

FY 2012 Goals, Objectives, and Selected Programs

In FY 2012, the Department continued a number of programs and initiatives designed to focus on meeting the President's cradle-to-career priority to support states and districts as they reform their schools and make college more affordable for students. For FY 2012, these priorities focused on:

- granting flexibility to states under ESEA,
- reforming the teaching profession,
- reducing college costs and improving college access,
- achieving equity in education, and
- improving student achievement.

A summary of major Department programs, organized by Strategic Goal, follows.

Goal 1: Postsecondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education

Increase college access, quality, and completion by improving higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults.

Objective 1.1: Access. Close the opportunity gap by improving the affordability of and access to college and workforce training, especially for low-income students, first-generation college students, individuals with disabilities, and other chronically underrepresented populations.

Objective 1.2: Quality. Foster institutional quality, accountability, and transparency to ensure that postsecondary education credentials represent effective preparation for students to excel in a global society and a changing economy.

Objective 1.3: Completion. Increase degree and certificate completion and job placement in high-need and high-skilled areas (especially STEM), particularly among underrepresented and economically disadvantaged populations.

In 2012, the Department continued to support President Obama's three-prong strategy (access, quality, and completion) for achieving the 2020 goal of America once again having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program (Direct Loan)

The [Direct Loan Program](#) lends funds directly to students and parents through participating schools. Created in 1993, this program is funded by borrowings from the U.S. Department of the Treasury, as well as an appropriation for subsidy costs.

The Federal Pell Grant Program (Pell Grant)

The [Pell Grant Program](#) helps ensure financial access to postsecondary education by providing grant aid to low-income and middle-income undergraduate students. Pell Grants vary according to the financial circumstances of students and their families. The maximum Federal Pell Grant award is \$5,550 for the 2012–13 award year (July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013). However, the

amount a student receives will depend on their financial need, cost of attendance, status as a full-time or part-time student, and plans to attend school for a full academic year or less. Students eligible for a Pell Grant will receive the full amount they qualify for—each school participating in the program receives enough funds each year from the Department to pay the Federal Pell Grant amounts for all its eligible students. The amount of any other student aid for which they might qualify does not affect the amount of the Pell Grant.

Effective with the 2012–13 award year, there was a reduction in the duration of a student's eligibility to receive a Pell Grant from 18 semesters (or its equivalent) to 12 semesters (or its equivalent). The calculation includes all earlier years of the student's receipt of Pell Grants.

The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO)

TRIO provides federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes [eight programs](#) targeted to serve and [assist low-income individuals](#), first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a [training program](#) for TRIO programs and is designed to assist TRIO personnel in improving the operation and success of the TRIO projects. In FY 2012, \$840.0 million was available for TRIO programs.

Career and Technical Education

[Career and Technical Education programs](#) (CTE) provide academic, technical, and employability skills to enable secondary students to graduate from high school and transition into postsecondary education, training, and employment in in-demand occupations in high-growth industry sectors. These programs also enable postsecondary students and adults to obtain industry-recognized credentials (in sectors where they exist and are appropriate) and postsecondary certificates or degrees that lead to employment in those sectors.

Under the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006*, the Department provides formula grants to eligible states and outlying areas to fund programs that assist secondary and postsecondary students to acquire academic and technical skills and to prepare for high-skill, high-wage, or high-demand occupations in the global economy.

The Perkins Act of 2006 also authorizes the Department to award discretionary grants to help improve CTE for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, for CTE students at Tribally Controlled CTE Institutions, and for grants to organizations, institutions, and agencies for CTE research, evaluation, capacity building, dissemination, technical assistance, and promising practices. In addition, the Department supports a [collaborative resources network](#), as well as [statistics collection and reporting](#).

Adult Education Programs. In addition, the Department administers formula grant funds to states for adult education and literacy programs. States distribute funds to local eligible entities to provide adult education and literacy services that provide educational opportunities below the postsecondary level for young people and adults, 16 years of age and older, who are not currently enrolled in school, and who lack a high school diploma or the basic skills to function effectively in the workplace and in their daily lives, or are unable to speak, read, or write the English language. A weekly electronic newsletter, [OVAE Connection](#), published by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, provides information to state officials involved in adult education, CTE, and community colleges, as well as to practitioners, researchers, education groups, and others interested in community colleges, CTE, and adult education.

