

Knowledge Alliance (KA)
House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies (LHHS)
U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
May 26, 2022

Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole, thank you for the opportunity to provide Knowledge Alliance's recommendations for funding to the House LHHS Subcommittee on FY23 appropriations. Knowledge Alliance (KA), a non-partisan, non-profit organization, is comprised of leading education organizations committed since 1971 to the greater use of high-quality and relevant data, research, evaluation and innovation in education policy and practice at all levels. To support continued education research, evaluation and innovation, we urge you to provide increases over FY22 levels in FY23 for existing federal research and development infrastructure. KA proposes a critical investment of: \$815.0 million for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES); \$267.9 million for the Research Development and Dissemination (RD&D) program at IES; \$65.0 million for the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) Program; \$60.0 million for the Comprehensive Centers (CCs); \$514.0 million for the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program.

This request translates to approximately a 10 percent increase for IES, RELs and CCs. We have requested an approximately 30 percent increase for RD&D to account for how, as the hub of general education research, it will be relied heavily upon to support research post-COVID. Finally, KA's EIR request matches the President's FY23 budget, which recognizes the importance of education research innovation and proposes a significant investment in addressing the educator shortage, an issue KA members are actively working on.

Knowledge Alliance believes that programs at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) – such as the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and the Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) program – coupled with the Comprehensive Centers (CCs) and the

Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) are the foundation of the nation's research, dissemination and technical assistance infrastructure. We deeply appreciate the increases in funding provided in Fiscal Year (FY) 22 for these critical programs to better tie evidence to practice in our schools and improve outcomes for students. Moreover, we know these funds will be critical in supporting schools as districts utilize evidence-based practices in their responses to COVID-19 learning loss and the other additional educational challenges posed by this transitional year, especially for student populations who have been historically underserved and were significantly impacted by the pandemic. We encourage Congress to continue to provide increases in each of these programs for FY23 to continue leveraging critical research, technical assistance, evaluation and innovation to help states, districts and schools.

KA priority programs require additional federal resources to address the continuously growing state and local needs for education research and technical assistance, as these programs provide critical support for states, districts and schools. Recently, the National Comprehensive Center established three Communities of Practice (COP) to support SEAs and their partners in three areas: (1) Using ARP funds to implement evidence-based strategies; (2) Implementing school improvement strategies through an equity lens; and (3) Planning for summer/extended learning drawing from evidence-based practices where they exist. With recognition that states and districts can, and should, work together to solve common challenges, the National Comprehensive Center provides a unique space for SEAs and LEAs to learn from each other as they engage around specific problems of practice. In the COP around school improvement, SEA and LEA leaders have already reported how bringing together school leaders, teachers and districts in their community, through an equity lens, is inspiring new, innovative, approaches to help low-performing schools. Clearly, both RELs and CCs have been first in line to provide technical

assistance and evidence-based resources to interested SEAs and LEAs. An increase in funding would allow these programs to expand their work and better meet the ever-growing need for support.

Despite the evident need for education research, dissemination and technical assistance infrastructure, evidence shows that this work remains underfunded. Three recently released [reports](#) by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) noted that IES is currently overburdened and underfunded, preventing efficient grant review cycles, adequate staffing levels and innovation within the agency. In the NASEM report titled “The Future of Education Research at IES,” there was consensus that “Congress should re-examine the IES budget, which does not appear to be on par with that of other scientific funding agencies.” The report notes that education research programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) receive substantially more funds than IES despite working with similar constituents on comparable issues. Moreover, as the hub of all federal education research work, IES is best situated to effectively create and disseminate evidence-based resources to the field. It is evident that KA’s priority programs require increases in FY23 to better meet the needs of states, districts, and schools nationwide.

The below section provides greater detail on the request for each of the programs outlined above. Thank you for your consideration of these important recommendations. We believe that continued strong support for, and investment in, the education research and development infrastructure will help improve outcomes for students and effectively leverage scarce federal resources. Furthermore, it will empower states and local school districts to develop and implement the innovative, evidence-based approaches that work best for the students in their communities.

FY23 Appropriations Asks

The Institute of Education Sciences is a major source of federal funding for education research.

Through its four research centers—the National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER)—IES funds hundreds of grants and contracts annually that support a wide range of research projects.

These centers support projects that provide vital information, often with an equity focus, on students with disabilities, teacher preparation and strategies for improving college and workforce readiness, among other topics. In the past year, IES has successfully pivoted its efforts to consider projects in the larger context of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.

Regional Educational Laboratories, of which there are ten operating under five-year contracts with ED, conduct applied research, develop and disseminate research-based products and provide training to states and school district staff as well as resources for educators, families and caregivers. Since the RELs have a broad set of regional stakeholders that extend beyond the SEA, they are well-attuned to a wider range of student and teacher needs. In addition to forming research partnerships focused on problems of practice in the field that provide relevant and responsive research and findings that address local needs; RELs utilize the resources of the WWC, such as the practice guides, to break down the evidence into digestible chunks for educator use. They have also developed webinars and other resources based on the practice guides to aide in translating research for educators. RELs are continuously developing tools that districts and schools use to improve teaching and learning. In response to the pandemic, RELs have provided [evidence-based resources](#) to help address a host of critical challenges facing states, districts, educators and families as they continue to navigate the impacts of COVID-19.

The Education Innovation and Research program, authorized by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), helps drive substantial and lasting improvements in student achievement by supporting the development and scale-up of successful innovations at the state and local levels. EIR uses a tiered evidence approach that has two important design principles: it provides more funds to programs with higher levels of evidence, and it requires rigorous and independent evaluations so that programs continue to improve, and future competitions can be geared towards more promising areas of investment.

KA supports the Administration's FY23 EIR proposal which recommends a historic, and needed, increase in funding for the program. EIR would allow for the creation of more innovative evidence-based resources to address the myriad of educational challenges facing the nation. Of this historic increase, \$350 million would target projects that identify and scale up evidence-based strategies to elevate and strengthen a teacher workforce hit hard by COVID-19. Given the educator workforce shortage, KA supports the use of these funds to support efforts to stabilize the profession through improved support for educators and expanded professional growth opportunities, including access to leadership opportunities that can lead to increased pay and improved retention for fully certified, experienced, and effective teachers.

Comprehensive Centers provide technical assistance that builds the capacity of SEAs to help districts and schools improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps and increase the quality of instruction. The CCs include 19 Regional Centers that work closely with states in their regions on implementation of critical reforms in elementary and secondary education, as well as one national center providing technical assistance to the regional centers and SEAs. The CCs operate under a Memorandum of Understanding with each SEA in the region, and the SEA sets the scope of work to be conducted through the five-year agreement.