Federalism Amok:

Building a Data Infrastructure for K-12 Education in the States

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Disclaimer

This presentation reflects the views of the author and should not be considered the official position of either the College Board or the U.S. Department of Education.

The Plan of the Talk

- The Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant program: a brief overview
- Major issues with SLDSs:
  - Capacity in the states;
  - The need for a common data model;
  - Data quality, validity, fitness for use;
  - Privacy, confidentiality, and federal access.
- An uncertain future
  - Private sector supplements/alternatives

The SLDS Program: A Brief Overview

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Legislative Background

- Authorized in 2002 by the Education Sciences Reform Act and the Educational Technical Assistance Act
- The grants are cooperative agreements—more active federal government involvement than in typical grants
- Administered by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education

Goals of the Program

Enable grantees to design, develop, and implement SLDSs to ***efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, disaggregate, report, and use individual student P-20W (early childhood through workforce) data***.

Long-term goals of the program are to:

1. identify what works to improve instruction;
2. ensure grads are equipped for long-term success;
3. simplify reporting and increase transparency;
4. inform decisionmaking at all levels of education;
5. permit creation and use of accurate, timely P-20W data.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include the **state education agencies** of:

50 States

District of Columbia

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

U.S. Virgin Islands

American Samoa

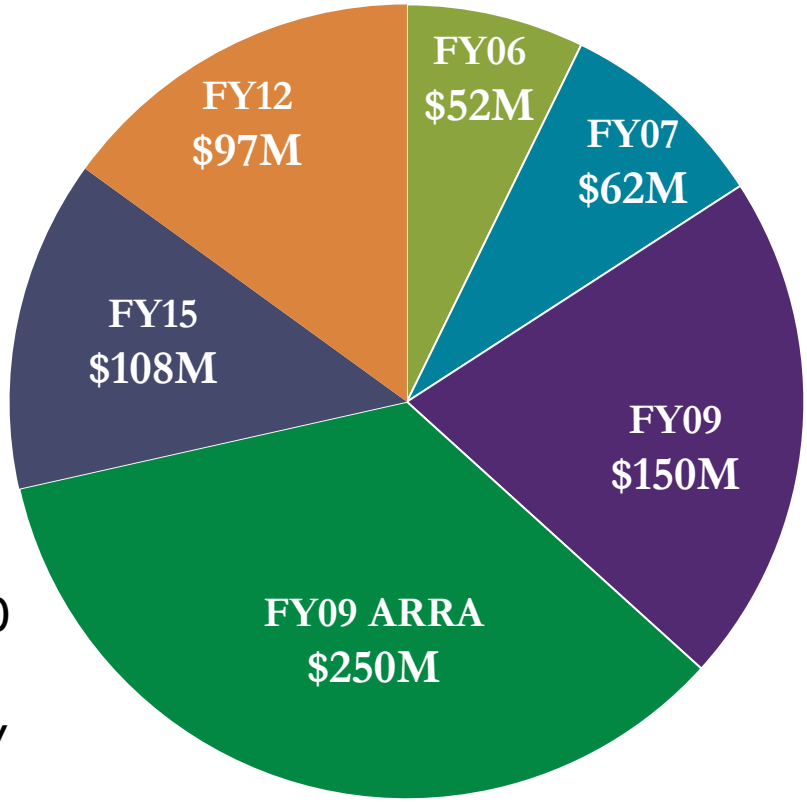
Guam

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Grant Awards Status

To date, 47 states, DC, PR, VI, and AS have been awarded SLDS grants totaling $721M:

- **1st Round (FY06)**: Nov. 2005 – 14 grantees awarded over $52M
- **2nd Round (FY07)**: June 2007 – 13 grantees awarded over $62M
- **3rd Round (FY09)**: April 2009 – 27 grantees awarded over $150M
- **4th Round (FY09 ARRA)**: May 2010 – 20 states awarded $250M under American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA)



- **5th Round (FY12)**: May 2012 – 24 grantees awarded over $97M
- **6th Round (FY15)**: September 2015 – 16 grantees awarded over $108M

Major Issues in the Success of SLDSs

Issue 1: Capacity in the States

- State procurement issues with grant implementation:
  - Much longer than originally planned to get up to speed
  - Political roadblocks to spending and implementation
  - Lack of high quality 3rd party vendor capacity
- New roles for state education agencies as facilitating organization
- Sustainability at the state level after grant period
- USED response: state support teams, best practice resources, personnel exchange network, virtual expertise exchange, topical workgroups, regional meetings, national conferences.

Issue 2: Common Data Standards

- SLDSs (and other education data systems) have highly fragmented governance → many different data models, even given federal reporting requirements
- Common Education Data Standards initiative built on older NCES efforts to standardize to create a voluntary common vocabulary for education data
- Version 1 released in 2010 (well after grant program commenced) and with only about 160 data elements
- Up to Version 6 (draft) with thousands of elements, spanning P-20W
- Still a fragmented and politicized environment

Issue 3: Validity, Reliability, and Fitness for Use

- Administrative data such as those in an SLDS tend to be broad but shallow (large *n*, small *k*) compared to survey data (with assessments).
- Are the data really fit for their intended uses?
  - Avoiding the “drunkard’s search” problem
  - Measurement error cascades into estimates and misclassification (Schochet and Chiang 2010; Corcoran 2010)
  - Coverage errors of many types
  - Little understanding of basic dimensions of data quality in these systems

Issue 4: Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access

- Always been complicated—now it's getting interesting
- Federal legislation and regulations—FERPA, COPPA, PPRA etc.
  - USED created Privacy Technical Assistance Center to help, but states often have little incentive
- Increasing complexity due to patchwork of legislation in the states
- Impetus is to prevent abuses—particularly by for-profit companies—but risk of unintended consequences is high

Looking Ahead

The Future of Education Data

- Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) loosens some requirements around assessment (regulations still pending)
  - Impact on data systems and their utility yet unknown
- Likely reauthorization and re-regulation of FERPA in coming years as well
- Private sector is uniquely interesting player in education data
  - National Student Clearinghouse
  - Private, not-for-profit assessment companies
  - Growing education technology sector