
Performance Plan Summary

Looking Ahead and Addressing Challenges

The U.S. Department of Education's commitment to equity and access are at the heart of its strategic planning and reporting across the six goals in the Department's *Strategic Plan*.

Excellent Education for All

America's high school graduation rate has reached a record high, dropout rates are down, and 1.1 million more Black and Hispanic students are attending college than in 2008, according to [new National Center for Education Statistics data](#).

As a nation, America must accelerate that pace of change because today:

- a quarter of high schools with the highest percentage of African-American and Latino students do not offer Algebra II, and a third do not offer chemistry;
- about 40 percent of school districts do not offer preschool programs; and
- we have [far too many](#) students of color, primarily boys, being suspended and expelled from school.

The Department's work will not be done until it ensures that the opportunity for a high-quality education is not just a possibility, and not just a promise, but a reality for the nation's citizens. Going forward, the Department will build on priorities that are in place:

- state-driven accountability that demands progress for all children;
- increased access to high-quality early education for children from low-income families;
- more flexibility for state decision-making;
- more support for principals and teachers to apply high standards to practice;
- reforming career and technical 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 reauthorization of the ESEA by the ESSA will impact many of the Department's activities, but plans for implementation are being developed. Through the transition to the ESSA, the opportunities that remain to help improve the education system for citizens are a constant and essential source of motivation and urgency to do even more to improve America's education system. Accomplishing the Department's strategic goals will require strong coordination and collaboration from Department staff working with partners at the federal, state, and local levels, including representatives from Congress; federal, state, and local agencies; school districts; and schools.

Data Verification and Validation

The *GPRA Modernization Act of 2010* requires agencies to prepare information on the reliability of data presented. OMB guidance indicates:

Agencies may develop a single data verification and validation appendix used to communicate the agency's approaches, and/or may also choose to provide information about data quality wherever the performance information is communicated (e.g., websites).⁷

The full data verification and validation summary and a high-level assessment of the completeness and reliability of the data presented are provided in appendix A of this report.

Reporting on Progress

The Department continues to use quarterly performance reviews, targeted strategic initiatives, and outreach to leaders and stakeholders to assess progress and garner engagement toward achieving strategic goals and outcomes. Additionally, the Organizational Performance Review contributes to the Department's compliance with the *GPRA Modernization Act of 2010* by informing data-driven performance discussions, and serving as a tool for principal offices to improve their efficiency and effectiveness through operational and administration priorities and initiatives at the principal office level.

To support the tracking and reporting of progress against the goals and objectives, the Department provides regular updates to its data profile on performance.gov. The effective implementation of the Department's *Strategic Plan* will depend, in part, on the effective use of high-quality and timely publicly reported data throughout the lifecycle of policies and programs.

In addition, the Department's success in achieving its strategic goals is closely tied to its capacity and funding. In addressing capacity, the Department has increased investment in the continuous improvement of its workforce, adding more resources for workforce management and development. An emerging federal emphasis on enterprise risk management has contributed to the Department seeking to employ comprehensive risk management to ensure prudent use of public dollars by mitigating risk through increased oversight and support of grantees and contractors as well as in its general operations.

Continuous improvement rests on ongoing cycles of assessing performance, examining data, and employing lessons to improve practices. Creating a culture of continuous improvement is at the heart of the Department's efforts to partner with and support educators, administrators, and policy makers, but with the main intent to see better performance results overall. The Department is committed to doing its part to bring innovative ideas, convening influence, and any other resources that will help achieve the outcomes that matter most to its stakeholders.

⁷ OMB Circular A-11, *Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget*, Part 6, Section 260.9, 2014.

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 Leader: Ted Mitchell

Objective 1.1: Access and Affordability. Close the opportunity gap by improving the affordability of and access to college and/or workforce training, especially for underrepresented and/or underprepared populations (e.g., low-income and first-generation students, English learners, individuals with disabilities, adults without high school diplomas, etc.). **Objective Leaders: Jon O’Bergh, Jim Runcie, and Michael Yudin**

Metric 1.1.A: Rate of increase in net price of public four-year institutions⁸

Metric 1.1.B: Rate of increase in net price of public two-year institutions⁹

Metric 1.1.C: Percentage of high school seniors filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Metric 1.1.D: Index of national annual aggregate earnings of Vocation Rehabilitation (VR) consumers (based on the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes, hours worked, and hourly wages of VR consumers)

Metric 1.1.E: Index of national annual aggregate earnings of Transition-Age Youth (based on the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes, hours worked, and hourly wages of VR Transition-Age Youth)

Objective 1.2: Quality. Foster institutional value to ensure that postsecondary education credentials represent effective preparation for students to succeed in the workforce and participate in civic life. **Objective Leader: Jon O’Bergh**

Metric 1.2.A: Number of low-performing institutions with high loan default rates and low graduation rates¹⁰

Objective 1.3: Completion. Increase degree and certificate completion and job placement in high-need and high-skill areas, particularly among underrepresented and/or underprepared populations. **Objective Leader: Jon O’Bergh**

Metric 1.3.A: Degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort

Metric 1.3.B: Retention rate of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates: Full-time¹¹

⁸ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

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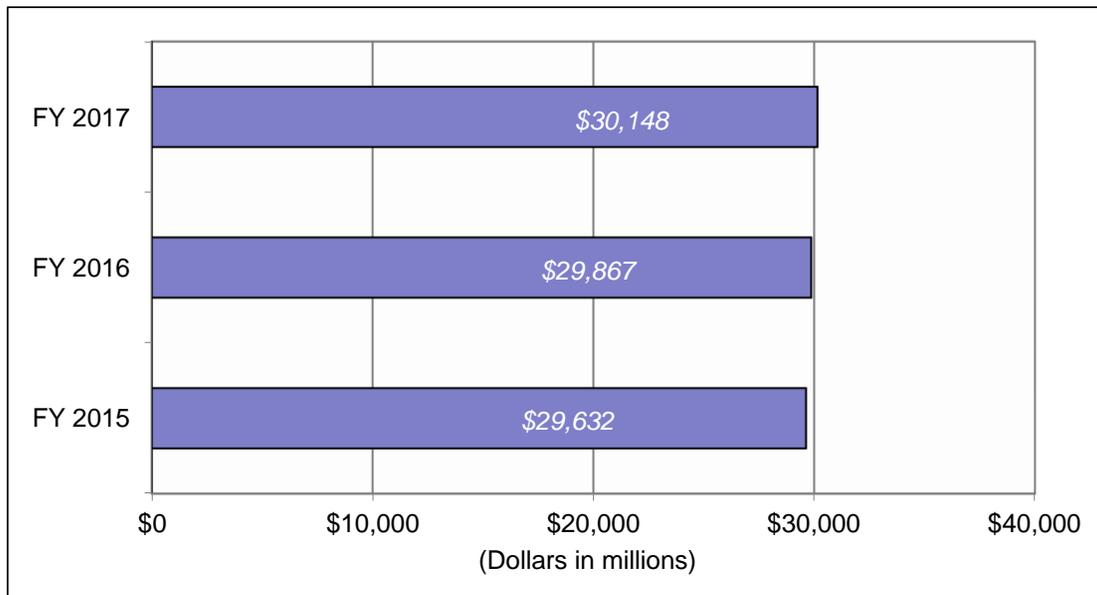
¹¹ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

Metric 1.3.C: Retention rate of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates: Part-time¹²

Objective 1.4: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Pathways. Increase STEM pathway opportunities that enable access to and completion of postsecondary programs. **Objective Leader: Russ Shilling**

Metric 1.4.A: Number of STEM postsecondary credentials awarded

Goal 1 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities¹³ Supporting Goal 1 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
FSA	SAA		Student Aid Administration: Salaries and expenses	675	697	732
FSA	SAA		Student Aid Administration: Servicing Activities	722	855	900
FSA	SFA	1.1	Federal Pell grants: Discretionary	22,475	22,475	22,475
OCTAE	CTAE	1.1, 1.2, 1.3	Adult basic and literacy education state grants	569	582	582
OCTAE	CTAE	NA	Career and technical education state grants	1,118	1,118	1,193
OPE	HE	1.1, 1.3	Federal TRIO programs	840	900	900
OPE	HE		First in the World	60	0	100
OPE	HE		HBCU and minority-serving institutions (MSI) innovation for completion fund (proposed)	0	0	30
Subtotal				26,459	26,627	26,912
Other Discretionary Programs/Activities				3,174	3,241	3,236
TOTAL, GOAL 1				29,632	29,867	30,148

POC = Principal Office Component

NA = Not applicable.

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

¹² Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

¹³ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

Public Benefit

Increasing college access, affordability, quality, and completion by improving postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults requires attention to three equally important factors to facilitate success: availability of good consumer information and financial aid, strong motivation by students and families, and access to affordable, high-quality learning opportunities.

Prior to entering postsecondary education, prospective students need easily accessible information on the cost of attendance and financial aid; rates for career placement, graduation, and college loan defaults; labor market outcomes and projections of labor market demand; loan repayment and management options; and other subjects crucial to understanding the affordability and value of the postsecondary institutions and programs of study available. Students deserve to know that, whether they enter a college, university, career training program, or adult education program, the credential they earn will be affordable and its value will be recognized as an indication that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills for success in the workplace and in life.

Providing federal student aid in a simple, reliable, and efficient manner is primarily how the Department supports college access, affordability, quality, and completion. In FY 2015, the Department delivered nearly \$128 billion in grants, work-study, and loan assistance to almost 12 million postsecondary students at over 6,100 schools.¹⁴ In addition, the Department administered \$2 billion annually in grants to strengthen postsecondary institutions and promote college readiness, and nearly \$1.7 billion more in grant funds for career and technical education (CTE), adult education (including literacy and civics education), and correctional education to help youths and adults secure the skills that equip them for work, civic participation, and lifelong learning.¹⁵

The Department has taken significant steps to increase college access, affordability, quality, and completion in recent years. Resources developed by the Department, such as the [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#), the [Financial Aid Shopping Sheet](#), the [College Scorecard](#), a consolidated [student aid website](#), and new loan counseling and financial literacy resources, now provide students and families with new and enhanced tools for informed decision-making. In particular, the release in FY 2015 of a vastly expanded College Scorecard—including many important metrics that have not been published before—has set a new standard for consumer information about postsecondary education. Redesigned with direct input from students, families, and their advisers, the College Scorecard provides the clearest, most accessible, and most reliable national data on cost, graduation, debt, and postcollege earnings. Gainful Employment regulations will also ensure that students are informed about key outcomes for occupational-oriented programs before they enroll and that programs not meeting established standards will lose eligibility for access to federal student aid funds. In addition, the Department continues to simplify the FAFSA so it is easier and faster for students to apply for aid, and has improved the process. Beginning with the 2017–18 award year, students can apply earlier and electronically retrieve tax information filed for an earlier year, rather than waiting until tax season to complete their applications. Learning about aid eligibility options much earlier in the college application and decision process will allow students and families to determine the true cost of attending college—taking available financial aid into account—and make more informed decisions. New and expanded repayment plans, including Pay As You Earn (PAYE)

¹⁴ [Federal Student Aid Annual Report FY 2015](#).

¹⁵ Note that CTE formula funds go to both secondary and postsecondary programs; approximately 40% of the amount listed goes to postsecondary programs.

and Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE), make debt more affordable for students after they leave school. America's College Promise, the President's proposed new federal-state partnership to make two years of community college free for responsible students, would significantly impact affordability by letting students earn the first half of a bachelor's degree and earn skills needed in the workforce at no cost. This proposal will require everyone to do their part: community colleges must strengthen their programs and increase the number of students who graduate, states must invest more in higher education and training, and students must take responsibility for their education, earn good grades, and stay on track to graduate. The Department will build on these efforts to ensure that all Americans, regardless of their financial circumstances, will have the opportunity to access and complete an affordable postsecondary degree or other postsecondary credential.

Goal 1: Details

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
1.1.A. Rate of increase in net price of public four-year institutions ¹⁶	AY: 2010–11 1.7%	AY: 2010–11 1.7%	AY: 2011–12 3.1%	AY: 2012–13 0.6%	AY: 2012–13 1.3%	MET			NA	NA	
New Metric: Federal student loan delinquency rate	FY: 2015 21.7%	NA	FY: 2014 24.0%	FY: 2015 21.7%	NA	NA	/		+/- 3–5% over prior year's actuals	+/- 3–5% over prior year's actuals	/
1.1.B. Rate of increase in net price of public two-year institutions ¹⁷	AY: 2010–11 1.7%	AY: 2010–11 1.7%	AY: 2011–12 3.2%	AY: 2012–13 0.1%	AY: 2012–13 1.3%	MET			NA	NA	

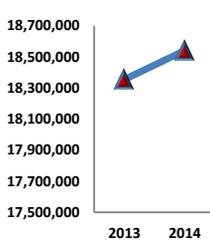
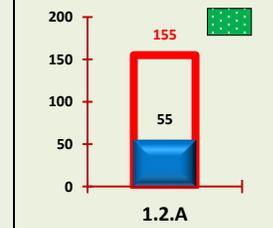
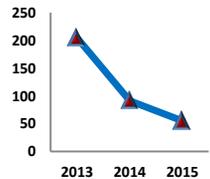
¹⁶ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 1.1% and 0.9%, respectively.

¹⁷ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 1.1% and 0.9%, respectively.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
New Metric: Web traffic to the College Scorecard (as measured by unique visitors annually)	FY: 2015 91,011 (Excluding new Scorecard launch on Sept. 12, 2015)	NA	NA	91,011	NA	NA			1,500,000	1,800,000	
New APG Metric: Number of data points or other information reports released on the FSA Data Center ¹⁸	FY: 2009–14 12	NA	NA	12	NA	NA			15	30	
1.1.C. Percentage of high school seniors filing a FAFSA	SY: 2012–13 59.2%	SY: 2012–13 59.2%	SY: 2013–14 60.1%	SY: 2014–15 60.5%	SY 2014–15 59.1%– 61.1%	MET	<p>61.0% 60.0% 59.0% 58.0% 57.0% 56.0% 55.0% 54.0% 53.0% 52.0% 51.0% 50.0%</p> <p>59.1% 60.5%</p> <p>1.1.C</p>		+/- one percentage point of prior year's actuals	+/- one percentage point of prior year's actuals	<p>61.5% 59.5% 57.5% 55.5%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>
1.1.D. Index of national aggregate annual earnings of VR consumers (based on the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes, hours worked, and hourly wages of VR consumers)	FY: 2010 \$57,971,317	\$61,824,728	\$61,800,214 ¹⁹	TBD Data available Q1 FY16	\$64,322,447	TBD	TBD		\$65,608,896	\$66,921,074	<p>61,900,000 61,800,000 61,700,000 61,600,000 61,500,000</p> <p>2013 2014</p>

¹⁸ Metric is aligned with an APG.

¹⁹ Metric reported as TBD in the 2014 APR. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was "Not Met."

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
1.1.E. Index of national aggregate annual earnings of Transition-Age Youth (based on the number of competitive integrated employment outcomes, hours worked, and hourly wages of VR Transition-Age Youth)	FY: 2010 \$15,971,665	\$18,353,441	\$18,540,576 ²⁰	TBD Data available Q1 FY16	\$19,094,920	TBD	TBD		\$19,476,818	\$19,866,354	
1.2.A. Number of low-performing institutions with high loan default rates and low graduation rates ²¹	AY: 2010–11 205	AY: 2010–11 205	AY: 2011–12 91	AY: 2012–13 55	AY: 2012–13 155	MET			NA	NA	
New Metric: Pell enrollment at IHEs with high graduation rates ²²	AY: 2013–14 24.1%	NA	NA	AY: 2013–14 24.1%	NA	NA			AY 2014–15 25.0%	AY 2015–16 26.0%	
New Metric: Number of states that develop or strengthen career pathways policies, guidance, or legislation	FY: 2015 8	NA	NA	8	NA	NA			10	37	

²⁰ Metric reported as TBD in the 2014 APR. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was “Not Met.”

²¹ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 135 and 117, respectively.

²² “High graduation rate” is defined as 65% or higher, which is roughly the 75th percentile.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
1.3.A. Degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort ²³	Current Population Survey (CPS) Year: 2012 44.0%	CPS Year: 2012 44.0%	CPS Year: 2013 44.8%	CPS Year: 2014 45.7%	45.6%	MET			46.8%	48.4%	
1.3.B. Retention rate of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates: Full-time ²⁴	AY: 2011 71.9%	AY: 2011 71.9%	AY: 2012 71.8%	AY: 2013 72.9%	72.1%	MET			NA	NA	
New Metric: Enrollment in IHEs where students' median earnings 10 years after entering college are below a minimum earnings threshold ²⁵	AY: 2012–13 9.7%	NA	NA	AY: 2012–13 9.7%	NA	NA			9.4%	9.0%	

²³ Metric is aligned with an APG.

²⁴ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 72.1% and 72.3%, respectively.

²⁵ “Minimum earnings threshold” is defined as the median earnings above the level of an institution at the 25th percentile for students 10 years after entering college, which equals \$19,000 for less-than-2-year institutions, \$26,000 for 2-year institutions, and \$35,000 for 4-year institutions.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
1.3.C. Retention rate of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates: Part-time ²⁶	AY: 2011 41.7%	AY: 2011 41.7%	AY: 2012 42.2%	AY: 2013 43.1%	42.6%	MET	<p>43.5% 43.0% 42.5% 42.0% 41.5% 41.0% 40.5% 40.0%</p> <p>42.6% 43.1%</p> <p>1.3.C</p>		NA	NA	<p>45.0% 43.0% 41.0% 39.0% 37.0% 35.0%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>
New Metric: FAFSA renewal rate	FY: 2015 79%	NA	NA	FY: 2015 79%	NA	NA	/		+/- one percentage point over prior year's actual	+/- one percentage point over prior year's actual	/
1.4.A. Number of STEM postsecondary credentials awarded	AY: 2010–11 531,018	AY: 2010–11 531,018	AY: 2011–12 556,696	AY: 2012–13 573,911	595,000	NOT MET	<p>600,000 580,000 560,000 540,000 520,000 500,000</p> <p>595,000 573,911</p> <p>1.4.A</p>		638,000	691,000	<p>580,000 560,000 540,000 520,000 500,000</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

1.1.A. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); annually

1.1.B. IPEDS; annually

1.1.C. The denominator is the number of graduating seniors according to the most recent projection by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The numerator is from FSA's Central Processing System and is based on the number of applications during the first nine months of the application cycle that are—as of September 30 of the first year of the application cycle—complete (not rejected); first-time filers; incoming freshmen, with or without previous college attendance; age 18 or less as of June 30 of the first year of the application cycle; reporting high school diploma attainment; and attended a high school in the fifty states and Washington, DC; annually

²⁶ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 42.9% and 43.5%, respectively.

- 1.1.D. Rehabilitation Services Administration-911 (RSA-911); annually
- 1.1.E. RSA-911; annually
- 1.2.A. FSA Cohort Default Rate (CDR) Report, September 2014, and IPEDS Data Center; annually
- 1.3.A. NCES Digest of Education Statistics, Table 104.30 (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_104.30.asp), Number of persons age 18 and over, by highest level of educational attainment, sex, race/ethnicity, and age: 2013. Tabulated from Current Population Survey (CPS) data, U.S. Census; annually
- 1.3.B. IPEDS Data Center; annually
- 1.3.C. IPEDS Data Center; annually
- 1.4.A. IPEDS Data Center; annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 1.1: Access and Affordability

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department supported or initiated a number of efforts and made progress toward this objective, despite limited ability to impact college costs or control price. The Department unveiled the expanded College Scorecard, a college choice tool that provides a wealth of customizable data—including many important metrics that have not been published before—so students and families can make informed choices based on the criteria most important to them. The Department also made the data behind the Scorecard publicly available in order to jumpstart efforts across the country to develop meaningful metrics for accountability. The Department continues to seek ways to simplify the FAFSA so it is easier and faster for students and families to apply for financial aid. Beginning with the 2017–18 award year, students can apply earlier and electronically retrieve tax information filed for an earlier year, rather than waiting until tax season to complete their applications. The number of IHEs agreeing to utilize the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet, a model form that makes it easier for students to compare financial aid offers, grew from around 2,000 in 2013–14 to more than 3,000 in 2014–15 following an outreach effort to encourage institutions to sign on.

Recognizing that FAFSA completion significantly increases chances that students will actually enroll in college, the Department issued guidance clarifying that state authorities may share FAFSA completion data with nonprofit organizations. This adds to the list of authorized entities that includes LEAs, The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grantees, tribal education authorities, and Indian organizations, so those entities can maximize the number of their students that complete the FAFSA.

The Department has taken additional actions to help struggling federal student loan borrowers manage their debt. The Department held negotiated rulemaking sessions and finalized regulations in October 2015 that expand Pay As You Earn, an income-based repayment program, to all student borrowers who have direct loans. In the wake of the collapse of Corinthian Colleges, the Department announced in June of this year that it would begin implementing a previously little-used provision in the law called “defense to repayment,” which allows borrowers to seek loan forgiveness if they believe they were defrauded by their college under state law, and assigned a Special Master to oversee the high volume of loan discharge cases. Since then, the Special Master has issued two reports with recommendations for developing a process to handle these borrower defense claims. The Department also announced its intent to establish a negotiated rulemaking committee in FY 2016 to address loan discharge and borrower defense issues, held two public hearings in September for the rulemaking, and since the end of the fiscal year has selected negotiators and announced three negotiated rulemaking sessions to be held in January, February, and March. The Department began to wind down contracts with five private collection agencies that provided inaccurate information to borrowers, and is revising existing contracts to ensure the proper balance between the interests of the borrower and of the taxpayer, as well as to increase the Department’s oversight capabilities.

Subsequent to FY 2015, the Department issued a report on October 1, 2015 with U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on a series of statutory, regulatory, and administrative recommendations to safeguard student borrowers. The recommendations include establishing: a way for borrowers to authorize the

Internal Revenue Service to release income information for multiple years to the Department to determine monthly payments under income-driven repayment plans; loan servicing standards; principles for borrower defense legislation; a streamlined discharge process for borrowers eligible for a total and permanent disability discharge of their loans; increased borrower protections in the federal student loan program; and protections for private student loan borrowers. The Under Secretary is overseeing a process to collect feedback from student borrowers and loan servicers in order to strengthen loan servicer contracts when they are renegotiated in the future.

Research indicates that correctional education programs for prisoners reduce recidivism rates. The Department therefore launched a Second Chance Pell Grant pilot through the Experimental Sites program. The goal of this limited pilot program is to increase access to high-quality educational opportunities and help incarcerated individuals successfully transition out of prison and back into the classroom or the workforce. In addition, the Department invested in a series of demonstration projects through the Improving Reentry Education grant competition, and launched a program to improve the outcomes of juvenile justice youth in the reentry process through a strong partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The partial restoration of Ability to Benefit provisions tied to career pathways restored access to federal student aid for millions of older youth and adults who lack a high school credential and are enrolled in a program that is part of a career pathway. The Department provided guidance through a Dear Colleague letter and initiated a series of webinars and other technical assistance activities to hold up programs and institutions that illustrate how to appropriately administer these new provisions. These efforts significantly open up affordable opportunities for those who were unable to complete high school due to a variety of reasons.

