

NEWS RELEASE

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Mississippi receives \$7 million grant to develop education data system

Jackson, Miss. - The Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education has awarded Mississippi a \$7.6 million grant for the design and implementation of a statewide longitudinal data system.

Mississippi was among 20 state education departments selected to receive the grant, which is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

“Once this system is in place, it will be an invaluable tool, not only for education, but also for multiple other applications,” said Governor Haley Barbour. “The state will be able to measure the effectiveness of education. It will provide policymakers with the necessary data to know where tax dollars are getting a good return on their investment, and it will allow us to quickly access information about the educational attainment and availability of a specifically-trained workforce.”

Building a robust longitudinal data system will help Mississippi track students from early childhood through K-12 and postsecondary education and into their careers while protecting student privacy and confidentiality consistent with applicable privacy protection laws.

“We are extremely appreciative to receive these funds as they will help Mississippi develop a statewide system to share data and to create a seamless process, at all levels of education, and into the workforce to track the progress of our students,” State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tom Burnham said.

"Integrating K-12 data with information from our community colleges and universities, and also industries, will tell us what parts of workforce education are working well and where our state needs to improve," said Dr. Eric Clark, Executive Director of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges. "A longitudinal data system will help us track and measure what training produces better jobs and higher pay for our citizens."

In tough economic times, this becomes even more important, Commissioner of Higher Education Dr. Hank Bounds said.



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"Making decisions about how to allocate resources in a way that they will make the most difference depends on our ability to gather and analyze quality data," Dr. Bounds said. "This new data system will help Mississippi's educational systems work better together to serve our students and the state."

State Longitudinal Data Systems grants were authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 and the first grants were awarded in 2005. The 2009 ARRA grantees were selected in a competition based on the merit of the applicants' proposals and the funding available for the program. An independent peer review panel evaluated the proposals on the aspects, including the need for the project, project goals and outcomes, activities and timeline, management and governance, and personnel and financial resources.

"This grant will enable us to extend our longitudinal study in all elements of education in Mississippi," Chairman of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) Larry Otis said. "We look forward to using the information to provide better workforce opportunities for our students."

In total, \$250 million was awarded this year through the SLDS grant competition. States received varying award sizes based on differing needs and requests.

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