing the registration process, but you will not be permitted to submit your application until all of the Registration Steps are complete.

## 2. How to Register

- Choose “Organization Applicant” for the type of registration.
- Complete the DUNS OR DUNS+4 Number field.
  - If your organization does not already have a DUNS Number, you can request one online by using the form at the Dun & Bradstreet website <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by phone (866-705-5711).
  - To submit successfully, you must provide the DUNS number on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov. This DUNS number is typically the same number used when your organization registered with the SAM. **If you don’t enter the same DUNS number as the DUNS you registered with, Grants.gov will reject your application.**
- Register with the System for Award Management (SAM) <http://www.sam.gov>.
  - You can learn more about the SAM and the registration process for grant applicants in the SAM user guide: [https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/Quick Guide for Grants Registrations v 1.7.pdf](https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/Quick%20Guide%20for%20Grants%20Registrations%20v%201.7.pdf)
  - For further assistance, please consult the tip sheet that the U.S. Department of Education has prepared for help with the SAM system <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/sam-faqs.html>.
  - Registration with the SAM may take a week to complete, but could take as many as several weeks to complete, depending on the completeness and accuracy of the data entered into the SAM database by an applicant. The SAM registration must be updated annually.
  - Once your SAM registration is active, it will take 24 to 48 hours for the information to be available in Grants.gov. You will only be able to submit your application via Grants.gov once the SAM information is available in Grants.gov.
- Create your Username & Password
  - Complete your AOR profile on Grants.gov and create your username and password. You will need to use your organization’s DUNS Number to complete this step. <https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/OrcRegister>.

- AOR Authorization
  - The E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) at your organization must login to Grants.gov to confirm you as an AOR. Please note that there can be more than one AOR for your organization. In some cases the E-Biz POC is also the AOR for an organization.

## C. SUBMISSION AND SUBMISSION VERIFICATION

### 1. Submit Early.

The Institute strongly recommends that you not wait until the deadline date to submit an application. Grants.gov will put a date/time stamp on the application and then process it after it is fully uploaded. **The time it takes to upload an application will vary depending on a number of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection.** If Grants.gov rejects your application due to errors in the application package, you will need to resubmit successfully before 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date as determined by Grants.gov. As an example, if you begin the submission process at 4:00:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date, and Grants.gov rejects the application at 4:15:00 p.m. Washington, DC time, there may not be enough time for you to locate the error that caused the submission to be rejected, correct it, and then attempt to submit the application again before the 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time deadline. **You are strongly encouraged to begin the submission process at least 3 to 4 days before the deadline date to ensure a successful, on-time submission.**

### 2. Verify Submission is OK

The Institute urges you to verify that Grants.gov and the Institute have received the application on time and that it was validated successfully. To see the date and time that your application was received by Grants.gov, you need to log on to Grants.gov and click on the "Track My Application" link <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html>. For a successful submission, the date/time received should be no later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington DC time on the deadline date, AND the application status should be: (1) Validated (i.e., no errors in submission), (2) Received by Agency (i.e., Grants.gov has transmitted the submission to the U.S. Department of Education), or (3) Agency Tracking Number Assigned (the U.S. Department of Education has assigned a unique PR/Award Number to the application).

Note: If the date/time received is later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date, the application is late. If the application has a status of "Received" it is still awaiting validation by Grants.gov. Once validation is complete, the status will change either to "Validated" or "Rejected with Errors." If the status is "Rejected with Errors," the application has not been received successfully. Grants.gov provides information on reasons why applications may be rejected in its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page.

- Grants.gov FAQ  
<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/general-support/faqs.html>



- Grants.gov Adobe Reader FAQs

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/general-support/faqs/adobe-reader-faqs.html>

You will receive four emails regarding the status of your submission; the first three will come from Grants.gov and the fourth will come from the U.S. Department of Education. Within 2 days of submitting a grant application to Grants.gov, you will receive three emails from Grants.gov:

- The first email message will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system and will provide you with an application tracking number beginning with the word “GRANT”, for example GRANT00234567. You can use this number to track your application on Grants.gov using the “Track My Application” link <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html> before it is transmitted to the U.S. Department of Education.
- The second email message will indicate that the application EITHER has been successfully validated by the Grants.gov system prior to transmission to the U.S. Department of Education OR has been rejected due to errors, in which case it will not be transmitted to the Department.
- The third email message will indicate that the U.S. Department of Education has confirmed retrieval of the application from Grants.gov once it has been validated.