As part of the Reach Higher Campaign, the Department collaborated with the Office of the First Lady to create a competition to promote the development of mobile app solutions that will help students navigate education and career pathways, including CTE. (The competition was subsequently announced in October 2015.)

Although results for metrics 1.1.A, 1.1.B, 1.1.C, 1.1.D, and 1.1.E are influenced by actions taken by the Department, they are most influenced by factors that are beyond the control of the Department. For example, results for metrics 1.1.A and 1.1.B are most influenced by actions taken by postsecondary institutions, state and local agencies regarding funding decisions, and market forces and job creation trends. The Department met its FY 2015 performance targets for metrics 1.1.A and 1.1.B to slow the increase in average net price at public institutions. However, given the Department's limited ability to influence net price, the Department plans to replace these metrics with different metrics for FY 2016.

Regarding metric 1.1.C, the Department achieved its FY 2015 performance target to increase the number of high school students completing the FAFSA. Efforts such as the FAFSA completion project, increased outreach activities by FSA and other offices, and the Department's participation in the American Council on Education's National College Application Week initiative since 2011, likely contributed to success with this target.

States are required to submit data for metrics 1.1.D and 1.1.E by November 30 for the previous fiscal year. As such, the FY 2015 data are not available until spring 2016. The *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA), signed by the President in July 2014, reforms the public workforce system by strengthening alignment and access to employment, training, education, and support services needed to succeed in the labor market. In particular, the WIOA includes many changes that are designed to strengthen and improve employment for individuals with

disabilities, many served by the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supported Employment programs. WIOA places significant emphasis on obtaining competitive integrated employment, especially in the amendments to the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. Program services are designed to maximize the ability of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, to achieve competitive integrated employment through customized employment, supported employment, and other individualized services. The Department will continue to track national aggregate annual earnings of Vocational Rehabilitation consumers and transition-aged youth. Future annual earnings are expected to improve by the regulatory actions that the Department will undertake in FY 2016.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Department will take additional actions to help struggling federal student loan borrowers manage their debt. These actions include publishing final rules in October 2015 that expand the Pay As You Earn repayment program to all student borrowers with direct loans, which is expected to help millions of struggling borrowers; building on successful pilot programs to communicate information about federal student loan repayment options; conducting rulemaking on loan discharge and borrower defense issues; and advocating for the administration's proposal for a single income-driven repayment plan.

America's College Promise, President Obama's proposed initiative announced in January 2015, would allow students to attend community colleges tuition-free if they attend at least half-time, make satisfactory academic progress to a degree, and maintain a 2.5 grade point average. If Congress passes legislation to enact the proposal, and all states participate and provide quality programs, the plan could benefit millions of students by making a higher education more affordable.

Although states are beginning to increase appropriations per full-time equivalent student, funding for higher education overall continues at historically low levels, which places pressure on institutions to raise costs in order to maintain quality and levels of service. Without specific programs, such as the proposed College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus program (discussed in strategic objective 1.3) and America's College Promise, the Department has little influence over state funding decisions and is limited in its ability to impact net price and college cost. Despite these challenges, the Department will continue to highlight institutions that are taking steps to ensure affordability for families and will support practices that reduce cost by reducing the time taken to earn a degree, such as competency-based education (see discussion of Experimental Sites programs in section 1.2), dual enrollment,²⁷ remedial education reforms, and improved articulation between institutions. The Department will also build on its existing work on consumer information tools, such as the College Scorecard; its work on consumer protections; and improving student loan servicing to ensure students have access to high-quality, affordable education and quality customer service.

Objective 1.2: Quality

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department pursued several rulemaking activities during FY 2015 on higher education topics, including the use of prepaid debit cards at IHEs; teacher preparation programs; and implementation of WIOA, which reforms adult education training and services, including in the areas of English language acquisition and vocational rehabilitation for individuals with

²⁷ An Experimental Site project addressing dual enrollment was subsequently announced on October 30, 2015.

disabilities. Most significantly, the Department implemented the Gainful Employment regulations, which took effect July 1, 2015, and began collecting data from institutions. The regulations foster program quality through transparency and accountability. Institutions will be required to notify students about completion rates as well as debt and earnings outcomes for certain types of occupational-oriented programs; programs that do not meet established standards risk losing eligibility for federal student aid funds. The Department also implemented its state authorization regulations on July 1 and reminded institutions and states of dual requirements that 1) IHEs must be authorized to operate in a given state by the appropriate state agency, and 2) that agency must have a process for handling student complaints.

The Department continues to encourage the higher education community to focus on innovative, transparent, and validated approaches to student learning. Through the Experimental Sites initiative, the Department announced experiments in the areas of competency-based learning, Federal Work Study, and prior learning assessments. The results of these experiments will guide future policy decisions. The Department and the White House convened a group of 50 leading higher education experts for a discussion of innovation in higher education. Participants spent the day considering opportunities for innovation on which the federal government and others could take action expediently, and were led through a design-thinking workshop about how online learning tools can catalyze improvements in postsecondary education.

The Department awarded 18 First in the World grants totaling \$60 million, with nine of the winning applications awarded to minority-serving institutions. The program focuses on high-need students and promotes evidence-based strategies and practices for college access and completion. Funded projects include a partnership of community colleges to implement proactive and individualized student support services, informed by an early alert and advising system based in predictive analytics; incorporating new teaching and learning strategies into the curriculum and student experience at an Historically Black College; and creating seamless transfer of lower-division general education requirements across participating institutions based on students' demonstration of learning outcomes regardless of courses or credits completed. The Department, through a contractor, will provide technical assistance to assist all grantees in conducting rigorous project evaluations. Those projects showing evidence of success will serve as models for possible dissemination or could be eligible for future validation and scale-up grants.

The Department awarded 40 grants totaling \$17.5 million in the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP).²⁸ This program helps postsecondary schools expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability, as well as build a framework to help students complete college. For the FY 2015 competition, the Department included a competitive preference priority supporting programs, practices, or strategies that are based on rigorous evidence.

The Department created an interagency task force on for-profit schools, including the Departments of Education, Defense, Justice, Labor, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Securities and Exchange Commission. The task force established a working group to focus on enforcement-related issues.

The Department collaborated with the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Institute

²⁸ FY 2015 awards listed at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3a/awards.html>.

of Museum and Library Services to develop Performance Partnership Pilots (P3) for Disconnected Youth. Nine pilots were announced in October 2015 that will test the hypothesis that additional flexibility for states, localities, and tribes, in the form of blending funds and obtaining waivers of certain programmatic requirements, can help overcome some of the significant hurdles that states, localities, and tribes may face in providing intensive, comprehensive, and sustained service pathways and improving outcomes for disconnected youth. Proposed priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria for a second competition are under development (subsequently published in October as well).

In collaboration with the National Economic Council, the Department of Labor, and the Aspen Institute, the Department held an UpSkill Summit at the White House on April 24, 2015. One hundred employers made commitments to help millions of frontline workers develop their skills, training and credentials. The Department secured similar commitments from national and international labor unions and labor-management collaborations.

As part of the President's commitment to double the number of apprenticeships in the country, the Department collaborated with the Department of Labor and the Office of the Vice President to secure over 200 commitments from community colleges and their Registered Apprenticeship partners to grant college credits and degrees to individuals who hold apprenticeship program completion certificates.

The Department surpassed its FY 2015 target for reducing the number of low-performing institutions—i.e., those with high student loan cohort default rates and below average completion rates. However, the Department proposes to replace this metric in FY 2016 with other metrics that take advantage of better data available through the expanded College Scorecard.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Department will continue various rulemaking development and implementation activities during FY 2016. Working cooperatively with schools and the Social Security Administration, the Department must ensure that activities such as data matching and validation occur on schedule in processing Gainful Employment data. The Department will also publish final rules regarding WIOA, Teacher Prep, and cash management regulations.²⁹

In the innovation space, the Department will continue to develop specifications for Experimental Sites projects on dual enrollment and alternative methods of quality assurance (the latter project, dubbed Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships, or EQUIP, was subsequently announced in October 2015, as was the dual enrollment project). Processing amended Program Participation Agreements for institutions that wish to participate in the competency-based education and prior learning assessment experiments remains a complex activity and has taken longer than anticipated, but the Department expects to complete the process in FY 2016 so the experiments can commence. The Department will also consider steps that can be taken to help accreditors strengthen their oversight of institutions.

The possible reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act* could provide an opportunity to develop new ways to encourage innovation and quality in this sector. Continuing to embed evidence-based practices in grant competitions is another area in which the Department can foster quality in terms of better student outcomes. The interagency For-Profit Task Force will

²⁹ Final Rules regarding Cash Management Regulations were published in October 2015.

work toward sharing information to ensure that students are protected from unscrupulous institutional behavior.

The reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006* creates opportunities to name quality features of CTE programs, strengthen the link between funding and results by incentivizing performance-based funding (such as completion-based state funding as an alternative to enrollment-based state funding mechanisms), and embed innovation funding in a reauthorized law that would include innovations, such as the American Technical Training Fund targeted at cohort-based, accelerated programming for high-demand sectors and occupations that embed remediation into program design.

Finally, the emphasis in WIOA Title II on integrated education and training programming opens the door for programs that by design allow adults to work on their basic skills while simultaneously pursuing credit-bearing courses at the postsecondary level that lead toward certificates or degrees in high-demand fields.

Objective 1.3: Completion

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department made progress through a variety of activities to support this strategic objective, especially by embedding a focus on completion in more grant competitions. One competition incorporated a competitive preference priority to increase postsecondary access, affordability and completion: Predominantly Black Institutions. The Department awarded grants to Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions that are designed to increase the number and proportion of high-need students who are academically prepared for, enroll in, or complete on time college, other postsecondary education, or other CTE. In the Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant competition, the Department incorporated two competitive preference priorities: one to support tutoring, counseling, and student service programs designed to improve academic success, including innovative and customized instruction courses designed to help retain students and move the students rapidly into core courses and through program completion; and one to develop and implement high-quality online or hybrid credit-bearing learning opportunities that reduce the cost of higher education, reduce time to degree completion, or allow students to progress at their own pace. First in the World grants, discussed in strategic objective 1.2, also support practices that improve college completion. The IES announced a competition to establish a Research Network on Scalable Practices to Support College Completion, and expects to award a grant during the first quarter of FY 2016.

The Department launched a new National Activities Project to study CTE stackable certificates. During the project's first year, the Department will gather information and convene knowledgeable stakeholders. During the second year, the Department will provide technical assistance to the field. A new CTE innovation program proposed in the FY 2016 budget, the American Technical Training Fund, would support the development and implementation of new models and practices at the local level.

The College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus program, also proposed in the FY 2016 budget, would provide \$7 billion in mandatory budget authority over 10 years to support colleges that successfully enroll and graduate a significant number of low- and moderate-income students on time and encourage all institutions to improve their performance.

Many students that enter higher education are not college ready. Improving the community college developmental education system is an important element of improving community

college completion. In 2015, the Department launched “Supporting Student Success: Adult Education and Remedial Education Reform in Community Colleges,” a national activity to improve developmental education practices across several states.

The Department cohosted with the White House a College Opportunity Summit on December 4, 2015, focused on completion and affordability, as well as on partnerships between P-12 and higher education to promote educational quality and seamless transitions from high school to college. Almost 300 commitments were announced at the summit to improve college opportunities for young people in communities across the country through college readiness partnerships, college advising, improving STEM learning and degree completion for underrepresented students, and helping more students complete their degrees.

In an effort to scale up successful practices that lead to completion, especially in the area of remedial education, the Department developed communities of practice among minority-serving community colleges. Lead institutions were identified, recruited, and trained. Two communities of practice have been launched as of October 2015. Subsequently, on November 16–17, 2015, approximately 130 minority-serving community colleges met at the Department and exchanged promising practices; received technical assistance from the Department and 13 federal agencies; and heard from leading authorities in the fields of minority-serving institution research, philanthropy, and student success strategies. Several colleges stepped forward to join the other lead colleges in growing the communities of practice that will continue the capacity-building dialogue with the federal agencies.

The Department achieved its performance target for metric 1.3.A with an educational attainment rate of 45.7 percent. The Department also achieved its performance targets for metric 1.3.B with a retention rate of 72.9 percent for full-time students and metric 1.3.C with a retention rate of 43.1 percent for part-time students. Given the Department’s limited ability to impact retention rates overall, the Department proposes alternative metrics to replace 1.3.B and 1.3.C for FY 2016.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Department’s ability to significantly impact completion rates on a large scale nationwide depends on Congressional support for programs proposed through the budget process. There is also a time lag in that actions and changes initiated in any particular year will take several years to show results as the cohort progresses through its educational programs. The Department will continue to incorporate postsecondary completion as a competitive preference priority in grant competitions where appropriate.

While the Department achieved its FY 2015 performance target for educational attainment, the targets in future years are set to grow at increasingly accelerated rates in order to reach the President’s 2020 goal of 60 percent degree attainment. However, while increases in high school graduation rates (one of the factors that feed into the attainment rate) are growing, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that fewer high school graduates are opting for college than they were in 2009—65.9 percent in 2013 and 68.4 percent in 2014, compared to a high point of 70.1 percent in 2009.³⁰ Total fall enrollment has declined as well, falling by an estimated 3.6 percent in 2014 from an enrollment surge in 2010.³¹ These data may be attributable to the

³⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, College Enrollment and Work Activity of High School Graduates News Release, April 22, 2014, and April 16, 2015: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgcec.htm>.

³¹ National Center for Educational Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 2014, “Table 303.10. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, sex of student, and control of institution: Selected years, 1947 through 2024”: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_303.10.asp.

natural cycle of higher enrollment rates during economic downturns followed by comparatively lower rates as the economy improves, but these trends may impact the ability to achieve the targeted growth in the attainment rate unless institutions significantly increase the percentage of students who complete their programs of study. Despite efforts to support college completion for underrepresented students, equity gaps in the attainment rate based on race, ethnicity, and disability status have not lessened.

Subpopulation Breakout for Metric 1.3.A: Degree attainment among 25–34-year-old age cohort, by race/ethnicity and disability status*

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian	Two or More Races	Disability
Percentage, 2012	51.6%	32.6%	22.6%	68.7%	37.2%**	29.3%**	45.7%	20.9%
Percentage, 2013	52.4%	33.2%	22.7%	70.9%	41.4%**	25.1%**	46.7%	19.1%
Percentage, 2014	53.6%	33.0%	24.0%	71.5%	30.6%**	21.4%**	44.4%	21.0%

Note: Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

* Disability is defined as: deaf; blind; difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; difficulty doing errands alone.

** Interpret with caution; small sample sizes reduce the reliability of these estimates.

Data Source and Frequency of Collection: NCES tabulations of data from the Current Population Survey, Census; annually

Objective 1.4: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Pathways

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department, in consultation with OMB, has highlighted this objective as a focus area for improvement. The number of STEM postsecondary credentials awarded is shaped by actions taken by postsecondary institutions, by state and local agencies through funding decisions, and by market forces and jobs creation trends. Many external factors impact this objective but the Department can nonetheless assert considerable influence to improve quality and access in STEM education. The total number of STEM postsecondary credentials awarded reflects a mixed response to the President’s call to graduate an additional 1 million STEM majors by 2020. To reach that ambitious goal, the target of total credentials established for FY 2015 was 595,000; the actual number of granted credentials was 573,911. The First in the World program, which seeks to address persistent and widespread challenges in postsecondary education for high-need students, awarded more than half of the development grants for implementation and evaluation of projects to increase success in STEM fields or that utilize education technology to enhance learning and assessment.

OCTAE is leading initiatives seeking to increase knowledge of and access to postsecondary STEM opportunities. For example, the CTE makeover challenge will incorporate “making” and “maker spaces” into CTE programs by upgrading or modernizing facilities that meet the needs of manufacturing in the 21st century. The Reach Higher App challenge will spur innovation in career exploration by empowering students with individualized career and education information. During this reporting period, the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities held its annual conference focused on STEM and entrepreneurship.

Across the administration, the Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) has established a task force which is working to enhance the undergraduate experience of STEM majors through

a formally chartered interagency working group led by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The group is focused on four major objectives:

- Evidence-based practices to improve undergraduate learning and retention in STEM;
- Community college efforts to both support two-year students and create bridges between two- and four-year postsecondary institutions;
- Research experiences that involve both university-industry and university-federal entity partnerships, particularly for students in the first two years; and
- Promoting mathematics success to help combat excessively high failure rates in introductory math courses at the undergraduate level.

Representatives from the Department have been instrumental in bringing new focus to the role of community colleges and articulation programs in supporting undergraduate STEM education. We anticipate that increasing the overall pipeline of candidates pursuing postsecondary education through community colleges and articulation programs will help address the decline in STEM certificates awarded.

Trends for females and minority students point to continued challenges in broadening participation in STEM. More STEM credentials were awarded in 2012–13 to students of each gender and racial/ethnic category—including Hispanic and Black—than in previous years, with the exception of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Along with the CoSTEM interagency working group focused on broadening participation in STEM, the My Brother's Keeper and Reach Higher initiatives, as well as other targeted efforts, may help expand participation of underrepresented groups in postsecondary STEM programs.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Office of STEM has been in place since June 2014. As a comparatively new entity one of its primary tasks has been to identify programs within the Department and across the federal government that are well suited for enhancing and increasing STEM participation through strategic use of STEM priorities. For programs that have already implemented STEM strategies, the office lends its expertise for program review and evaluation. The investments at the Department that address STEM degree and credential completion in particular are limited to select programs that target minority-serving institutions. As the next grant cycle commences, the Department is engaging in planning meetings that will identify areas for strategic leverage—technical assistance to grantees, preaward support to potential applicants, etc. The Department will continue to promote STEM pathway opportunities within the CoSTEM structure that include community colleges, as well as engage with specific STEM-focused initiatives led by corporate and philanthropic entities that help elevate the quality of STEM programs and advance STEM participation (e.g., STEM Learning Ecosystems).

Subpopulation Breakout for Metric 1.4.A: STEM* postsecondary credentials awarded by degree-granting institutions, by gender and race/ethnicity**

Year	Total	Gender		Race/Ethnicity								
		Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander			American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or More Races	Non-resident Alien
							Total	Asian	Pacific Islander			
2010-11	531,018	370,922	160,096	319,327	47,014	45,794	51,461	50,250	1,211	3,601	5,551	58,270
2011-12	556,696	387,705	168,991	333,652	47,004	49,262	53,670	52,336	1,334	3,600	7,388	62,120
2012-13	573,911	397,074	176,837	337,191	47,721	52,982	56,984	55,564	1,420	3,580	9,809	65,644

* STEM includes the following fields: Biological and biomedical sciences, Computer and information sciences, Engineering, Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields, Mathematics and statistics, and Physical sciences and science technologies. Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields excludes “Construction trades” and “Mechanic and repair technologies/technicians,” which are listed separately. The baseline has been recalculated from what was reported in the *FY 2013 Annual Performance Report and FY 2015 Annual Performance Plan* because of revised IPEDS data. Additionally, last year’s data included Military technologies and applied sciences, which is no longer included in the calculation.

** Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Reported racial/ethnic distributions of students by level of degree, field of degree, and sex were used to estimate race/ethnicity for students whose race/ethnicity was not reported. To facilitate trend comparisons, certain aggregations have been made of the degree fields as reported in the IPEDS Fall survey: “Agriculture and natural resources” includes Agriculture, agriculture operations, and related sciences and Natural resources and conservation; and “Business” includes Business management, marketing, and related support services and Personal and culinary services.

Data Source and Frequency of Collection: IPEDS Data Center; annually

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 1

The Department must ensure that all students—recent high school graduates and adult learners alike—are well prepared for college and careers by helping more of them enroll in postsecondary education or training and helping to increase the number of those who complete programs of study with a degree or certificate. This effort includes continuing to promote STEM pathway opportunities that help elevate the quality of STEM programs and advance STEM participation.

The Department continues to help struggling federal student loan borrowers manage their debt. Activities planned for FY 2016 include rulemaking to address borrower defense to repayment issues; new borrower outreach efforts about repayment options; strengthening loan servicing in ways that better serve borrowers; and advocating to simplify income-driven repayment plans. FSA is also developing a student aid complaint system that will allow students to submit complaints easily. Another FSA initiative, creating an enterprise data warehouse, will provide timely, accurate, and consistent access to FSA data. FSA has begun releasing additional information and reports to the public and will continue those transparency efforts in FY 2016.

To most effectively impact attainment rates, the Department will implement the President’s College Value and Affordability Agenda. One central strategy promotes innovation and competition (such as in course redesign and student services, accelerating time to degree by fostering dual enrollment and competency-based education). To support innovation and competition, the Department will launch Experimental Sites pilots on competency-based

education, prior learning assessment, dual enrollment, and alternative methods of quality assurance; and award P3 for Disconnected Youth.³²

A second major strategy holds institutions and students accountable for completion and postsecondary outcomes by fostering more informed decision-making by students and wiser investment of resources by institutions. To support this strategy, the Department will consider enhancements and additional data sources for the College Scorecard; continue implementing the Gainful Employment regulations; publish regulations implementing WIOA; and convene minority-serving community colleges in an effort to scale up successful practices that lead to completion, especially in the area of remedial education.

The Department will continue to spotlight model state programs and draw on them to shape federal strategies. The Department will highlight institutions that are working in noteworthy ways to successfully enroll and graduate low-income students. Furthermore, the Department continues to implement an evidence-based approach for institutional grants, with, for example, the use of competitive priorities in the SIP and the tiered-evidence structure of the First in the World grant competition. The net effect of these strategies will be to boost completion rates and, by extension, educational attainment.

³² The P3 for Disconnected Youth awards were subsequently announced in October 2015.