Goal 2: Elementary and Secondary Education

Prepare all elementary and secondary students for college and career by improving the education system's ability to consistently deliver excellent classroom instruction with rigorous academic standards while providing effective support services.

Objective 2.1: Standards and Assessments. Support state-led efforts to develop and adopt college- and career-ready, internationally benchmarked standards, with aligned, valid, and reliable assessments.

Objective 2.2: Great Teachers and Great Leaders. Improve the preparation, recruitment, development, support, evaluation, and recognition of effective teachers, principals, and administrators.

Objective 2.3: School Climate and Community. Increase the success, safety, and health of students, particularly in high-need schools and communities.

Objective 2.4: Struggling Schools. Support states and districts in turning around the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Objective 2.5: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Increase access to and excellence in STEM for all students and prepare the next generation for careers in STEM-related fields.

In FY 2012, the Department continued to support programs to help states to prepare students for college and careers, by consistently providing students with the education necessary to achieve that goal.

Race to the Top

On August 12, 2012, the Department published the final application for the 2012 Race to the Top—District competition, which will provide support to school districts in implementing local education reforms that personalize instruction, close achievement gaps, and take full advantage of 21st century tools that prepare each student for college and careers.

The [Race to the Top](#) state competition provided support to states to strengthen standards and assessments, increase teacher and principal quality, turn around the lowest-performing schools, and improve the use of education data. In addition, the Department awarded [state grants](#) to develop a new generation of tests that assess students' knowledge of mathematics and English language arts from third grade through high school. The early childhood component is discussed in Goal 3.

Race to the Top requires that reform occur as part of a comprehensive approach but acknowledges that there is no one path to reform. The [Race to the Top Annual Performance Report](#) is a tool that permits the Department, grantees, and the public to follow grantees' progress in implementing comprehensive education reform plans and meeting ambitious goals for student outcomes, including increasing student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

Teacher Incentive Fund

The Department's [Teacher Incentive Fund](#) (TIF) has provided grants to states, rural and urban school districts, and nonprofit organizations to develop and implement performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems in high-need schools. The Department conducted

[a new competition](#) in FY 2012 that seeks to strengthen the education profession by rewarding excellence, attracting teachers and principals to high-need schools, and providing all teachers and principals with the feedback and support they need to succeed.

ESEA Flexibility

The Department has invited each state educational agency (SEA) to [request flexibility](#) from certain requirements of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, as reauthorized by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, on behalf of itself, its local educational agencies, and schools, in order to better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction. During 2012, the Secretary approved requests from states and the District of Columbia to provide educators and state and local leaders with flexibility regarding specific requirements in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction.

School Improvement Grants

[School Improvement Grants](#) (SIG) are used to improve student achievement in three tiers of schools: (1) Tier I schools, which are generally the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring; (2) Tier II schools, which are generally the lowest-achieving five-percent of secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds; and (3) Tier III schools, which are all other Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Under the School Improvement Grants program, SEAs give priority to awarding funds to enable Tier I and Tier II schools to implement dramatic interventions to help turn around their academic performance.

In August 2012, the White House welcomed state, district, and school leaders and educators for panel discussions on the transformative efforts underway in low-performing schools through the SIG program, including efforts to turnaround schools characterized by years of low attendance rates, low student achievement, and low graduation rates, as well as high rates of student disciplinary action and staff turnover.

Investing in Innovation Fund

In FY 2012, the Department invited pre-applicants to submit an application for the FY 2012 Full Application Development Competition under the [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) grant competition. The grants continue support for evidence-based practices in education. The purpose of this program is to provide competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement and attainment in order to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.

Promise Neighborhoods

[Promise Neighborhoods](#), established under the legislative authority of the Fund for the Improvement of Education, provides funding to support eligible entities, including nonprofit organizations, which may include faith-based nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and Indian tribes. In FY 2012, the Department received applications and awards are expected no later than December 31, 2012.

