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Open Government Plan

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Open Government Plan

US Department of Education

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Message from Deputy Secretary Miller

April 7, 2010

President Obama is committed to open government, citizen participation and collaboration. On his first day in office, he sent a memo directing all Federal agencies to be transparent. The team at the U.S. Department of Education (ED) took it to heart.

We posted on the Web names of political appointees who would be working at ED. We encouraged ED employees to offer their ideas on how to make our work more effective and efficient. We created unprecedented transparency as we administered the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We posted all the applications we received from states under the Recovery Act's State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, as well as detailed reports on jobs saved.

For Race to the Top, the state education reform program, we provided a detailed description of the process we would use to review and select Race to the Top winners. We posted reviewers' scores and comments, so that everyone could see and learn from reviewers' work.

A year ago, as we began preparing for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, members of the senior staff and the Secretary visited all 50 states on a listening and learning tour to hear Americans' ideas about No Child Left Behind and education reform. We invited people to share their ideas also on the Web.

In March, we issued our draft National Education Technology Plan on the Department's Web site. We invited people to share their comments, videos, and examples of how technology is changing and improving education.

To help spur innovation, our Investing in Innovation team created an innovation portal — a Web site where education innovators can share ideas and collaborate, where funders and educators can point out needs, where people can gather to propose, develop, fund, implement, and improve education solutions in and outside of the classroom.

These are just a few of the ways the Education Department is committed to open government.

We have plans to extend transparency to other areas.

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Our goal is to make transparency, citizen participation, and collaboration with partners “the way we do things” across ED programs and throughout our organization.

Right now, by releasing more data than ever before, we are supplying parents and students with vital information to empower them to make the best decisions about their education. We invite teachers, administrators, local and state officials, parents and students to participate in our decision-making and hold us accountable. When we collaborate with the American people, we increase opportunities to identify novel and imaginative ways to meet the President’s goal that the United States once again will lead the world in college completion by 2020.

We will be shining a light on data and information that show where we are as a nation and what we must do to reach the President’s goal. We will be encouraging states, communities, and schools to do likewise, so that all education stakeholders — educators, parents, students, and citizens — have the information they need to make good decisions for children.

We look forward to hearing from you and from all others who have a stake in education about what we can do to improve this plan.

Anthony W. Miller

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I. Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Education considers Open Government to be a critical component in achieving the Administration's ambitious education goals, which are:

- The U.S. is to become No. 1 in the world in the percentage of the population with a college degree by 2020; and
- The U.S. is to significantly reduce gaps between low-income and minority students and their peers in high school graduation and college access/success by 2020.

Open Government practices became a priority at the Department of Education last year with the confirmation of Secretary Arne Duncan on January 20 and the issuance of the President's Open Government directive, titled *Transparency and Open Government*, on January 21. Together, these events marked a sea change in the Department's approach to transparency, citizen participation, and collaboration. These objectives of Open Government permeated all Department activities during the first year of the Administration and serve as the foundation for this plan. Examples of these key Department activities include the following:

- **Financial Transparency of ED programs funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act or ARRA). As of March 31, 2010, over \$75 billion in ED Recovery Act funds have been awarded. This has placed an enormous responsibility on the Department to ensure not only that we are transparent with our accounting of these funds, but also that the states receiving these grants account accurately and fully to the American people. ([Department of Education Information Related to the Economic Recovery Act of 2009](#)) The Department has responded to this responsibility by greatly improving transparency and accountability regarding state financial management of the Department's funding.

- **Listening and Learning Tour**

In May 2009, Secretary Arne Duncan launched his "Listening and Learning Tour" ([Education Secretary Launches National Discussion on Education Reform](#)) to engage the public directly in discussing education reform with America. This nearly yearlong dialog by the

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Secretary and senior staff in town hall meetings across America has resulted in the comprehensive Blueprint for Reauthorizing the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) ([A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)).

- **Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation Programs**

Both the *Race to the Top* and *Investing in Innovation* (i3) programs are funded under the Recovery Act. These two competitive grant programs support this Administration's belief that the best ideas do not have to come from Washington, but that Washington can help to support the best ideas. *Race to the Top* provides incentives to States to implement large-scale, system-changing reforms that improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase graduation and college enrollment rates. It has demonstrated unprecedented transparency for a grant competition, posting all applications as well as peer reviewer scores and comments for all to see.

The *i3* program will provide support to develop path-breaking new ideas, validate approaches that have demonstrated promise, and scale-up of our nation's most successful and proven education innovations. To further support innovation, the Office of Innovation and Improvement has launched the Open Innovation Portal, a public forum for all who wish to participate in creating opportunities for partnership and local private and public funding. This web portal connects grant applicants, stakeholders, funders and other participants to cultivate innovative ideas related to education.

College.gov

College.gov ([college, education, financial aid info - college.gov](#)) is a community site sponsored by the Department's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA). The site is maintained for students, their families, teachers and counselors. It is a gateway to resources ranging from student aid applications to career counseling and many things in between. This model connects with stakeholders in social communities and will leverage social media capabilities to support both temporary workgroups and permanent social groups, e.g. teachers.

- **Flagship Initiative – ED Data Express**

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Parents need to know the strengths and weakness of the schools in their community. Teachers need to know which instructional methods meet the needs of their students. School administrators and policy makers need to know which programs are most effective in improving outcomes for students. Researchers need access to information to help determine what works and what does not.

ED Data Express is a web site designed to improve the public's ability to access and explore high value State-level data collected by the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE).

- **Strategic Action Plan for Transparency**

The Strategic Action Plan for Transparency reviews the electronic data that the Department of Education publishes, including electronic data at Data.gov, USASpending.gov, and Recovery.gov as well as by EDFacts, FSA, and NCES.

- **Public Participation**

The Department of Education encourages public participation using web-based collaboration tools. We will continue to use web-based tools available at ED.gov and other third-party offerings to engage the public in a discussion on education topics. As part of the development of Department's Open Government plan, the Department used IdeaScale, an online discussion tool, along with other federal agencies, in February and March of 2010 to gather public feedback. During that period, 114 ideas and 200 comments were collected from the public. This feedback was reviewed and taken into consideration in formulating the Department's Open Government plan.

- **Enhancing the Department's Web site**

The Department of Education's web site has deployed a robust web 2.0 platform, making it easier to engage the public using collaboration capabilities. This modular architecture adds to www.ed.gov the capability to offer public commenting on web pages, voting on content items, discussion forums and more. The Department uses a mixture of these tools to communicate with the public.

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- **OpenED**

Internally, ED employees can participate and collaborate online using the OpenED portal which has been operating since 2009. Over 25 percent of employees have logged on to the OpenED Forum, accumulating a total of 8,519 visits to the site since its inception. OpenED has a robust governance structure. All ideas are reviewed by committee and 59 ideas were referred to ED senior leaders for further consideration. Senior leaders have provided responses to 25 ideas to date.

The first year of this Administration has laid a strong foundation for an open Department built solidly on the foundations of transparency, participation, and collaboration. In the coming months, ED will shore up this foundation and address sustainability by (1) institutionalizing Open Government practices with standards and procedures to ensure that these principles are adopted across the agency, and (2) ensuring that the Open Government Plan continues to be strategically aligned with the Agency's mission as our strategic plan evolves and we work with Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With this Open Government Plan, ED will strive to give the American people a transparent, open and collaborative Department that works for *and with* its citizens and customers to improve education in this nation.

Introduction

This Open Government Plan for the Department of Education articulates Secretary Arne Duncan's response to the Office of Management and Budget's Open Government Directive (OMB M-10-06). The Open Government Directive requires Departments and Agencies to document specific steps that will achieve the transparency, participation, and collaboration goals of President Obama and his Administration. More importantly, this plan expresses the values that are held by the Secretary and that permeate this Department concerning the role of transparency and citizen-centered government.

The Department of Education (ED) embraces the principles of increased transparency, participation and collaboration as essential to accomplishing its mission. By focusing on practices and opening the gates to data, we anticipate the creation of new information and knowledge that will help to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The Department of Education has begun and will continue improving transparency in significant ways. Examples include:

Secretary Duncan and senior staff visited all 50 states on a [Listening and Learning Tour](#). During this tour parents, teachers, students, and citizens heard and shared information about No Child Left Behind and new education reform. ED deployed social media tools to enable the public to [join the discussion online](#). This online discussion remains open, and ED will continue to review all feedback and ensure it is available to all reform activities.

ED began and will continue to announce [meetings with stakeholders](#) to increase participation in discussions about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Transcripts and videos of the meetings are posted on the web for those who are unable to attend.

Every session of the annual [Federal Student Aid Conference](#) was videotaped and posted on the web. ED is implementing innovative solutions to capture, store, and distribute extensive video content going forward, increasing opportunities for collaboration with citizens.

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ED launched the [Federal Student Aid Data Center](#) to provide a centralized source for information and data about the operation of federal financial assistance programs.

ED posted spending and activity [reports](#) for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, information about [technical assistance](#), staff contacts with [lobbyists](#), and [more](#).

Names and biographies of [political appointees](#) are an easy three clicks from the ED.gov home page. We will continue this level of easy access to information about key Department leaders.

In February 2009, Secretary Duncan established the OpenED project to help identify cost savings and improvements across the agency. OpenED, is a Department-wide employee idea-capture-and-collaboration project that allows employees to engage in ongoing, productive discussions about ways to enhance the work of the Department. The Forum draws upon the institutional knowledge and creativity of all ED employees to improve programs and Department operations. ED will continue to leverage this tool to increase transparency among internal stakeholders.

II. Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration in Programs

A. *Race to the Top – Game Changing Reforms*

The Race to the Top program, a \$4.35 billion fund created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), is the largest competitive education grant program in U.S. history, warranting unprecedented transparency and participation to ensure the best possible results. The \$4 billion for the Race to the Top Fund is designed to provide incentives to States to implement large-scale, system-changing reforms that improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase graduation and college enrollment rates.

From the beginning, the Department has made it a priority to conduct the historic Race to the Top competition with the utmost transparency, participation, and collaboration. When ED issued the original criteria for the competition, the Department could have waived the public comment period because it was the first year of the competition, but ED decided to take public comment believing that constructive criticism from stakeholders across the country would strengthen the program.

The notice of proposed priorities (NPP), published in July 2009, prompted an outpouring of public comments. Over 1,160 commenters submitted thousands of unique comments, ranging from one paragraph to 67 pages. Parents submitted comments, as did professional associations. Scores of public officials and educators, governors, chief State school officers, teachers, and principals weighed in with suggestions and critiques. Individuals from all 50 States and the District of Columbia, including over 550 individuals and 200 organizations, commented on the notice. The extensive and thoughtful public commentary on the NPP was invaluable in helping the Department revise, improve, and clarify the priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria for the Race to the Top program.

When we published the final application in November 2009, we included – in addition to the criteria – the detailed scoring rubric

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that we would give reviewers to help them judge the criteria.¹ The purpose was to be absolutely transparent with the public and with applicants about how the peer reviewers would judge applications for this historic competition.

In an effort to help States understand the application, we hosted two technical assistance planning workshops during December 2009, in Denver, Colorado and Baltimore, Maryland. Both workshops were open to the public, and the Baltimore workshop included a conference call to facilitate attendance for interested parties who otherwise could not participate. A total of 216 participants attended the two workshops, including participants from 49 States and the District of Columbia. As part of this effort, and to further promote transparency, we posted on our web site the slides and transcripts from the workshops, as well as an evaluation from attendees. This information is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/technical-assistance.html>.

We also formed a cross-functional team that met regularly to respond to the many questions sent to our email inbox or left on the dedicated phone line. Since November 2009, we have received over 700 inquiries. Based on the questions we received from the public, we made frequent updates to our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. .²

When we issued the original notices, we committed to publishing every State's application – together with the final scores each received and the transcript and/or video of each finalist's presentation – on our web site at the conclusion of each Phase of the competition.³ After we received the Phase 1 applications, there was tremendous public interest in the applications, and so we decided to publish them even earlier. We will publish every reviewer's scores and comments (without the reviewers' names) after awards are announced for each Phase. This information is

¹ <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/application.doc> , starting on page 75

² For ease of use, those addenda and the original document have been incorporated into one document. See <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/faq.html>

³ The deadline for Phase 1 of Race to the Top was January 19, 2010, with awards announced March 29, 2010. States that did not receive funding, or that did not apply in the first Phase, could apply for funding in Phase 2, with applications due by June 1, 2010.

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available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/index.html>.

We have also endeavored to conduct the peer review process with as much public transparency as is appropriate given the competitive nature of the grant process. This began when the Secretary issued an [open call for reviewers](#); in response, we received about 1,500 nominations and applications. We have also published our reviewer training materials, the evaluation of the training by reviewers, a detailed description of how the reviewers were selected, a summary of the application review process for the public, and, in advance of publishing the reviewers' names at the conclusion of Phase 1, demographic information about the reviewers. This information is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/application-review.html>.

It is worth noting that the Race to the Top criteria themselves also have a substantial focus on transparency (e.g. the criteria in Section C, Data Systems to Support Instruction, and criterion (D)(4), which rewards States for plans to publicly report data on teacher and principal credentialing programs) and collaboration (e.g. criterion (A)(1), which encourages collaboration between school districts and the State, and criterion (A)(2), which rewards States for achieving broad stakeholder support). The full Race to the Top criteria are available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

Finally, as the Department embarks on an unprecedented level of flexible, collaborative technical assistance with grantees, we will continue to work to not only support our grantees, but to share their lessons nationwide. As part of their grants, States are required to make any work developed with the funds freely available to others. States may do this by posting their work on a web site that we identify (unless the work is otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information).

Forty states and the District of Columbia answered the challenge in Phase I. With their leadership, stakeholders in their states sat down together, looked hard at what is and is not working in

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education, and developed bold and creative reform plans that give us great hope for the future of America.

On March 4, 2010, we announced that 16 applicants advanced as finalists:

Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

On March 29, ED announced that Delaware and Tennessee were the winners in Phase 1 of the Race to the Top competition.

Find the complete applications, scores and reviewers comments for all applicants in their entirety online at [Resources - Race to the Top Fund](#).

B. *Race to the Top Assessment*

The Race to the Top Assessment Program is a \$350 million grant competition designed to fill an urgent need in the nation's educational system. It seeks to provide valid and instructionally useful assessments that provide accurate information about what students know and can do. These assessments will be anchored in standards designed to enable every student to gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college or the workplace by the time he or she graduates from high school.

These grants will support the work of consortia of States that develop and implement common, high-quality assessments aligned with common college- and career-ready K-12 standards. The use of common assessments based on common standards will promote a culture of higher expectations as well as collaboration on best practices. States will use these assessment systems to expand instructional practice and support continuous improvement that meaningfully improves school and educator effectiveness and enhances program impact.

Transparency and Public Input

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To ensure that this program makes the most effective use of funds, the Department held 10 public meetings to accept input from experts and other stakeholders. At these meetings, held between November 2009 and January 2010, 48 invited assessment experts joined representatives from 37 State educational agencies and nearly 1,000 members of the public for over 50 hours of public and expert contribution on critical questions about assessment and assessment design. Additionally, the Department solicited written input and received over 100 comments.

All written input as well as the materials presented at the public input meetings and transcripts are available on the Race to the Top Assessment Program's web site at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html>.

Notice Inviting Applications

As part of the Race to the Top Assessment Application package, the Department will publish the final requirements, definitions, eligibility, and selection criteria. Additionally, this package will include the scoring rubric peer reviewers will use to evaluate all proposals. All requirements, application materials, and guidance will be posted on our web site and accessible to the public.

To assist prospective applicants in preparing an application and to respond to questions, the Department will host a Technical Assistance Meeting on April 22, 2010. For those who cannot attend, a transcript of the meeting will be available on the Race to the Top Assessment program web site at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment>. Announcements of any other technical assistance opportunities for prospective applicants will also be available at this web site.

C. *The Listening and Learning Tour – Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization*

This past year Secretary Duncan and senior staff visited all 50 states on a [Listening and Learning Tour](#) to hear from parents,

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students, and citizens about No Child Left Behind and education reform. Americans were invited to [join the discussion online](#).

They took the lessons they learned from across America and included them in the [Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#).

The blueprint for revising the ESEA asks states to adopt college- and career-ready standards and rewards schools for producing dramatic gains in student achievement. The proposal challenges the nation to embrace educational standards that would put America on a path to global leadership.

The blueprint provides incentives for states to adopt academic standards that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and create accountability systems that measure student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate and succeed in college.

D. Investing in Innovation (i3)

i3 is an innovative grant fund established as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). It provides support to local educational agencies (LEAs), and nonprofit organizations in partnership with (a) one or more LEAs or (b) a consortium of schools.

Applicants must address one of the four areas that are driving the Obama administration's school reform agenda:

- Supporting effective teachers and principals;
- Improving the use of data to accelerate student achievement;
- Complementing the implementation of standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and careers; and
- Turning around persistently low-performing schools.

Unlike other federal grant programs where evidence is a selection criterion, in the i3 program evidence is a formal

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eligibility requirement. The i3 regulations also include specific definitions for what constitutes strong evidence and moderate evidence and will award three types of grants based on these three levels of evidence. Development grants will require a reasonable hypothesis and will be aimed at helping develop fresh ideas, Validation grants will require moderate evidence and will be aimed at validating and spreading promising programs on a State or regional scale, and Scale Up grants will require strong evidence and will be aimed at bringing proven programs to national, regional, or State scale. The Department expects to make Development grants of up to \$5 million each; Validation grants of up to \$30 million each; Scale Up grants of up to \$50 million each. Complete information on the i3 program can be found at the [Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)](#) web site.

In keeping with the innovative nature of this program, i3 has modeled transparency principles throughout its development. The Department published the notice of proposed priorities (NPP) to obtain public comment, hosted webinars following the NPP publication to answer questions, and held pre-application meetings in three cities (Denver, Baltimore, and Atlanta) to further engage the public in the competition. These sessions were also made available via webinar. Approximately 1000 people attended the meetings, with an additional 2000 participants via webinar.

The Department has applied transparency principles to the peer review process. An Open Call was made for peer reviewers, including visible posting on ED.gov, and approximately 1000 applications have been received for peer reviewer positions.

To further support innovation, the Office of Innovation and Improvement has launched the Open Innovation Portal, a public forum for all who wish to participate in creating opportunities for partnership and local private and public funding. This web portal connects grant applicants, stakeholders, funders and other participants to cultivate innovative ideas related to education. Through this portal, the Department hopes that partnerships will develop that will accelerate the development, identification, and broad use of innovative products, practices, and processes to improve education in schools.

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The Open Innovation Portal, available at <http://innovation.ed.gov>, provides a public forum for all who wish to participate in creating opportunities for partnership and local private and public funding – potentially multiplying many times over the federal funding opportunity. The portal allows the posting, commenting and scoring of ideas. It carries additional features such as inclusion of video clips, idea leaderboards and challenges from non-profit partners.

