

Agency: Mississippi Department of Education

Agency Contact: John Kraman

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Contractor Name: Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University

Contract Address: 50 Church Street, 4th Floor, Cambridge MA 02138

Service Type: Strategic Data Project Fellowship Program

Date of Contract: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2021

Length of Initial Contract: 2 year

Number of Renewals: 1

Total Value of Contract including Renewals: \$49,000.00

Why is the personal or professional service the only one that can meet the needs of the agency?

The Strategic Data Project convenes a national network of Fellows and state departments of education, school districts, and education organizations to train them in research methods, data management skills, and policy and leadership best practices. The program has demonstrated a strong commitment to providing professional development training to fellows by fostering and transforming the use of data in education to improve student achievement.

Why is the source the only person or entity that can provide the required personal or professional service?

Through various searches of providers of a Data Fellowship Program; the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University was the only provider found which recruits and trains education research and data scientists to work within school systems to transform the use of data to inform decision making, with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.

Why is the amount to be expended for the personal or professional service reasonable?

To enroll an Agency Fellow within the two-year program includes; participation in several Professional Development workshops; access to SDP's resources, online learning modules and webinars; regular phone check-ins, support from a Harvard-affiliated faculty advisor to carry out a transformative data project specific to the partner's strategic priorities, resulting in action-oriented insights to aid practitioners and policymakers in decision-making.

What efforts were made to ensure the best possible price for the services was obtained?

The Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University offers a fixed price for all state departments of education, school districts, and education organizations that wishes to utilize the Strategic Data Project Fellowship Program.

Instructions for filing objections:

If any person or entity objects and proposes that the personal or professional service published is not a sole-source service and that the service can be provided by another person or entity, please notify the agency in writing with a detailed explanation of why the personal or professional service is not a sole-source service. The objection must be submitted to the agency within seven (7) calendar days from the last date published.

The Mississippi Department of Education
Attn: Dr. Carey Wright
C/O Harvard University Sole Source
359 North West Street
Jackson, MS 39201



Center for Education Policy Research

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



STRATEGIC DATA PROJECT

Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University
50 Church Street, 4th Floor
Cambridge, MA 02138

October 23, 2018

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to certify that the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University (CEPR) is the sole source provider of the Strategic Data Project, a program which recruits and trains talented education researchers and data scientists to work within school systems to transform their use of data to inform decision making, with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. Housed at CEPR, SDP convenes a national network of 250 Fellows and 110 state departments of education, school districts, and education organizations to train them in research methods, data management skills, and policy and leadership best practices.

CEPR is a unique partnership among districts, states, foundations, and university-based researchers designed to leverage the overwhelming amount of newly available school-, teacher-, and student-level data to address previously intractable policy questions in education and improve educational outcomes for all students. Now in its 10th year, its mission is to improve the effective use of quality evidence in education. While CEPR oversees a number of research projects in partnership with school systems, what sets it apart from other university research centers is that it endeavors to build capacity within school systems to do their own research and data analysis.

In 2008, CEPR launched SDP and the SDP Fellowship program, which provides a unique entry point for passionate quantitative researchers and data strategists who want to put their skills to work to improve public education. SDP Fellows are placed in school systems and education organizations across the country where they can make a difference.

Over the course of the two-year fellowship, Fellows work with senior education leaders to carry out analytic projects to provide data to inform strategic decisions that will improve opportunities for students. Fellows participate in a tailored curriculum in measurement, analysis, leadership, and education policy delivered by researchers and practitioners. SDP has trained 250 Fellows in the field, with approximately 70 Fellows actively participating per year across roughly 40 -50 school systems and education organizations.

There is no other existing organization at this time which provides the same training and support as SDP, while also offering the talent recruitment, matching, and placement component.

Thank you,

Miriam Greenberg
Director of Education
Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University

Attachment 1
Fellowship Program

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE SDP "AGENCY FELLOWS" PROGRAM

The task of the Agency Fellow is to enhance existing employee's data analysis and decision making skills in support of Client senior leadership. The Agency Fellow's responsibilities will include three areas:

1. **Focus Issue and Related Projects (85%).** For the duration of his/her fellowship, the Fellow will be assigned a focus issue—identified early on by agency leadership in collaboration with the SDP leadership. The focus issue should represent an opportunity for the Fellow to take leadership, develop deep knowledge, and contribute substantially to the agency's needs. The focus issue should also be one that benefits particularly from quantitative analysis.
 - a. Over the course of his/her fellowship, the Fellow will continue to fulfill his/her responsibilities to the Client, as an existing employee. SDP recognizes that the Agency Fellows joins the fellowship already having a full-time job with the Client and that these responsibilities will remain a primary component of the Fellows' role. However, the Client will make every effort to widen the scope of responsibilities of the Agency Fellow such that his/her projects align with the SDP goals.
2. **Professional Development and SDP's National Efforts (10%).** The Fellow will participate in professional development, including six off-site meetings, conference calls, webinars, readings, assignments and presentations. Additionally, the Fellow will participate in a network of education professionals with similar skills and responsibilities. Fellows in one partner agency may draw on the experience and expertise of Fellows in other partner agencies, researchers at non-partner agencies, colleges and universities, and other organizations engaged in education reform. In turn, each Fellow will link its agency, and agency leadership, back to this network. To help build this network, Fellows will contribute reports on the success and challenges of their work. Fellows may also be asked to present on their work during fellowship workshops. These reports and presentations will provide opportunities for other agencies and analysts to learn from and model best practices.
3. **Capstone Reports (5%).** Throughout the two year fellowship, Fellows will work across agencies as members of Capstone Report groups (to complete a final project and present this project during the C11 Fellows graduation. The capstone reports will capture significant contributions each Fellow has made to their respective agencies. Example topics might include: development of early warning indicators, teacher evaluation systems that include measures of student learning, etc. The goals of this report are to (1) demonstrate Fellows' impact on one aspect of the agency, through the use of data and analysis; (2) reflect on the cohort's ability to contribute meaningfully to reform in K-12 education; and (3) build a base of usable, actionable knowledge for the field of data-use in education. SDP expects that the capstone reports will include non-confidential agency specific data, analyses, and descriptions of key projects. SDP and Fellows will adhere to appropriate IRB guidelines to protect human subject information. Capstones will be shared publicly and are intended to be resource guides for future Fellows and the Exchange network.
4. The Agency Fellow will be an employee of the Client and will be managed by and report to:

John Kraman