The purpose of Promise Neighborhoods is to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in the nation's most distressed communities, and to transform those communities by: identifying and increasing the capacity of eligible entities that are focused on achieving results for children and youth throughout an entire neighborhood; building a complete continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center; integrating programs and breaking down agency "silos" so that solutions are implemented effectively and efficiently across agencies; developing the local infrastructure of systems and resources needed to sustain and scale up proven, effective solutions across the broader region beyond the initial neighborhood; and learning about the overall impact of the Promise Neighborhoods program and about the relationship between particular strategies in Promise Neighborhoods and student outcomes.

Goal 3: Early Learning

Improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through 3rd grade, so that all children, particularly those with high needs, are on track for graduating from high school college- and career- ready.

Objective 3.1: Access. Increase access to high-quality early learning programs and comprehensive services, especially for children with high needs.

Objective 3.2: Workforce. Improve the quality and effectiveness of the early learning workforce so that early childhood educators have the skills and abilities necessary to improve young children's health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes.

Objective 3.3: Assessment and Accountability. Improve the capacity of states and early learning programs to develop and implement comprehensive early learning assessment systems.

In FY 2012, the Department continued funding and assistance to help state education systems to prepare students for college and careers, by encouraging and creating incentives for states and local educational agencies to offer high-quality early learning programs, especially for children with high needs.

Inter-Governmental Cooperation

The Department prioritizes improving the health, social, emotional, and educational outcomes for young children from birth through third grade by enhancing the quality of early learning programs, and increasing the access to [high-quality early learning programs](#)—especially for young children at risk for school failure. The Department's role in promoting early learning is significant and includes: administering several early learning programs; collaborating and coordinating early learning programs, research, and technical assistance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; encouraging states and local districts to target resources for early learning; promoting state and local educational agency partnerships with other early learning agencies and programs in the state or community; conducting research on early learning through the Institute of Education Sciences (IES); funding technical assistance on early learning topics, including early literacy and social and emotional development; and supporting the development of state longitudinal data systems that include early learning programs.

Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge

[The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge](#) (RTT-ELC) provides state competitive grants to improve early learning and development programs. The goal of the RTT-ELC is to better prepare more children with high needs for kindergarten, because children from birth to age five, including those from low-income families, need a strong foundation for success.

RTT-ELC focuses on five key areas of reform:

- *Establishing Successful State Systems* by building on states' existing strengths, ambitiously moving forward states' early learning and development agendas, and carefully coordinating programs across agencies to ensure consistency and sustainability beyond the grant;
- *Defining High-Quality, Accountable Programs* by creating a quality rating and improvement system that is used across the state to evaluate and improve program performance and to inform families about program quality;
- *Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children* by developing common standards within a state and assessments that measure child outcomes, address behavioral and health needs, as well as inform, engage, and support families;
- *Supporting a Great Early Childhood Education Workforce* by providing professional development, career advancement opportunities, appropriate compensation, and a common set of standards for workforce knowledge and competencies; and
- *Measuring Outcomes and Progress* so that data can be used to inform early learning instruction and services and to assess whether children are entering kindergarten ready to succeed in elementary school.

The RTT-ELC program is jointly administered with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Goal 4: Equity

Ensure and promote effective educational opportunities and safe and healthy learning environments for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language, and socioeconomic status.

Objective 4.1: Continue to Increase the Infusion of Equity Throughout the Department's Programs and Activities. Promote and coordinate equity-focused efforts in Departmental programs.

Objective 4.2: Civil Rights Enforcement. Ensure equal access to education and promote educational excellence throughout the nation through the vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws.

In FY 2012, the Department continued to support programs to help the education system, with a focus on technical assistance, data collection, and enforcement activities on critical issues including: school culture, by working to ensure students are free from harassment and sexual violence; issues of access, by ensuring equitable distribution of resources; ensuring that English learners get the services they need; ensuring that schools, including charter schools, do not engage in discriminatory recruitment practices or segregate students; and disparate discipline rates.

Under the *FY 2011–2014 Strategic Plan*, the Department focused on the pursuit of equity in two primary ways: (1) by increasing the infusion of equity throughout the Department's programs and activities and (2) by ensuring equal access to education and promoting educational excellence throughout the nation through the vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws.