As of March 29, 2010, the Open Innovation Portal has 2851 members. A total of 76 ideas have been submitted, with 88% having received at least one question, answer, or comment. An active network is developing, with 716 network requests, 455 private messages, 254 idea questions, and 74 idea comments. The Department is encouraged by the early success of this innovative collaboration tool.

E. Draft National Education Technology Plan

On March 3, 2010, the Department released a draft of the National Educational Technology Plan: "Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology."

This plan was prepared for the Office of Educational Technology by leading researchers and practitioners. It represents their best ideas about how we can bring forward our schools—making them centers of learning designed to close the gap between the technology-rich and exciting experiences that dominate students' lives outside of school while preparing them for success in today's competitive global marketplace.

In keeping with the Open Government Initiative, ED has published the draft on the Department's Web site at [National Education Technology Plan 2010](#). The public has been invited to review it, comment on it, and to refine it. ED welcomes suggestions about ways to accelerate the development and adoption of tools and resources that merge education and technology as well as incentives to help spark innovation, scaling of the most effective products, and continuous improvement.

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You can find Secretary Duncan's complete remarks at [Using Technology to Transform Schools--Remarks by Secretary Arne Duncan at the Association of American Publishers Annual Meeting](#) .

F. *Financial Transparency of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)*

Historically, the federal government accounts for only 9 percent of total U.S. public education spending annually, with state and local governments providing the remaining 91 percent of funding, and states maintaining primary authority over education spending. As a result of the 2008 recession, however, state and local governments faced severe revenue shortfalls, limiting their ability to fund education at previous levels given balanced-budget restrictions. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) created the one-time \$48.6 billion State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) to address this crisis. Both ARRA and the Department demand accountability and transparency regarding this massive infusion of federal funds into the public education system. For example, the Department posted all SFSF applications and amendments to ensure stakeholders are informed on a State's use of the program funds. The Department intends to build on this experience to create a new level of transparency regarding state education spending on an on-going basis.

First, the Department is shining an unprecedented spotlight on the flow of ARRA funds at both the state and program level. All ARRA agencies are required to submit weekly spending updates by program to Recovery.gov. The Department of Education has gone above and beyond this requirement by aggregating this data into formats more meaningful to education stakeholders. Weekly reports of obligations and outlays for each state by program, and for each program by state, are posted at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/reports.html>

Second, the Department is providing unprecedented transparency into the education funding requirement that states use federal funding to support state and local funding,

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maintaining overall support rather than allowing funds to be shifted elsewhere (Maintenance of Effort or MOE). For SFSF, each State must assure that it will provide, for each of fiscal years (FYs) 2009 through 2011, at least the levels of support for elementary and secondary education and for public institutions of higher education as it provided for FY 2006. If a State is unable to maintain the required levels of support for education, it may apply for and obtain a waiver of the MOE requirements if it is able to demonstrate that it has not reduced the percentage of total State revenues spent on education. Examples of how the MOE compliance effort ensures transparency include:

- All SFSF applications and amendments are posted at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/resources.html>
- Requests for MOE waivers and status of the waiver applications are posted at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/applicant.html>
- All SFSF Guidance and Monitoring Plans are posted at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/applicant.html>

Finally, ARRA provided a new level of transparency into the spending of federal funds at a granular level via the required Section 1512 Quarterly Reporting by recipients regarding ARRA awards, spending, and job creation. These data are compiled and posted by the Recovery, Accountability, and Transparency Board on Recovery.gov. To serve the financial transparency needs of education stakeholders, however, the Department aggregates these data at the state level by program and the program level by state. The posted data include the detailed jobs narratives provided by each state on jobs created with SFSF funds, allowing an unprecedented window into the use of funds by state and by program. The Department's Section 1512 reports are posted at:

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<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/spending/impact2.html>

The Department intends to build on these ARRA practices to enhance the transparency of all of its grant programs at the state level, in conjunction with the upcoming guidance on federal spending information, including sub-award collection.

G. *Federal Student Aid (FSA) College.gov*

College.gov conveys the Department's strong belief that postsecondary education is an achievable goal for anyone, regardless of income, ethnicity, age or gender. This unique Web site motivates students with inspirational stories and information about planning, preparing and paying for college. With students' input and participation, College.gov was created for high school students and their families as a comprehensive online resource with the help and tools students need to get started. College.gov seeks to build an online community that fosters hope, highlights the opportunity of education beyond high school and empowers users with clearly defined resources to reach their college dreams.

The College.gov team has worked to bring transparency, participation and collaboration to this online experience. Before beginning work on the project, a "listening tour" was held to gauge the needs of citizens. Students and families from across the country revealed that they needed answers to the most basic questions on attaining education beyond high school. Students said that wanted to hear from and be inspired by others like them. Through focus groups and usability testing, the target audience's voice is continuously heard on matters of site design, content and features. User feedback is extremely valued. Every user-submitted suggestion is logged, discussed by the team, and then considered during the change management process. A short survey on the site allows the team to monitor satisfaction levels, and these responses always trend favorable. All survey data and site metrics are documented and analyzed each month to identify areas for improvement.

Site features that encourage participation include:

I'm Going Billboards

College.gov allows users to submit their inspirational messages and pictures, or "billboards," which are posted on the homepage to remind them that this site is for students and by students. Users can then email their billboards to friends and family or embed their billboards into their own sites or blogs. All users are able to browse through student-made "I'm going" billboards on the home page, which creates a sense of unity and joint purpose.

Student Videos

College.gov features inspirational videos and profiles of current college students and their parents describing the paths they took to get college, despite the obstacles they faced. This feature demonstrates that the dream of going to college is possible.

Fan Page on Facebook

Building a community on Facebook allows students to share College.gov in an easy way that connects with their peers. The fan base is growing, with 12,940 current fans. They receive biweekly wall posts on new features, relevant content, or interesting links.

Personalized Roadmap

This is an interactive tool for students to create an "I'm going" personalized roadmap which details the steps to take to get to college. These can be printed out as a single page or a wall-sized poster, or saved as the desktop on a user's computer.

Content

Content is organized and presented in a way for students to easily find the answers to their higher education questions: Why Go? What to Do? and How to Pay? Links to valuable online resources, such as College Navigator (school search site), *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) and FAFSA4caster are prevalent throughout the site.

III. Strategic Action Plan for Transparency

While the Department feels that it has made some great strides in transparency over the past year, we recognize that there are continuous improvements we can make that will allow greater insight into internal processes and plans and ensure a constant, open dialogue with our stakeholders. Below are listed several new and ongoing efforts by the Department to ensure we are indeed fulfilling our responsibilities to members of the public to maintain transparency.

A. Flagship Initiative

The President's Goals in Education are:

- for the United States to become number one in the world in the percentage of population with a college degree by 2020; and
- for the United States to significantly reduce gaps in high school graduation and college access and success by 2020.

In order to achieve these goals, accurate, timely and reliable information is needed -both to make changes to drastically improve our education system and measure progress against the President's goals. For example:

- Parents need to know the strengths and weakness of the schools in their community when compared to each other and their neighboring communities.

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- Teachers need to know which instructional methods meet the needs of their students and which interventions are most effective in addressing difficult problems.
- School administrators and policy makers need to know which programs are most effective in improving outcomes for students so programs that work can be scaled up and those that aren't as effective can be improved or discarded.
- Researchers need access to information to help determine what works and what does not, identify areas where more information is needed, and drive innovative ideas to improve outcomes for students.

As technology rapidly transforms and improves the ability to share information and use it to improve outcomes for students, we must ensure individual privacy continues to be protected, people understand what the information means, and data is used appropriately.

A combination of strategic actions will be taken as part of the Transparency in Education Initiative, such as its work on ED Data Express to improve access to high-value Department data and developing and implementing more robust technical assistance and guidance for ensuring privacy is protected.

ED Data Express

ED Data Express is a web site designed to improve the public's ability to access and explore high value State-level data collected by the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). The site is in the final stages of development and focuses mainly on data reported by States on key K-12 grant programs funded by OESE. The site currently includes data from *EDFacts*, Consolidated State Performance Reports (CSPR), State Accountability Workbooks, and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

ED Data Express utilizes a web-enabled database application that allows users to select a particular data element (or set of data elements) and view it in several different ways. The site includes current and previous year data on student performance, demographics, accountability, and some statistical components. Data

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can be viewed in three ways: a state profile page, a data element explorer, and a build-a-table page. The state profile pages include charts and tables with key data for each state. The data element explorer allows users to view a single element across all states, both graphically and in a table. The state table page allows users to build customized tables by selecting specific indicators and specific states. In addition to the data viewing tools, the site includes an "about" page with information about the collections and guidance for appropriate use, a page with definitions of important terms, a frequently asked questions page, and links to other education data resources.

The site is designed to be interactive and to present the data in a clear, easy to use way, with options to download information into Excel or manipulate the data within the web site. Members of the general public, grantees, stakeholder groups, media, and Department of Education personnel, who are interested in K-12 grant-related data, are envisioned as its primary users. As such, the site is designed to accommodate different interests and types of users. For example, someone interested in quick information about a single state can view the state profile page for a general overview. Someone who is interested in information about a particular data element or who wants the flexibility to build a custom query can use the data element explorer or state tables tool. The three tools incorporate graphs and charts to help users visualize the data. Future versions of the site will include additional data visualization tools, such as a mapping feature and enhanced graphing tools. ED Data Express is not intended to meet the needs of individuals, researchers, or organizations looking to do complex analyses; for that reason it provides links to NCES tools, so that users who are interested in using full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States may obtain that data. NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations.

