

## STRATEGIC DATA PROJECT

# Transform Your Finance Data Strategy: Partner with Us

For over a decade the Strategic Data Project has worked with education agencies to develop their capacity to use insights from student data to drive their strategy. Yet still too often, **data on finances and resource use remains disconnected from student learning.**

**The Strategic Data Project wants to change that.**

In partnership with the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University and the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University, we're launching the SDP Finance Fellows program to build capacity for organizations to better understand their options for **using their financial resources to improve schooling systems and, ultimately, student outcomes.**

### ABOUT SDP

The Strategic Data Project started in 2008 aimed at building analytic capacity with K12 partners to generate quality evidence that would inform policy and practice. SDP has collaborated with more than 145 school districts, charter management organizations, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations and has trained more than 350 education data leaders. SDP is now launching finance-focused fellowship as well as a new network to support institutions and systems of higher education.



# SDP FINANCE FELLOWS ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Partners are matched with innovative fellows skilled in analysis and committed to making a difference in the lives of students. Our partners can choose from two fellowship pathways:

## Pathway 1: SDP will recruit and match a Finance Fellow for your organization

**Finance Fellows** are recruited by SDP via a competitive nationwide search. They are matched to an SDP partner organization where they serve as full-time, paid, agency employees for two years. Fellows bring impressive credentials in statistics, data management, and more.

## Pathway 2: Enroll one of your own employees as a Finance Fellow

Agency leaders can nominate and enroll current employees, such as **analytic leaders or rising stars within the organization** who, with additional training and attention, can take on leadership roles.



### BO YAN

*Jefferson County Public Schools*

Working for Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky, SDP Fellow Bo Yan wanted to know how districts can improve the efficiency of school budgeting and spending by linking financial, school operations, and student achievement data. Yan created a new financial tool called cycle-based budgeting that tied budget requests to measurable goals and included a timeline for program evaluation. Jefferson County's use of Yan's budgeting model allows the district to track spending on programs and test their alignment with district priorities.



### DAVE HERSH

*Camden City School District*

When officials in Camden City School District faced a 30 percent drop in enrollment and a 20 percent drop in its operating budget, they needed to make tough decisions about program cuts. SDP Fellow Dave Hersh created a new resource-allocation toolkit and trained staff to make priority-minded budget choices based on current and multiple-year budget projections. Dave went on to become Camden's Chief Financial Officer after his fellowship.

## MATCHING YOUR ORGANIZATION TO TALENTED FELLOWS

Organizations that work with SDP to find and select the Finance Fellows benefit from our rigorous selection process, which admits only 12% of applicants.



SDP conducts a nationwide search for strong researchers and analysts with a passion for education.



Candidates who demonstrate promise analyze financial and student data and prepare a memo in response to a challenging analytic problem for a phone case interview.



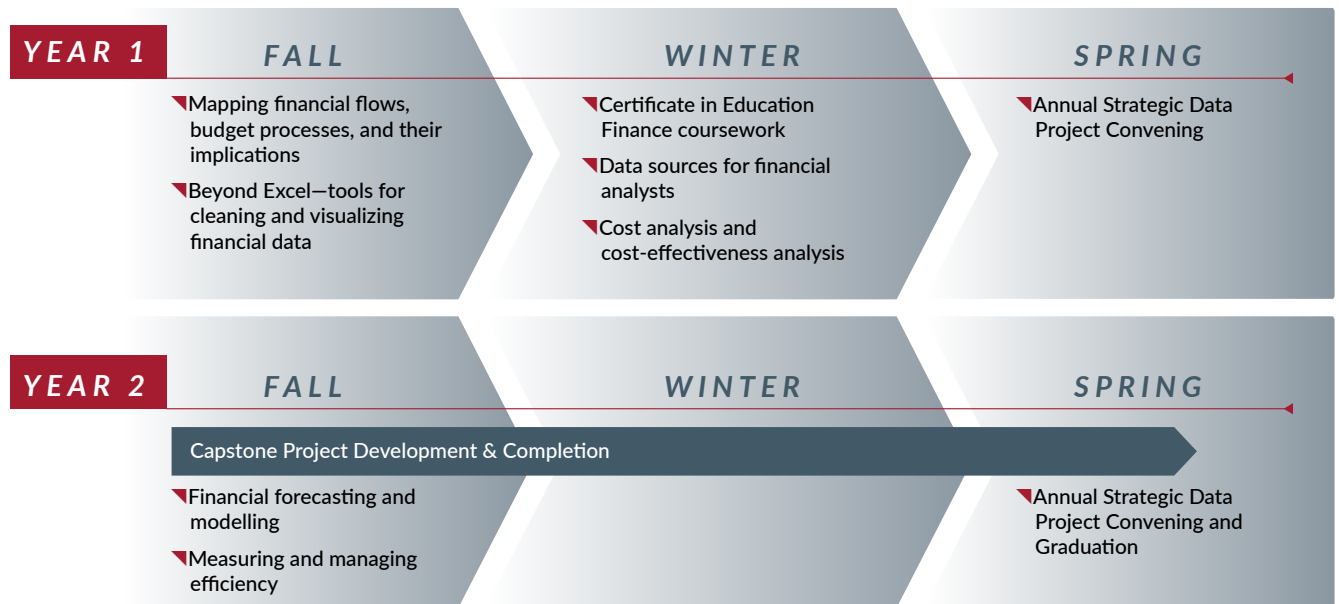
Successful candidates are invited to present findings to a panel of Harvard experts in school finance.