For example, the Department worked to provide a greater focus on equity throughout its initiatives and programs, including in the awarding of competitive grants like Race to the Top—District and the Charter School Program; working to preserve accountability for subgroup performance while offering flexibility for states under the ESEA; improving the affordability of postsecondary education; ensuring a safe learning environment where students are free from bullying and harassment; ensuring the equitable distribution of effective teachers and resources in low-performing, high-poverty, and high-minority schools; increasing traditionally underrepresented students' access to college- and career-ready curricula such as STEM classes, advanced placement, and other high-level courses; and increasing access to high-quality early learning programs for high-need children.

Increasing the Infusion of Equity Throughout Department Programs and Activities

In general, the Department's work includes major activities in the area of early education, elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, and career and technical education. The Department supports White House initiatives; economically disadvantaged students; English learners; students with disabilities; women and girls; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. The Department continues to host and staff the ongoing work of the Equity and Excellence Commission, a group of 27 national education experts assembled to discuss ways to improve educational equity and excellence, which is expected to develop policy recommendations.

During FY 2012, senior leaders from across the Department met throughout the year to assess how equity is being pursued through current activities and what priorities or activities might be warranted, including how the Department could better promote equitable access to high quality teachers. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Office of English Language Acquisition, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, play a leading role in planning how to increase the infusion of equity throughout the Department.

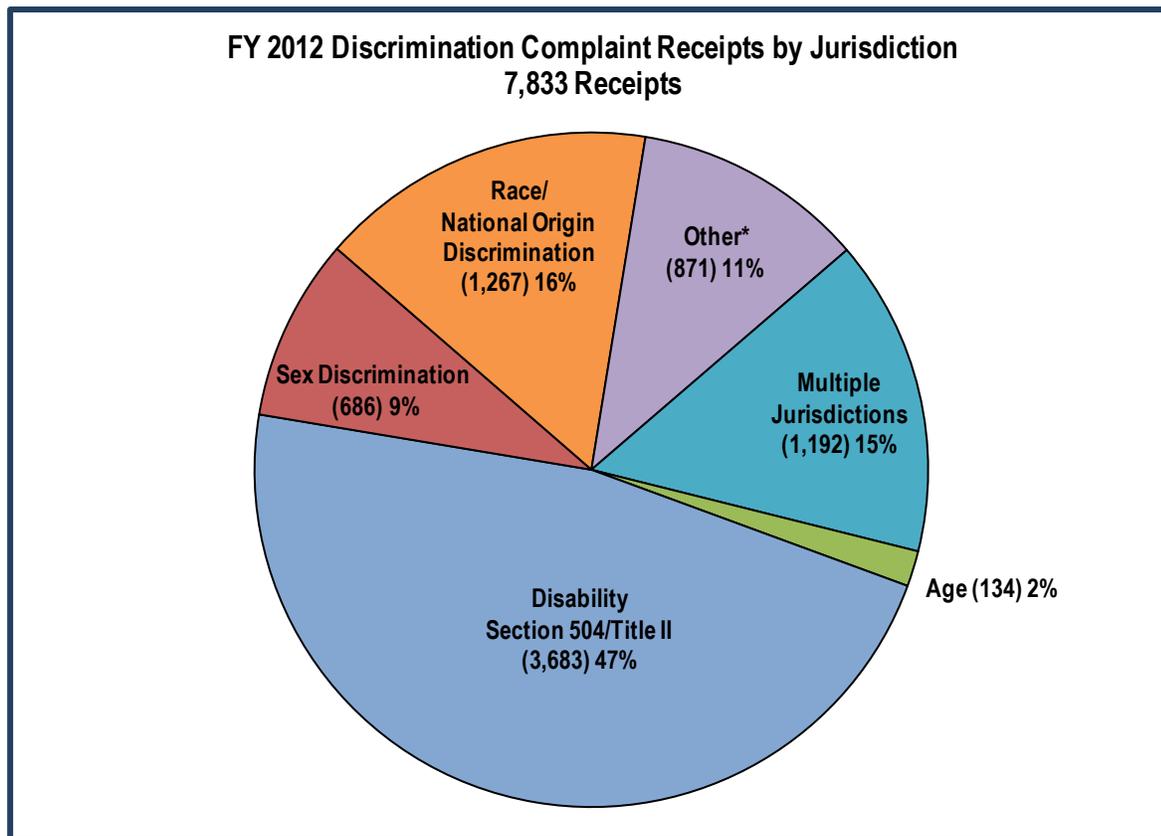
During FY 2012, the Department [launched a new website](#) and an enhanced set of data indicators for the Civil Rights Data Collection, a biannual survey. Data are disaggregated in most instances by race/ethnicity, sex, disability, and limited English proficient status. The data provided through the survey help tell the "equity story" about the nation's educational system. The data are fully accessible to the public through the website, so parents, educators, and advocates can compare and analyze schools and districts. This year, the data covered 85 percent of the nation's students and more than 70,000 public schools nationwide. Schools are now reporting more detailed and useful information related to incidents of school discipline, access to college preparatory math and science courses, bullying and harassment, restraint and seclusion, school finance, and other areas.