If the second email message indicates that the application, as identified by its unique application tracking number, is valid and the time of receipt was no later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington DC time, then the application is successful and on-time.

Note: You should not rely solely on e-mail to confirm whether an application has been received on-time and validated successfully. The Institute urges you to use the “Track My Application” link on Grants.gov to verify on-time, valid submissions in addition to the confirmation emails. <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html>

Once Grants.gov validates the application and transmits it to the U.S. Department of Education, you will receive an email from the U.S. Department of Education.

- This fourth email message will indicate that the application has been assigned a PR/Award number unique to the application beginning with the letter R, followed by the section of the CFDA number unique to that research competition (e.g., 372A), the fiscal year for the submission (e.g., 15 for fiscal year 2015), and finally four digits unique to the application, for example R372A15XXXX. If the application was received after the closing date/time, this email will also indicate that the application is late and will not be given further consideration.

Note: The Institute strongly recommends that you begin the submission process at least 3 to 4 days in advance of the deadline date to allow for a successful and timely submission.

### **3. Late Applications**

If your application is submitted after 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the application deadline date your application will not be accepted and will not be reviewed. **The Institute does not accept late applications.**

However, if you believe that a technical problem with the Grants.gov system prevented you from being able to submit your application on time, you must contact the Grants.gov Support Desk at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov), <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/about/contact-us.html>, or call 1-800-518-4726. The Grants.gov Support Desk will assign a Case Number (e.g., 1-12345678) that you must keep as a record of the problems. If you wish to petition that the Institute accept your late application due to technical problems with the Grants.gov system you should contact the program officer for the topic designated in your application and provide an explanation of the problem experienced with Grants.gov, along with the Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number. **Your application will be accepted only if it is possible to confirm that a technical problem occurred with the Grants.gov system and that the problem (as documented with the Grants.gov Support Desk) affected your ability to submit the application by 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the application deadline date.** The Institute will contact you approximately 1 month after the submission deadline as to whether the application will be accepted.

### **D. TIPS FOR WORKING WITH GRANTS.GOV**

The Institute strongly encourages you to use the “Check Application for Errors” button at the top of the grant application package to identify errors or missing required information that can prevent an application from being processed and sent forward for review.

Note: You must click the “Save and Submit” button at the top of the application package to upload the application to the Grants.gov website. The “Save and Submit” button will become active only after you have used the “Check Package for Errors” button and then clicked the “Save” button. Once the “Save and Submit” button is clicked, you will need to enter the user name and password that were created upon registration with Grants.gov.

#### **1. Working Offline**

When you download the application package from Grants.gov, you will be working offline and saving data on your computer. You will need to logon to Grants.gov to upload the completed application package and submit the application.

#### **2. Dial-Up Internet Connections**

Using a dial-up connection to upload and submit an application can take significantly longer than using a high-speed connection to the internet (e.g., cable modem/DSL/T1). Although times will vary depending upon the size of the application, it can take a few minutes to a few hours to complete the grant submission using a dial-up connection.

#### **3. Software Requirements**

You will need Adobe software (at least Adobe Reader 10.1.14) to read and complete the application forms for submission through Grants.gov. You can verify if your Adobe software version is compatible with Grants.gov, and if it is not a compatible version, you can download the necessary version of Adobe from Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/recommended-software.html>).

#### 4. Attaching Files

The forms included in the application package provide the means for you to attach Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. **You must attach read-only, non-modifiable PDF files**; any other file attachment will cause your application to be rejected by Grants.gov.

Grants.gov provides help for converting files to a PDF format:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>.