ED Data Express is also designed to interface with social networking applications, such as Facebook and Digg, to better share information in these newly emerging channels. As the public adopts new ways to access and use information, the more the Department can adapt and

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share information via these new channels, the more success we will have in reaching our audiences and addressing their interests.

OESE expects to launch the site internally in early June 2010 and launch the site publically by July 1, 2010 contingent upon final Departmental clearance and approval.

Promoting Transparency

All information contained on ED Data Express is currently publically accessible in State-specific files. However, it is published in various places on the Department's web site, mostly in a PDF format. The information is difficult to find, burdensome to update, and frequently is released with significant delays. The burden of compiling and using the data in this format is very high, since a user must open every State's PDF file and manually consolidate the information into a file that can be used for analysis. A design goal of ED Data Express is to provide an innovation with a clear "relative advantage" over the current process that is simple to use and provides various ways of viewing the data. In ED Data Express, the information is consolidated into one location, and users can quickly select the information they need, view it several different ways, and download it into Excel for further analysis. With the data more readily accessible and easy to explore, the site will facilitate the ability of States and grantees to learn from one another, and help the Department learn how to share information properly with people who want to look at data, but are less familiar with its use than researchers.

Promoting Participation

The increased accessibility and ease of use improves the ability of people to view, consider, and use the State-reported data. It enables the public and grantees to identify States that may be getting better

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results or using different approaches, thus helps to inform their own decision-making and program development.

In addition, the ED Data Express web site includes a user feedback survey that allows OESE to receive ratings, comments, and suggestions from users about the site. The survey tool is flexible, so that OESE can add different questions to encourage continued feedback and dialogue. OESE has discussed the web site at *EDFacts* and NCES conferences, and will continue to use those opportunities to discuss the site and solicit suggestions from attendees. OESE is also planning to meet with the *EDFacts* team's EIMAC Standing Task Force, which is a group of approximately ten SEA representatives (some of which are *EDFacts* coordinators). *EDFacts* uses this task force as a "sounding board" for major new initiatives that they have proposed. OESE believes that this group could be a useful partner, especially in moving forward with the launch of the site and for future enhancements.

Promoting Collaboration

OESE partnered with the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD) *EDFacts* team on this project to more efficiently obtain the relevant data, receive assistance in the design of the site, and to use the *EDFacts* Metadata and Process System (EMAPS) to facilitate the collection and upload of data elements embedded in documents (e.g., Consolidated State Applications). OESE is working closely with NCES staff on the design of the Ed Data Express site, and will utilize their technical expertise to appropriately balance the site simplicity with the need to properly display data and document data sources and limitations. OESE met with the Office of the General Council (OGC) and the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO), the office tasked with administering the Family Education Privacy Rights Act (FERPA) (a law that requires protection of student records) and will continue to work with them to ensure that the site is consistent with statutory and regulatory responsibilities regarding privacy, confidentiality, security, or other restrictions. The process has included collaboration with Office of the Chief Information Officer

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(OCIO) to use Department web servers and meet IT security standards. Finally, OESE has held conversations with other grant-making offices that are interested in making their grant program data more readily accessible.

OESE will gather quantitative information on site usage by tracking numbers of web page hits. Additionally, OESE will use its Grantee Satisfaction Survey to solicit feedback from grantees. The Grantee Satisfaction Survey is an ongoing, government-wide survey that includes a series of benchmarked questions that are comparable across agencies. It also allows agencies to include program specific questions; OESE is taking advantage of this tool to collect input on 11 major grant programs, including several of the Recovery Act grant programs. Questions about ED Data Express will be added to this survey to examine the Department's use of technology and its success in making State-reported data more accessible and easy to explore.

The Department views ED Data Express as a first step rather than a finished product. The experience and lessons learned via OESE's launch of Ed Data Express will offer a new and exciting way of learning how best to publish grant program related data for general audiences. As the site matures and expands, the governance structure for Ed Data Express will also need to evolve. To start that process, at the request of OESE, *EDFacts* created a working group within the Department's Data Governance Board (that includes representatives of the other grant-making offices and key program support offices) to begin conversations about the sustained management and support of ED Data Express.

B. Timely publishing of Electronic Data

1. Data.gov

Data produced by government agencies are often hard to find or are published in proprietary formats of limited utility. As a result, a wealth of information remains

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untapped by the ingenuity and creativity of the American people. Data.gov is a citizen-friendly platform that provides access to Federal datasets. With a searchable data catalog, Data.gov helps the public find, access, and download non-sensitive Government data and tools in a variety of formats.

We are currently moving our datasets to [Data.gov](https://data.gov) and will continue to do so as quickly as practicable.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been the traditional source of high-value⁴ data at the Department of Education.

Recently, the Federal Student Aid Data Center was launched to provide a centralized source for information and data related to the federal financial assistance programs. Many of the high-value datasets are released simultaneously on both the [FSA Data Center](https://fsa.data.gov) and [Data.gov](https://data.gov).

The entire high-value public use data collection of the NCES is currently available online either at [NCES.ed.gov](https://nces.ed.gov) or at Data.gov. All new public use data sets are posted to Data.gov when they are released. At time of this document's publication, we currently have the following available at Data.gov (we have included examples of the types of questions these data sets are intended to answer):

- [Common Core of Data, School District Finance Survey, SY 2006-07, FY 2007](#)

What kinds of distance education courses are provided in the U.S.? What is known about the availability and use of these courses? How they are delivered to students? What policies govern them?

- [FAFSA Application Volume](#)

⁴ High-value information is information that can be used to increase agency accountability and responsiveness; improve public knowledge of the agency and its operations; further the core mission of the agency; create economic opportunity; or respond to need and demand as identified through public consultation.

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How many students took the first step toward applying for college financial assistance by filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)? How many students in each state filled it out? What is the breakdown (number of students who filled it out) by postsecondary institution?

- [Postsecondary Education Quick Information System \(PEQIS\)](#)

This file contains data from a quick-response survey using the Postsecondary Education Quick Information System (PEQIS). It provides national estimates on postsecondary education topics (e.g., distance education, dual-enrollment) among 2-year and 4-year Title IV eligible, degree-granting institutions.

- [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study \(TIMSS\)](#)

How do U.S. students (in 4th and 8th grades) perform in mathematics and science compared to students other countries? What factors may be related to achievement in these subject areas?

Additionally, NCES is in the processes of posting the following datasets to Data.gov:

NCES Data Releases Scheduled from 2/1/2010 to 6/30/2010

- 2008-09 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education School level nonfiscal data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- 2008-09 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education Agency (school district) level nonfiscal data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- 2008-09 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education State level nonfiscal data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- Fiscal Year 2008 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education State Fiscal (National Public Education Finance Survey) data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- 2007-08 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education State level dropout and graduation data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- 2007-08 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education Agency (school district) level dropout and graduation data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]

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- Final revised 2007-08 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education State level nonfiscal data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- Fall 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Data system (IPEDS) Enrollments [Format: csv files]
 - Enrollments by race/ethnicity, gender, attendance status, and level of student
 - Enrollments by age category, gender, attendance status, and level of student
 - Enrollments by residence and migration of first-time freshman
 - Enrollments by total entering class and retention rate
 - Major field of study, race/ethnicity, gender, attendance status, and level of student 2008
 - Total entering class and retention rates
- 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Data system (IPEDS) Graduation Rates for the 2002 Cohort at 4 year institutions and the 2005 cohort at 2 year institutions and less than 2 year institutions [Format: csv files]
 - Graduation rate data for cohort year 2002 (4-year) and cohort year 2005 (2-year) institutions
 - Graduation rate data for cohort year 2005 (less-than-2-year institutions)
- Fiscal Year 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Data system (IPEDS) Financial Statistics [Format csv files]
 - Public institutions - GASB 34/35
 - Public institutions - GASB 34/35 (Component units using FASB)
 - Public institutions - GASB 34/35 (Component units using GASB)
 - Private not-for-profit institutions or Public institutions using FASB
 - Private for-profit institutions
- Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) 2004 cohort of entering students as of 2009
 - Create tables and graphs quickly and efficiently using [Quick Stats](#) [Data tool]
 - Create complex tables and run linear & logistic regressions using [DAS 2.0](#) [Data tool]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS89) Technology-based Distance Education for Public Elementary and Secondary School Students, 2004-05 [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS92) Educational Technology in U.S. Public Schools, Fall 2008 [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS93) Educational Technology in Public School Districts, Fall 2008 [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS 95) Teachers' Use of Educational Technology in U.S. Public Schools [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS 96) Alternative Schools and Programs for Students At Risk of Educational Failure, 2007-08 [Format: ASCII flat file]

2. eRulemaking

To facilitate the public's involvement in the Department's rulemaking process, the Department participates in Regulations.gov, an electronic, single, Government-wide

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access point that enables the public to submit comments on different types of federal regulatory documents and to read and respond to comments submitted by other members of the public during the public comment period. Regulations.gov improves the public's access to and participation in rulemaking by providing one central electronic location to search, retrieve, and read all federal regulatory material. Through this site, the public can view a description of regulations currently open for comment, read the full text of these documents and any supporting regulatory documents, and submit comments to the appropriate federal agency. The public uses Regulations.gov to access Department of Education proposed, interim final, and final regulations, as well as a limited number of our other regulatory documents requesting public comment. We anticipate that the Department will expand its use of the system to include an increased number of regulatory documents in the future.

A recent search of Regulations.gov showed that the Department of Education has received and posted more than 6,300 public submissions on 980 notices and 100 rulemakings.