Ensuring Equal Access

The Department enforces federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in our nation's schools, primarily in educational institutions that receive federal funds from the Department. OCR, a law enforcement agency within the Department, performs the Department's civil rights enforcement responsibilities in a variety of ways, including: investigating complaints alleging discrimination;

conducting proactive and systemic investigations in educational institutions to determine if they are in compliance with the laws; and providing technical assistance to educational institutions on how to comply with the law and to parents and students on their rights under the law. The Department also issues regulations on civil rights laws, develops policy guidance interpreting the laws, and distributes the information broadly.

In FY 2012, OCR received a total of 7,833 complaints alleging discrimination, comparable to FY 2011's all-time high of 7,841, and resolved 8,161 complaints, some of which were received the previous year. As shown in the chart below, close to half of the complaints received by the Department allege discrimination due to disability. In addition to the issues addressed through complaint processing, OCR resolved or negotiated the settlement of 32 proactive compliance reviews, which are among the most significant public statements that OCR makes concerning civil rights compliance. OCR also initiated 6 proactive compliance reviews, and conducted 42 proactive technical assistance activities. In addition, OCR developed policy guidance to address discrimination against students on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and disability. OCR's law enforcement work supports progress on the Department's efforts to address equity.



* This category reflects new complaint receipts for which jurisdiction has not yet been determined. It also includes complaint receipts under the *Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act* and those with issues over which OCR has no jurisdiction.

Source: Office for Civil Rights Case Management System

Goal 5: Continuous Improvement of the U.S. Education System

Enhance the education system's ability to continuously improve through better and more widespread use of data, research and evaluation, transparency, innovation, and technology.

Objective 5.1: Data Systems. Facilitate the development of interoperable longitudinal data systems from early learning through the workforce to enable data-driven decision-making by increasing access to timely, reliable, and high-value data.

Objective 5.2: Research and Evaluation. Support multiple approaches to research and evaluation to support educational improvement and Department decision-making.

Objective 5.3: Transparency. Present relevant and reliable information that increases demand for educational attainment and improves educational performance, while maintaining student privacy.

Objective 5.4: Technology and Innovation. Accelerate the development and broad adoption of new, effective programs, processes, and strategies, including education technology.

In FY 2012, the Department continued to support programs to help the education system, by facilitating the development of the infrastructure necessary to collect and disseminate high-value education information for the improvement of child and student outcomes.

Streamlining Data Content. In FY 2012, a database hosted by the Department was merged with [Data.gov](#) to save the cost of hosting and maintaining a separate data website and to benefit from greater participation in the shared services of [Data.gov/Education](#), where the growing community of developers and researchers continues to be supported by an expanding platform of tools and features.

The Data Quality Initiative. The Data Quality Initiative (DQI), begun in 2006, is designed to improve the quality of the Department's program performance data and reporting. The DQI contractor has worked with the Department's program offices and with grantees to review grantee [evaluation plans and reports](#); develop annual performance reporting methodologies; develop data collection and reporting guidance; review and analyze grantee annual performance data; and deliver grantee briefings and workshops focused on evaluation issues.

In 2009, the Department initiated a companion DQI contract to conduct data audits for selected programs to examine the quality and methods used to report program performance information. A second DQI technical assistance contract, awarded in September 2012, builds on prior work and provides direct assistance to program offices regarding the review, development, analysis, and reporting on *GPRA Modernization Act* and other measures to inform programmatic and budget decisions. This work also helps staff to identify key indicators, and guide their collection and use of data.