If you include scanned documents as part of a PDF file (e.g., Letters of Agreement in Appendix D), scan them at the lowest resolution to minimize the size of the file and expedite the upload process. PDF files that contain graphics and/or scanned material can greatly increase the size of the file attachments and can result in difficulties opening the files. The average discretionary grant application package totals 1 to 2 MB; therefore, **check the total size of your application package before you attempt to submit it**. Very large application packages can take a long time to upload, putting the application at risk of being received late and therefore not accepted by the Institute. In order to be considered on-time, all files and attachments must be completely received by 4:30:00 p.m. Washington DC time on the date of the application deadline.

PDF files included in the application **must** be the following:

- o **In a read-only, non-modifiable format.**
- o **Individual files** (attachments that contain files within a file, such as PDF Portfolio files, or an interactive or fillable PDF file will not be read).
- o **Not password protected.**
- o **Given a file name that is the following:**
  - o **Unique** - Grants.gov cannot process an application that includes two or more file attachments that have the same name.
  - o **No more than 50 characters.**
  - o **Contains no special characters (e.g., &,-,\*,%/,#), blank spaces, periods, or accent marks in the file name** (you may use an underscore to indicate word separation in file names such as "my\_Attached\_File.pdf").

Please note that if these guidelines are not followed, your application will be rejected by Grants.gov and not forwarded to the U.S. Department of Education.

## XVIII. EXCEPTION TO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

The Department will reject your application if you submit it in paper format unless, as described here, you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement and submit, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. Further information regarding calculation of the date that is two weeks before the application deadline date is provided below.

You may qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement and submit an application in paper format if you are unable to submit the application through the Grants.gov system because: (a) you do not have access to the Internet; or (b) you do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system; and (c) no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date (14 calendar days or, if the fourteenth calendar date before the application deadline date falls on a Federal holiday, the next business day following the Federal holiday), you mail or fax a written statement to the Institute explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevents you from using the Internet to submit the application. If you mail the written statement to the Institute, it must be postmarked no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax the written statement to the Institute, the faxed statement must be received no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date. The written statement should be addressed and mailed or faxed to:

Ellie Pelaez, Office of Administration and Policy  
Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education  
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Room 600E  
Washington, DC 20208  
FAX: (202) 219-1466

If you request and qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement you may submit an application via mail, commercial carrier or hand delivery. To submit an application by mail, mail the original and two copies of the application on or before the deadline date to:

U.S. Department of Education  
Application Control Center  
Attention: CFDA# (84.372A)  
LBJ Basement Level 1  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-4260

You must show one of the following as proof of mailing: (a) a legibly dated U.S. Postal Service Postmark; (b) a legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service; (c) a dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier; or (d) any other proof of mailing acceptable to the U.S. Secretary of Education (a private metered postmark or a mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Services will not be accepted by the Institute). Note that the U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a

dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office. If your application is postmarked after the application deadline date, the Institute will not consider your application. The Application Control Center will mail you a notification of receipt of the grant application. If this notification is not received within 15 business days from the application deadline date, call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

To submit an application by hand, you or your courier must hand deliver the original and two copies of the application by 4:30:00 p.m. (Washington, DC time) on or before the deadline date to:

U.S. Department of Education  
Application Control Center  
Attention: CFDA# (84.372A)  
550 12th Street, S.W.  
Potomac Center Plaza - Room 7039  
Washington, DC 20202 – 4260

The Application Control Center accepts application deliveries daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (Washington, DC time), except Saturdays, Sundays and Federal holidays.

#### XIX. INQUIRIES ADDRESS

Dr. Nancy Sharkey  
Institute of Education Sciences  
National Center for Education Statistics  
1990 K Street, NW, Rm. 9101  
Washington, DC 20006-5651  
Email: Nancy.Sharkey@ed.gov  
Telephone: (202) 502-7494

#### XX. PROGRAM AUTHORITY

20 U.S.C. 9607 et seq., the “Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002,” Title II of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

#### XXI. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 77, 82, 84, 97, 98, and 99. The OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485, and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended in 2 CFR part 3474. In addition, the

regulations in 34 CFR part 75 are applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.101(b), 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.211, 75.217(a)-(c), 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, and 75.230.