3. IT Dashboard

The IT Dashboard launched in 2009, with a goal of showing the public how federal IT investments are performing. At this point, the information in the Dashboard provides a portion of the information necessary to support decisions regarding the Department's IT portfolio. As the amount of information in the Dashboard grows, we foresee a time when results of public review will be one of the evaluation criteria used for decisions regarding how we spend IT dollars.

Internally, the visual presentation of information in the Dashboard is valuable as a tool to allow senior executives in the Department to quickly recognize key characteristics of the overall portfolio. As additional views are developed,

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we can have effective discussions about the impact and results of investment decisions.

We have added steps in our operational IT management processes to ensure the Dashboard is populated with current information. Going forward we will seek ways to incorporate comments, suggestions, risks and issues received from the public into our governance and capital planning processes.

We will respond timely, thoroughly and transparently to any feedback received through the IT Dashboard. As appropriate, we will modify our agency processes to address weaknesses that may be identified. We will route specific suggestions for improvement or ideas that affect the portfolio through our Enterprise Architecture processes.

OMB is currently using the IT Dashboard as a way for federal agencies to submit their IT investment data. Agencies will update their IT investment data monthly and submit their complete data for every budget year, beginning with 2011. OMB plans to expand the amount of data and extend the analytical capabilities of the IT Dashboard over time.

The IT Dashboard is available at USAspending.gov.

**4. Recovery.gov
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) requires an unprecedented level of transparency into government spending. In particular it mandates:

- The creation of “a web site on the Internet to be named Recovery.gov, to foster greater accountability and transparency in the use of funds made available in this Act.” Recovery.gov is operated by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board,

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which was also created by the Recovery Act.
<http://www.recovery.gov>

- The creation of an agency-specific Recovery webpage located within the Agency site and identified on the home page.
<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/>
- Weekly reporting by Agencies on obligations, outlays, and activities
- Quarterly reporting by Recipients on awards, spending, jobs impact, and project status.

The Department of Education has been an active participant in the development and on-going evolution of these sites and tools since their inception. As a result of these initiatives, education stakeholders can now track on a weekly basis the speed with which the Department is awarding its ARRA funding and the extent to which States are putting this money to work. This provides a new level of accountability for federal and state education spending. At the local level, parents and community members can enter the zip code of their local school district, identify exactly how much ARRA funding has been awarded and spent to date, and scrutinize vendor payments over \$25,000, holding local officials accountable for their decisions.

As the Department gains experience with the new level of transparency provided via Recovery.gov, ED continues to address the issue of presenting its data in a user-friendly format to ensure its use by the widest possible variety of stakeholders. In doing so, ED has gone beyond the requirements of recovery.gov in the following areas:

- Weekly ARRA spending to date is posted on ED.gov/recovery with detailed state and program-level detail. This provides the appropriate level of aggregation to help citizens understand the flow of funds in their state to different programs, and for program advocates to understand state-level

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differences in flow of funds for the program in question.

- Section 1512 award, spending, and jobs reporting data are posted on ed.gov/recovery at the state and program level. This allows citizens to assess their State's progress in using ARRA funds to save or create jobs, and allows policymakers to evaluate the impact of different ED ARRA programs relative to job creation.

This enhanced level of transparency for ARRA programs, and the attention to both the availability and accessibility of the information presented has set a new standard of transparency for the Department. The next step for the Department is to apply these principles to all programs, not just to Recovery Act programs. In particular, FFATA sub-award reporting implementation will be critical to achieving greater transparency into education funding at the local level.

5. **USASpending.gov**

The **Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006** (S. 2590) is an Act of Congress that requires the full disclosure to the public of all entities or organizations receiving federal funds beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2007. The purpose of the Act is to provide the public with information about how their tax dollars are spent in greater detail in order to build public trust in government and credibility in the professionals who use these dollars.

The Act requires a single searchable web site, accessible by the public for free that includes the following information for each federal award:

1. the name of the entity receiving the award;
2. the amount of the award;

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3. information on the award including transaction type, funding agency, etc;
4. the location of the entity receiving the award;
5. a unique identifier of the entity receiving the award.

Federal awards include grants, sub-grants, loans, awards, cooperative agreements and other forms of financial assistance as well as contracts, subcontracts, purchase orders, task orders, and delivery orders. The legislation does not require inclusion of individual transactions below \$25,000 or credit card transactions before October 1, 2008.

The searchable web site USAspending.gov was launched in December 2007, and is maintained by the Office of Management and Budget. The site provides citizens the ability to look at contracts, grants, loans, and other types of spending across many agencies. The data available on USAspending.gov is provided by the Federal Assistance Awards Data System (FAADS) and the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS).

The majority of grant, loan and some procurement data are also submitted by agencies. An updated version of the USAspending.gov Guidance was issued on June 1, 2009; which defines award reporting requirements necessary to comply with both the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act). The updated guidance required federal agencies to report data on their awards in never-before-required timeliness and detail. In June 2009, USAspending.gov began processing agency file submissions twice per month, on the 5th and the 20th, instead of once per month. Data on the web site is generally refreshed in the first and third week of every month.

The latest guidance is available at the following link: [M-09-19, Guidance on Data Submission under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act \(FFATA\)](#).

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6. ED Facts

ED Facts is a U.S. Department of Education initiative to put performance data at the center of policy, management and budget decisions for all K-12 educational programs.

ED Facts centralizes performance data supplied by K-12 state educational agencies (SEAs) with other data assets, such as financial grant information, within the Department to enable better analysis and use in policy development, planning and management. The purpose of *ED Facts* is to:

- Place the use of robust, timely performance data at the core of decision and policymaking in education.
- Reduce state and district data burden and streamline data practices.
- Improve state data capabilities by providing resources and technical assistance.
- Provide data for planning, policy, and management at the federal, state, and local levels.

Until now *ED Facts* has only been available to Department and State analysts. In the interest of transparency the Department plans to make these data publicly available for the first time and will start by moving five datasets to Data.gov this fiscal year:

- 1) Schools in need of improvement since 2004-05
- 2) Districts in need of improvement since 2004-05
- 3) Statewide assessment results in reading since 2003-04
- 4) Statewide assessment results in mathematics since 2003-04
- 5) District level graduation rates reported under ESEA for 2006-07 and 2007-08

7. Federal Student Aid (FSA) Data Center

In September 2009, Federal Student Aid established the FSA Data Center, a centralized, on-line source for FSA programmatic data. The Data Center, available at www.FSADataCenter.ed.gov, compiles information from across the Department in an effort to promote

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transparency and increase self-service opportunities for our customers and stakeholders. The site is intended to estimate customer needs and proactively provide information to them in a useful and easily accessible way.

To that end, in creating the Data Center, we reviewed routine requests received through the press, from the Hill or through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and produced a series of new data reports to respond to the most common requests. For example, we created the Programmatic Volume Reports, which provide users both federal student loan and grant data by school on a quarterly basis. In addition, customers can easily access application, school, lender, guaranty agency, and default data as well as the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (ECASLA) Loan Purchase Program Activity Reports on the Data Center.

As our programs evolve and the needs of our customers change, we will continuously review the data we produce and update the site accordingly. In the months ahead, we plan to begin posting Clery Act reviews, foreign gifts information and FSA contracts. As these data become available, we will register it with the Data.gov Web site.

8. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), one of the principal federal statistical agencies, is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States and other nations. NCES is located within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the scientific arm of the U.S. Department of Education.

The mission of NCES is to collect, analyze, report, and disseminate education information and statistics in a manner that

- meets the highest methodological standards;
- is timely, relevant, and useful to practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and the public;

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- is objective, secular, neutral, and non-ideological; and
- is free of partisan political influence and racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias.

NCES publishes public-use and restricted-use datasets and reports that describe, estimate, forecast, or analyze education statistics and ensure that all users have equitable and timely access to data. NCES statistics are used to track progress and trends, identify problems and opportunities for policy improvement, and manage and monitor programs.

With more than 20 survey programs, NCES covers education topics from birth through adulthood using cross-sectional databases, longitudinal studies, and assessments. In addition, NCES coordinates participation in international assessments, administers quick-response surveys on pressing policy issues, assists state and local education agencies in improving their statistical systems, manages grants to develop statewide longitudinal data systems across the nation, and reviews and reports on education activities in the U.S. and foreign countries.

NCES has a Statistical Standards Program that consults and advises on methodological and statistical aspects involved in the design, collection, and analysis of education data. NCES program staff also provides consultation and advice to other organizations and agencies, and to other offices within the Department of Education as the need arises. This program publishes and updates the NCES Statistical Standards and monitors and administers restricted-use data licenses for Center's data products.

NCES activities include:

- Provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends.
- Report timely, useful, and high-quality data to education policymakers and data users.

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- Publish reports to distribute educational statistics to a wide audience.
- Provide data in the form of data files and web tools available for research and analysis.
- Work with state and local education agencies on issues of data collection, maintenance, and analysis.
- Assures compliance with Section 183 of the Education Sciences Reform Act, (ESRA) which prohibits the release of personally identifiable information by the Department, and includes felony criminal penalties, including imprisonment.

NCES serves:

- Educators and educational organizations
- Federal, state, and local education officials
- Congress
- The news media
- Researchers
- Students
- Parents
- The general public

You can find additional information about NCES at the [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education](#).

C. Participation and Collaboration Communities

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The Department is using a number of technologies to encourage public participation and collaboration. We highlighted college.gov at the beginning of this plan and describe several others below. While this is the future direction of the Department, it is just the beginning. Online communities are already becoming commonplace – a trend we expect to continue and accelerate. Some of these communities will be long term – like college.gov – and others may be special purpose focus groups that come into being to solve a problem and dissolve at the end of their need. If transparency allows visibility then these tools can provide the rich participation and collaboration experiences needed online to support communities?.