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 Leader: Ann Whalen

Objective 2.1: Standards and Assessments. Support implementation of internationally benchmarked college- and career-ready standards, with aligned, valid, and reliable assessments. **Objective Leader: Ary Amerikaner**

Metric 2.1.A: Number of states/territories³³ that have adopted college- and career-ready standards³⁴

Metric 2.1.B: Number of states/territories³⁵ that are implementing next-generation reading and mathematics assessments, aligned with college- and career-ready standards

Objective 2.2: Effective Teachers and Strong Leaders. Improve the preparation, recruitment, retention, development, support, evaluation, recognition, and equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders.³⁶ **Objective Leader: Ary Amerikaner**

Metric 2.2.A: Number of states that have fully implemented teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that consider multiple measures of effectiveness, with student growth as a significant factor

Objective 2.3: School Climate and Community. Increase the success, safety, and health of students, particularly in high-need schools, and deepen family and community engagement. **Objective Leader: Heather Rieman**

Metric 2.3.A: Disparity in the rates of out-of-school suspensions for SWDs and youth of color (youth of color metric)

Metric 2.3.B: Disparity in the rates of out-of-school suspensions for students with disabilities and youth of color, SWDs, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) only metric)

Objective 2.4: Turn Around Schools and Close Achievement Gaps. Accelerate achievement by supporting states and districts in turning around low-performing schools and closing achievement gaps, and developing models of next-generation high schools. **Objective Leader: Ary Amerikaner**

³³ Revising metric language to include “states/territories” to align with the 2014–15 APG statement.

³⁴ College- and career-ready standards included in this metric are in the fields of reading/language arts and math.

³⁵ Revising metric language to include “states/territories” to align with the 2014–15 APG statement.

³⁶ States with approved ESEA Flexibility requests were initially required to implement teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by 2014–15 or 2015–16, depending on the school year of initial approval. Through ESEA Flexibility renewal in fall 2014, the Department committed to working with states that need to make adjustments to implementation timelines or sequencing through the ESEA Flexibility renewal process.

Metric 2.4.A: Number of persistently low graduation rate high schools

Metric 2.4.B: Percentage of Cohort 1 priority schools that have met the state exit criteria and exited priority school status³⁷

Metric 2.4.C: Percentage of Cohort 1 focus schools that have met the state exit criteria and exited focus school status³⁸

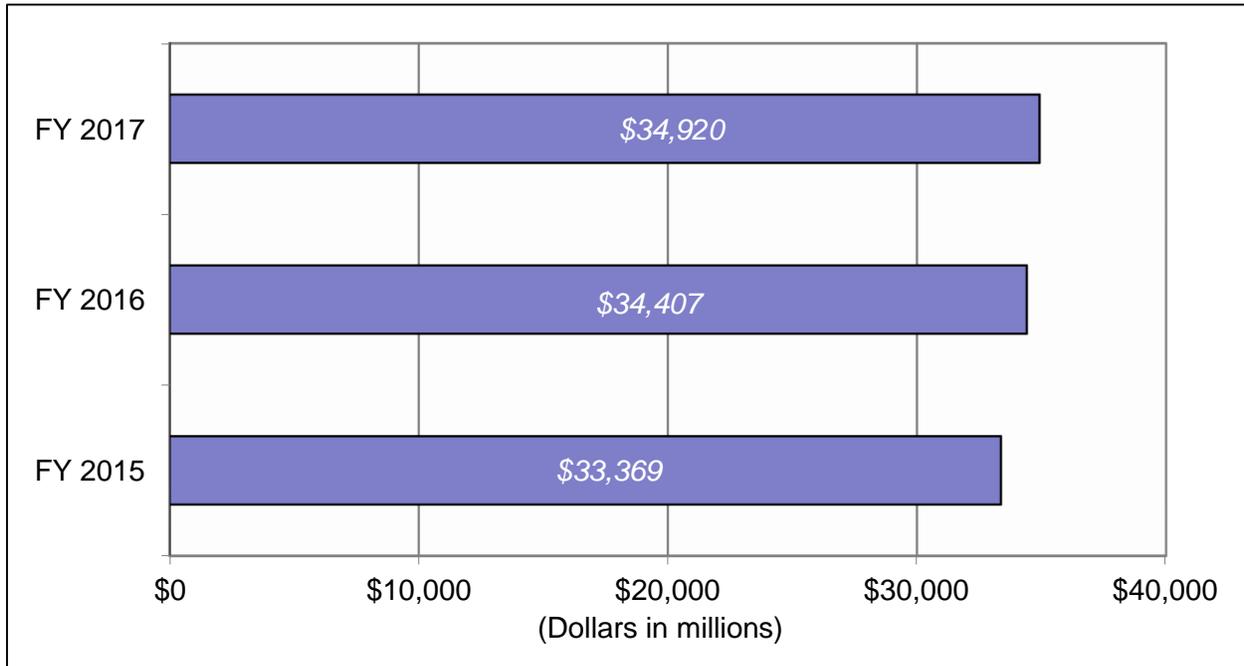
Objective 2.5: STEM Teaching and Learning. Increase the number and quality of STEM teachers and increase opportunities for students to access rich STEM learning experiences.

Objective Leader: Russ Shilling

Metric 2.5.A: Percentage of high school and middle school teachers who teach STEM as their main assignment who hold a corresponding undergraduate degree

Metric 2.5.B: Number of public high school graduates who have taken at least one STEM AP exam

Goal 2 Discretionary Resources



³⁷ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

³⁸ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

Major Discretionary Programs and Activities³⁹ Supporting Goal 2 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
OESE	ED	2.4	School improvement grants	506	450	0
OESE	ED	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4	Title I Grants to local education agencies	14,410	14,910	15,360
OESE	I&I	2.1	State assessments	378	378	403
OESE	I&I	2.2	Teacher and school leader incentive grants	230	230	250
OESE	SIP	NA	Student support and academic enrichment grants	0	0	500
OESE	SIP	2.2	Supporting effective instruction State grants	2,350	2,350	2,250
OESE	SSS	NA	21st century community learning centers	1,152	1,167	1,000
OII	I&I	2.2, 2.3, 2.4	Charter schools grants	253	333	350
OII	I&I	2.2, 2.3, 2.6	Magnet schools assistance	92	97	115
OII	I&I	2.1, 2.4, 2.5	Next generation high schools (proposed)	0	0	80
OII	I&I	2.2	Teach to lead (proposed)	0	0	10
OII	SIP	2.5	Mathematics and science partnerships	153	153	0
OII	SSS	2.1, 2.2, 2.3	Promise Neighborhoods	57	73	128
OPE	HE	2.2	Teacher and principal pathways (proposed)	0	0	125
OSERS	SE	2.1, 2.2, 2.3	Special Education grants to states	11,498	11,913	11,913
Subtotal				31,077	32,053	32,484
Other Discretionary Programs/Activities				2,292	2,354	2,437
TOTAL, GOAL 2				33,369	34,407	34,920

POC = Principal Office Component

NA = Not applicable.

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Public Benefit

The goal for America's elementary and secondary educational system is clear: every student should graduate from high school ready for college and a career. Every student should have meaningful opportunities from which to choose upon graduation from high school. Over the past several years, states, districts, and schools have initiated groundbreaking reforms and innovations to try to meet this goal. For the first time, almost every state is supporting higher standards that will demonstrate that students who meet those standards are truly college- and career-ready. Many states are implementing assessments that are not only aligned with these new standards, but also gauge essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and the application of knowledge. At the same time, states, districts, and schools are working to meet the challenges of ensuring that every classroom has an excellent teacher and every school has a strong and effective leader; building local capacity to support successful school turnarounds; redesigning high school education by building stronger connections among secondary education, postsecondary education, and the workplace; and improving teacher preparation and classroom instruction in STEM education.

However, while many schools are increasing the quality of instruction and improving academic achievement, there is also broad agreement that the United States education system fails to

³⁹ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

consistently provide all students with the excellent education necessary to achieve college- and career-readiness. The result is that too many of our students are failing to reach their full potential. Data from the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that low-income students scored 24 to 28 points below their more advantaged peers. The achievement gaps between black and white students were between 24 and 32 points and achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students were between 18 and 24 points.⁴⁰

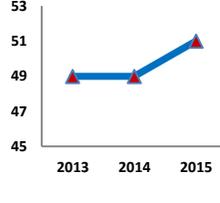
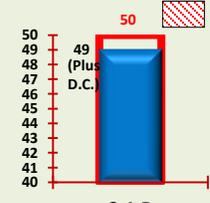
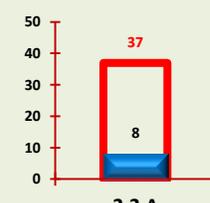
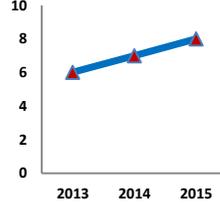
Many children, particularly children from low-income families, students with disabilities (SWDs), ELs, and children of color, confront not only an achievement gap, but also an opportunity gap. Today, a student attending a high school with high minority enrollment is much less likely to be offered calculus and physics than a student in a high school with low minority enrollment. Closing the opportunity gap will require that school resources, talent, and spending be targeted toward kids who need help the most.

The Department's elementary and secondary education reforms focus on the building blocks needed for schools, school districts, and states to more consistently deliver excellent classroom instruction for all students. The foundation of these reforms is a system for improving learning and teaching that aligns with college- and career-ready standards, high-quality formative and summative assessments, and engaging and effective instructional content. Ensuring that U.S. students have the critical thinking skills and other tools they need to be effective in the 21st-century economy means improving teaching and learning in all content areas—from language arts and STEM to history, civics and government, geography, foreign languages, the arts, economics and financial literacy, environmental education, computer science, health education, and other subjects.

On December 10, 2015, the President signed a reauthorization of the ESEA, the ESSA. The law requires that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers and that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through annual statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward those high standards. It also continues the ESEA's focus on ensuring that states and school districts account for the progress of all students, take meaningful actions to improve the lowest-performing schools, and ensure equitable access to excellent educators. The Department is developing approaches to best support the implementation of the ESSA. The FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA for the Department's work.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2015 Reading and Mathematics Assessments, http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#/

Goal 2: Details

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target 2015	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015			Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
2.1.A. Number of states/territories that have adopted college- and career-ready standards ⁴¹	SY: 2012–13 49, plus DC	49, plus DC	49, plus DC and Puerto Rico	SY: 2014–15 51 (49 plus DC and Puerto Rico)	50	MET			52	52	
2.1.B. Number of states/territories that are implementing next-generation reading and mathematics assessments, aligned with college- and career-ready standards ⁴²	SY: 2012–13 0	0	0	SY: 2014–15 49 (48 plus DC)	50	NOT MET			52	52	
2.2.A. Number of states that have fully implemented teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that consider multiple measures of effectiveness, with student growth as a significant factor ⁴³	SY: 2012–13 6	6	7	8	37	NOT MET			22 ⁴⁴	39 ⁴⁵	

⁴¹ Revising metric language to include “states/territories” to align with the 2014–15 APG statement. 2014 Metric reported as “Not Met.” However, metric was “Met” given the inclusion of territories to align with the APG statement.

⁴² Metric is aligned with an APG. Revising metric language to include “states/territories” to align with the 2014–15 APG statement.

⁴³ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁴⁴ The out-year performance targets are revised to reflect updated information provided by states through ESEA Flexibility renewal requests regarding implementation timelines.

⁴⁵ The out-year performance targets are revised to reflect updated information provided by states through ESEA Flexibility renewal requests regarding implementation timelines.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
2.3.A. Disparity in the rates of out-of-school suspensions for students with disabilities and youth of color (youth of color metric)	SY: 2011–12 10.7% point disparity	Not Collected	TBD SY 2013–14 data collected in 2015 and available in 2016	Not Collected	NA Biennial Metric				6.7% point disparity	NA Biennial Metric	
2.3.B. Disparity in the rates of out-of-school suspensions for students with disabilities and youth of color (SWDs, IDEA only metric)	SY: 2011–12 5.7% point disparity	Not Collected	TBD SY 2013–14 data collected in 2015 and available in 2016	Not Collected	NA Biennial Metric				2.7% point disparity	NA Biennial Metric	
2.4.A. Number of persistently low graduation rate high schools	SY: 2011–12 775	SY: 2011–12 775	SY: 2012–13 737	SY: 2013–14 680	699	MET		5% annual reduction	5% annual reduction ⁴⁶		
2.4.B. Percentage of Cohort 1 priority schools that have met the state exit criteria and exited priority school status ⁴⁷	SY: 2013–14 NA	NA	16.3% ⁴⁸	NA	15%	NA ⁴⁹			NA	NA	

⁴⁶ The baseline data for this performance metric were recalculated from what was reported in the FY 2013 APR and FY 2015 APP. The targets remain at a 5% reduction each year.

⁴⁷ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 20.0% and 25.0%, respectively.

⁴⁸ Metric reported as TBD in the 2014 APR. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was “Met.”

⁴⁹ The FY 2015 data for this metric are not available. Further, the Department has decided to remove this metric due to unforeseen challenges in using the data provided by states. These challenges are discussed in more detail in appendix B of this report.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
New Metric: Percentage of SIG schools in Cohort 5 that are above the 25th percentile in mathematics, as measured by their state assessments	SY: 2013–14 19.7%	NA	NA	SY: 2013–14 19.7%	NA	NA	/		TBD	TBD	/
2.4.C. Percentage of Cohort 1 focus schools that have met the state exit criteria and exited focus school status ⁵⁰	SY: 2013–14 NA	NA	11.9% ⁵¹	NA	15%	NA ⁵²	/		NA	NA	/
New Metric: Percentage of SIG schools in Cohort 5 that are above the 25th percentile in reading/language arts, as measured by their state assessments	SY: 2013–14 20.1%	NA	NA	SY: 2013–14 20.1%	NA	NA	/		TBD	TBD	/
2.5.A. Percentage of high school and middle school teachers who teach STEM as their main assignment who hold a corresponding undergraduate degree	AY: 2011–12 62.2%	Not Collected	Not Collected	Not Collected	NA	NA	/		65.3%	65.3%	/
2.5.B. Number of public high school graduates who have taken at least one STEM AP exam	AY: 2011–12 497,922	AY: 2011–12 497,922	AY: 2012–13 527,001	AY: 2013–14 555,119	581,419	NOT MET			632,642	691,541	

NA = Not applicable.
TBD = To be determined.

⁵⁰ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 20.0% and 25.0%, respectively.

⁵¹ Metric reported as TBD in the 2014 APR. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was “Met.”

⁵² The FY 2015 data for this metric are not available. Further, the Department has decided to remove this metric due to unforeseen challenges in using the data provided by states. These challenges are discussed in more detail in appendix B of this report.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

- 2.1.A. *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Monitoring*; annually
- 2.1.B. *ESEA Flexibility Monitoring*; annually
- 2.2.A. *ESEA Flexibility Applications and Monitoring*; annually
- 2.3.A. *Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)*; biennially
- 2.3.B. *CRDC*; biennially
- 2.4.A. *EDFacts*; annually
- 2.4.B. *EDFacts*; annually
- 2.4.C. *EDFacts*; annually
- 2.5.A. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), NCES*; quadrennially
- 2.5.B. *College Board/Advanced Placement (AP) administrative records*; annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 2.1: Standards and Assessments

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

States have recognized the need to improve the rigor and quality of their standards and assessments. With standards in place, educators are designing instructional strategies to engage students and implementing support systems to strengthen college- and career-ready skills for all students, including those with disabilities and ELs.

Results for this metric are most influenced by actions taken by states and LEAs, but also are influenced by other factors. For example, the complexity of developing appropriate assessment instruments and approaches for students poses significant challenges, especially for children from low-income families, children who are ELs, and children with disabilities. Developing and administering college- and career-ready assessments and supporting teachers through training related to the new standards will require continuing support.

Challenges and Next Steps:

On December 10, 2015, the President signed a reauthorization of the ESEA, the ESSA. The law requires that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers and that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through annual statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward those high standards. The FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA.

While the Department evaluates how it will best implement the requirements of the new law, where applicable, it will continue to leverage federal investments, including Titles I, II, and III of the ESSA, as well as IDEA, and provide guidance and technical assistance to states to ensure that teachers and principals are well prepared and students have the resources and support needed to graduate from high school ready for college and careers.

A key challenge facing the Department over the next two years relates to the changes states may make to their currently adopted college- and career-ready standards due to decisions implemented by state leadership or state legislatures. Another key challenge is supporting states with the implementation of their college- and career-ready aligned assessments for all students, including ELs, SWDs, and economically disadvantaged and low-achieving students, to ensure that all students are prepared for postsecondary success.

The Department is taking steps to address these challenges by developing and targeting technical assistance activities that will, in part, increase state capacity to leverage limited resources and continue to identify promising practices across multiple states. First, the Department has released its [Title I assessment peer review guidance](#), which highlights the requirements for a high-quality assessment to help support state assessment development; in FY 2016, the Department will begin conducting peer review of state assessment systems. The Department will also build a library of resources (i.e., a central location for practitioners looking for best practices) to assist state educational agencies (SEAs) in transitioning to college- and career-ready standards, leveraging work that has occurred during RTT with other partner organizations such as Achieve, Student Achievement Partners, National Parent Teacher Association, and others. In addition, the Department is working internally to coordinate the provision of technical assistance across OESE, OSEP, and other related offices and programs.

The Department also funds a Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation (part of the Comprehensive Centers program) that helps build the capacity of state educational agencies to implement college- and career-ready standards. The Department will continue to work with states by taking such steps as providing technical assistance and guidance to states as they implement the next steps outlined in the President's Testing Action Plan announced in November 2015.

Objective 2.2: Effective Teachers and Strong Leaders

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Over the past several years, states and school districts have made educator effectiveness a key priority in their reform efforts. States and districts are working on the development and implementation of high-quality teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, as well as broader human capital management systems that use the results of evaluation systems to inform targeted educator development and support opportunities, placement, retention, promotion, compensation, and other personnel decisions. The Department has supported the work of states and districts in this area through key programs and initiatives such as [Title I](#), [Title II](#), [RTT](#), [Teacher Incentive Fund](#), [ESEA Flexibility](#), [Excellent Educators for All](#), and the Comprehensive Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (in addition to the other regional and content comprehensive centers), and using these programs and initiatives to provide resources and technical assistance to states and districts so that they can move forward with successful implementation. In 2015, more states and districts are implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that are based on multiple measures, including evidence of student learning growth as a significant factor.

Similar to objective 2.1, the results of this metric are greatly influenced by state and district actions, as well as other factors not in the Department's control. As teacher and school leader evaluation and support systems are governed by state and local policies, without revisions in state policies and new partnerships with teacher and principal organizations, reforms of existing evaluation and support systems are unlikely to be successful.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Implementation of teacher and leader evaluation and support systems has proven to be very challenging work for states and districts, particularly during the time of transition to new standards and assessments, and has caused states to need to adjust timelines and sequencing of implementation steps. In order to mitigate these risks, the Department has provided flexibility to states regarding the use of student growth based on statewide assessments during the transition to new assessments, as well as other changes that are outside their original implementation timelines and plans under ESEA Flexibility. The Department is working to connect all states to experts who can provide technical assistance in this area. There are also challenges associated with teacher and principal support for the new systems. The Department is continuing to work with states to help them engage with educators and develop plans focused on continuous improvement so that they can make adjustments as needed.

Under ESSA, ESEA Flexibility waivers, including Principle 3—supporting effective instruction and leadership—expire on August 1, 2016. The FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA.

Objective 2.3: School Climate and Community

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Strengthening school and classroom climate in preschool through 12th-grade settings is an essential precondition to scalable improvements in the academic achievement, socioemotional wellbeing, and college and career readiness of American public school students. While states, districts, and schools across the country have made real strides reforming approaches to school discipline and climate in order to ensure effective environments for more students, significant challenges remain to guaranteeing safe and supportive schools in which to learn and grow for all students. More than one in five students report being bullied in school; national data continue to suggest that suspensions and expulsions disproportionately impact minority students and SWDs; and too few schools are employing school climate data and interventions as part of their continuous improvement strategies. Maximizing instructional time to prepare all students for the rigors and opportunities of meaningful postsecondary educations and careers requires that these issues are addressed at every level of the P–12 system.

During FY 2015, the Department has pursued a vigorous strategy to improve school climate and community and encourage the nationwide adoption of evidence-based practices to ensure safe and supportive learning environments for all students. In June 2015, the Department hosted a two-day convening for 19 high-needs school districts to support their local implementation of “early warning systems” to identify and support students at-risk of falling behind in school and/or dropping out. This convening served to highlight effective local practices to use data strategically to identify students in need of additional support. To shine a light on effective reforms in school discipline policy and practice, and in support of the administration’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative, the Department sponsored—in collaboration with the White House and DOJ—a major summit on school climate and discipline, entitled “[Rethink Discipline](#),” on July 22, 2015. This summit brought to the White House over 45 school districts and a coalition of public and private partners to elevate effective reforms of school discipline in schools, with the goal of highlighting best practices in eliminating disproportionalities and bias in the administration of school discipline. At the summit, the Department also released a new resource for school district superintendents and their leadership teams—“[Rethink Discipline: A Resource Guide for Superintendent Action](#)”—that provides suggested action steps and links to free resources to support communitywide efforts to reform and improve the efficacy of local school discipline and climate policy and practice. The Department also supported the development of new school climate survey resources that states, districts, and schools can use, free of charge, to systematically collect and act on school climate data from multiple stakeholders, including students, teachers, noninstructional school staff, and parents and families (to be released in FY 2016). The Department also laid significant groundwork for the launch of “[Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism](#),” which aims to raise nationwide awareness of and encourage action to combat the serious problem of chronic absenteeism affecting between five and seven and a half million students each year. In collaboration with HHS, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), DOJ, and a coalition of public and private partners, the Department released on October 7, 2015, a Dear Colleague letter and community toolkit for states, districts, and schools that includes actionable strategies to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism within communities.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Improving school discipline and climate policy and practice nationwide remains a significant challenge given the many differentiated contexts in which this work must unfold. There simply is no one right way to approach the challenge of ensuring safe and supportive learning

environments for all students, and a spirit of experimentation and innovation is critical to sustaining motivation for and persistence in tackling what are often extraordinary challenges at the state, district, and school levels. Challenges to improving school discipline and climate include a lack of funding for and focus on this work, which can often be treated as “extra” or “additional” work not necessarily related to the core functions of school systems. When practitioners and policymakers do not understand the relationship between conditions for learning and student achievement, it is difficult to enshrine effective school discipline and climate practice and policy. To meet this challenge, the Department continues to advance the Supportive School Discipline Initiative in partnership with DOJ, offering technical assistance to states and districts that are working to reduce bias and disproportionalities in the administration of school discipline. Moreover, the Department also continues to pursue a vigorous strategy to improve school discipline and climate that includes a major focus on the upcoming release of the 2013–14 CRDC, which will include updates to national school discipline data as well as the first-ever national data on chronic absenteeism. The Department will leverage the data on chronic absenteeism to promote effective cross-sector efforts to meet student needs in order to ensure that students are able and ready to attend and succeed in school every day.

