

Secretary Miguel Cardona
US Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

The undersigned educational, membership, nonprofit, and research organizations urge you to take a small action, through your leadership of the Department of Education (ED or the Department), that would have a significant and positive impact on the operation of the Department's programs and on the entities that compete for and receive grants through those programs, including organizations dedicated to ensuring greater and more equitable opportunities for historically underserved populations.

Our proposed action concerns the [Grants Forecast](#) that appears on the ED website. This is the vehicle the Department has used to inform State and local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, Tribes, and other eligible entities of upcoming grant opportunities. An individual seeking that information on the website will come across a link that reads, "ED grants forecast: competitions opening soon," and, accordingly, people have long gone to that site for updates on competitions that will launch in the near future or later in the fiscal year.

But the individuals who have sought that information through the Forecast have almost always turned away in frustration because it typically provides almost no actual projections on the launch dates for upcoming competitions. As an example, in mid-March of this year the Forecast listed 66 programs under which the Department might hold competitions in fiscal year 2024, but provided current estimates of when the competitions would open for only five of them. For the other 61, the Forecast instead provided links to information on past competitions, labeled a program "TBA," or, in a couple cases, estimated a launch date that had already passed. Thus, interested parties cannot determine whether the Department will hold a competition for a specific program in a given year, much less when such a competition might take place. Except for a handful of small programs, the ED Grants Forecast doesn't forecast anything.

One might ask: with so many important issues before your agency, why is this one important? It is important because the availability of an actual forecast of the Department's planned competitions would result in stronger applications and, thus, better projects funded through the grants, to the benefit of all students served. And please remember that the individuals who prepare grant applications are real people. Many of them attempt to plan their lives around ED grant competitions (such as ensuring that they are not on vacation during the period when a competition is open) but are frustrated in doing so because of the lack of information on when a competition might be launched. ED's failure to provide forecast information is disrespectful of those individuals. This problem is particularly acute when the Department provides only a 30- or 45-day window for submission of very complex and time-consuming applications, as has happened in recent years.

Moreover, this is an issue of major importance to organizations whose focus is educational equity and greater opportunities for all Americans, including children, youth, and adults who are members of historically underserved populations, such as students living in poverty, English learners, children and adults with disabilities, and students of color. Those entities include such

entities as women- and minority-owned nonprofit organizations, Tribal colleges and universities, other minority-serving institutions of higher education, and civil rights organizations. Frequently, these organizations are small and underfunded and have less capacity than others in applying for Federal grants. They are even more dependent than others on receiving timely and reliable information on upcoming competitions.

We note that some years ago the Grants Forecast actually did include at least some information on upcoming competitions, although that information was never comprehensive. In more recent years, the Forecast has provided almost no prospective information at all. Some of our staffers have communicated with ED officials about this issue, and have never received a satisfactory explanation, the most common one being that ED plans and schedules change and that any forecast would never be 100 percent accurate. We agree that any forecast is just that, a forecast, but this does not negate the clear benefits of providing the public with early information on ED's plans.

For these reasons, we ask that the Department do the following:

- At the beginning of each fiscal year (or, ideally, a month or two before year begins), post on the Forecast a complete listing of all the competitions the Department expects to run during the fiscal year, including projected opening dates, closing dates, and award dates. (That third piece of information, the award date, is not currently included in the forecast, but it would be very valuable to prospective applicants because it would provide initial information on when they would need to be available, to commence grant activities, should they win an award.)
- As the year continues, continually update the Forecast as new information becomes available, thereby providing the public with the most current information possible. In particular, update the Forecast after the Congress has passed the annual appropriations act and more definitive information on the year's competitions can be provided.
- Put in place a similar process with respect to the Department's contracting activity, for which there has been a similar failure to provide current information on upcoming actions. We note that [Forecast of ED Contract Opportunities](#) does provide a target award date (although not a projected competition launch date) for each program. And it provides some additional useful information, such as the expected size of the contract and the type of competition that will be conducted. However, the Contracts Forecast is updated only sporadically (typically, only a couple times a year). Further, the Forecast generally does not provide even brief information on the substance of a contract action but instead provides a (frequently uninformative) title, such as "Presto Task Order ESSIN task 9," "HEAL O&M," or "Gargoyle Investigator." As with the Grants Forecast, the Contracts Forecast should be kept up to date throughout the year and, to the extent feasible, it should include better information about the substance of upcoming procurements.

While we know that you have many demands on your plate, we ask that you make this small but important action an immediate priority for your agency. We await your response. Please respond to Dr. Rachel Dinkes, President and CEO, Knowledge Alliance, at rdinkes@knowledgeall.net.

Sincerely,

Knowledge Alliance

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

America Forward

American Psychological Association

American School Counselor Association

CAST

CodeAsia

EDGE Consulting Partners

ETS

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE)

Knowledgeworks

LEARN Coalition

Lehigh University College of Education

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

National Black Justice Coalition

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

New Leaders

Partners for Rural Impact

SRI International

Teach For America

Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (TED)

The Education Trust

Transcend