1. Public Participation at ED.gov

The Department of Education encourages public participation using web-based collaboration tools. The Department of Education will continue to use web-based tools available at ed.gov and other third-party offerings to engage the public in a discussion on topics related to education.

The Department of Education recently deployed Drupal, an open-source web platform, in part to provide collaboration opportunities. Through its modular architecture, Drupal provides www.ed.gov capabilities such as public commenting on web pages, voting on topics and discussion forums.

In the future, ED will use a mixture of these tools to encourage public feedback on education activities, classroom and administrative best practices, high-value data set releases and other special topics as they arise.

An example of public commenting on ed.gov web pages can be found on the 2010 National Education Technology Plan (<http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010>). The Office of Educational Technology published a draft of this document online and invited the public to comment. The plan describes how information and communication technologies can help transform American education. It provides concrete goals to inform state and local

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educational technology plans, and recommendations to inspire research, development, and innovation. “We are open to your comments,” Secretary Duncan said in a video announcing the plan. “Tell us about how technology has changed your school or classroom.”

Interested parties are able to attach comments specifically on individual pages of the plan. As part of the feature, participants are able to reply online to existing comments, creating a forum for discussion. This targeted feedback is being gathered and analyzed and will be contributory to future drafts of the plan.

The ED.gov blog (<http://www.ed.gov/blog>) is another tool used for gathering topical feedback. The blog features a “Join the Conversation” section that highlights blog posts where public feedback is encouraged. This extends engagement opportunities such as the Department’s “Listening and Learning Tour” events by providing an additional venue for the public to participate in the open discussion.

ED does not produce significant education materials; however, we do maintain a one-stop website designed to make it easy for teachers, parents, students, and citizens to find education materials from ALL federal agencies. The website, FREE, is one of ED’s most popular web offerings because nearly all the 1,600 resources available there are free for re-use. Federal Resources for Educational Excellence is available at [FREE -- http://www.free.ed.gov/](http://www.free.ed.gov/).

2. Encouraging Office Participation at ED.gov

Another reason for choosing Drupal as the ED.gov web platform is that it provides streamlined methods for our offices to publish online content. Shortly after this plan is published, we will provide a new content management system that makes it easier to keep office web pages updated with current information and developments and that includes RSS feeds. The goal is to encourage an open, continuously-updating information hub powered by the offices that make up our Department. This ability

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creates a stronger connection between our employees and the stakeholders that rely on us.

3. OpenEducation.IdeaScale.com

As part of the development of this plan, ED used IdeaScale, along with other federal agencies, in February and March of 2010 to gather public feedback. During that period, over 100 ideas and 200 comments were collected from the public. This feedback was reviewed and taken into consideration for the formation of this plan.

4. Open Innovation Web Portal

The Department's Investing in Innovation (i3) fund supports the development of path-breaking new ideas, the validation of approaches that have demonstrated promise, and the scale-up of our nation's most successful and proven education innovations. The Open Innovation Portal, available at <http://innovation.ed.gov>, provides a public forum for all who wish to participate in creating opportunities for partnership and local private and public funding – potentially multiplying many times over the federal funding opportunity. This web portal connects grant applicants, stakeholders, funders, and other participants to cultivate innovative ideas related to education. The portal allows the posting, commenting and scoring of ideas. It carries additional features such as inclusion of video clips, idea leaderboards and challenges from non-profit partners.

5. Employee Participation through OpenED

OpenED—President Obama pledged to look for budget-cutting ideas “from the bottom up,” saying he would establish a process through which every government worker could submit ideas on how to save money. In February 2009, to heed the President's call, Secretary Duncan established in the Department the OpenED project to help identify cost savings and improvements across the agency.

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OpenED is an established Department-wide employee idea creation and collaboration project created and managed by the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS), for the Office of the Secretary (OS), Chief of Staff. Along with an email account and hard-copy suggestion box, OpenED operates an online forum that provides the opportunity for employees to engage in ongoing, productive discussions about ideas to enhance the work of the Department. The Forum seeks to draw upon the institutional knowledge and creativity of all ED employees to improve programs and Department operations.

This IT application allows all employees access to the system using their network authorization. Once in the system, employees can enter an idea into the Forum and other employees may read or comment on the new idea. All entries are accessible and visible to each employee in the agency. This open discussion typically leads to further development of the idea or results in a better solution surfacing relative to the topic. Employees can vote on ideas in the Forum resulting in the most highly rated idea (based on the greatest number of yes votes) rising to the top of the list. Employees are encouraged to enter into discussions and participate regularly in Forum discussions. OpenED Forum can be accessed from connectED, the Department's Intranet web site.

To date, 1,124 employees (approximately 25 percent of ED employees) have logged into OpenED Forum accumulating a total of 8,519 visits to the site since its inception. Currently, the Forum contains eight topics for discussion that have generated approximately 250 new ideas, producing 195 sublevel discussions about these ideas. One topic alone received 62 new ideas, generating 72 sublevel postings. To date all ideas have been reviewed, 59 ideas were approved to send forward to ED senior leaders for their approval and next steps. Senior leaders provided responses to 25 ideas to date. These responses are posted online in OpenED Forum and on ConnectED.

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Sustainable governance structure:

To sustain and manage all operations of the OpenED Forum, PPSS staff created a partnership between PPSS (OPEPD) and OS and set up a Steering Committee of staff representing both offices. PPSS staff run operations of OpenED Forum and OS staff provide leadership and input on operations.

The Steering Committee established a reading committee for the purpose of reviewing the hundreds of ideas submitted to the Forum.

The Reading Committee:

The OpenED Forum Reading Committee reviews and manages the evaluation process of Forum postings for the purpose of determining what ideas are beneficial that may improve or enhance the work of the Department. The Committee connects with the OpenED Steering Committee throughout the review process to ensure concurrence between both Committees and adherence to the goals of OpenED Forum.

The Reading Committee consists of 7 members with 6 members selected from three different principal offices. Each principal office designates a manager and non-manager staff member to represent their office. This "mixed" membership provides a balance between levels of leadership within the Department. The Reading Committee serves for a period of six months after which a new group of representatives from three other Principal Operating Components (POCs) are designated to serve.

Steering Committee's Role in the Idea Review:

The Steering Committee determines the three POC's that will be asked to designate staff to work as the Reading Committee for a period of six months. The Steering Committee reviews the work of the Reading Committee including its recommendations and POC reviews of ideas considered for implementation. The Steering Committee determines what ideas will be implemented and sends their

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recommendation to the Chief of Staff for approval. For each idea implemented, the Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring that the ED employee who generated the original idea receives recognition by ED leadership.

PPSS staff on the Steering Committee represents ED at the government-wide ideation community run by the Assistant Deputy Chief Technology Officer, Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President. PPSS staff responds to emails and calls from employees across ED related to the OpenED initiative. The Steering Committee coordinates all ED-wide communications for OpenED and advertises regularly to encourage participation.

D. Improving Internal Processes

1. Public Notifications

The Department of Education notifies the public of important events and information updates via its web site and other social media tools. Below is a description of the tools currently in use:

- Electronic newsletters – ED has multiple periodic electronic newsletters that inform parents, teachers, education stakeholders and other members. These electronic newsletters are open to the public via ED’s opt-in policy in which subscribers may stop delivery at any time. EDInfo, ED Review, Education Innovator, IESNews, Research e-News, Thursdays Notes, Touching Base and PreventionED are the currently available newsletters, and ED will continue to create newsletters as new special topics are identified. For more information on ED’s electronic newsletters, please visit: <http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/>.
- ED.gov “Blog” – The ED.gov Blog is a primary tool for the Department of Education to publish and promote up-to-

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date information on agency and secretary events and news headlines. In addition to publishing information, the blog also allows for inclusion of videos, opportunities for public commenting and electronic subscription via Really Simple Syndication (RSS) features found in third-party blog reading software. ED plans on extending its blog tools to other offices within the Department. The main ED.gov blog can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/>.

- Media releases – Frequently throughout the day, the Department of Education releases newsworthy items via its electronic press room. This section of ed.gov features press releases, speeches, media advisories and the Secretary’s weekly schedule. ED’s Press Room is located at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/landing.jhtml> .
- Federal Register – The Department of Education frequently publishes proposed and final regulations, announcements and other documents in the Federal Register database maintained by the Government Printing Office. ED updates its web site to provide a listing of Federal Register notices as well as provides a search capability. ED’s Federal Register page is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/>
- Twitter – Twitter is an online social network tool that sends status updates to subscribers. ED uses Twitter daily to send important updates of Department activities. The main ED Twitter feed is available at <http://twitter.com/usedgov> and others listed at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html>.
- Facebook – Facebook is another online social network tool which ED uses to send updates to subscribers. Facebook is used daily to send important Department and Secretary updates. The main ED Facebook page is <http://www.facebook.com/ED.gov> and others are available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html>.

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- YouTube – YouTube is a video sharing service which ED uses to distribute audio/video clips. ED’s YouTube channel features taped stakeholder meetings, messages from senior officials and other special topic features. The YouTube channel for Education can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/usedgov>.
- FedBizOpps.gov – ED posts synopses of proposed contract actions as well as contract solicitations on [FedBizOpps.gov](http://www.fedbizopps.gov), which is the single point on the Internet where vendors can access information needed to bid on government contracts. Vendors wishing to do business with ED may view synopses and download solicitations that they are interested in bidding on.