Objective 2.4: Turn Around Schools and Close Achievement Gaps:

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Turning around the lowest-performing schools, closing achievement gaps, increasing high school graduation rates, and decreasing disparities in graduation rates are critical to achieving the President’s goal of once again having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. States and districts have assumed the challenge of focusing on their lowest-performing schools, and directing significant resources and support in order to improve student outcomes dramatically. Since 2009, more than 1,700 schools have received up to \$2 million per year for three years through the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program to implement rigorous intervention models intended to turn these schools around. Nearly two-thirds of the schools in the first two cohorts and over half of schools in the third cohort have made progress in improving student achievement in reading, and a similar percentage have shown improvement in math. However, some participating schools have also shown decreases in performance, and more work is needed to ensure that the progress is sustained. To assist states in this challenging work, the Department strengthened the SIG program in FY 2015 by, among other things, including three new models, including an evidence-based, whole school reform model, and allowing additional time for planning and implementation. The Department also continued to partner with the Corporation for National and Community Service to support the School Turnaround AmeriCorps program grantees, and partnered with the President’s Council on Arts and Humanities to support the Turnaround Arts Initiative, including expanding that initiative to incorporate early learning as a turnaround strategy.

In addition, the nation has made significant progress in increasing overall graduation rates, but gaps between rates for different student groups continue to persist. See also the Explanation and Analysis of Progress for objective 4.1 for additional information on the Department’s efforts to improve the national high school graduation rate and to close gaps between groups of students.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Turning around the lowest-performing schools is extremely challenging work and takes several years to show progress and success. As a result, there are challenges in communicating that this is a long-term process, not a short-term fix, and managing expectations of what success

looks like along the way. Additionally, as major grant programs are ending, such as RTT and SIG, there may be fewer resources available in states and districts to support school turnaround. Sustaining successful school turnaround is a major challenge for states, districts, and schools.

In addition to financial resources, sustaining successful school turnaround requires effective technical assistance and support from the Department. In particular, there is a significant need for effective turnaround leaders for the lowest-performing schools, which the Department is attempting to address through its [Turnaround School Leaders program](#), a program focused on helping districts, in partnership with states, IHEs, and nonprofit or for-profit partners, develop leaders with the specialized skills needed to turn schools around.

The ESSA continues the ESEA's focus on ensuring that states and school districts account for the progress of all students, take meaningful actions to improve the lowest-performing schools, and ensure equitable access to excellent educators. However, the provisions and ultimate impact of the new law are still being evaluated, and plans for implementation have yet to be fully developed. The FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA.

Objective 2.5: STEM Teaching and Learning:

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department, in consultation with OMB, has highlighted this objective as a focus area for improvement. Efforts such as the expansion of 100Kin10, the nonprofit organization created in response to the call to recruit 100,000 STEM teachers from 2011 to 2021, and the recent awards made to support effective STEM teachers via the [Supporting Effective Educator Development Grant program](#) show continued attention and progress toward the Department's goal of increasing the number and quality of STEM teachers. Across the administration, there has been a significant emphasis on improving STEM instruction, most directly through the CoSTEM Education's interagency working groups. The Department leads this formally chartered group on P-12 STEM Instruction, which includes regular participation from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institutes of Health, NSF, Department of Defense, and White House (Office of Science and Technology Policy and OMB). All participating agencies have committed to align efforts to support the preparation of high-quality STEM teachers and to support authentic STEM experiences⁵³ for P-12 educators. Not only do these agencies work together within the context of the CoSTEM Education, but the goals of the interagency working groups align to the CAP Goal for STEM Education across the administration. All activities that are being undertaken by the interagency working groups feed into the CAP process, and all milestones for that process align with the CoSTEM goals.

In addition, through the Teacher Incentive Fund national activities the STEM office is engaged in work around STEM Teacher Leadership and STEM Master Teachers that will continue into FY 2016. Six research action clusters will be convening every couple of months and developing resources to support STEM teacher leadership efforts.

2014 data from the College Board shows an overall increase in the number of graduating high school students taking Advanced Placement (AP) STEM exams: 555,119 compared to 527,001 in 2013 data. In all subgroups, the total number of participants increased, ranging from an

⁵³ Authentic STEM experiences means laboratory, research-based, or experiential learning opportunities in a STEM subject in informal or formal settings.

approximate 15 percent increase for Hispanic/Latino students to a 3 percent increase for Black/African American students. Females still outnumber males in terms of AP STEM exam participation (which has been the case since 2002).

Challenges and Next Steps:

While efforts continue to support P-12 STEM instruction, only two current federal programs are focused on preparing new STEM teachers—the Teacher Quality Partnerships program at the Department and the Noyce Scholarship program at NSF. Proposals for a dedicated program to prepare new STEM teachers have not yet been acted on by Congress, and the majority of teachers are prepared at colleges and universities that do not receive direct NSF or Department funding aimed specifically at STEM teacher preparation. The Mathematics and Science Partnership (MSP) program, which is no longer authorized under ESSA, does not have a national activities set-aside to provide technical assistance and, although each project within MSP must complete an evaluation for the state, these evaluations are not submitted to the Department. While the overall numbers of students taking STEM AP exams have increased—including through Department-supported programs such as the Investing in Innovation (i3) program—AP courses are only one way to provide students with rich STEM learning experiences. Additional support should be given to both formal and informal STEM opportunities for students within the entire P-12 spectrum.

In FY 2016 and beyond, continued collaboration within the Department to better coordinate awards made to support STEM educator development will be important. In addition, ESSA authorizes new activities for STEM educator preparation. For example, the new STEM Master Teacher Corps program provides an opportunity for states to utilize their STEM master educators in the development of new STEM educators. Further, ESSA authorizes states and districts to use funds to provide all students access to advanced STEM coursework through the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants. There is opportunity to infuse STEM into other Department priorities, including for example a possible collaboration with the Office of Early Learning to support P-3 STEM educators, as well as continued collaboration across agencies like NSF to support educator development and support, especially in disciplines like engineering and computer science. Disparities in computer science are emblematic of the large gaps in student access and engagement in STEM courses overall; only half of high schools offer calculus, and only 63 percent offer physics. The 2017 Budget provides resources to empower states and districts to create high-quality computer science learning opportunities in grades P-8 and access to computer science courses in high school, dedicating \$100 million in discretionary funding at the Department of Education for Computer Science for All Development Grants to help school districts, alone or in consortia, execute ambitious computer science expansion efforts, particularly for traditionally underrepresented students. Lastly, absent direct funding streams to support the preparation of new STEM educators, continued work with nongovernment partners like 100Kin10 who are making progress against the goal of preparing 100,000 STEM educators will be essential.

Subpopulation Breakout for Metric 2.5.B: Number of Graduates Taking an AP STEM Exam during High School: U.S. Public Schools, 2012–14

	Race/Ethnicity							Gender		Socioeconomic Status		Total
	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	White	Other	No Response	Female	Male	Low Income	Not Low Income	
Number of Graduates, 2012	2,363	73,503	36,689	64,237	298,859	15,001	7,270	256,705	241,217	114,658	383,264	497,922
Number of Graduates, 2013	2,918	78,886	37,816	74,015	312,917	16,785	3,664	271,217	255,784	128,782	398,219	527,001
Number of Graduates, 2014	3,103	83,412	41,108	82,595	323,887	17,723	3,291	287,424	267,695	142,307	412,812	555,119

Data Source and Frequency of Collection: College Board/AP administrative records; annually

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 2

During FY 2015, the Department implemented a reorganization in OESE that incorporates a new (and aforementioned) [Office of State Support](#), which replaces and enhances services previously provided by the units formerly known as the Office of Student Achievement and School Accountability, Office of School Turnaround, and the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU). This reorganization integrates key state-administered programs in a new office that will provide improved state-centered support across programs. The Department is using this reorganization to rethink, redesign, and rebuild core grant administration functions in order to provide more transparent, higher quality, and better differentiated support to states. This new structure, which builds on the collaboration that has occurred between OESE, the ISU, and OSEP, will better support states in implementing the key reform programs and initiatives that support Goal 2, and in transitioning to and implementing the ESSA, and will improve the Department's ability to execute its core priorities. The Department will continue to provide technical assistance to states in the areas of college- and career-ready standards and assessments, teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, and turning around the lowest-performing schools. The Department will begin to implement a revised process for peer reviewing state assessments to ensure that they are high-quality and will work with states to implement their plans for ensuring equitable access to effective teachers and leaders for all students.

Finally, the Department will explore all opportunities for meaningful guidance and regulations under the ESSA that would help states implement the new law and promote the equity and excellence objectives that Goal 2 represents.

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 Leader: Ann Whalen

Objective 3.1: Access to High-Quality Programs and Services. Increase access to high-quality early learning programs and comprehensive services, especially for children with high needs. **Objective Leader: Libby Doggett**

Metric 3.1.A: Number of states with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) that meet high-quality benchmarks for child care and other early childhood programs⁵⁴

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

Metric 3.2.A: Number of states and territories with professional development systems that include core knowledge and competencies, career pathways, professional development capacity assessments, accessible professional development opportunities, and financial supports for child care providers⁵⁵

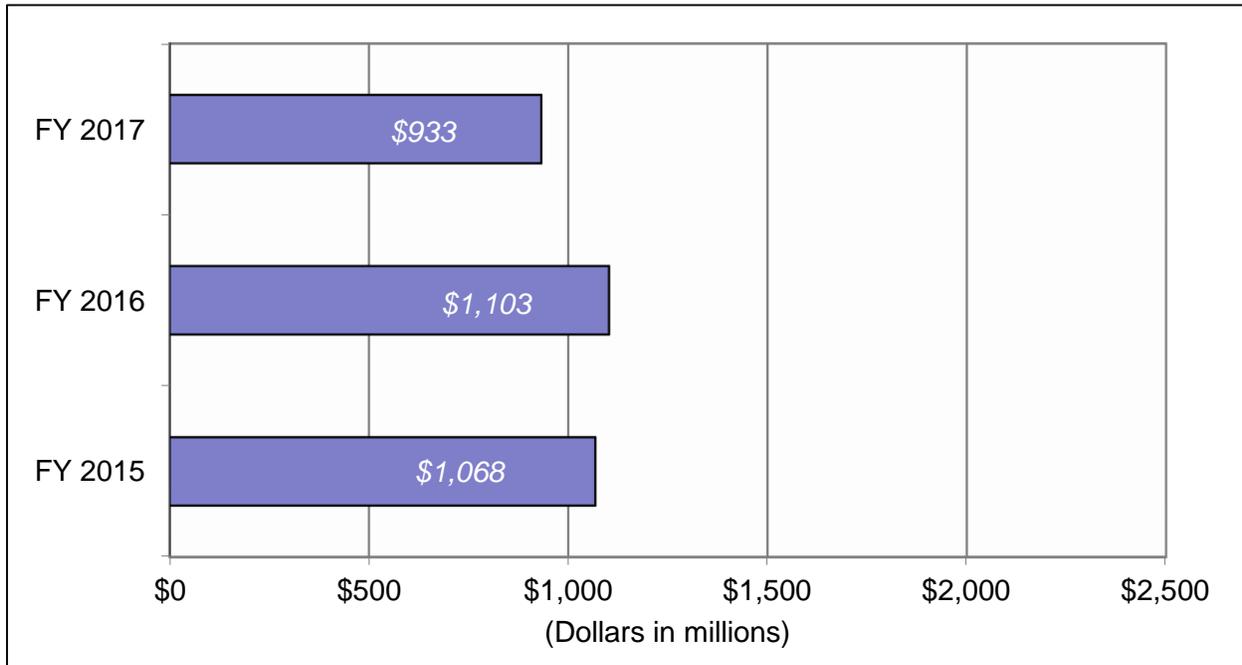
Objective 3.3: Measuring Progress, Outcomes, and Readiness. Improve the capacity of states and early learning programs to develop and implement comprehensive early learning assessment systems. **Objective Leader: Libby Doggett**

Metric 3.3.A: Number of states collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure

⁵⁴ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

⁵⁵ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

Goal 3 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities⁵⁶ Supporting Goal 3 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
OESE	I&I	3.1	Preschool development grants	250	250	0 ⁵⁷
OSERS	SE	3.1, 3.2, 3.3	Grants for infants and families	439	459	504
OSERS	SE	3.1, 3.2, 3.3	Preschool grants	353	368	403
Subtotal				1,042	1,077	907
Other Discretionary Programs/Activities				26	26	26
TOTAL, GOAL 3				1,068	1,103	933

POC = Principal Office Component

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Public Benefit

Each year, about 4 million children enter kindergarten in the United States. They live in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. They speak many languages, come from diverse cultures, and have differing abilities, which may require individualized services and supports. Parents and caregivers send their children to school believing that one day their children will be able to pursue their dreams—whether that is teaching, protecting their communities as police officers, making scientific discoveries, or helping companies and organizations succeed. All parents hope their child will start school ready for success. And many parents turn that hope into action, seeking out supportive and high-quality early learning opportunities. Unfortunately, not every

⁵⁶ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

⁵⁷ Funds are included in the 2017 President's Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services.

parent finds those opportunities, and access to high-quality early learning opportunities differs across states and communities. There are large disparities in enrollment based on geography, race, and socioeconomic levels. As a result, too many children enter kindergarten a year or more behind their classmates in academic skills and socio-emotional development.⁵⁸ For some children, starting school already behind can trap them in a cycle of continuous catch-up in their learning. As a nation, we must ensure that all children, regardless of family circumstance, immigration status, the color of their skin, disability, or their zip code, have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Advances in education, developmental psychology, neuroscience, medicine, and economics have helped to demonstrate the benefits of quality early education for young children and that the years from birth to age five are a critical period in children's learning and development, providing the necessary foundation for more advanced skills.⁵⁹ For example, at kindergarten entry, children with bigger vocabularies at an early age have higher reading and mathematics achievement and fewer behavior challenges.⁶⁰ A robust body of research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than those who do not participate. The gains are particularly powerful for children from low-income families and those at risk for academic failure who, on average, start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers in preliteracy and language skills.⁶¹

Studies also reveal that participating in quality early learning can boost children's educational attainment and earnings later in life.⁶² Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are less likely to utilize special education services or be retained in their grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, and succeed in their careers than those who have not attended high-quality preschool programs.⁶³ Research also suggests that expanding early learning—including high-quality preschool—provides society with a return on investment of \$8.60 for every \$1 spent with half of this benefit from increased earnings and improved health outcomes for children when they grow up.⁶⁴

The Administration began efforts to increase investments in early learning in its first term and has continued to request additional funding in each subsequent budget proposal—through Head Start, child care, home visiting, IDEA Part C, ELC, and Preschool Development Grants. States and local communities have welcomed the opportunity to partner with the federal government through these early learning programs.

From 2011 to 2013, 20 (of the 40 states that applied for ELC) were awarded grants. These grantees had committed to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of early learning programs

⁵⁸ Yoshikawa, Hirokazu, Christine Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinosa, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow. Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education. Vol. 9. Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development, 2013.

⁵⁹ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base for Preschool Education. Policy brief, Society for Research in Child Development and the Foundation for Child Development. Retrieved from the Foundation for Child Development website: fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence_Base_on_Preschool_Education_FINAL.pdf

⁶⁰ Maczuga, S., Morgan, P., Farkas, G., Hammer, C., Hillemeier, M., & Scheffner, C. 24-Month-Old Children With Larger Oral Vocabularies Display Greater Academic and Behavioral Functioning at Kindergarten Entry. *Child Development*, Volume 86, Issue 5, pages 1351–1370, September/October 2015.

⁶¹ Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. (2000). Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁶² See, e.g., Yoshikawa, et.al., Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education, 2013.

⁶³ Center for Public Education. (2008). The Research on Pre-K. Alexandria, VA.

⁶⁴ White House Council of Economic Advisors. The Economics of Early Childhood Investments, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early_childhood_report1.pdf

across multiple funding streams supporting children from birth through age 5 and serve as model early learning and development systems. By December 2014, nearly 14,000 early childhood programs are ranked in the highest quality tiers of the 20 ELC states' rating systems—a 63 percent increase since the states applied for their grants—with significantly more children enrolled in the highest quality-rated early learning programs than ever before.⁶⁵ National technical assistance is also available to help all states in building such systems.

In 2013, the President's Budget proposed a landmark investment to expand access to high-quality preschool, *Preschool for All*. The President's overarching vision has been captured in the bipartisan *Strong Start for America's Children Act* reintroduced in the 114th Congress. This legislation would fund voluntary, high-quality preschool for all four-year old children from families earning below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line in a state-federal partnership, and encourage states to spend their own funds to support preschool for young children with family incomes above that income level. The legislation would also expand Early Head Start-child care partnerships to help raise the quality of services for infants and toddlers and increase IDEA funding for young children with disabilities.

In addition, Strong Start includes authorization for [Preschool Development Grants](#), which were first funded by Congress in 2014. Last year 18 states (of the 36 that applied) were awarded grants to create or expand high-quality preschool programs for 4-year-olds in over 200 high-need communities. This program builds on the achievements of ELC by expanding access to preschool programs that include the following nationally recognized standards: high staff qualifications; professional development for teachers and staff; low staff-child ratios; small class sizes; full-day programs; developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments that are aligned with states' early learning standards; inclusive programs for children with disabilities; employee salaries that are comparable to those for K–12 teaching staff; ongoing program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; strong family engagement; and onsite comprehensive services for children.

Providing children, including children with disabilities and those who are ELs, with quality early education experiences is essential to strengthening our nation's economy. Significant new investments to expand access to high-quality early learning, improve the early childhood workforce, and support comprehensive assessment systems are necessary to help states, local communities, and parents close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. Only then can we ensure that all children graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, and life.

⁶⁵ At a Glance: Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Year 2014 Progress Update <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/rtt-elic-2014-apr-progress.pdf>

Goal 3: Details

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
3.1.A. Number of states with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) that meet high quality benchmarks for child care and other early childhood programs ⁶⁶	SY: 2010 17	27	29 ⁶⁷	NA	32	NA ⁶⁸	/		NA	NA	
New APG Metric: Percent of 4-year olds enrolled in state preschool programs ⁶⁹	SY: 2013–14 29.1%	NA	SY: 2013–14 29.1%	NA	NA	NA	/		33.0%	35.0%	/
New APG Metric: Number of states with high-quality preschool program standards ⁷⁰	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	NA	NA	/		19	21	/
3.2.A. Number of states and territories with professional development systems that include core knowledge and competencies, career pathways, professional development capacity assessments, accessible professional development opportunities, and financial supports for child care providers ⁷¹	SY: 2011 30	30	Not Collected	NA	38	NA ⁷²	/		NA	NA	/

⁶⁶ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 35 and 37, respectively.

⁶⁷ Metric reported as TBD in the 2014 APR. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was “Met.”

⁶⁸ This is an HHS metric and out of the Department's control or influence. Please refer to footnote 66 for additional information.

⁶⁹ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁷⁰ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁷¹ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were both NA.

⁷² Please refer to footnote 68.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
New Metric: Number of states that require a teacher with a bachelor's degree in a state preschool program	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	NA	NA	/		19	20	/
3.3.A. Number of states collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure	SY: 2010 2	3	5 ⁷³	11 ⁷⁴	9	MET			14	16 ⁷⁵	

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

3.1.A. Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Report of State Plans with annual updates from states and territories (HHS/Office of Childcare); annually

3.2.A. CCDF Report of State Plans (HHS/Office of Childcare); biennially

3.3.A. Race to the Top (RTT)-Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Technical Assistance Center; annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

⁷³ Five ELC states implemented their KEA (OR, KY, VT, MD, and OH) in the 2014–15 school year. One state (DE) had planned to implement its KEA in 2014–15 year, but later adjusted its timeline to implement during the 2015–16 school year. As such, the FY14 actual is revised from six to five states.

⁷⁴ Eleven ELC states (CA, CO, DE, KY, MD, MA, MI, NC, OH, OR, and VT) are implementing their KEAs in the 2015–16 school year. The remaining eight states that chose to implement KEAs (GA, IL, MN, NJ, NM, PA, RI, WA) will begin after the 2015–16 school year. Wisconsin did not select to implement a KEA, but is implementing a statewide literacy assessment and is exploring the development and use of a KEA.

⁷⁵ There will be difficulty collecting ELC data in out-years because some grantees will no longer be reporting APR data.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 3.1: Access to High-Quality Programs and Services

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

While states and the federal government both invest in early learning, these efforts have fallen short of what is needed to ensure that all children can access a high-quality early education that will prepare them for success. Across the nation, 58 percent of 4-year-olds and 85 percent of 3-year-olds are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs through state preschool, Head Start, and preschool special education services.⁷⁶ Even fewer are enrolled in the highest-quality programs.⁷⁷ Overall, during 2011–13, 4.4 million 3- and 4-year-olds were not attending any preschool at all, representing more than half (54 percent) of all children in that age group.⁷⁸

Children’s access to preschool also varies significantly by family income level and geographic region.⁷⁹ As of the 2013–14 school year, 41 states and the District of Columbia offered voluntary, state preschool programs for some children.⁸⁰ In 2015–16, three states (Indiana, New Hampshire, and North Dakota) had small pilot programs. Hawaii now has a program reaching public school students and their Preschool Development Grant will serve children in the public charter school system. Montana’s Preschool Development Grant has provided that state’s first state preschool program, which by 2018 will provide high-quality preschool to over 5,000 children from low-income families in sixteen communities, eight of which are on Indian lands.

Twenty-nine percent of America’s 4-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program in the 2013–14 school year. While total enrollment for 4-year-olds increased by 8,535, nearly half this increase was required to recoup the loss of 4,000 seats in 2012–13. At the May release of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) Yearbook, Secretary Duncan noted, “The current pace of change is far too incremental...We have to think about transformational change.” In fact, as NIEER researchers observed, “at the 2013–2014 growth rate it would take about 75 years for states to reach 50 percent enrollment at age 4 and 150 years to reach 70 percent enrollment.”

While states enroll a total of 1.35 million 3- and 4-year-olds in state preschool, enrollment in individual state programs significantly varies.⁸¹ For example, Florida, Oklahoma, Vermont, and the District of Columbia served more than 70 percent of their 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool, whereas 11 states with programs served fewer than 10 percent of 4-year-olds. These states are: Alabama; Alaska; Arizona; Delaware; Minnesota; Missouri; Nevada; Ohio; Oregon;

⁷⁶ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁷⁷ Nores, M., & Barnett, W.S. (2014). *Access to High Quality Early Care and Education: Readiness and Opportunity Gaps in America* (CEELO Policy Report). New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

⁷⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). KIDS COUNT data center. Baltimore, MD: Author. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2015kidscountdatabook-2015.pdf>

⁷⁹ Cascio, E.U., Whitmore Schanzenbach, D. Expanding Preschool Access for Disadvantaged Children http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/expand_preschool_access_cascio_schanzenbach.pdf

⁸⁰ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁸¹ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Rhode Island; and Washington. Local Head Start programs serve another approximately half million 4-year-olds from the lowest-income families.⁸²

While Latinos are the fastest growing and largest minority group in the United States, making up a quarter of 3- and 4-year-olds, Latinos demonstrate the lowest preschool participation rates of any major ethnicity or race with 63 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds not in any preschool programs.⁸³ The rates were also low for American Indians (59 percent). More than half of African-American and non-Hispanic white 3- and 4-year-olds were not in any preschool programs, which was nearly the same for Asian and Pacific Islander children (48 percent). While most children who have access to preschool attend moderate-quality programs, African American children and children from low-income families are the most likely to attend low-quality preschool programs and the least likely to attend high-quality preschool programs.⁸⁴ About one-third of children served by state preschool programs live in the two states with the lowest quality standards from the NIEER—Florida and Texas.⁸⁵ Forty percent of preschoolers—more than half a million—attend programs that meet few of the quality NIEER benchmark standards.