Finalists also participate in a live cost-benefit case challenge that tests their ability to solve problems in real time.

## FELLOWS GROW THEIR SKILLS

Fellows and supervisors participate in multiple, hands-on workshops and events to assess their organization's data use, develop analytic plans, and share key insights about evidence-driven change. Fellows also partake in remote learning between workshops to develop technical skills and deepen their understanding of key education policy topics.



*SDP Finance workshops and events*

## FELLOWS GAIN A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Fellows and supervisors gain a network of professional colleagues who support one another in making evidence-based change in education. Program alumni and faculty lead and mentor new fellows throughout the experience.



### **Marguerite Roza**

*Edunomics Lab, Georgetown University*

Marguerite Roza directs the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University, a research center focused on exploring and modeling education finance policy and practice. She leads the McCourt School of Public Policy's Certificate in Education Finance, which equips participants with practical skills in strategic fiscal management, finance policy analysis, and financial leadership.



### **Jon Fullerton**

*Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR), Harvard University*

CEPR's Executive Director, Jon Fullerton, has extensive experience working with policymakers and executives in designing and implementing organizational change and improvements. He previously served as the Board of Education's director of budget and financial policy for the Los Angeles Unified School District.



### **Brooks Bowden**

*Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania*

A. Brooks Bowden is an assistant professor in the Education Policy Division at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. She also serves as Director of Training for the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She specializes in program evaluation and economic analysis.

# Finance Fellows take on pressing challenges

Possible projects include:

- » **Leveraging new data to improve equity.** Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Federal Government now requires all states to report actual spending at the school level. Fellows can work with states to interpret what this data does (and does not) show about the equitable use of resources within states and districts and possible policy implications.
- » **Understanding “hidden” spending patterns.** Because most district and school budgeting is done on an incremental basis (i.e., last year’s spending is the model for this year’s spending), resources are rarely tightly aligned to strategy. Fellows can identify hidden areas where spending is out of line with priorities and work to develop budgeting processes to overcome this.
- » **Developing new budgeting strategies.** Many larger districts are rethinking their budgeting processes—often striving to put more decisions at the school level and having resources follow the student. Fellows can help districts design and manage the transition to new budgeting systems that are more focused on serving students.

Learn more about how SDP Fellows make an impact at [sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/our-impact](https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/our-impact).

## Become an SDP Partner

SDP partners include more than 200 schools, systems, and education organizations working to transform the use of data in education to improve student achievement. By participating in the SDP Finance Fellows program, partners will grow advanced analytic capacity, develop clear priorities and plans for data use and data systems, build organizational willingness to use data for decision-making, and uncover valuable insights about system performance.

We’re looking for partners interested in using finance data to improve school systems. Ideal partners:

- » are committed to the use of data to inform decisions and policy
- » value the culture of data use
- » have an ambitious data project in mind for an SDP Fellow

### PARTNER INVESTMENT

Whether you choose to host a Finance Fellow who has been recruited and matched to your organization or to enroll one of your own employees, a **partnership fee (\$59,000 for matched fellows; \$49,000 for a nominated employee)** supports the Fellow’s enrollment in the SDP training and CEF programs.

Finance Fellows selected by SDP but hired by your organization earn a **salary between \$70,000–\$90,000 plus benefits.**

**READY TO BECOME A PARTNER? APPLY AT [SDP.CEPR.HARVARD.EDU/APPLY](https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/apply)**