

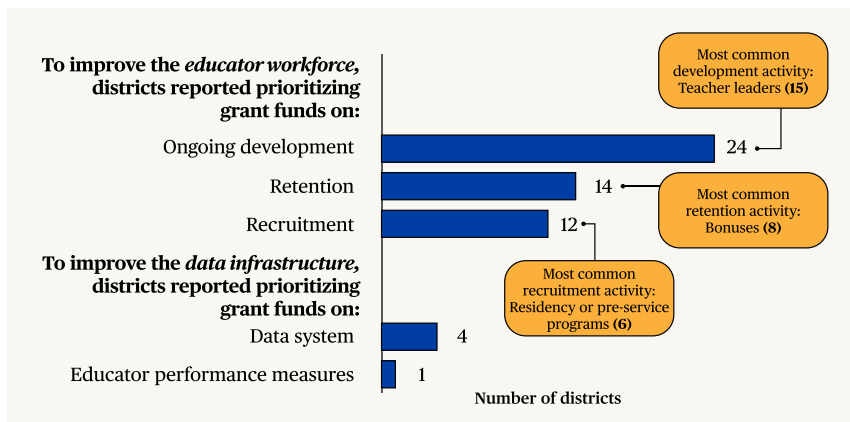
Federal Support for Attracting, Training, and Retaining Educators: How Districts Receiving Teacher and School Leader Grants Use Their Funds

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Ensuring students’ equitable access to talented educators remains a national priority. Congress established the Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive competitive grant program in 2015 to help address this goal, providing financial support to selected school districts to improve their systems for hiring, supporting, and retaining educators, particularly in high-need schools. Grantees can use TSL funds flexibly to improve their basic infrastructure for generating and managing data or on strategies that use these data to improve their educator workforce. This report provides the first comprehensive review of the activities 2017 TSL grantee districts prioritized with their TSL funds and how well these activities aligned with the key aspects of the program. The report is based on interviews conducted near the end of the initial 3-year grant period for the 24 districts that were part of the 2017 TSL cohort and is part of a broader evaluation of TSL required by Congress.

Key Findings

- TSL districts prioritized strategies to improve their educator workforce over strategies to improve their data infrastructure.** This finding may suggest that districts already had an infrastructure that they felt was mostly sufficient to drive decisions and thus used the grant’s flexibility to prioritize other strategies. Among other possible explanations is that districts still planned to prioritize upgrading their infrastructure, but primarily with non-TSL grant funds.



- TSL districts most commonly prioritized performance-based compensation and personalized support.** Districts were required to have both activities in place but were not required to use grant funds to support them. Nevertheless, most reported using grant funds for performance-based compensation such as bonuses or on programs for teacher leaders who provide personalized support and feedback to teachers.
- TSL districts may not have prioritized funding activities that directly addressed educator equity or diversity as much as the program expected.** Although all districts proposed to address equity and diversity, as encouraged by the U.S. Department of Education, most of their reported high-priority activities did not appear to specifically address these goals. Only some indicated that the prioritized activities were to improve educator diversity, and few reported that increasing underserved students’ equitable access to effective educators was central to their high-priority activities.

These findings suggest that in some ways, the TSL grants played out as intended, with districts using the program’s flexibility to prioritize a variety of activities to better attract, train, and retain their educators. However, TSL districts did not appear to follow through as strongly as expected in other ways, particularly on identifying and addressing equity gaps and educator diversity, which points to potential areas of focus for incentives and technical assistance in future grant competitions.