

grantee conference. Additionally, fewer states are ready to link to early childhood data, as evidenced in the low number of Priority 2 FY 2012 applications. The Department is creating a series of best practice materials in early childhood and held a privacy workshop for states on sharing early childhood data.

For more information on the Department's FY 2012–13 Priority Goals, please go to <http://goals.performance.gov/agency/ed>.

Cross-Agency Priority Goals

In addition to the Agency Priority Goals, the Department contributes to several Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals as required by the *GPR Modernization Act of 2010*:

Broadband: As part of expanding all [broadband](#) capabilities, ensure 4G wireless broadband coverage for 98 percent of Americans by 2016.

Veteran Career Readiness: Improve career readiness of veterans. By September 30, 2013, increase the percent of eligible service members who will be served by career readiness and preparedness programs from 50 percent to 90 percent in order to improve their competitiveness in the job market.

Job Training: Ensure our country has one of the most skilled workforces in the world by preparing 2 million workers with skills training by 2015 and improving the coordination and delivery of job training services.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education: In support of the President's goal that the U.S. have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, the federal government will work with education partners to improve the quality of STEM education at all levels to help increase the number of well-prepared graduates with STEM degrees by one-third over the next 10 years, resulting in an additional 1 million graduates with degrees in STEM subjects.

For additional information on the Cross-Agency Priority Goals, please go to http://goals.performance.gov/goals_2013.

Looking Ahead and Addressing Challenges

Education is key to the nation's long-term economic prosperity and is an investment in its future. A highly educated workforce is necessary for American competitiveness in the global economy. The Department continues to maintain strong support for traditional state formula grant programs while continuing to fund competitive initiatives, including [Race to the Top](#), [Promise Neighborhoods](#), [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) grants, and a redesigned [School Improvement Grants](#) program. Almost every state is supporting higher standards that ensure students will be college- and career-ready.

The United States is seeing the highest high school graduation rate in three decades, and over the past four years, postsecondary financial assistance available to students and families has increased significantly. Moreover, the Department has seen an increase of more than 50 percent in the number of students accessing higher education on Pell Grants.

Finally, the Department's efforts to support and strengthen the teaching profession through improved teacher evaluation and professional development are predicted to pay long-term dividends.

Going forward, the Department will build on what it has already established:

- state-driven accountability that demands progress for all children;
- high-quality early education for more low-income children;
- more flexibility for state decision-making;
- more support for principals and teachers to apply high standards to practice;
- reforming career education in high schools and community colleges; and
- reforming and simplifying the application process for student aid to help drive college affordability and completion.

The Department cannot stop here, however. It needs to continue to strengthen the support systems necessary for all students to reach the middle class and beyond. Pre-school should be accessible for all students. The Department needs to fund a set of K-12 strategic reforms, including improving teaching to improve learning and making schools safer. The Department needs to ensure that college is more affordable. Ultimately, the Department looks to creating ladders of opportunity to help students living in poverty advance beyond their means.

The Department's 2014–2018 *Strategic Plan* stands on a foundation of six strategic goals:

Goal 1: Postsecondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education. Increase college access, affordability, quality, and completion by improving postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults.

Goal 2: Elementary and Secondary Education. Improve the elementary and secondary education system's ability to consistently deliver excellent instruction aligned with rigorous academic standards while providing effective support services to close achievement and opportunity gaps, and ensure all students graduate high school college- and career-ready.

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.

Goal 4: Equity. Increase educational opportunities for and reduce discrimination against underserved students so that all students are well-positioned to succeed.

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, evidence, transparency, innovation, and technology.

Goal 6: U.S. Department of Education Capacity. Improve the organizational capacities of the Department to implement this strategic plan.

The challenges to achieving these goals lie in the Department's capacity and funding. The Department must focus on ways to thrive in a climate that is resource constrained. In addressing capacity, the Department will invest in the continuous improvement of a skilled, diverse, and engaged workforce to improve productivity and communication. Competencies will be modernized and sharpened, processes will be streamlined, and succession planning will be ongoing so that there is no break in effective leadership or direction.

The Department will employ comprehensive risk management and grant and contract monitoring to ensure prudent use of public dollars by mitigating risk through increased oversight and support of grantees and contractors.

The Department will build systems to support states' and grantees' implementation of reforms that result in improved outcomes. To this end, the Department will keep the public informed of promising practices and new reform initiatives that result from federal investment and new relationships that have been enabled by innovations afforded by grant initiatives and through use of the latest technologies.