Children with disabilities also have difficulty accessing inclusive preschool programs. In 2013, across all states, 55.6 percent of preschool children served under Part B, section 619 of IDEA participated in at least 10 hours of a general early childhood program. Fewer than half (43.5 percent) of preschool children with disabilities received special education services in their general early childhood programs.⁸⁶

In coordination with the [Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center](#) (ELC TA) and [Preschool Development Grants Technical Assistance Center](#) (PDG TA), the Department, in coordination with HHS, is supporting efforts to expand access to high-quality early learning programs for the 20 ELC and 18 Preschool Development Grants states, as well as nongrant states, through online early learning communities, technical assistance webinars, briefs, and reports. Additionally, OESE's national comprehensive center, the [Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes](#) (CEELO) and OSEP technical assistance (TA) centers provide support for all states, including around issues of access and quality.

A critical driver of quality in all early learning and development programs has been the states' QRIS (or Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (TQRIS) for ELC states). This reform metric helps states set progressively higher program standards and provides supports to programs so they can meet those higher standards. Once programs are enrolled in a state's TQRIS, the state helps them improve their quality and their ranking. States provide technical assistance, professional development opportunities, and program improvement grants that allow programs to make the necessary quality improvements. Nearly half of all children who live in low-income families in the United States reside in the 20 ELC states. ELC states have increased the number of early learning and development programs participating in their TQRIS and are implementing strategies to improve the quality of those programs. The 20 ELC states' cumulative state data show that the number of early childhood programs included in the states'

⁸² Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2014. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/docs/hs-program-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>

⁸³ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). KIDS COUNT data center. Baltimore, MD: Author. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2015kidscountdatabook-2015.pdf>

⁸⁴ Center for American Progress. Why We Need a Federal Preschool Investment in 6 Charts. December 9, 2014. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2014/12/09/102737/why-we-need-a-federal-preschool-investment-in-6-charts/>

⁸⁵ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

⁸⁶ 2013 Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Data File. Accessed on 4/17/15 at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html>

TQRIS has nearly doubled from 38,642 at the start of their grants to 72,281 programs in 2014, an increase of 87 percent.

The 20 ELC states also reported on the number of children in various types of early learning and development programs that are in top tiers of their state's TQRIS in 2014. The report shows a 176 percent increase in the number of children with high needs enrolled in state preschool programs in the top tiers of their state's TQRIS from the time the states received their grants. More than 200,000 children are now enrolled in these programs, an increase of more than 127,000 children. As a result of the ELC program, there is a 75 percent increase in the number of children enrolled in high-quality programs supported through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF or child care subsidy). 228,760 children with high needs are now enrolled in CCDF-funded programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS, an increase of almost 100,000 children. 151,676 children with high needs are now enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS, an increase of more than 78,000 children.

In his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama called upon Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool for every child in America, proposing investments that would support a continuum of early learning opportunity from birth through kindergarten entry. He challenged more Americans—elected officials, business leaders, philanthropists, and the public—to help more children access the early education they need to succeed in school and in life. On December 10, 2014, the President convened state and local policymakers, mayors, school superintendents, corporate and community leaders, and advocates for the White House Summit on Early Education, highlighting collective leadership in support of early education for America's children. Leaders shared best practices in building the public-private partnerships that are expanding early education in communities across the country. Participants discussed effective strategies and programs that support and bring high-quality early childhood education to scale.

Leading private and philanthropic organizations made commits to new actions to spur greater access to high-quality early learning programs. Together with federal awards, this amounts to a collective investment of over \$1 billion in the education and development of America's youngest learners. It includes:

- Over \$340 million in new actions from corporate and philanthropic leaders to expand the reach and enhance the quality of early education for thousands of additional children.
- Up to \$750 million in new federal grant awards announced by Secretaries Duncan and Burwell, to support early learning for over 63,000 additional children across the country for Preschool Development Grants and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.
- The launch of [Invest in US](#), a new initiative created by the First Five Years Fund, a bipartisan nonprofit organization, in partnership with private philanthropic leaders, in response to the President's call to action.
- New private and philanthropic resources and support for Early Learning Communities, an initiative of Invest in US. Invest in US is working to connect communities and states interested in expanding early learning programs and opportunities with 10 leading partners that have committed to helping connect leaders with resources, planning grants, technical assistance, and other support for their youngest learners.

Since the Summit, significant progress has been made, and bipartisan cooperation has led to a substantial increase in public-private investments in early education.

Congress took an important step in 2014 to address inequities in access to high-quality preschool by supporting the Preschool Development Grants program, a 4-year, federal-state partnership to expand the number of children enrolled in high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities. There was significant bipartisan interest from state governors in this program. Thirty-five states and Puerto Rico applied and the Department made grants to 18 states. During the 2015–16 school year, these states are serving approximately 33,000 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families in more than 200 communities in high-quality preschool programs. The diversity of the 18 states that received grants reflects the fact that increasing access to preschool is a bipartisan priority across the country. From Massachusetts and Montana to Alabama and Hawaii, Preschool Development Grants are designed to help states move forward with high-quality preschool, whether that means expanding an already successful preschool program or helping to build state-level capacity and put in place quality improvements to serve more children in high-quality settings.

While the Preschool Development Grants will not reach every child in the funded states and there remains a huge unmet need, these states will be another step closer to the goal of expanding access to high-quality early learning across the country. Over the 4-year grant period, and with continued funding from Congress, these states are expecting to enroll an additional 177,000 children in high-quality preschool programs, which will help put children on a path to success in school and in life. About 285,000 preschoolers could have been served in the 18 states that did not receive a Preschool Development Grant. For four years, the Obama administration has requested formula funding to address the enormous unmet need for high-quality preschool and provide preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- to moderate-income families. In addition, the Administration's FY 2017 budget request includes funding for continuation grants to support current states, as well as additional dollars to expand Preschool Development Grants to more states, the Bureau of Indian Education, tribal educational agencies, territories, and the Outlying Areas.

The Department is also engaging in specific activities to ensure that infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families have access to high-quality programs and services. OSEP began implementing an [RDA](#) system to hold states accountable for both improving results for children with disabilities and complying with requirements in IDEA. As part of RDA, states are being asked to develop a SSIP to focus and drive their efforts to improve results for children with disabilities. Phase 1 of the SSIP was submitted to OSEP in April 2015. States were required to submit SSIPs for both Part B and C of IDEA. The SSIPs included a measurable child result that states will be working to achieve over the next 5 years, and the infrastructure that they will need to have in place to support local programs in delivering high-quality services to meet the state-identified child result. Another component of RDA is ensuring that determinations reflect state performance on results, as well as compliance. OSEP must annually determine if a state “Meets Requirements,” “Needs Assistance,” or “Needs Intervention.” In July 2015, OSEP used child outcome data for the first time in making determinations for Part C programs.

In addition to accountability activities, OSEP is supporting states through technical assistance. Three of OSEP's national centers specifically focus on supporting states in enhancing their Part C and Part B, section 619 programs, as well as other early learning programs, to increase the quality of services provided to children with disabilities and their families. These centers are working with Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to develop effective and efficient infrastructures, including data and personnel systems, to deliver high-quality services to infants, toddlers, and preschool age children with disabilities and their families. The centers have developed a systems framework that states can use to assess their infrastructure and work

towards improving it. In addition, the centers are working with the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) to promote the use of the recently released DEC Recommended Practices, which provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities.

The Department and HHS released two major early childhood policy statements. [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Practices in Early Childhood Settings](#) was released December 10, 2014. The statement has influenced local and state efforts to assist states and their public and private local early childhood programs in preventing and severely limiting expulsions and suspensions in early learning settings. A second policy statement, [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#), released on September 14, 2015, supports the goal that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. In addition, the Department and HHS, in partnership with Too Small to Fail, have created the [Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day](#) tip sheets. Made specifically for families, caregivers and early educators, these resources can help enrich a child's early language experiences by providing research-based tips for talking, reading, and singing with young children every day beginning from birth. The Departments are also collecting public input on policy statements around family engagement in early learning settings and health and wellness promotion in early childhood settings. Each of these efforts contributes to the goal of improving the quality of early learning programs.

In October 2015, the Departments held a three-day annual grantee meeting for the 20 ELC and 18 Preschool Development Grants states. In addition, nongrant states were invited to attend. In all, over 300 persons participated, and over 35 states were represented. Sessions focused on meeting the needs of states around improving quality in programs, measuring child outcomes, and supporting birth to third grade systems and other reforms.

Metrics in Goal 3 are influenced most by actions taken by states or grantees in response to state and federal policy initiatives, but they are also influenced by factors that are beyond the control of states, LEAs, or the Department of Education.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Expanding access to high-quality preschool is critically important to ensuring that every child in America has the opportunity for lifelong success. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), reauthorizing the ESEA. ESSA includes a new Preschool Development Grants program designed to improve coordination of early childhood programs and expand access to high-quality preschool. It is not certain how many additional children will have access to high-quality preschool under the new program. Also in December 2015, President Obama signed the FY 2016 spending bill, which provides funding for year 3 of the Preschool Development Grants. The Departments will be working to secure funding for the fourth and final year of the current Preschool Development Grants program in FY 2017. Pulling these funds away from states and communities would jeopardize their plans to serve over 50,000 children in high-quality preschool programs during the last year of the grants.⁸⁷

The President has made it a priority to expand educational opportunity for our nation's children, starting with our youngest learners, and has put forward a vision that would support the healthy

⁸⁷ This estimate assumes that the elimination of Preschool Development Grants in 2016 would prevent states from serving the additional children proposed in their applications for the final two years of the grant.

development and growth of children from birth to kindergarten entry. The President's FY 2017 Budget builds on the good work underway in states and local communities, and calls for expanding support to additional grantees to improve program alignment and coordination and to expand access to services. Preschool Development Grants are a critical step toward voluntary, universal access to high-quality early learning that gives all children a strong start in school and life.

ELC states face many challenges in developing a rating and monitoring process for their TQRIS. Providers must be informed about the process, so as to make them more likely to participate. The observation and rating tool must be a true measure of different levels of quality; it must give the same rating results in many different settings, and it has to be easy to use. Validating the effectiveness of a TQRIS ensures that it is measuring and assessing program quality in ways that make sense to state policy makers, early learning and education programs, and families with young children. Both the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services are providing support so ELC states have the knowledge and best research for improving their TQRIS. This technical assistance is provided directly to the states in addition to peer learning groups on various topics of interest such as best ways to validate a TQRIS system or to ensure families understand the difference in the quality tiers. The Departments are helping ELC states to validate their systems, ensure consistency in the reporting of TQRIS ratings, and develop data system linkages between their TQRIS and other systems with data on young children and the early childhood workforce. As states begin to report on evaluations of their TQRIS, there must be a recognition that the systems are still not mature and may not yet reflect their true impact. OSEP-funded technical assistance also supports states in thinking about how to intentionally include children with disabilities across all levels of the TQRIS system, as some states only have optional indicators for children with disabilities, only include children with disabilities at some levels of the TQRIS, or do not intentionally include children with disabilities. Additionally, IES is also doing a study of the TQRIS systems and plans to make results available in 2016.

The Department committed \$5 million in Preschool Development Grants national activities funds to add to a multiyear investment by IES funding to expand the work of the network to support the work of the Preschool Development Grants states and other states advancing preschool and addressing the need for a new quality assessment tool. The Early Learning Network will comprise five Research Teams that will conduct in-depth, exploratory research in states, regions, cities, or school districts that are providing preschool opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Each Research Team will conduct three complementary, prospective studies: (1) a descriptive study of systems-level policies and practices that support early learning; (2) a classroom observation study to identify teaching practices and other classroom-level malleable factors associated with children's school readiness and achievement in preschool and early elementary school; and (3) a longitudinal study to identify malleable factors associated with early learning and school achievement over time from preschool through the early elementary school grades (e.g., kindergarten through third grade). The Research Teams will also provide support to the Early Learning Assessment Team in piloting and validating a classroom observation tool that is designed for practitioners to use.

Funding continues to be a challenge for IDEA programs. Part C programs in particular are stretched thin as data shows that the number of children receiving services under Part C over the years has been steadily increasing. However, federal funding for Part C has not increased at the same rate so there has been a decrease in federal per-child funding for Part C services. To address fiscal challenges, some states have narrowed or restricted eligibility criteria, implemented or increased family fees for services, and reduced provider reimbursements. All of

these can reduce access to services for infants and toddlers who could benefit from them. OSEP-funded TA centers will provide TA to states on building their state infrastructure, which includes their financial system, to support states in using their funding as efficiently as possible. Additionally, OSEP-funded TA centers will continue to work with states to enhance the quality of services that they provide under IDEA Parts C and B, section 619.

Objective 3.2: Effective Workforce

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Securing a well-trained and properly supported early learning workforce is an essential element of high-quality early learning programs. Significant headway has been made in describing and conceptualizing what teachers do in the classroom that results in learning, which is a critical first step in getting teachers into those positions.

On April 1, 2015, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) released *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, which was commissioned by both the Departments of Education and HHS and four philanthropic foundations. The study explores the science of child development, particularly looking at implications for the professionals who work with children birth through age 8. The committee found that much is known about how children learn and develop, as well as the qualifications of the early childhood workforce and the supports they need. However, this knowledge is not fully reflected in the current capacities and practices of the workforce, the settings in which they work, and the qualifications and professional learning that is most effective.

The IOM/NRC Study outlines a blueprint for action based on 13 recommendations for local, state, and national governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic funders, and the business sector to support improvements to the quality of professional practice for early learning professionals who work with children from birth through age 8 and the environments in which they work. The study makes recommendations on improving the quality of the early learning workforce, including higher levels of education such as a bachelor's degree for lead educators, qualifications based more strongly on competencies and knowledge, and the use of evidence-based practices and strategies. Additionally, the study recommends fair compensation to recognize the professionalization of the workforce, as well as other improved supports for educators in their work environments. In the months following the release, additional communication materials were developed and distributed to the field through conferences, webinars, meetings, and in-service trainings.

ELC states are creating quality professional development systems to improve the skills of current and aspiring early learning teachers, directors, and assistant teachers. Fourteen ELC states are specifically working to provide and expand access to professional development opportunities that are aligned with their Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and that tightly link training with professional development approaches, such as coaching and mentoring (CO, DE, GA, KY, MD, MN, NJ, NM, OH, OR, PA, RI, WA, and WI). These states are also using incentives, such as scholarships, compensation and wage supplements, tiered reimbursement rates, other financial incentives and strategies to promote professional improvement and career advancement. These other strategies include management opportunities, and they promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway that is based on the state's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Fifteen ELC states are working to support educators in improving their knowledge, skills and abilities (CA, CO, DE, GA, IL, MD, MA, MI, MN, NM, NC, OR, PA, RI, VT).

The Preschool Development Grants program sets a high bar for workforce quality in the 18 grantee states. High-quality preschool programs require, for example, high staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a state-approved alternate pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials. In addition, instructional staff salaries are required to be comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff, and programs must provide high-quality professional development for all staff.

Four states (Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, and Oregon) are finishing up working with the OSEP-funded [Early Childhood Personnel Center \(ECPC\)](#). This work centered on enhancing the personnel system within the states to ensure that personnel have the knowledge and skills to provide services to young children with disabilities and their families. These states developed and are implementing a plan to align their personnel standards with national professional organization personnel standards; develop partnerships with universities and community colleges to ensure that their curriculum is aligned to state personnel standards and to support better alignment between pre-service preparation and in-service professional development; and implement evidence-based practices within in-service professional development. ECPC is in the process of selecting four more states to work with over the next two years. In addition to providing intensive TA with states, ECPC held Leadership Institutes for 20 states. These Leadership Institutes provides strategies for Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators and leaders within early childhood agencies to work together to develop the workforce so that they have the competencies to serve young children with disabilities and their families. Additionally, ECPC has facilitated national professional organizations coming together to identify a set of competencies that personnel need to serve young children with disabilities. Those organizations include including DEC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the American Occupational Therapy Association, and the American Physical Therapy Association. Through this work, DEC and NAEYC are in the process of developing an agreement to align their personnel standards. During the fiscal year OSEP, also funded 7 new awards to universities to prepare personnel to work in early intervention and early childhood special education.

Challenges and Next Steps:

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed ESSA, reauthorizing the ESEA. ESSA includes a new Preschool Development Grants program designed to improve coordination of early childhood programs and expand access to high-quality preschool, which may positively affect the early childhood workforce with expanded opportunities for professional development and improved conditions. ESSA also includes language explicitly stating that Title II dollars can be used for early childhood educators. Also in December 2015, President Obama signed the FY 2016 spending bill, which provides funding for year 3 of the Preschool Development Grants. The Departments will be working to secure funding for the fourth and final year of the current Preschool Development Grants program in FY 2017.

There are challenges in developing an effective early learning workforce. States have hiring challenges, due in part to a lack of available well-trained and effective personnel across multiple disciplines. Some states have experienced high turnover of early childhood educators and consultants due to low wages, attractive offers in other states, challenging financial times, and program management. States that can sustain programs for longer periods have less difficulty recruiting and retaining strong early childhood educators.

The Department and its technical assistance providers are working to address some of these challenges through webinars, peer learning, and pointing out promising practices, such as mentoring and coaching. For example, a study examining career pathways to be released in FY 2016 will provide states with an overview of how these systems are working in a handful of leading states. Reducing duplication of efforts and promoting promising practices is necessary for creating an early learning workforce that can deliver on the promise of these programs. ECPC is currently working with Part C and Part B, Section 619 coordinators to identify additional states with which to work to improve their personnel systems. A challenge that Part C and Part B, section 619 personnel experience is that they are often not included within workforce initiatives within states. To address this, ECPC will continue to hold Leadership Institutes as a way to provide Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators strategies to engage and become decision makers in workforce initiatives within their states.

Building on the positive reception from the release of the *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, the Departments are developing a plan to fund additional activities addressing the implementation of the recommendations, including funding a study on financing of preschool and convening with IHEs. The study will examine how to fund early care and education for 3- and 4-year-old preschool children that is accessible, affordable to families, and of high quality, including a well-qualified and adequately supported workforce consistent with the vision outlined in the Study. Over the course of 20 months, an ad hoc committee will review and synthesize the available research and analysis on the resources needed to meet the true costs of high-quality early care and education, including resources for improving the quality, affordability and accessibility of higher education; improving the quality and availability of professional learning during ongoing practice; and supporting well-qualified educators and administrators with adequate compensation through complete wage and benefit packages that are comparable across ages and settings.

The committee will gather information and review the available evidence on funding mechanisms that are currently being employed successfully on a large scale as well as illustrative examples of funding strategies that are being employed on a smaller scale but have promise for expansion. The committee will also take into consideration lessons that can be drawn from financing of early care and education in other countries and from workforce development in sectors other than education. The committee will produce a report that synthesizes the information gathered and, based on their analysis and interpretation, draws conclusions about and makes recommendations for concrete, implementable funding strategies in the public and private sectors at the national, state, and local levels.

Objective 3.3: Measuring Progress, Outcomes, and Readiness

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department, in consultation with OMB, has determined that performance toward this objective is making noteworthy progress. As part of ELC, 11 states chose to use funds to address the use of comprehensive assessment systems, though all ELC states include comprehensive assessments as part of their program standards on which their TQRIS is based. These states are doing the difficult work of creating coordinated and comprehensive assessment systems that organize information to help early childhood educators, families, program directors, administrators, and policymakers to make informed instructional and programmatic decisions. A comprehensive assessment system coordinates the various types of valid and reliable screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments that children are likely to receive throughout their early learning years, such as screenings for possible developmental delays, assessments of ongoing developmental progress, diagnostic

assessments, and measures that examine children’s accomplishments on developmentally appropriate standards-based benchmarks. As they create these comprehensive systems, states are updating and selecting screening and assessment tools that are valid and appropriate for the populations being served; educating users about the purposes of each assessment; coordinating assessments to avoid duplication; training early childhood educators to administer, interpret, and use the results of assessments; and involving parents in decisions regarding learning and development strategies for their children.

In addition, 19 ELC states are or will be using KEAs that cover all the essential domains of school readiness and are aligned with their states’ early learning and development standards. Wisconsin did not elect to direct ELC funds toward the development of a comprehensive KEA, though they are funding an exploratory study. As part of a KEA, information is collected through observations, one-on-one discussions, small group activities, and through the use of technology. Results help early childhood educators better understand the status of children’s learning and development when they enter kindergarten so the educators can individualize instruction. Educators can share information with parents so that they can make informed decisions about their children’s education. Educators are using findings from the KEA to inform to inform instruction and help close the readiness gap at kindergarten and in the early elementary school grades.

The Department surpassed the 2015 performance target of 9 states collecting and reporting disaggregated data on the status of children at kindergarten entry using a common measure. Eleven ELC states (CA, CO, DE, KY, MD, MA, MI, NC, OH, OR, and VT) are implementing their KEAs in the 2015–16 school year. The remaining eight states that chose to implement KEAs (GA, IL, MN, NJ, NM, PA, RI, WA) will begin after the 2015–16 school year. The 18 Preschool Development Grants states are required to report on the school readiness of the children participating in their high-quality preschool programs, with strong encouragement to use a KEA. We expect to have this data in spring 2017 for the second year of the grant.

On April 7, 2015, ELC TA cohosted a webinar with CEELO and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) focusing on the essential elements of a comprehensive assessment system, promising implementation strategies, key capacity-building considerations, and tools that can support this work at the state level. On June 6, 2015, ELC TA held the National Working Meeting on Early Learning Assessment in New Orleans, Louisiana. The one-day working meeting provided states with the opportunity to work together to address persistent problems associated with the implementation of comprehensive early learning assessment systems with a specific focus on child assessments, including KEAs. In August, 2015 ELC TA released a brief, statewide KEA Data Collection and Reporting in ELC states, in response to a request from a ELC state for information about issues that need to be considered in planning and implementing a statewide KEA data collection and reporting system. The report includes information on practices in five ELC states (Kentucky, Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Washington).

On August 27, 2015, the Department posted [EDFacts Data Set: Kindergarten Entry Assessment Data Collection through EDFacts Metadata and Process System \(EMAPS\)](#) as part of the *Annual Mandatory Collection of Elementary and Secondary Education Data through EDFacts* to explain the data that will be collected through EMAPS for KEAs in the School Year (SY) 2016–17, SY 2017–18, and SY 2018–19 EDFacts package. The team will address public comments received, post responses for 30 days, and then post a final regulation.

