The Institute of Education Sciences Regional Education Laboratories

Administering Office
National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE)

Authorizing Legislation
ESRA, Part D, Section 174

FY2012 Funding
Annual Appropriation: $ 57,426,000
Total Awarded to date over 60 months: $341.9 million
Number of awards: 10
Average Annual Award: $6.8 million

Purpose and Mission
The Regional Educational Laboratories (RELS) work in partnership with school districts, state departments of education, and others to use data and research to improve academic outcomes for students. Fundamentally, the mission of the RELs is to provide support for a more evidence-reliant education system. All regional educational laboratories (RELS) provide technical assistance through applied research and development of fast response projects and large-scale rigorous studies, primarily to educators and policymakers at the state and local level.

To ensure that REL scientifically based work meets the IES standards for research and evaluation, all REL fast-response project plans, evaluation study plans, and draft and final reports are required to pass a rigorous external peer review process established under NCEE.

FY2012 Contract Winners
The current RELs, launched in 2012, are working in partnership with nearly 70 "research alliances" comprised of education practitioners and policymakers at the district and/or state levels. In collaboration with the RELs, research alliance members identify specific, pressing education challenges in their region. Then they analyze data and conduct research to gain a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and to develop and test strategies for improvement.

The goal of this work is to build capacity to use data and research for improvement at all levels of the system. Research alliances operating in each region are addressing critical issues such as:

- Providing effective early education
- Identifying and retaining effective teachers and principals
- Adopting and implementing rigorous standards and assessments
- Increasing college readiness, access, and completion
- Improving low-achieving schools

According to Sarah Sparks of Education Week, for the latest iteration of the REL five-year contract process, half of the educational lab regions had either no competition or challengers could not meet the competition criteria. In every region in which a challenger made it to the final round of competition, the Institute of Education Sciences tapped the newcomer over the current research group to head the new lab. After a major overhaul of the labs' design, IES hopes to drive deeper improvements through this new crop of REL contracts.

IES Regional Education Laboratories
Annual Appropriation Levels of Five-year Contracts Awarded FY2012

General Services Administration, Contracts & Acquisitions, www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=087c828160a36b255672d01df14b1b2c&tab=core&_cview=1.