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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[Docket No.: ED-2027-XXX-XXXX]

Request For Information

AGENCY: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Department of Education (ED).

ACTION: Request for Information

SUMMARY: NCES seeks comment on the strategic redesign of its portfolio of studies, including administrative data collections and sample surveys, both cross-sectional and longitudinal.

DATES: We must receive your comments by December 3, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be submitted via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at regulations.gov. However, if you require accommodation or cannot otherwise submit your comments via regulations.gov, please contact the program contact person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT. The Department will not accept comments by email or by fax. To ensure that the Department does not receive duplicate copies, please submit your comments only once. Additionally, please include the Docket ID at the top of your comments.

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to www.regulations.gov to submit your comments electronically. Information on using Regulations.gov, including instructions for accessing agency

documents, submitting comments, and viewing the docket, is available on the site under the "FAQ" tab.

Privacy Note: The Department's policy for comments received from members of the public is to make these submissions available for public viewing in their entirety on the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. Therefore, commenters should be careful to include in their comments only information that they wish to make publicly available. We encourage, but do not require, that each respondent includes their name, title, institution or affiliation, and the name, title, mailing and email addresses, and telephone number of a contact person for the institution or affiliation, if any. IES will not directly respond to comments.

This is a request for information only. This RFI is not a request for proposals (RFP) or a promise to issue an RFP. This RFI does not commit the Department to contract for any supply or service whatsoever. Further, we are not seeking proposals for evaluation and will not accept unsolicited proposals. The Department will not pay for any information or administrative costs that you may incur in responding to this RFI. The documents and information submitted in response to this RFI will not be returned.

Accessible Format: By request to the program contact person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT, individuals with disabilities can obtain this document in an accessible format. The Department will provide the requestor with an accessible format that may include Rich Text Format (RTF) or text format (txt), a thumb drive, an MP3 file, braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc, or another accessible format.

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Portable Document Format (PDF). To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free on the site.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Matthew Soldner, Acting NCES Commissioner. You may email your questions to NCESCommissioner@ed.gov, but as described above, comments must be submitted via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at regulations.gov. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and wish to access telecommunications relay services, please dial 7-1-1.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The mission of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is to: "Provide national leadership in expanding fundamental knowledge and understanding of education from early childhood through postsecondary study, in order to provide parents, educators, students, researchers, policymakers, and the general public with reliable information about, including the condition and progress of education in the United States, including early childhood education and special education; educational practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students; and the effectiveness of Federal and other education programs." (See: 20 U.S.C. § 9511).

IES carries out that mission through four centers, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NCES is specifically responsible for collecting and analyzing education-related statistical data. ESRA requires NCES to "collect, report, analyze, and disseminate statistical data related to education in the United States and in other nations, including—(1) collecting, acquiring, compiling (where appropriate, on a State-by-State basis), and disseminating full and complete statistics (disaggregated by the population characteristics described [below]) on the condition and progress of education, at the preschool, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and adult levels in the United States …" (See: 20 U.S.C. § 9543).

Like its fellow Centers, NCES is seeking to align its priorities more closely with state and local education needs, accelerate the speed at which high-quality data and evidence are produced, and increase the use of those data and evidence by educators and policymakers so that student outcomes can be dramatically improved. This RFI seeks public comment on how it might do each.

The Challenge

The task of comprehensively describing the condition of education is daunting. The statutory remit that Congress has established for NCES, which spans multiple levels of education and topics in both the domestic and international context, is already an ambitious one. Further complicating its work is the breadth of stakeholders that NCES seeks to serve. The Center considers state and federal policymakers, students and families, educators, researchers, business leaders, and the media to be key constituents for its products—and is cognizant that each has its own information needs. As evidenced by the multiple observers who have commented as such, the need for NCES to prioritize what it collects, for whom, and for what purpose is a well-understood concern.

Perhaps less well understood is the role of time in NCES's work. When time *is* considered as a factor in NCES work, it is most often operationalized as "the speed with which data are collected and released." This is neither unsurprising nor wrong: the production of statistics in a timely manner is a core function of a statistical agency because the timeliness of data directly impacts its utility. But time and its passage is more than just a metric by which NCES's operational efficiency can be judged (though it should be that, too).

As time passes, the conditions that surround education change—sometimes profoundly—and stakeholders' information needs can change in turn. NCES has not, to date, adopted a process of strategic foresight designed to systematically envision potential futures and the information needs they demand. Over time, this has the potential to minimize the value of the data NCES

produces because, due to changing conditions, data products may not be maximally responsive to the issue of the day. Honing this skill and leveraging its outcomes as NCES considers its portfolio of work is a critical element in any strategic redesign effort.

Purpose of This RFI

NCES seeks to develop a framework that can guide the strategic redevelopment of its portfolio of work. To do so, NCES is soliciting insights from experts and innovators in state and local education policy and practice, federal statistics, data collection methods, and other interested stakeholders to address questions such as:

1. What data do states and districts, educators, and families currently most need to inform their efforts to improve outcomes for all learners?
2. How can we prepare data collections for future data needs reflecting the potential for changed educational conditions and challenges?
3. What data collection methods are best suited to meet current and evolving information needs?
4. How might data collection and dissemination be optimized for future Super Intelligence or SI (formerly referred to as Artificial Intelligence or AI) applications and uses?
5. What dissemination methods are best suited to meet the information needs of NCES's diverse audiences?
6. Which data collection and dissemination methods are most efficient, optimizing the value of the outputs generated by those activities and the resources needed to execute them?
7. What federal, state, local, and industry partnerships are needed to enable those methods and make the most of the data NCES collects?

Additional Areas of Interest

We also welcome comments on the two issues below.

1. NCES is particularly interested in minimizing burden on respondents, particularly in the context of declining survey response rates. However, NCES is committed to the utility of the data it provides to the public. How might NCES prioritize and streamline its data collections to balance respondent burden and benefit?

2. Historically, NCES has sought to maximize the potential value of its data by developing data assets and products for non-technical audiences. This has included extensive derivation of analytic variables drawing across multiple study data sources, imputation designed to maximize data's analytic utility, and the development of extensive user documentation. These activities necessarily compete with NCES's timeliness goals. How might NCES resolve this tension in a way consistent with its responsibilities as statistical agency serving the public?

Matthew Soldner,

Acting Commissioner,

National Center for Education Statistics.

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