In FY 2013, the Department made [EAG](#) awards to support the development and enhancement of KEAs. Texas and two state consortia, one led by Maryland and the other led by North

Carolina, were awarded EAG grants. KEAs under this program should be aligned with state early learning standards and cover all essential domains of school readiness. Three additional ELC grantees are participating in the Maryland consortium (Massachusetts, Michigan, and Ohio) as well as a number of non-ELC states. Eight states are partnering with North Carolina: Delaware, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Washington, DC. Together the ELC and EAG programs support 29 states in creating incentives for states to implement KEAs.

On an annual basis through their APRs, OSEP continues to require state Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to report on child outcomes for children that received at least 6 months of IDEA services. OSEP funds a technical assistance center to support states in collecting high-quality data within their outcomes measurement system and in using that data for program improvement.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Assessment in early learning is in its infancy. Many states are starting from scratch developing valid and reliable measures for KEAs. As a result, constructing and testing these instruments and implementing them across every school in the state will be challenging and will take time. In addition, states will need to ensure that the KEAs are implemented in a balanced way that does not result in the loss of a significant amount of instructional time. Additionally, two of the three EAG grantees that are consortia may experience challenges coordinating across states due to differences in their policies and procedures. Preschool Development Grants states are required to report on the status of children in kindergarten served by the grants in the high-need communities, but they are not required to use a KEA, and funding may be a challenge at the federal, state and local levels. The Departments are working with these grantees to minimize these coordination challenges.

The Departments of Education and HHS will continue to reach out to CEELo, Education Commission on the States, CCSSO, NIEER, and other organizations that share our interest in advancing quality KEAs, share resources, and develop strategies that might increase our collective impact. The Departments are using national activities funds to develop case studies of four states' approaches to KEAs through the Department of Education's Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy. The objectives of this study are to document the processes, accomplishments, challenges, and solutions of four states (Maryland, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington) implementing KEAs and to share what they have learned with federal and state policymakers and the field. Of particular interest was identifying what is working well and what lessons have been learned in these states that were early adopters of KEAs. Data collection occurred between January and June 2015 in the four case study states, 12 districts, and 23 schools in the study. The final report is expected in July 2016. CEELo and ELC TA will continue to monitor state progress in development and implementation of KEAs and highlight best practices through webinars and meetings.

This year OSEP used Part C child outcomes data in making annual determinations of performance based on state performance plans and annual performance reports. OSEP-funded TA centers will continue to work with states to support them collecting high-quality child outcomes data that is reliable and valid, and using this data for program improvement efforts.

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 3

The Department is using a multipronged approach to 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. Through technical assistance by Department staff and contractors, technical assistance centers, monitoring, research networks and reports, grantee meetings, and use of social media and the bully pulpit, the Department expects to reach its goal. One tool that supports the Departments in the management of this goal is an electronic monitoring and reporting tool that it uses to assess the progress in all ELC and Preschool Development Grants states and deploy specialized technical assistance as quickly as possible to ensure progress continues. Further, the Departments work with the ELC TA, PDG TA, CEELO, and OSEP-funded TA centers to provide targeted technical assistance, establish learning communities and provide webinars, briefs, and reports on key topics. The Departments' annual grantee meeting allows us to highlight key promising practices, discuss major challenges, and better understand state and local challenges. OSEP will be reviewing states' Phase II SSIPs for Part C in April 2016 and will be supporting them through technical assistance to develop plans that have improvement strategies to build or enhance their infrastructure, collect and use high-quality data, and improve services to enhance results for young children with disabilities and their families.

The Department of Education's efforts are aimed at increasing access to high-quality, effective programs—served by an effective early learning workforce—for children from birth to school entry and beyond (including children with disabilities and those who are ELs). Comprehensive assessment systems will measure our success, helping us to enhance the quality of all early learning programs, and reach the ultimate goal of improving children's outcomes.

Goal 4. Equity:

Increase educational opportunities for underserved students and reduce discrimination so that all students are well-positioned to succeed.

Goal Leader: Catherine Lhamon

Objective 4.1: Equitable Educational Opportunities. Increase all students’ access to educational opportunities with a focus on closing achievement gaps, and remove barriers that students face based on their race, ethnicity, or national origin; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; disability; English language ability; religion; socioeconomic status; or geographical location. **Objective Leader: Bob Kim**

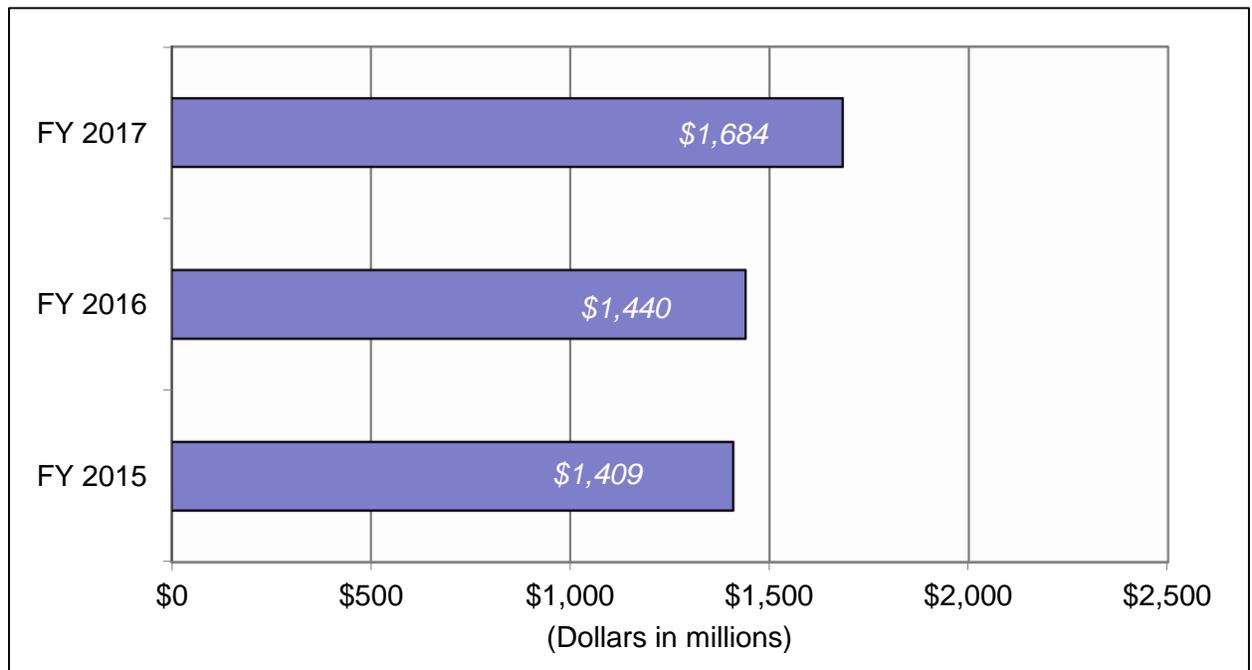
Metric 4.1.A: National high school graduation rate

Objective 4.2: Civil Rights Compliance. Ensure educational institutions’ awareness of and compliance with federal civil rights obligations and enhance the public’s knowledge of their civil rights. **Objective Leader: Bob Kim**

Metric 4.2.A: Percentage of proactive civil rights investigations launched annually that address areas of concentration in civil rights enforcement

Metric 4.2.B: Percentage of proactive civil rights investigations resolved annually that address areas of concentration in civil rights enforcement

Goal 4 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities⁸⁸ Supporting Goal 4 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
OCR	OCR		Office for Civil Rights	100	107	138
OESE	ED	4.1	State agency programs: Migrant	375	375	375
OESE	IE	NA	Indian Education: Grants to local education agencies	100	100	100
OESE	IE	NA	Indian Education: Special programs for Indian children	18	38	68
OESE	SIP	NA	Alaska Native education	31	32	32
OESE	SIP	NA	Native Hawaiian education	32	33	33
OESE	SIP	4.1, 4.2	Training and advisory services	7	7	7
OESE/OELA	ELA	4.1, 4.2	English Language Acquisition	737	737	800
OII	I&I	4.1, 2.4	Stronger together (proposed)	0	0	120
OSERS	SE	NA	Special Olympics education programs	8	10	10
TOTAL, GOAL 4				1,409	1,440	1,684

POC = Principal Office Component

NA = Not applicable.

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Public Benefit

Equity of opportunity is the foundation of the American dream, and equity in education is a cornerstone to building a strong, globally competitive workforce. From birth through adulthood, in institutions of early learning, P–12 schools, career and technical education, postsecondary education, adult education, workforce development, and independent living programs, the Department's goal is to ensure that all of our nation's students have access to the educators, resources, and opportunities to succeed. Accordingly, the Department is committed to improving outcomes for all students—regardless of income, home language, zip code, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or disability—through its major education initiatives. Moreover, the Department also recognizes the need to increase educational opportunities systemically for underserved populations, including by exploring ways to increase equitable access to resources and effective teachers within states and districts.

To foster equitable access to early learning education, through the Preschool Development Grants program, the Department, together with the Administration for Children and Families at HHS, is providing access to high-quality preschool for thousands of children from low- and moderate-income families in hundreds of communities across the nation. With the inclusion of this program in the ESSA, which reauthorized the ESEA, the Department will continue to foster increased access to high-quality preschool for the neediest children.

In P–12 education, through the SIG program, ESEA, and other federal programs, the Department is providing significant resources to dramatically improve the nation's lowest-achieving schools by using turnaround interventions and strategies and identifying the low-achieving schools that are showing strong evidence of successfully turning around. The Department is focused on supporting innovation, not just compliance monitoring, and is focused on spurring growth in achievement, not just absolute achievement measures as done in the past. In FY 2015, Department launched programs and initiatives designed to study and address chronic absenteeism and high school dropouts as well as to promote best practices in improving

⁸⁸ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

the rates of high school completion and graduation. The Department also started interagency planning to encourage greater socioeconomic diversity in schools and to provide greater educational opportunity for disconnected youth.

The Department worked to increase the number of low-income high school students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Building on partnerships with the Department of Labor and other federal agencies, the Department continued to expand career pathways for youth and adults by increasing access to high-quality secondary and postsecondary CTE programs, registered apprenticeship programs, and other forms of advanced technical training.

In higher education, the Department developed the President's America's College Promise proposal to make two years of community college free for eligible students. Through the First in the World program, the Department also awarded grants to IHEs to promote evidence-based strategies and practices for college access and completion, focusing on low-income students. Through SIP, the Department is supporting IHEs to help them become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students through improvements in academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.

Civil rights data collection, policy development and enforcement are the tools for ensuring that recipients of federal funding provide educational opportunities absent discriminatory barriers. The Department's OCR continues to address issues of equity in educational opportunity through both its policy and enforcement work by issuing detailed policy guidance; conducting vigorous complaint investigations; procuring strong systemic remedies; pursuing aggressive monitoring of resolution agreements; launching targeted and proactive compliance reviews and technical assistance activities; collecting and publicizing school-level data on important civil rights compliance indicators; and participating in intra- and interagency work groups to share expertise and best practices.

Goal 4: Details

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
4.1.A. National high school graduation rate ⁸⁹	SY: 2011–12 80.0%	SY: 2011–12 80.0%	SY: 2012–13 81.4%	SY: 2013–14 82.3%	83.0% ⁹⁰	NOT MET			84.5%	85%	
New APG Metric: Gap in the graduation rate between students from low-income families and all students ⁹¹	SY: 2013–14 7.7%	SY: 2011–12 8.3%	SY: 2012–13 8.1%	SY: 2013–14 7.7%	NA	NA			7.6% ⁹²	7.4%	
New APG Metric: Number of schools that do not have a gap or that decreased the gap between students from low-income ⁹³ families and the state average of all students ⁹⁴	SY: 2013–14 80%	SY: 2011–12 77.6%	SY: 2012–13 78.8%	SY: 2013–14 80%	NA	NA			81.2% ⁹⁵	82.4%	

⁸⁹ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁹⁰ SY 2013–14 actuals are being used to compare against the FY 2015 target.

⁹¹ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁹² SY 2014–15 actuals are being used to compare against the FY 2016 target; FY 2016 (SY 2015–16) data not available until 2017.

⁹³ For purposes of this metric, eligibility for Free or Reduced Price Lunches (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is the primary source of data for identifying economically disadvantaged (low-income) students for reporting on student outcomes, including graduation rates. The Department is currently considering options for redefining “economically disadvantaged” students for student outcomes reporting and other uses. Should the Department make such a change, data on economically disadvantaged students may not be entirely comparable with data for previous years.

⁹⁴ Metric is aligned with an APG.

⁹⁵ SY 2014–15 actuals are being used to compare against the FY 2016 target; FY 2016 (SY 2015–16) data not available until 2017.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
4.2.A. Percentage of proactive civil rights investigations launched annually that address areas of concentration in civil rights enforcement	FY: 2013 7%	7%	21%	16%	10%	MET	<p>18.0% 16.0% 14.0% 12.0% 10.0% 8.0% 6.0% 4.0% 2.0% 0.0%</p> <p>10.0% 16.0%</p> <p>4.2.A</p>	12%	15%	<p>25.0% 20.0% 15.0% 10.0% 5.0% 0.0%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>	
4.2.B. Percentage of proactive civil rights investigations resolved annually that address areas of concentration in civil rights enforcement	FY: 2013 8%	8%	15%	20%	10%	MET	<p>25.0% 20.0% 15.0% 10.0% 5.0% 0.0%</p> <p>10.0% 20.0%</p> <p>4.2.B</p>	12%	16%	<p>25.0% 20.0% 15.0% 10.0% 5.0% 0.0%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>	

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

4.1.A. ED*Facts*; annually

4.2.A. Office for Civil Rights' (OCR) Case Management System (CMS) and Document Management (DM) systems; quarterly

4.2.B. OCR CMS and DM systems; quarterly

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 4.1: Equitable Educational Opportunities

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Throughout FY 2015, the Department continued its efforts to expand equitable educational opportunities through its budget priorities, grants, and initiatives in the P–12 and postsecondary spaces, as well as through interagency collaborations and taskforces.

The Department has placed increased emphasis on ensuring educational equity through forward-looking strategies, such as FY 2016 budget development. For example, the Department proposed investing in equity measures in its FY 2016 budget, with \$2.7 billion or almost 12 percent increase for ESEA programs and substantial increases across many programs.

P–12 Education

The Office of Early Learning in the Department’s OESE and the Administration for Children and Families at HHS awarded grants to launch high-quality preschool for 33,000 children from low- to moderate-income families in over 200 communities in the 18 Preschool Development Grants states. The 20 Race to the Top-ELC states have finalized their Annual Performance Reports showing their states’ progress in developing or enhancing their early learning systems. OCR also worked with HHS to develop a policy statement on discipline in early learning environments.

The Department continued to support the SIG program, ESEA Flexibility renewal, and the Excellent Educators for All initiative. On February 9, 2015, the Department published a notice of final regulations (NFRs) for SIG, incorporating changes from the FY 2014 appropriations act and lessons learned from implementation, so that SIG can better support turnaround efforts in the lowest-performing schools. The SIG NFR made slight adjustments to the four historical SIG models and includes three new SIG models: an early learning model, an evidence-based, whole school reform model, and a state-determined whole school reform model.

The Department released guidance for the [Excellent Educators for All](#) initiative during FY 2015. The initiative is directly tied to the goal of closing achievement gaps and ensuring equal educational opportunities; it is a three-pronged attempt to support states and districts as they work to ensure that low income students and students of color have equal access to effective and qualified educators. First, the Department required states to submit new Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (State Plans) in June 2015 and has reviewed and approved the plans of all 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico. Second, the Department is currently implementing a \$4.2 million effort to support an Equitable Access Support Network (EASN) that provides meaningful technical assistance to states in developing and then implementing high quality plans. The Department also created and released state-specific Educator Equity Profiles. The Department sent each state a copy of its CRDC file to facilitate additional state-level data analysis. The Department held a number of webinars with states to ensure they understood how the data could help in developing equity plans.

Also, several offices across the Department continue to be involved in the White House My Brother’s Keeper initiative, which aims to improve educational and other outcomes and reduce involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems for boys and young men of color. OSERS worked with OESE to identify districts with the highest numbers of males of color dropping out of school with the goal of providing these districts with technical assistance to

support high needs students. OSERS also led a multistate convening to address disproportionate discipline rates for students of color. “[Rethink Discipline](#),” a day-long conference at the White House, was convened by the Department and DOJ in July 2015, bringing together education professionals from across the country to work on strategies for creating positive school climates and implementing effective discipline practices to reduce the overuse of unnecessary out-of-school suspensions and expulsions and replace these practices with positive alternatives that keep students in school and engaged in learning, but also ensure accountability.

OESE helped launch a new White House Administration initiative, [Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism](#). Led by the White House, the Department, HHS, HUD, and DOJ, the administration announced new steps to combat chronic absenteeism and called on states and local communities across the country to join in taking immediate action to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year, beginning in the current school year (2015–16).

OELA has been working with the White House Task Force on New Americans, particularly on highlighting promising practices for serving ELs, immigrants and refugees. In April, the Task Force released a new report that outlines the federal government’s goals to strengthen its integration efforts nationwide and build welcoming communities. Additionally, the Task Force has launched an “[Educational and Linguistic Integration Webinar Series](#),” which has highlighted the work of researchers and practitioners who are working to support these populations. OELA has also partnered with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans to launch a set of fact sheets on Black ELs to develop awareness for targeted actions to ensure that group of student receive appropriate attention and support.

The Office of the Secretary supported the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education in its efforts to coordinate across federal agencies to execute [Generation Indigenious](#), or Gen I, an interagency initiative to support Native youth.

OCTAE continued to coordinate the implementation of the [P3](#) initiative, a unique cross-agency initiative that gives state, local, and tribal governments greater flexibility in using their discretionary funds to test innovative strategies for improving results for disconnected youth. The first nine pilots were announced in October 2015. For the next round of P3, OCTAE has published a Notice of Proposed Priorities (NPP). The NPP includes proposed priorities for disconnected youth who are unemployed and not enrolled in education; ELs; individuals with disabilities; homeless; in foster care; involved with the justice system; or immigrants or refugees.

While ESSA will certainly impact much of the Department’s work to promote equity in educational opportunity, the ultimate impacts of the new law are still being evaluated, and plans for implementation have yet to be fully developed. The FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA.

Higher Education

In FY 2015, OPEPD worked with the Office of the Under Secretary and other offices to develop the America’s College Promise to make two years of community college free for eligible students. OCTAE worked on preparing two solicitations related to reentry education.

The Department published a notice announcing a [First in the World](#) grant competition on May 11, 2015. The program is designed to promote evidence-based strategies and practices for college access and completion, focusing on high-need students. The \$60 million appropriated

for this program was used to make 18 grants to IHEs, including 9 grants to minority-serving institutions totaling \$30 million. Two of the awards were Validation grants designed to replicate strategies proven to be successful in earlier evaluations.

SIP supports eligible IHEs in becoming self-sufficient and expanding their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the institution’s academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.

In an effort to scale up successful practices that lead to completion, especially in the area of remedial education, the Department developed communities of practice among minority-serving community colleges. Lead institutions have been identified, recruited, and trained. Two communities of practice have been launched as of October 2015. The Department convened these communities of practice and others in November 2015 for the Student Success at Minority Serving Institutions conference.

OCR and FSA continue to support the President’s Sexual Assault Task Force to improve coordination, transparency, and effectiveness in responding to sexual violence in colleges and universities. The Task Force released a Resource Guide in September 2015, and is developing plans for the coming months, including a focus on technical assistance/regional convenings, research initiatives, and training/prevention at the P–12 level.

OCTAE and OCR are developing joint guidance to assist high schools, community colleges, other CTE providers, and state agencies in meeting their obligations under federal law to administer and oversee CTE programs, without discriminating on the basis of gender. OCTAE is working as well with FSA to promote greater awareness of new ability to benefit provisions that enable adults who lack a high school diploma or its equivalent to access student financial aid if they are enrolled in qualifying career pathway program.

Subpopulation Breakout for Metric 4.1.A: National high school graduation rate by race/ethnicity, other characteristics*

SY	Total	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficiency	Students with Disabilities
2011–12	80%	67%	88%	73%	69%	86%	72%	59%	61%
2012–13	81.4%	69.7%	88.7%	75.2%	70.7%	86.6%	73.3%	61.1%	61.9%
2013–14	82.3%	69.6%**	89.4%	76.3%	72.5%	87.2%	74.6%	62.6%	63.1%

* Data are reported based on the requirements for individual states in the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR).
 ** The United States 4-year ACGR for American Indian/Alaska Native students was estimated using both the reported 4-year ACGR data from 49 states and the District of Columbia and using imputed data for Virginia. Available at: http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2013-14.asp.
 Data Source and Frequency of Collection: ED Facts universe collection, annual reports; annually

Challenges and Next Steps:

The following items delineate future challenges and next steps as the Department works to enhance educational opportunities for underserved populations.

As with all budget requests, the new and continuing proposals related to equity described above are dependent on final appropriations. Offices across the Department will maximize alignment with the Department’s issues of equity.

Staff worked diligently to approve state educator equity plans and to oversee implementation of the Excellent Educators for All initiative, addressing the urgency of progress on educator equity and the capacity of states to meet new data and planning requirements. OESE is managing a large technical assistance effort around the plans that will allow all states to receive intensive support. A cross-agency group is working to ensure this technical assistance includes stakeholders from the civil rights community to help states improve consultation efforts.

In FY 2015, the Department also promoted this goal through continued implementation of ESEA Flexibility. The [ESEA Flexibility renewal guidance](#), issued on November 13, 2014, focused on improving educational outcomes for all students, closing achievement gaps, increasing equity, and improving the quality of instruction. As part of the SEA's process of ensuring that schools were accountable for the performance of all subgroups of students, in its renewal request, each SEA had to demonstrate that a school could not receive the highest rating in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system if there are significant achievement or graduation rate gaps across subgroups that are not closing in the school. States were also encouraged, through the renewal process, to identify and address existing opportunity gaps that may contribute to achievement gaps.

The ESSA continues the ESEA's focus on ensuring that states and school districts account for the progress of all students, take meaningful actions to improve the lowest-performing schools, and ensure equitable access to excellent educators. However, the provisions and ultimate impact of the new law are still being evaluated, and plans for implementation have yet to be fully developed. The FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA.