2. Records Management for National Archiving

The Records Management and Privacy Division is responsible for developing and implementing strategies and programs designed to ensure compliance with federal information management requirements

In performing its responsibilities, the Division:

- Serves as the Department’s principal authority and representative on records management statutory, regulatory and policy requirements to assure compliance with National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) directives.
- Serves as the Department’s primary liaison with OMB and other agencies on inter-agency privacy safeguard and breach notification initiatives.
- Develops clear and consistent business rules (standards) for records management; administrative safeguards for protecting personally identifiable information; and risk-based information breach notification actions.

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- Provides guidance and instruction to Department staff for the appropriate handling, maintenance, and disposition of records.
- Provides guidance and instruction to Department staff regarding processes and procedures that protect personally identifiable information from improper disclosure, including information retained Privacy Act Systems of Records (SORs) and information safeguarded by the requirements of Section 208 of the E-Government Act of 2002.
- Develops and provides print and web-based training to Department employees and contractors regarding the unit's mission.
- Oversees the implementation and management of Department-wide systems and databases that support the successful and efficient handling of records and privacy safeguards administration.
- Coordinates inter-agency development, review and approval of Computer Matching Agreements (CMAs) in support of the Department's Data Integrity Board.

Information is available online at [Regulatory Information Management Services](#).

3. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Administration

In addition to publicizing the President's FOIA Memorandum and Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines, the Department of Education has taken many steps to ensure a presumption of openness is applied to all decisions involving the FOIA by increasing awareness through training, proactive and discretionary release of records and increasing efficiency.

Increasing Awareness through Training: The Department of Education is developing a FOIA Training Curriculum with modules focused on the various groups of employees and

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their specific responsibility for administering the FOIA, i.e., Program Office FOIA Coordinators, FOIA Public Liaisons, new employees, and managers.

- 1) The "FOIA Overview Module," the first module in the series, will provide basic information about the FOIA such as the FOIA's purpose, guidelines, exemptions, searches, and internal processes. The goal is for the module to be disseminated to new employees upon entry, and to all Department employees, electronically, on an annual basis.
- 2) The development of the modules is in progress and the "FOIA Overview" is expected to roll out before the end of the fiscal year.

Developing Processes for Proactive and Discretionary Releases of Records: The Department of Education has developed processes for proactive and discretionary releases of records. The Department has defined "proactive release" as the release of information in advance of a FOIA request; and defined "discretionary release" as the release of information which legally can be withheld but which the Department has decided, within its discretion, to release.

The Department is identifying types of documents that have been requested in previous years and now proactively releases responsive documents into the public domain via the FOIA e-Reading Room, in advance of receiving a FOIA request. Annually, the Department receives more than 700 requests for contracts, grant applications, and information about federally funded programs to include ARRA related documents. The Department's FOIA Service Center consults with senior agency personnel, including the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, Office of Communication & Outreach, Contracts & Acquisitions Management, Office of General Counsel and relevant subject matter experts to identify material for proactive release and in concert with the Office of the Chief Information Officer to get these

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types of documents published in the FOIA e-Reading Room.

In response to the Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines, the Department, through its two-level review process, works to ensure that a foreseeable harm is linked to any information falling within the scope of a discretionary exemption and if no harm is found—or the Department determines that the information may otherwise be released—the information is discretionarily released.

Implementing a two-level quality review of documents not fully-released: The Department conducts at least a two-level review of documents that are deemed NOT fully releasable. During this second review, special attention is focused on ensuring a foreseeable harm has been established and segregated information is released. The two-level review is believed to significantly decrease the number of administrative appeals.

Populating the FOIA e-Reading Room in a manner to ensure rapid distribution of information: The Department populates the FOIA e-Reading Room with frequently requested documents, proactively released documents, and discretionarily released documents. Additionally, the Department is providing access to these types of documents and others, using hyperlinks, located in the e-Reading Room, to lead requesters directly to program offices' web sites making it easier for the public to locate information.

The Department of Education's FOIA Service Center has taken steps to ensure that the system it uses for responding to requests is effective and efficient. The FOIA Service Center has addressed the key roles played by the broad spectrum of agency personnel who work with FOIA professionals by:

- Reviewing FOIA Policy: After a review of internal and external policies, procedures, and workload, the Department determined its FOIA regulation and agency directive both need updating. The update will

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promulgate streamlined processes to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, provide mandatory requirements for program allocation of resource levels to fulfill the FOIA workload, and establish mandatory participation in training/meetings for FOIA professionals. The regulation is in the final stages of approval, and the FOIA Directive is expected to be issued for Departmental clearance before the end of the fiscal year.

- Evaluating the Agency's FOIA case management workflow system/procedures: The Department currently uses a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) case management and workflow system with many features and benefits. In an effort to ensure that the system for responding to requests is effective and efficient, the Department evaluated its use of various features. The Department found that the use of features, such as the redaction tool and electronic document file cabinet, has transformed the work of FOIA processing from paper, manual labor and needlessly repetitive tasks, to automated processes commanded by menus and icons. The Department system electronically stores, retrieves, redacts, and prints documents for delivery to FOIA requesters. It also keeps track of FOIA processing statistics and fees, and generates reports on the number, type, and disposition of FOIA requests processed. The Department has augmented technology and contractor support to achieve improvements at the processing level.
- Identifying a FOIA IT contact within the FOIA Service Center: In an effort to ensure FOIA professionals have sufficient IT support for the FOIA case management system, a FOIA Public Liaison has been designated as the IT administrator for the case management workflow system. Instead of calling the Department's "Help Desk," for IT support, FOIA Coordinators are able to resolve most electronic FOIA issues through a single point of contact by calling the FOIA Service Center's Hotline number.

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The Department's key FOIA processing metrics, the 2009 FOIA Annual Report, is posted on the Department's FOIA Homepage along with various other FOIA resources at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/foia/foiatoc.html>. The 2009 Annual Report is posted in machine-readable format as required by the Open Government Directive. Additionally, in concert with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Department ensures its FOIA web site is updated with many other user-friendly documents as well as links to each program offices' FOIA e-Reading Rooms.

The Department has a backlog. However, there is a reduction in the total number of backlog cases since the end of FY 2009. Below is a chart that shows the backlog requests and administrative appeals that remain pending at the end of the fiscal year and what is held currently in terms of age:

FY	FOIA Requests (overdue)	Age-FOIA Request (average days)	FOIA Appeals (overdue)	Age-Appeal (average days)
2009	419	58	28	85
2010*	404*	23*	24*	63*

**year to date*

The Department of Education shows a 12 percent increase in the number of requests where records have been released in full when compared with the previous year's Annual Report. In 2009, 720 records were released in full compared to 644 in 2008; 32 percent of requests received were released in full. However, in 2009, 859 records were released in part compared to 1,029 in 2008, which indicates a 17 percent decrease in the number of requests partially released.

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The Department of Education is taking at least three steps to improve timeliness in responding to requests and to administrative appeals by:

Improving FOIA Intake procedures: The Department's FOIA Service Center has created standard operating procedures to ensure, at Intake, that only perfected requests are sent to a program office for search and processing; requests are assigned and electronically sent to the correct program office; and a target date is issued for when the case should be completed. Determinations regarding requests for fee waivers and expedited processing are made and communicated to the requesters by the Intake Team and issues are resolved before the case is assigned to a program office.

Creating access to documents in advance of receiving FOIA requests: The Department's FOIA Service Center assists program offices with populating the FOIA e-Reading Room with frequently requested documents, proactively released documents, and discretionarily released documents. The Department is providing access to these types of documents using hyperlinks, located in the e-Reading Room, to lead requesters directly to program offices' web sites making it easier for the public to locate information.

Increase Awareness of Department's response to FOIA: Monthly, the Department's FOIA Service Center disseminates a Department-wide monthly report of overdue cases. Since many program offices use their own FOIA tracking mechanisms, the dissemination of this report provides an opportunity to ensure the integrity of the data within the case management workflow system. The report highlights the Department's total number of overdue cases, overdue by program office, number of days, average age and median age. Additionally, the FOIA Service Center conducts bi-weekly appeals meetings to ensure new appeals are acknowledged, tracked, and requirements for documentation are forwarded to the Office of General Counsel for review, i.e. documentation of search, justification for withholding, etc.

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The Department of Education is committed to assisting with the new Office of Government Information Services' FOIA mediation efforts.

4. Congressional Requests for Information

The Department of Education's Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs (OLCA) has a wide range of responsibilities, the most important of which is coordinating all Department matters relating to Congress. OLCA has a leadership role in planning, developing, and implementing the Department's legislative goals and strategies, notifying Congressional offices of grant awards and Department initiatives, addressing appropriations and budget matters, and monitoring the status of legislative proposals.

OLCA's organizational structure consists of political leadership that communicates the Administration's position on educational issues, career staff for legislative policy that advises on legislation, and congressional affairs staff that aid in resolving constituent concerns.

OLCA also works with employees throughout the Department to respond to written and oral inquiries from individual members of Congress, prepare for legislative hearings, and schedule and facilitate meetings between members of Congress and ED senior officers.

The inquiries that are received by OLCA are tracked through the Department's correspondence control system. For each issue submitted through a congressional inquiry, it is assigned to the appropriate principal office within the Department for response. Congressional inquiries are typically responded to within three to four weeks depending on the complexity of the inquiry.

Congressional Members can contact the office through OLCA's main telephone line(s) at 202-401-1028 or 202-401-0020. Electronic mail can be submitted to

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olca@ed.gov. Correspondence can also be mailed to 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-3100.