Consolidating Data Collection Through ED*Facts*. Complete and accurate data are essential for effective decision-making. [ED*Facts*](#) is the Department's initiative to put performance data at the center of policy, management, and budget decision-making for elementary and secondary educational programs. ED*Facts* centralizes performance data supplied by state educational agencies and enables the Department to better analyze and use data in policy development, planning, and management. The ED*Facts* system enables the consolidation of separate data collections and reduces the reporting burden for states by eliminating redundant data requests.

Data are available for both state and local educational agencies and school data include data on demographics, program participation, implementation, and outcomes.

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems. The [Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems \(SLDS\) grant program](#), as authorized by the *Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002*, is designed to aid state educational agencies in developing and implementing longitudinal data systems. Most statewide longitudinal data systems funds are awarded as state grants, but a portion of the funds are used for activities to improve data quality, coordination, and use. Current activities include the Education Data Technical Assistance program, the Privacy Technical Assistance Center, and work on common education data standards. These initiatives are intended to enhance the ability of states to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, and use education data, including individual student records. The data systems developed with funds from these grants should help states, districts, schools, and teachers make data-driven decisions to improve student learning, as well as facilitate research to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps.

Data Strategy Team. The Department's Data Strategy Team (DST) develops and promotes coordinated and consistent data strategies among the various principal offices within the Department. The mission of the DST is to coordinate the Department's public-facing data initiatives by building cohesiveness in internal processes and data policies and by improving transparency in matters related to the Department's collection of data. The DST supports states' use of education data through data websites and technical assistance to grantees and identifies best practices for the use and promotion of data policy.

The Department's Evaluation Planning Initiatives

In May 2010, the Department launched a new agencywide evaluation planning process to better align its investments in knowledge building with the Department's Strategic Plan and its budget and policy priorities. This process, now in its second year, ensures that evaluation funds are used efficiently and effectively to advance the Department's goals. To determine the effectiveness of programs, policies, and strategies for improving education outcomes, funding is directed at evaluations that will yield reliable measures of effectiveness. For priority questions related to other issues, such as performance management and implementation support, the funding is directed to evaluations that use rigorous methods appropriate for answering those questions.

The evaluation planning team meets with the Department's policy and program offices and, based on their input, develops recommendations for future evaluation activities in the current fiscal year and beyond. Each office identifies its highest-priority research questions, as well as other program-specific research questions they would like addressed. The evaluation team examines the extent to which these research questions are supported by existing research or are being addressed through ongoing evaluations and then develops recommendations based on current and prospective resources. In FY 2011, the Department developed and approved a set of priority research questions to inform future investments in knowledge building. Planning for FY 2012 investments was largely completed this spring and planning for FY 2013 is underway, although final decisions are contingent on appropriations action.

Goal 6: U.S. Department of Education Capacity

Improve the organizational capacities of the Department to implement this Strategic Plan.

Objective 6.1: Effective Workforce. Continue to build a high-performing, skilled workforce within the Department.

Objective 6.2: Programmatic Risk Management. Improve the Department's program efficacy through comprehensive risk management and grant monitoring.

Objective 6.3: Implementation and Support. Build Department capacity to support states' and other grantees' implementation of reforms that result in improved outcomes for students.

Objective 6.4: Productivity and Performance Management. Improve workforce productivity through information technology and performance management systems.

Human Capital and Client Services

The Department is committed to ensuring its workforce has the skills needed to accomplish its Strategic Goals and to further develop human capital skills that will be needed for the future. In FY 2011, the Department assessed its human capital needs and focused on ways to improve workforce competencies through the delivery of training courses, leadership development programs, tuition reimbursement, career and organizational counseling, and computer learning support. In FY 2012, the Department's Office of Management (OM) set goals for closing competency gaps in mission critical occupations and leadership positions. These targeted competencies included fiscal monitoring, policy, legislation, and administrative rulemaking.

Additionally, OM has invested in the development of grants management staff to ensure that the workforce has the knowledge and skills required to oversee the department's grants-making process through the design and implementation of a grants management competency model and certificate program.