Objective 4.2: Civil Rights Compliance

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department, in consultation with OMB, has determined that performance toward this objective is making noteworthy progress. OCR has dramatically increased the efficiency and accuracy of the CRDC by launching a newly developed and improved data collection tool. Many new features of the data collection tool contributed to the increased efficiency and data accuracy, including the ability of LEAs and schools to (1) preview future CRDC questions that will be mandatory for the 2015–16 CRDC and to submit data voluntarily (optional) for these questions early, as part of the 2013–14 collection; (2) receive automated, customized edit checks of data entries prior to final data submission/ certification; (3) obtain individualized district feedback reports that summarize the 2013–14 data submitted; and (4) benefit from the repopulation of some survey data items from 8 SEAs to reduce approximately 2,000 LEAs' reporting burden. As a result, 17,000 LEAs can receive real-time summary reports of their 2013–14 CRDC data up to 8 months earlier and at least 2,000 LEAs' burden to comply with data violation to launching an investigation by as much as one year, thus bringing speedier relief to complainants. Data for the 2013–14 CRDC will be available in the spring of 2016.

In FY 2015, OCR, in collaboration with OELA, supported major investments in the quality of the CRDC data, including the disaggregated data for ELs in all public schools. This new feature of the [CRDC website](#) allows access to individual district or school level EL profiles that include information about the demographics of EL students and their participation in early childhood, gifted and talented, AP, SAT, college and career readiness, math and science courses, and discipline. OCR worked with OELA to develop and publish the EL Toolkit to support the implementation of EL Guidance. The toolkit was launched nationally at the end of April and all ten chapters are now available online. OCR continues to promote the EL guidance and toolkit through speaking engagements and technical assistance.

In the policy arena, in FY 2015, OCR released nine guidance documents of critical importance to the Department, schools, civil rights stakeholders and the public—the most issued in one fiscal year in OCR history—concerning: (1) the Title VI requirements around resource equity and resource comparability; (2) obligations of elementary and secondary schools to respond to the bullying of SWDs; (3) schools’ obligations surrounding effective communication for SWDs; (4) questions and answers on Title IX and single-sex elementary and secondary classes and extracurricular activities; (5) applicability of federal civil rights laws to juvenile justice residential facilities; (6) implementing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Ebola guidance for schools; (7) schools’ obligations to ensure that EL students can participate meaningfully and equally in school and to communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand; (8) addressing the risk of measles in schools and school obligations to SWDs medically unable to obtain vaccinations; and (9) the importance and role of Title IX coordinators.

In order to further disseminate and deliver the message of these policy guidance documents to communities nationwide, OCR provided more than 220 technical assistance sessions to recipients and other stakeholders. These sessions were conducted by employees from all of OCR’s twelve regional and enforcement offices throughout the nation, and from headquarters, including Program Legal Group staff.

In FY 2015, OCR received a new record-high number of complaints (10,394, vs. 9,983 in FY 2014) and resolved 9,232 complaints (compared to 9,864 in FY 2014)—including a higher number of complex and systemic case resolutions than in FY 2014—despite experiencing the lowest staffing levels in OCR history (average of 539).

Additionally, OCR increased the transparency of its work to the public by making available a list of colleges and universities currently being investigated under Title IX related to sexual violence; posting hundreds of resolution agreements with educational institutions on its website; and overhauling the website to make more easily accessible information about OCR’s civil rights enforcement work (including resolution letters and agreements from FY 2014 forward); policy guidance documents; frequently asked questions about the laws OCR enforces; and a robust reading room with publications, pamphlets, and other materials. In total, there are now more than 800 cases available on the website. OCR’s customer service team responded to 7,430 hotline calls, answered 3,397 public inquiries, and fulfilled 8,775 publication requests for OCR documents to ensure the public has accurate information about civil rights laws and policy to promote equity in education.

Challenges and Next Steps:

In FY 2015, OCR again received a new record-high number of complaints despite experiencing the lowest staffing levels in OCR history—continuing a trend that has existed for decades and has accelerated during this administration.

To create greater efficiency in our work, OCR overhauled its case processing guidelines, increased use of technology, eliminated peripheral practices such as reviewing appeals of dismissals or retaining cases over which other agencies have joint jurisdiction, and successfully used its internal audit program to foster greater consistency, quality and systemic relief in its enforcement efforts.

The complaint volume and lack of resources continue to have an impact on OCR’s ability to conduct and resolve proactive investigations and to conduct proactive technical assistance. OCR’s ability to conduct proactive activities is also impacted by limited staffing and resources.

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 4

The Department will continue to work in FY 2016 to expand access to high-quality preschool, close achievement and graduation gaps, foster equitable access to educational resources and excellent educators, ensure all students have the opportunity to attain a high-quality education in a supportive and nondiscriminatory environment, and foster greater college access and completion. In doing so, the Department will continue to integrate the support for underserved or at-risk students, children and youth—including high-need students, students of color, ELs, and children and youth with disabilities—across its programs and initiatives.

As mentioned above, ESSA continues the ESEA's focus on ensuring that states and school districts account for the progress of all students, including students from low-income families and students of color; take meaningful actions to improve the lowest-performing schools; and ensure equitable access to excellent educators. The Department is developing approaches to best support the implementation of the ESSA, and the FY 2016 APR will provide additional detail on the impact of the ESSA for the Department's work.

The Department will continue to support a robust early learning agenda that includes building state and local capacity to expand access to high-quality preschool programs, improving the workforce, aligning preschool systems, and supporting comprehensive assessment systems.

The Department will work with the White House, other agencies, states and local communities to implement [*Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*](#).

The Department will implement the [National Professional Development](#) program to increase well prepared teachers and other educators to serve ELs.

The Department will advance programs that serve homeless, foster, disconnected, incarcerated, and migrant youth, including through implementing the P3 program.

The Department will support the My Brother's Keeper initiative to improve educational and other outcomes and reduce involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems for boys and young men of color, and to address disproportionate discipline rates for students of color and SWDs.

The Department will work with the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education to implement Gen I.

The Department will explore ways to work collaboratively with other federal agencies to increase socioeconomic and racial integration and diversity in schools.

The Department will continue to issue civil rights policy guidance documents that address schools' obligations to ensure equity for students, investigate civil rights complaints, launch targeted and proactive civil rights compliance reviews and technical assistance activities, provide more transparency about civil rights processes and resolutions on its website, and issue new CRDC data that illuminate equity and opportunity gaps in our nation's schools.

The Department will foster more equity in career, technical, and adult education programs, including through the Advancing Equity in CTE project to reduce inequities in CTE access, participation, completion, and post-program outcomes for girls and women, individuals with disabilities, and students of color.

The Department will promote evidence-based strategies and practices to increase college access and completion and expand colleges' capacity to support low-income students through the First in the World program and SIP.

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 Leader: Amy McIntosh

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

Objective Leader: Ross Santy

Metric 5.1.A: Number of public data sets included in ED Data Inventory and thus linked to Data.gov or ED.gov websites

Metric 5.1.B: Number of states linking K–12 and postsecondary data with workforce data

Metric 5.1.C: Number of states linking K–12 with early childhood data

Objective 5.2: Privacy. Provide all education stakeholders, from early childhood to adult learning, with technical assistance and guidance to help them protect student privacy while effectively managing and using student information. **Objective Leader: Kathleen Styles**

Metric 5.2.A: Average time to close “cases” (PTAC + FPCO)⁹⁶

Objective 5.3: Research, Evaluation, and Use of Evidence. Invest in research and evaluation that builds evidence for education improvement; communicate findings effectively; and drive the use of evidence in decision-making by internal and external stakeholders. **Objective Leaders: Ruth Neild and Margo Anderson**

Metric 5.3.A: Percentage of select new⁹⁷ (noncontinuation) competitive grant dollars that reward evidence

Metric 5.3.B: Number of peer-reviewed, full-text resources in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)

Metric 5.3.C: Number of reviewed studies in the WWC database⁹⁸

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

Objective Leader: Joseph South

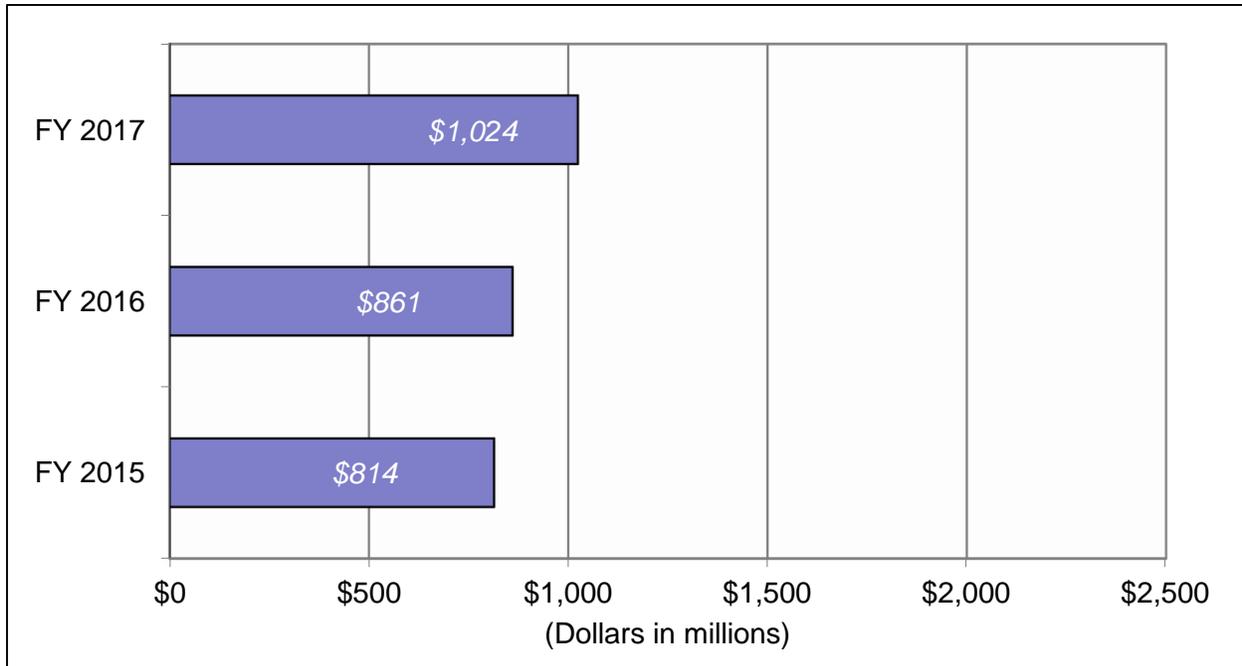
⁹⁶ Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) and Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO).

⁹⁷ “New competitive grant dollars that reward evidence” includes all dollars awarded based on the existence of at least “evidence of promise” in support of a project, per the framework in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (34 CFR Part 75). Consideration of such evidence appears through: eligibility threshold (e.g., in the i3); absolute priority; competitive priority (earning at least one point for it); or selection criteria (earning at least one point for it). The percentage is calculated compared to the total new grant dollars awarded, excluding awards made by the IES, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, and technical assistance centers, with some exceptions.

⁹⁸ Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

Metric 5.4.A: Percentage of schools in the country that have actual Internet bandwidth speeds of at least 100 Megabits per second (Mbps)

Goal 5 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities⁹⁹ Supporting Goal 5 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
IES	IES	5.3	National assessment	129	149	149
IES	IES	5.3	Regional educational laboratories	54	54	54
IES	IES	5.3	Research in special education	54	54	54
IES	IES	5.3	Research, development, and dissemination	180	195	209
IES	IES	5.1, 5.2	Statewide longitudinal data systems	35	35	81
IES	IES	5.3	Statistics	103	112	125
OII	I&I	5.3	Education innovation and research	120	120	180
Subtotal				675	719	853
Other Discretionary Programs/Activities				139	142	171
TOTAL, GOAL 5				814	861	1,024

POC = Principal Office Component

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

Public Benefit

Education stakeholders, ranging from students and parents, to teachers and principals, to superintendents and the Secretary, need access to timely, appropriate, relevant, and actionable information. Information sources, which can range from datasets to rigorous evaluations and research studies, must be accessible through reliable technology and must reach needed

⁹⁹ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

audiences through dissemination, while applying appropriate controls to protect student privacy. The Department must continue to invest in its information resources so that internal and external stakeholders can use this information to make evidence-based decisions.

States continue to develop systems that will collect, manage, and appropriately report the valid, reliable data that are essential to achieving improvements across education, but there is much more work to do. The Department continues ongoing efforts to develop effective SLDS, design voluntary Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) to increase interoperability, and develop the capacity of institutions and staff to utilize data to improve teaching and learning outcomes. It is not enough to support only the development of the systems and structures that will provide education agencies across the nation with the data necessary to generate accurate pictures of student performance and other critical elements, from early learning programs through postsecondary institutions and the workforce. The Department must continue to lead the national discussion of how these systems are best and most appropriately used to support students, improve instruction, address inequities, develop future teachers, and inform practice; all while ensuring the privacy of the nation's students is safely protected.

Additionally, the Department must serve as a model for how data are disseminated. Information that SEAs and LEAs report to the Department should be made accessible, where possible, to inform the public and help with local decision-making, but these data must be shared in ways that protect student privacy and that are in compliance with federal and state privacy laws. The collection, storage, maintenance, and use of data must be responsible and must appropriately protect student privacy. Stewards and users of data must remember that these data describe real people and ensure that systems protect the rights of those people. The Department will help practitioners in the field ensure they are properly protecting privacy and communicating with parents and students about the proper use and management of student data.

The Department continues to prioritize the use of “evidence-based” practices through its competitive programs while supporting the creation of new evidence through rigorous project evaluations. This approach helps ensure that scarce dollars have their intended impact and also empowers states and districts to become more dynamic learning organizations, especially in areas with little existing rigorous evidence. Additionally, the Department continues to provide tools to stakeholders that help them understand what types of which strategies and interventions are effective for various “problems of practice.”

Better use of information, both for policy-makers, but also educators, depends on access to reliable technology. The Department's vision for 21st-century learning requires that schools have a 21st-century technology infrastructure anchored around high-speed Internet to allow for innovation and personalization in the classroom. This vision is supported by the remarkable progress we have made towards the President's ConnectED initiative goal to connect 99 percent of students in the nation's schools to high-speed broadband by 2018. States, districts, and schools must have such infrastructure to incorporate cutting-edge methods for strengthening curriculum quality and delivery to meet more rigorous college- and career-ready standards; improving student access and engagement; developing comprehensive, formative, and summative assessment systems; and enhancing data management systems.

Goal 5: Details

Continuous Improvement of the U.S. Education System Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
5.1.A. Number of public data sets included in ED Data Inventory and thus linked to Data.gov or ED.gov websites	FY: 2013 55	55	66	79	79	MET			94	104	
5.1.B. Number of states linking K-12 and postsecondary data with workforce data	FY: 2013 12	12	20	24	22	MET			25	25	
5.1.C. Number of states linking K-12 with early childhood data	FY: 2013 19	19	26	32	27	MET			29	32	

Continuous Improvement of the U.S. Education System Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
5.2.A. Average time to close "cases" (PTAC + FPCO)	FY: 2013 10 days	10	9	4.9	8 days	MET			7.2 ¹⁰⁰	6.48 ¹⁰¹	
5.3.A. Percentage of select new (noncontinuation) competitive grant dollars that reward evidence ¹⁰²	FY: 2012 6.5%	9.35%	15.9%	29.4%	11.0%	MET			18% ¹⁰³	20%	
New APG Metric: Number of completed project evaluations from grantees from select discretionary grant programs in a given fiscal year that meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Evidence Standards ¹⁰⁴	FY: 2015 2	NA	NA	2	NA	NA			10	20	

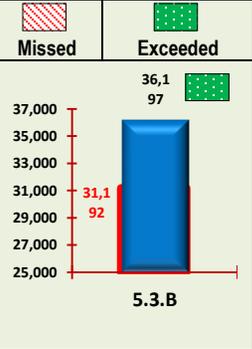
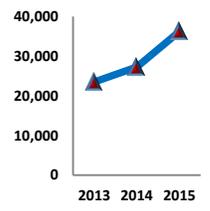
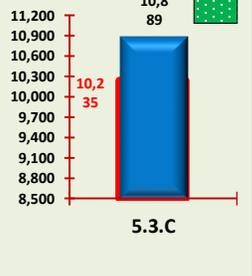
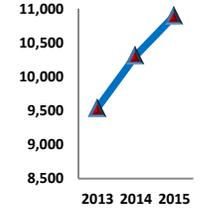
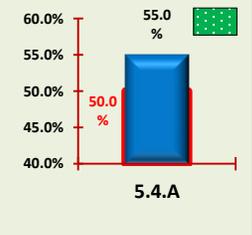
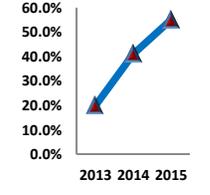
¹⁰⁰ Target is being updated to reflect the goal of a 10% reduction from the prior year.

¹⁰¹ Target is being updated to reflect the goal of a 10% reduction from the prior year.

¹⁰² Metric is aligned to an APG.

¹⁰³ The out-year performance targets are increased from what was reported in the *FY 2014 Annual Performance Report and FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan*.

¹⁰⁴ Metric is aligned to an APG.

Continuous Improvement of the U.S. Education System Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target 2015	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015			Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
5.3.B. Number of peer-reviewed, full-text resources in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)	FY: 2013 23,512	23,512	27,292	36,197	31,192	MET			35,692	40,892	
5.3.C. Number of reviewed studies in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) database ¹⁰⁵	FY: 2013 9,535	9,535	10,310	10,889	10,235	MET			NA	NA	
New Metric: Number of visits to the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) website	FY: 2015 1,822,000	NA	NA	1,822,000	NA	NA	/		1,967,760	2,164,536	/
5.4.A. Percentage of schools in the country that have actual Internet bandwidth speeds of at least 100 Mbps	FY: 2013 20%	20%	41%	55%	50%	MET			70%	80%	

NA = Not applicable.

¹⁰⁵ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 10,585 and 10,935, respectively.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

- 5.1.A. Data Strategy Team Data Inventory and the public ED Data Inventory at <http://datainventory.ed.gov>; quarterly
- 5.1.B. State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant monitoring (monthly updates from states, annual performance reports, final performance reports, and site visits); quarterly
- 5.1.C. SLDS grant monitoring (monthly updates from states, annual performance reports, final performance reports, and site visits); quarterly
- 5.2.A. Case Tracking System (CTS); quarterly
- 5.3.A. Forecast Report issued by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) and final Funding Reports from relevant programs; annually
- 5.3.B. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC); quarterly
- 5.3.C. What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); quarterly
- 5.4.A. Education Superhighway (for baseline), Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)/AASA E-rate Infrastructure Survey (for FY 2014 actual data); annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 5.1: Data Systems and Transparency

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department continues to focus upon providing technical assistance to the field to support the development and use of longitudinal data systems that serve the education needs of the states. In recent years a core focus for this work has been upon implementing and sustaining connections that span the complete student lifecycle. For example, the [SLDS grant program](#) works with a State Support Team (SST) of experienced government and industry experts in the area of data systems development, connection and maintenance. The technical assistance provided by the SST is available to all states, not only to active grantees of the SLDS grant program. This level of support has enabled better conversations across states, sharing of both technical and business process best practices, and helped bring to life the number of new K-12 and postsecondary to workforce connections and P-12 to early childhood data connections that surpassed our targets for FY 2015 on both metrics.

Collaboration is key to the success of this objective. SLDS staff work frequently with other Department programs, including the ELC, as well as coordinating with Department of Labor's Workforce Data Quality Information program. The Department continues to collaborate with technical experts, standards organizations and key stakeholders in the maintenance, enhancement and roll-out of CEDS. In FY 2015, in addition to successfully completing a new grant round and awarding 16 new SLDS grants to support collaborative data uses, a new contract was awarded to support CEDS enhancements, tools and uses over the next two years. States, postsecondary institutions and independent research groups continue to use the online CEDS tools to map their data systems, data uses and data models to CEDS.

The Department continues to model the transparency we are working to develop in the field by updating and expanding the ED Data Inventory. While work to improve the functionality and connections of the ED Data Inventory system have stalled due to budgetary limitations, the work to improve and enhance the Inventory's content continues to move forward. Collections and reports from Department programs within seven different Principal Office Components are now represented in the Inventory. This resulted in 74 distinct publicly available datasets across the Department being connected to an Inventory entry. The Inventory continues to provide source information to data.gov on a regular basis.

Challenges and Next Steps:

As with previous years, state support for longitudinal data system development continues to be the largest dependency and area of risk for progress in this area. Several states have experienced increased political pressures over the past year to reduce collection and management of longitudinal student data. The most effective strategies towards building support within states for continuing to support longitudinal data system initiatives is to enable a strong set of best practice uses for the data that deliver value to stakeholders at multiple levels. The 16 new awards made in the SLDS FY 2015 grant competition are all focused upon data use. A key challenge that is being addressed right now is to develop a consistently applied and agreed upon metric (or set of metrics) for measuring and documenting good data use. The SLDS team has been driving work forward in this area as monitoring practices and protocols are set up for FY 2015 grantees.

Formalizing new phases for CEDS and the ED Data Inventory work will be very important in the coming months. As FY 2015 came to a close a new vehicle was put in place to support the development and use of CEDS for the next two years. As we start FY 2016, work is now getting back up to speed to engage the field in the continued development of the standards, and to support use of the online tools that enable agencies and interested individuals to interact with CEDS. Having the vehicle in place for two years will be helpful, as gaps in the work seen during both FY 2014 and FY 2015 should not occur. The ED Data Inventory is also at a critical juncture in its development. While the content of the inventory continues to be supported and enhanced, the technical work that was getting started at the beginning of FY 2015 to better integrate the Inventory and the collection clearance process systems at the Department had to be put on hold. Although, this should not cause problems for meeting the established goals connecting public data sets with entries within the Inventory in FY 2016, if the funding and integration issues are not resolved further progress into FY 2017 and FY 2018 may be threatened.

In FY 2016, the Department is launching the InformED initiative. InformED is the Department's groundbreaking effort to transform how the Department makes information available—and actionable—for internal users and for the public, building on lessons learned from the new College Scorecard. The InformED initiative would replicate across the education spectrum, from early childhood to adult education, what the Scorecard accomplished for higher education. Each of these Scorecard-like sites or “information hubs” would pull together the Department's diverse array of information on a particular topic, make it accessible with intuitive tools for decision-making, and allow open data access to unlock answers to pressing education questions and needs. As with the College Scorecard, the release of these data will enable external developers to create innovative new tools to further serve students. The Department is working to identify several key themes around which to center information and will develop new iterations of the College Scorecard. InformED will empower decision-makers by providing the full set of information, both data and studies that currently live in disparate locations, into one location with analysis and reporting tools and open data access to address relevant education questions. To support open access to education data and centralized dissemination of other evidence, the Department must invest in its underlying data infrastructure for managing the collection, quality, release, and analysis of data.