Regarding funding, the Department, as others, faces fiscal uncertainty. Over the past few years, the Department has achieved savings through hiring more slowly and reducing lease costs, utilities, travel, printing, supplies, and some contract costs. Through careful management of funds, the Department was able to avert furloughing employees in FY 2013 so that our customers and stakeholders continued to receive the best possible service. The Department will continue to meet the financial challenge head-on, always with efficiency and responsibility in mind as it complies with the *Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act*.

The Department continues to have concerns about interest and default rates on student loans. It will work toward more collaboration with other federal government agencies around science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) initiatives and with the Department of Health and Human Services on early learning.

The Department sees education as the foundation for a strong national economy. Working with partners and colleagues in Congress, the states, and across the education community, the Department's primary focus will be on the students, who are the reason for its existence.

Enhancing Education Systems and Support: The Department strives to leverage its data, evaluation, performance, and financial systems to meet four important aspects of its mission:

- To contribute to the Department's ability to build customer relations by providing timely responses to customer inquiries.
- To empower employees to make informed decisions by increasing their access to data.
- To increase accountability through improved financial management.
- To keep Department employees informed of project status and ensure that all users receive proper training on new systems.

Finally, as the Department transitions to its new *Strategic Plan* for FY 2014–2018 during the coming year, as an organization it will have charted a roadmap for future success and will continue to evaluate how best to accomplish its strategic goals and objectives during these fiscally challenging times. The new plan is intended to help the Department refine its course and better focus performance within the framework of the *GPR Modernization Act of 2010*.

The six Department *Strategic Plan* goals guide the day-to-day work of the Department's staff. This plan will help to align the administration's yearly budget requests and the Department's legislative agenda. Continuous improvement rests on ongoing cycles of assessing performance, examining data, and improving practices. Creating a culture of continuous improvement is at the heart of the Department's efforts to work with and support elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educators and policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels.

Accomplishing all of this plan's priorities will require strong coordination and collaboration from Department staff working with Congress, partners at the state and local levels, and all other

stakeholders. This includes meeting numerous legislative challenges. In addition, state and federal fiscal constraints may impact the Department's ability to provide the necessary incentives and resources to increase quality, transparency, and accountability.

Reporting on Progress Made on Strategic Goals and Objectives: The Department will continue to use tools such as quarterly reviews to ensure progress toward achieving strategic goals and outcomes. The Department's strategic goals align with government-wide goals and priorities and translate to specific organizational goals. The Organizational Performance Review will continue to be a paramount process for setting goals at the principal office level. These goals will cascade down to the individual employee level through Senior Executive Service plans and through the Department's individual performance plans and metrics.

To support the tracking and reporting of progress against the goals and objectives, the Department has created and is developing its data profile on <http://www.performance.gov> for key policy and programmatic topics. It is also creating a set of information dashboards and data analysis tools to provide more relevance and context for senior leaders in gauging the impact of individual and collective performance, and in overall strategic decision making.

The effective implementation of the Department's priority and strategic goals will depend, in part, on the effective use of high-quality and timely data, including evaluations and performance measures, throughout the lifecycle of policies and programs. The Department is committed to increasing the number of programs and initiatives that are evaluated using methods that include those consistent with the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and incorporating cost-effectiveness measures into evaluations and program improvement systems.

Department of Education's FY 2014–2015 Priority Goals
<p>Improve students' ability to complete college By September 30, 2015, increase degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort to 45.6 percent.</p>
<p>Support implementation of college- and career-ready standards and assessment By September 30, 2015, at least 50 states will have adopted college and career-ready standards. By September 30, 2015, at least 50 states will be implementing next-generation assessments, aligned with college- and career-ready standards.</p>
<p>Improve learning by ensuring that more students have effective teachers and leaders By September 30, 2015, at least 37 states will have fully implemented teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that consider multiple measures of effectiveness, with student growth as a significant factor.</p>
<p>Turn around and close achievement gaps in low-performing schools By September 30, 2015, decrease the number of high schools with low graduation rates to 1,285.</p>
<p>Support comprehensive early learning assessment systems By September 30, 2015, at least nine states will be collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure.</p>
<p>Ensure equitable educational opportunities By September 30, 2015, increase the national high school graduation rate to 83 percent, as measured by the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate; decrease disparities in the national high school graduation rate among minority students, students with disabilities, English learners, and students in poverty.</p>
<p>Enable evidence-based decision making. By September 30, 2015, at least 11 percent of select new¹ (non-continuation) discretionary grant dollars will reward evidence.</p>

¹ A list of reform-directed grant programs will be provided. New grant dollars that "reward evidence" include all dollars awarded as a result of addressing tiered-evidence as either eligibility threshold (e.g., i3 competition), absolute priority, competitive priority (earning at least one point for it), or selection criteria (earning at least one point for it).