OLCA is in daily contact with members of Congress. This interaction ensures that the initiatives of Congress and the Department are achieved. ([About Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs](#))

IV. ED Roadmap for Incorporating Principles of Openness into Core Agency Missions

Building on the solid foundation put in place during this inaugural year of Open Government, we will not stop here. Our next steps will shore up this foundation and address sustainability by (1) institutionalizing Open Government practices with standards and procedures to ensure that these principles are adopted across the agency, and (2) ensuring that the Open Government Plan continues to be strategically aligned with the Agency's mission as our strategic plan evolves and we work with Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

1. Institutionalize core principles across ED: As the smallest Cabinet-level agency with just 4,100 *full-time equivalent* (FTE) staff, but the fourth largest as measured by funding appropriation, the majority of the Department's resources are appropriately dedicated to the program offices. These program office resources oversee grant programs which means that central support staff resources are limited. For Open Government to fully succeed at ED, the practices developed over the past year must be internalized and institutionalized at the program office level. Over the next year, ED will:
 - a. *Develop guiding standards for grant application transparency that can be applied across programs*. Every grant program is different, but all should be subject to transparency principles.

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ED has set a new standard for end-to-end transparency over the last year. We posted initial and approved applications for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund and School Improvement Fund, peer reviewer comments, as well as the scores for Race to the Top applications. These programs invited state-level participants, so the number of applications is relatively low. Over the next few months, the Department will begin two different but equally high-profile ARRA competitions - the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and the revamped Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). We expect over 3000 applications for the Investing in Innovation Fund and this large number of applications will require the Department to evaluate and use a different approach to achieve transparency on this scale. After gaining experience applying transparency principles to these diverse programs, the Department will develop a consistent set of standards to implement across all grant programs, and communicate best practices to aid in effective execution of those standards. Our timeline is as follows.

- April – develop transparency policy for i3
 - May-June – develop transparency policy for TIF
 - September – publish competition results for both i3 and TIF
 - Oct – Dec 2010 – develop ED guiding standards and procedures for competitive grant transparency, provide examples of Best Practices representing the range of approaches for achieving transparency for different types of grants
- b. *Develop guiding standards for financial transparency that can be applied across programs.* ED has provided significant transparency into the flow of ARRA education grants to States through weekly agency reporting and quarterly recipient reporting. To further deliver transparency into state use of ED

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funding, this level of reporting will be applied to non-ARRA programs on an on-going basis. Over the coming year, ED will develop user-friendly approaches, similar to the current ARRA weekly spending reports aggregated by state and by program, to presenting the State and Program level funding already available on USASpending.gov at a granular level similar. In addition, the implementation of FFATA sub-award reporting will provide ED with a new and more detailed source of transparency into the flow of funds. When this information becomes available, ED will work to aggregate this information in a format meaningful to ED stakeholders, similar to the current quarterly ARRA Section 1512 reports posted on ED.gov. Our timeline is as follows.

- Oct – Dec 2010 Program spending report systems developed and tested
 - Oct – June 2011 FFATA sub-award reporting procedures developed and implemented
 - July 2011 - Dec 2011 FFATA sub-award reports developed and tested
- c. *Develop procedures for updating Web content at the office, initiative, and program level.* ED's current web design and content management workflow are barriers to effective use of the web for many ED offices, initiatives, and programs. These barriers are, in turn, barriers to open government. We aim to lower these barriers through the adoption of a streamlined approach to content management, using Drupal, and more flexible templates for web pages. It will be easier for offices, initiatives, and programs to post web content quickly and display it more flexibly to meet their needs and their stakeholders' needs. As a result, we expect to see more effective use of the web spread throughout our agency. As this system is implemented, we expect to see offices, initiatives, and programs posting news, information about upcoming competitions and workshops, slideshows from technical assistance workshops,

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schedules of upcoming events, and more. They will be able to engage with citizens and stakeholders. To optimize execution of this significant change, ED will take a phased approach, piloting the program in a limited number of offices, then phasing it in gradually, integrating learning with each successive implementation.

Our timeline is as follows.

- May - Aug 2010: Pilot program Drupal transition
- Sep - Dec 2010: Phased transition to offices and initiatives
- May - Jun 2011: Drupal available to all offices and initiatives
- Sep - Dec 2011: Drupal (or alternative) available to all programs

d. *Rationalize program content sources.* ED currently supports both an annual paper published source of program information (the Guide to Education Programs) and real-time, web-based source of program information. This dual system is inefficient and increases the risk of outdated information, threatening transparency. Assuming resources are approved to fund this project, ED will integrate these two programs in 2011.

- July - Sep 2010 Integration funding requested
- Oct - Mar 2011 Integration project underway

a. *Address Regulatory/Statutory Challenges Affecting Open Government:* Data Governance, including security, privacy policy and IT Investment Management, is guided by a complex

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combination of laws, regulations, and directives that affect multiple levels of government, institutions, and organizations. The Department takes these requirements seriously and has mature, operating governance structures that place controls over all technology used to implement these initiatives. We will augment existing governance structures to address new challenges resulting from inconsistencies between the many regulations affecting rule-making and the realities of social networking and 21st century technology. ED will convene a working group including OGC, OCIO and core program offices to work with OMB OIRA to develop a consistent approach to these issues at both the Agency and Federal level.

- July - Sep 2010 Working Group membership and charter defined
- Sep - Dec 2010 Preliminary solutions identified
- Jan - Jun 2011 Final recommendation and implementation

2. Ensure Strategic Alignment: ED is currently at a pivotal point in its history. With unprecedented sources of funding through ARRA we are executing groundbreaking competitions including Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants, Investing in Innovation Fund, and Teacher Incentive Fund. We have proposed significant changes to ESEA, our largest appropriation driving many of our core programs. ED's strategies will be fine-tuned as we gain experience with these new programs, and the final structure of ESEA will have significant implications for our Flagship Initiative. ED recommends that this Open Government Plan be viewed as a living document, continually subject to change as we gain experience with the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration, and as the Agency's core principles evolve with continued strategic planning and ESEA reauthorization.

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- Jul - Sep 2010 Review 2011 S&A budget to ensure consistency with Open Government Plan
- Sep 2010 Review current Open Government Plan to align with final ED Strategic Plan and ESEA reauthorization status
- Oct - Dec 2010 Finalize objectives of Flagship Initiative

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Institutionalize Grant Award Transparency



Institutionalize Financial Transparency



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Simplify Web Content Update Procedures



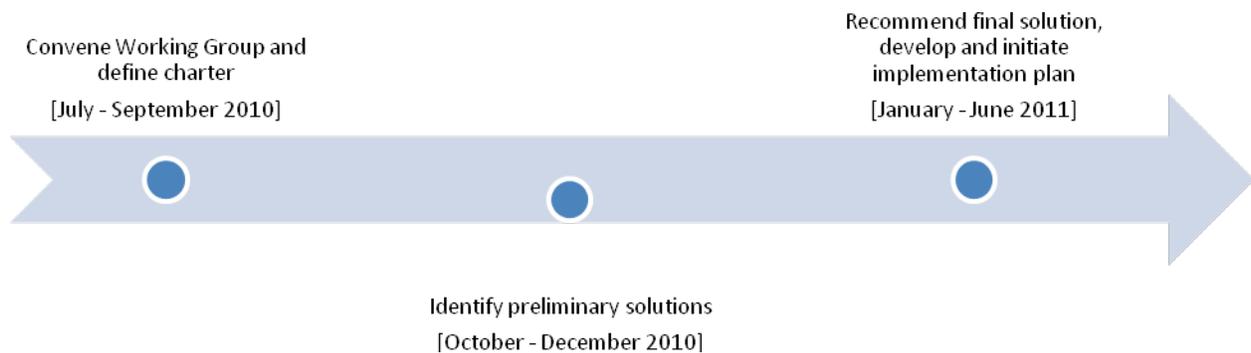
Rationalize Program Content Sources



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Address Data Governance Regulatory / Statutory Issues



Ensure Strategic Alignment



V. CONCLUSION

At the U.S. Department of Education, we view transparency, participation and collaboration as vital to the success of our mission to improve the quality and accessibility of education in the United States. These are goals in and of themselves, inasmuch as we understand clearly that our stakeholders deserve an education agency that serves the people as efficiently, openly, honestly and collaboratively as possible.

In writing this plan, we have addressed the requirements of the President and his staff for developing an Open Government Plan for the Department. While doing this, we have uncovered some challenges to transparency, participation and collaboration. Some of these impediments are of our own doing (*e.g.*, cumbersome data management and technology processes); others are not (*e.g.*, complex legal and regulatory processes that bind and limit the exercise of our legal authorities). These represent challenges to the process of governing, and we at the Department are now (thanks to the process initiated by the Open Government Directive) fully engaged and committed to managing, regulating and governing over, under, around and through the impediments that hinder our ability to serve the nation.

Transparency, participation and collaboration are the keys to unlocking the constraints that hinder our ability to serve citizens better. Applying these values to our business of supporting the education community will enable the Department to institutionalize transparency, participation and collaboration; in effect, we will write these values on the "DNA" of our institutional culture, memory and knowledge. By doing this, we believe we will be laying the groundwork for

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transforming the Department to meet the requirements of the President and the needs of the people.

We look forward to the public's feedback on how to improve our Open Government Plan. The Plan is still developing, and it will be improved significantly by citizens' suggestions. We welcome thoughts on this Plan. To provide comments, please visit our Open Government Web site at (www.ed.gov/open) or send us an email at opengov@ed.gov. We also welcome specific questions and we will do our best to respond as quickly and thoughtfully as possible. Please understand that this Plan is just the first step in bringing transparency, participation and collaboration to the U.S. Department of Education; we look forward to taking additional steps with citizen input and support and we intend to take citizens' comments into account when updating this Plan.