Continuous development for the Department's leaders is critical to the success of accomplishing our mission and vital to human capital management and succession planning. To strengthen the skills of our leaders, a number of programs were developed to enhance the leadership skills of those who are in leadership positions and those aspiring to become leaders. These programs include our Pathways to Leadership Program and Transition to Supervision Program, as well as participation in the Excellence in Government Fellows Program.

The Department Continues Risk-Based Grant Management Strategies

The Department continues to build its capacity to use data to continuously improve its grant management. In FY 2012, the Department advanced its use of data about grant applicants and recipients to inform its pre-award and post-award grant management decisions. The agency is developing its tools and procedures for grant risk management in a context of increasing governmentwide attention to grant risk, which includes significant attention to reducing improper payments through pre-payment screenings and the deployment of the Department of the Treasury's "Do Not Pay" system.

FY 2012 was the second year of the agency's consistent pre-award assessment of applicants' financial and grant management capacity. Because of new agency pre-award grant management procedures, 100 percent of programs conducted a risk assessment in FY 2012.

Each Department program staff employed a risk assessment rubric with indicators of an applicant's past performance with grants and potential financial and management weaknesses. The Department's Decision Support System Entity Risk Review (ERR), which was pilot tested in FY 2011, continued to provide program officers access to risk-related information from Dun & Bradstreet, the Department's grant management system, and the Federal Audit Clearinghouse of recipients' independent audit ("A-133 audit") results. Program officers use these data in conjunction with other performance information, including findings from on-site and desk monitoring of past and current awards, to review grant applicants' capability to manage federal funds. In FY 2012, the rubrics used to identify risk were refined based on last year's experiences to focus on the most useful and meaningful data.

In FY 2012, the agency substantially increased its resources for applying data analysis to its decision making. Guidance documents outline the allowable and recommended actions that program officers may take to mitigate risk when a recipient has past performance or management problems. The risk mitigation guidance emphasizes the use of special award conditions, such as extra reporting by the recipient, technical assistance, and increased oversight of a grant, as methods for promoting successful grant projects. Increased communication among programs—both in regular meetings and through web-based document sharing—is increasing the amount of information program officers have about their grantees. Program offices also used risk assessments to inform their annual grant monitoring plans. The agency is capturing information from risk assessments in order to improve the process over the next few years.

Programs requested and received 186 ERR reports during FY 2011. These reports were used during a Department pilot test of the ERR as a risk assessment tool. The total number of ERR reports requested and delivered for FY 2012 was 320. Grant officers use ERR reports for purposes in addition to discretionary grant pre-award risk reviews, such as oversight during the performance period of formula and discretionary grants. Therefore, the count of ERR reports used is not the same as the number of programs conducting pre-award risk reviews.

During FY 2011, 32 percent of Department programs making awards during the year participated in the pilot test, using an ERR report to inform risk assessments. Some programs that did not use ERRs may have used other sources of information for risk assessment.

During FY 2012, the Department implemented an internal policy that all discretionary grant programs will conduct a risk assessment of applicants prior to making awards. All programs used a risk index that included audit findings and information on the applicants' past performance prior to making awards. Most programs used ERR reports as a component of the risk assessment.

Because the Department has reached 100 percent program participation in the application of a risk index to conduct a risk assessment, a new measure and baseline of grant risk management will be established in 2013.

Customer Satisfaction with the Department of Education

In FY 2012, in response to the President's April 27, 2011, Executive Order 13571, Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service, the Department survey included 38 programs.

The survey uses the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The ACSI is the national indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of goods and services. It is the only uniform benchmarking measure of customer satisfaction across agencies and private industry.

The ACSI allows benchmarking between federal agencies and provides information unique to each agency on how activities that interface with the public affect the satisfaction of its customers. The ACSI is a weighted average of three questions that measure: overall satisfaction, satisfaction compared to expectations, and satisfaction compared to an ideal organization.

Additionally, each principal office in the Department surveys their stakeholders on the effective use of technology, clarity and organization of documents, staff knowledge, responsiveness, collaboration with other Department offices, provision of technical assistance, and ease of accessing online resources.

In FY 2012, there was a slight drop in satisfaction from the previous year—from 72 to 71 points on a 100-point scale. To review the complete results of the Department’s customer satisfaction surveys: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/gss/index.html>.

Customer Satisfaction With the Department of Education, 2005–2012