The Department is also continuing to improve its own internal data management practices through the maturation of the DST. What started as primarily a communication tool has evolved to document the key hurdles that prevent better data practices within the Department and to make recommendations to address them. Leadership of the DST is currently reviewing a drafted Directive on Departmental Data Management Practices. The Directive, if implemented, would formally unite existing data strategy and data governance practices while also outlining the roles and responsibilities for offices that steward key data on behalf of the Department. This work is continuing the evolution of DST from a volunteer, collaborative organization to a true governance body that can effect change and implement better practice across the Department.

Objective 5.2: Privacy

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Educational institutions rely on student data to improve decision-making, to personalize learning, and to target additional support to at-risk students, and the Department itself relies on student data for key administration initiatives. Increases in the collection and use of student data, however, have fueled public concern about student privacy, and important gains are at risk due to public concern. Throughout FY 2015, student privacy was an extremely hot topic and as a result the Department had to begin, to some degree, pulling away from our long term

improvement plans to respond to immediate *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) and privacy issues providing substantial, recurring technical assistance to the Hill on dozens of proposed bills dealing with student privacy. In addition, the Department responded to public and congressional criticism over the privacy of students' medical treatment records in the wake of a recent sexual assault case by issuing a draft Dear Colleague letter on the protection of student privacy in campus medical records. The Department was publicly commended for publishing the letter in draft format, to obtain public input before finalizing it in FY 2016.

While adjusting to these changing demands, there has been consistent, steady improvement in office metrics specific to privacy since we began tracking these numbers about two years ago. Our strategy has been to rely when appropriate on contractor resources, both within the office and from the contractors that staff the PTAC. These efforts in addressing the high degree of public interest in student privacy included the implementation of a new more user-friendly website, and the release of our Model Terms of Service guidance and teacher training video. Another strategy that continues to pay off is increased coordination with other Department offices engaged in privacy technical assistance as the Department expanded PTAC's work to include early childhood programs, particularly through the creation of new online resource page that curates a vast array of technical assistance resources on the privacy and security of early childhood (EC) data from across the Department's disparate EC technical assistance centers. Through PTAC and the Department's Office of the Chief Privacy Officer (OCPO), the Department conducted a number of targeted technical assistance activities on early childhood issues, including a site visits, webinars, and workshops and provided extensive internal technical assistance on privacy issues relating to the Preschool Development Grants program. As a result of this focus on efficiencies and resource utilization, using metrics to improve performance and relying on a case tracking system that manages workload and content for both our contractor and federal staff, the average time to respond to cases was under 5 days, meeting the Department's FY 2015 performance target of by having an average turnaround time of less than 8 days.

Challenges and Next Steps:

As we move forward into FY 2016, the Department again anticipates a significant amount of activity in the field on student privacy issues, from new state statutes, to policy statements, continued industry pledges and coordination with other enforcement agencies. The challenge for this area is to be proactive, when limited resources mandate reactivity. We are fundamentally realigning privacy processes and policy at the Department, while continuing to run a compliance and technical assistance program. It is challenging to continue to run basic operations, while redesigning processes and building for the future.

While we continued to make considerable strides in FY 2015, we still face an inherent challenge regarding inquiries seeking guidance on issues for which the Department has no answer. For example, video recording is increasingly being utilized in the educational arena (e.g., for surveillance, or remote classroom observation), and application of the regulatory framework to these situations is complicated. The Department, specifically the OCPO, will continue to use the biweekly meetings with the Department's Office of the General Counsel (OGC) and OPEPD to examine those issues that may require regulatory or statutory change to provide answers. Now having senior support for increased resources, there is the hope that even greater strides will be realized moving forward into FY 2016 with the addition of these resources and as part of a contract recompetition, to transform and restructure PTAC from an external, contractor-run TA center, to an integral part of the OCPO. The new contract, awarded in September 2015 will improve the Department's privacy technical assistance by leveraging and integrating the

expertise and support of PTAC's contractor subject-matter experts with the legal and policy expertise of the Department's federal staff.

Objective 5.3: Research, Evaluation, and Use of Evidence

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Systemic improvement requires research and evaluation so that decision makers at the national, state, and local levels have reliable evidence to inform their actions. While the Department's research programs are its primary driver for learning what works, the Department also seeks to build evidence by incorporating grantee-led evaluations into other programs. Requiring that more discretionary grants build on and generate evidence of effectiveness will increase the likelihood that scarce program dollars have a positive impact on student outcomes. A list of evaluations completed in FY 2015, as well as a summary of other relevant upcoming evaluations, can be found in appendix E.

The Department's Evidence Planning Group (EPG) continues to identify opportunities for discretionary grant programs to use evidence-related priorities or selection criteria in competitions. In FY 2015, a total of eight competitions in OII, OESE, and OPE encouraged evidence-based projects through eligibility requirements, competitive preference priorities, and selection criteria. In addition, nine competitions in OII, OESE, and OPE asked that applicants design evaluations of their proposed projects that will produce evidence. The Department surpassed the FY 2015 performance target for programs rewarding evidence in grant competitions. In addition, the EPG has met with each of the Department's grant-making offices to discuss appropriate uses of evidence in FY 2016 competitions. The Department projects that over 10 competitions will reward evidence in their FY 2016 competitions.

The metric above tracks the Department's progress in incentivizing applicants to build on evidence of "what works" and to generate new evidence in the course of their grants. Two other metrics—one related to the WWC and one to ERIC—track the Department's progress in reviewing studies of education effectiveness against rigorous standards and in making high-quality education research widely available and easily accessible. The Department believes that progress in these metrics will contribute to the information flow that is essential to promoting promising areas of education research and development.

The WWC reviews and summarizes studies of the effectiveness of education interventions. During FY 2015, the WWC surpassed the Department's target by reviewing more than 600 studies. Reviews of studies submitted by applicants to Department grant competitions contributed to the larger-than-anticipated number of studies reviewed. In addition to its regular reviews of IES-funded research studies, in FY 2015 the WWC also began to review studies produced by the i3 program's first cohort of grantees. These grantees, originally funded in 2010, began to share their results of the independent evaluations of their projects this past year. The WWC also expanded its capacity to review higher volumes of studies by offering additional reviewer training and awarding a new contract for grant-related study reviews.

Likewise, in FY 2015, ERIC continued to prioritize acquisition of peer-reviewed, full-text education research and secured many new agreements with content providers to enable ERIC to acquire the full text of peer-reviewed research articles supported with FY 2012 or later research funding from IES. This work contributed to surpassing the FY 2015 annual performance target by more than 5,000 full-text, peer-reviewed resources. ERIC also has incorporated a search function that allows users to identify studies in the ERIC database that were reviewed by the WWC and that met standards. In this way, the greater integration of the

Department's WWC and ERIC investments contributes to the "virtuous cycle" of using and producing research evidence.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The process to collect data and track progress against the goal is iterative, and properly using evidence to award competitive grants entails a shift in culture and capacity building across the Department. Building evidence into competitions is also resource-intensive in terms of program staff capacity, grantee capacity, availability of sufficient numbers of WWC-certified reviewers, and the review process. Grantees vary in their comfort with and understanding of evaluation and use of evidence, yet the Department has limited resources to support grantees in conducting rigorous evaluations that would produce evidence of effectiveness. Finally, targets for this objective are based on reasonable projections about which competitive grant programs may make new awards in this fiscal year, but the actual dollar amount awarded will depend on final appropriation amounts and other funding decisions and trade-offs, so performance targets may not increase in a linear fashion each year.

The Department's leadership will continue explaining to internal stakeholders how the new evidence framework in Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) can be used in upcoming discretionary grant competitions to reward evidence. For example:

- EPG is meeting with program offices throughout the Department to identify ways to incorporate evidence into discretionary grant competitions.
- EPG is also exploring ways to support program offices that choose to incorporate evidence and build capacity departmentwide. For example, EPG worked to establish a departmentwide contract that would provide for technical assistance to grantees on their evaluations, particularly impact evaluations that are intended to produce studies that meet WWC standards. This contract vehicle is now operational for programs planning FY 2016 competitions. Additionally, IES has collaborated with program offices to recruit peer reviewers familiar with the WWC standards, which will increase scrutiny of applicants' proposed plans for rigorous evaluations. Finally, OII and IES are providing training to Department staff on logic models and other elements of the evidence framework to better inform our work at the Department and to provide better assistance to our grantees.
- IES continues to use its various resources intentionally to support program design and evaluation. For example, in FY 2015, IES managed the development of a [guide](#) for planning and conducting strong quasi-experiments and offered a [webinar](#) on the topic. Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast will offer a five-part webinar series FY 2016 on designing strong studies of the impact of professional development. The series is geared toward applicants to the Department's discretionary grant programs that require evidence.

To increase the number of individuals who are certified WWC reviewers, the WWC has been developing an on-demand online reviewer certification course. Previously, all training was held in-person and offered a few times per year. Demand is high for this credential, and the WWC has not been able to train all interested individuals. This new approach will allow anyone to take the training online and complete a multiple-choice exam on WWC standards. This system will allow many more individuals to receive training, at a considerably reduced per-person cost.

Objective 5.4: Technology and Innovation

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department, in consultation with OMB, has determined that performance toward this objective is making noteworthy progress. The Department made many successes during FY 2015, including a call to the country's 16,000 superintendents who lead district, charter, and private schools to join the Department in taking the Future Ready District Pledge. By taking this pledge, superintendents commit to develop, implement, and share technology plans with other districts so they can learn from successes and challenges along the way. The Future Ready District Pledge offers a roadmap to achieve successful personalized digital learning for every student and affirms a commitment by districts to move as quickly as possible toward the shared vision of preparing students for success in college, careers, and citizenship.

To support the work of the superintendents, the Department collected a series of best practices for connecting schools, providing devices, and preparing teachers to use technology effectively. These practices were published in guides released at the "ConnectED to the Future" superintendent summit: [Future Ready Schools: Empowering Educators through Professional Learning](#) and [Future Ready Schools: Building Technology Infrastructure for Learning](#). The Department also issued a [Dear Colleague letter](#) to state and local superintendents to clarify that technology and digital learning can be an allowable use of more than \$27 billion in federal funds under the ESEA and IDEA. Moreover, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) modernized School and Libraries (E-rate) program, raising the E-rate cap an additional \$1.5 billion per year and reprioritizing internal connectivity. With that added funding, E-rate will now provide up to \$3.9 billion per year to schools and libraries for both connectivity to and bandwidth within these institutions.

In April 2015, former Secretary Duncan announced the release of the [Ed Tech Developer's Guide: A Primer for Developers, Startups and Entrepreneurs](#)—the first guidance from the Department specifically for developers of educational software. This guide addresses key questions about the education ecosystem and highlights critical needs and opportunities to develop digital tools and apps for learning that will help close equity gaps in our schools. Written with input from knowledgeable educators, developers, and researchers who were willing to share what they have learned, the guide is designed to help entrepreneurs apply technology in smart ways to solve persistent problems in education. The release was followed by a national Ed Tech Developers Tour, spawning more than twenty events around the country to promote the guide and highlight administration priorities regarding the creation and use of educational technology in schools. This guide is now the most downloaded publication from the Department's Office of Educational Technology.

In September 2015, the Department announced the hiring of the first ever open education adviser to lead a national effort to expand schools' access to high-quality, openly licensed learning resources. In support of the President's ConnectED goal for high-quality, low-cost digital learning resources, the open education adviser will focus on helping both P–12 and higher education connect with teaching, learning and research resources in the public domain that are freely available to anyone over the web. With this position filled, the Department is able to work with tool providers and developers, district and state leaders, and educators to expand the use of openly licensed educational resources at scale in districts and states. Open educational resources are an important element of an infrastructure for learning and ranges from podcasts to digital libraries to textbooks and games.

Also in September, the Department awarded a contract to develop approaches for evaluating educational apps to help schools and parents make evidence-based decisions when choosing which apps to use with their students. This project will establish a standard for low-cost, quick turnaround evaluations of apps, and field test rapid-cycle evaluations to understand how to improve outcomes of ESEA and now ESSA programs. In addition to generating evidence on specific apps, the project will help develop protocol tools for conducting rapid cycle evaluations of apps that practitioners, developers, and researchers can use beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Challenges and Next Steps:

In November 2015, Education Superhighway, a nonprofit dedicated to reaching the President's connectivity goal, released data based on application data from the FCC's E-rate program. It includes data from 6,781 public school districts, representing over 25 million students in approximately 49,000 schools. It estimates that 59 percent of schools have reached the President's connectivity goal this year. This estimate falls within 4 percentage points of that reported by the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) survey. It further points out that future roadblocks to progress include access to needed fiber, especially in rural areas; affordability of broadband, especially in smaller districts that are not buying large quantities; and fully utilizing E-rate funds, since districts have to provide a percentage match to every E-rate dollar they receive. Each of these barriers could slow the rapid deployment of broadband to schools in coming years, since to varying degrees they fall outside the direct control of schools.

Several challenges remain in meeting the goals of this objective, including the need to educate the public about privacy and data security (leading to setbacks in the ability to use data to create personalized learning systems), difficulty measuring effectiveness without a robust evaluation program, and difficulty showing impact without data collection.

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 5

Several themes run across Goal 5 implementation strategies. Collaboration will be a key strategy needed to implement all objectives, including collaboration within the Department, collaboration within government, and collaboration with the education community as a whole. Sufficient resources are also key to all objectives in Goal 5, both federal resources and (in the case of the SLDS program) state resources as well. Privacy is both a stand-alone objective and a theme in other objectives. The Department must address valid privacy concerns and dispel privacy myths.

Another theme for success in Goal 5 is developing sustainable, scalable solutions for using data and evidence in decision-making, which will require the Department to be both efficient and effective. Building off Department resources, the Department is working to identify ways to make its data more accessible and actionable for the public. The recent release of the College Scorecard has shown the power of both user-friendly data tools and improved data access for researchers and developers through Application Program Interfaces. Department staff will leverage existing resources to improve the way that key datasets are located, accessed, and made usable. Another vital information resource is the WWC, helping identify the quality of various studies. Carefully reviewing studies against WWC standards is painstaking work and challenging to carry out at scale and in a short time frame. The Department is taking deliberate steps to increase the number of reviewers who are certified to carry out WWC reviews and to procure contracts that allow the Department to act nimbly to obtain these reviews.

Goal 6. U.S. Department of Education Capacity:

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

Goal Leader: Andrew Jackson

Objective 6.1: Effective Workforce. Continue to build a skilled, diverse, and engaged workforce within the Department. **Objective Leader: Cassandra Cuffee-Graves**

Metric 6.1.A: Staffing gaps percentage¹⁰⁶

Metric 6.1.B: EVS Employee Engagement Index¹⁰⁷

Metric 6.1.C: Time to hire¹⁰⁸

Metric 6.1.D: Effective Communication Index¹⁰⁹

Objective 6.2: Risk Management. Improve the Department's program efficacy through comprehensive risk management, and grant and contract monitoring. **Objective Leaders: Phil Maestri and Jim Ropelewski**

Metric 6.2.A: Percentage of A-133 Single Audits Overdue for resolution

Metric 6.2.B: Compliance rate of contractor evaluation performance reports¹¹⁰

Objective 6.3: Implementation and Support. Build Department capacity and systems to support states' and other grantees' implementation of reforms that result in improved outcomes, and keep the public informed of promising practices and new reform initiatives. **Objective Leader: Heather Rieman**

Metric 6.3.A: Percentage of states who annually rate the Department's technical assistance as helping build state capacity to implement education reforms

Objective 6.4: Productivity and Performance Management. Improve workforce productivity through information technology enhancements, telework expansion efforts, more effective process performance management systems, and state-of-the-art leadership and knowledge management practices. **Objective Leaders: Danny Harris, Cassandra Cuffee-Graves, and Denise Carter**

¹⁰⁶ Percent resulting from dividing number of all agency positions into unfilled agency vacancies. Metric is being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics.

¹⁰⁷ Based on positive Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS, also referred to as "EVS") responses.

¹⁰⁸ The Department's target for completing hiring actions is 90 days (as measured from Request to Recruit date to Tentative Offer date). This metric measures the percentage of hiring actions completed within 90 days. An increase in the time to hire rate means more hiring actions are completed within the target timeframe, the hiring process is more efficient, and vacancies are filled on a more timely basis.

¹⁰⁹ Based on positive FEVS responses.

¹¹⁰ As reported in the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) reporting tool at www.ppirs.gov. Government use of PPIRS is required by Federal Acquisition Regulation Subpart 42.15, and government wide annual reporting performance targets are set by the Office of Management and Budget in the March 6, 2013, memorandum titled, "[Improving the Collection and Use of Information about Contractor Performance and Integrity](#)." The PPIRS compliance metric "calculates the number of completed evaluations against the contract actions that should have had an evaluation completed. This number is displayed as a percentage" (https://www.cpars.gov/pdfs/Improving_Compliance.pdf).

Metric 6.4.A: Number of Department information technology (IT) security incidents

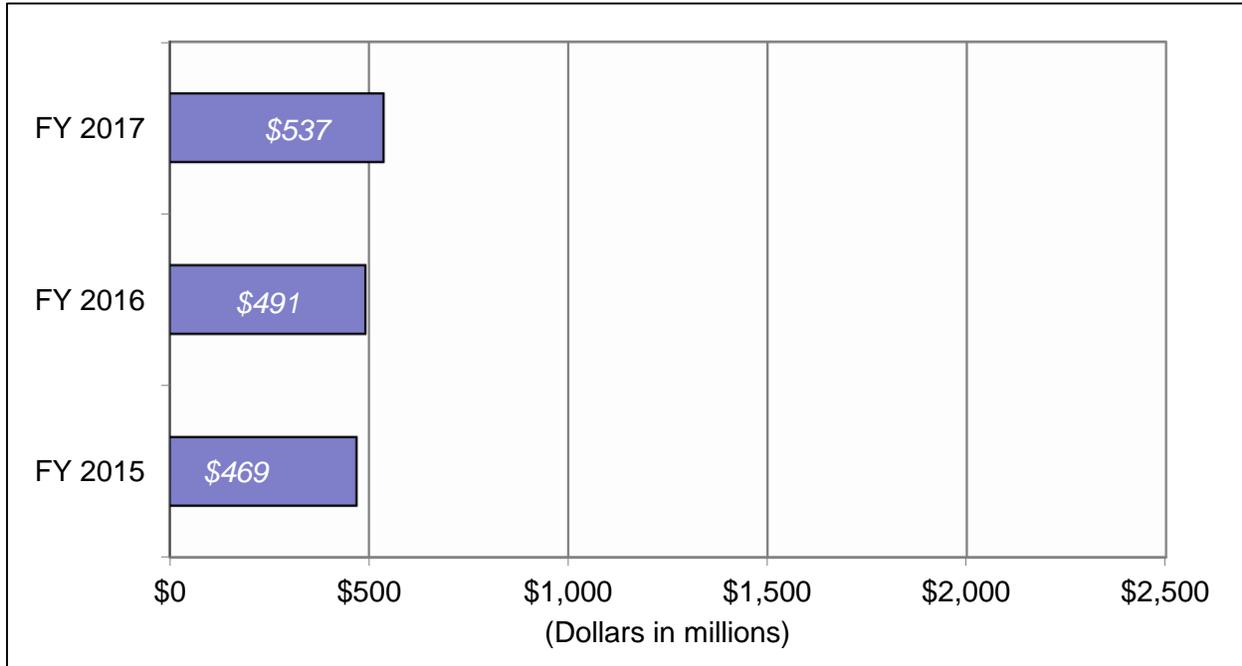
Metric 6.4.B: EVS Results-Oriented Performance Culture Index¹¹¹

Metric 6.4.C: EVS Leadership and Knowledge Management Index¹¹²

Metric 6.4.D: Total usable square footage

Metric 6.4.E: Rent cost

Goal 6 Discretionary Resources



Major Discretionary Programs and Activities¹¹³ Supporting Goal 6 Performance Metrics [Dollars in Millions]

POC	Account	Obj.	Program	FY 2015 Appropriation	FY 2016 Appropriation	FY 2017 President's Budget
OIG	OIG		Office of Inspector General	58	59	62
PA	PA		Program Administration: Building modernization	0	1	24
PA	PA		Program Administration: Salaries and expenses	411	431	450
TOTAL, GOAL 6				469	491	537

POC = Principal Office Component

NOTES: Many programs may have sub-activities that relate to other goals. Detail may not add to total due to rounding.

¹¹¹ Based on positive FEVS responses.

¹¹² Based on positive FEVS responses.

¹¹³ All the programs listed are discretionary programs, as distinct from mandatory programs. These include both competitive and noncompetitive programs.

Public Benefit

To ensure the achievement of the Department's mission critical objectives, grants and contract management remain a strategic focus for improvement in long- and short-term initiatives. Additionally, fortifying human capital strategies, competencies and resources, along with the continuous improvement of IT security and technologically enhanced work environments, continue to be priorities. These activities support grantees, schools, students, families, and communities in achieving their educational and economic goals, while also continuing to hold recipients of the Department's funding accountable to clear financial requirements and legal obligations.

The Department continues to focus on human capital management to acquire and develop its workforce; increase diversity and inclusion and improve employee engagement; rethink how it monitors and intervenes with high-risk grantees and contractors; enhance workforce productivity through information technology; safeguard its assets and stakeholders from cybersecurity threats; continue to improve and integrate effective performance management; and transform the way the Department interacts with states, districts, IHEs, and other grantees and stakeholders. These efforts will improve performance results, increase stakeholder collaboration, and lead to greater employee engagement.

In FY 2015, the Department was a leader in the broader grant community to implement successfully the new [Uniform Guidance](#) regulations prescribed and updated by the President's Office of Management and Budget. The Department created an online repository of resources and conducted frequent outreach to help grantees follow the new rules, which reduce burden while strengthening controls against waste, fraud, and abuse.

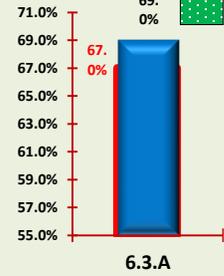
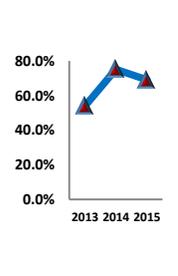
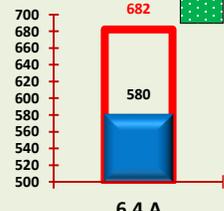
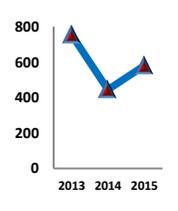
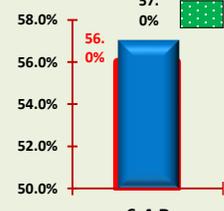
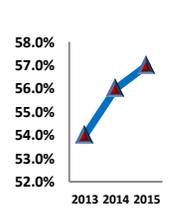
Using a strategic approach in FY 2015, the Department strengthened Human Resources (HR) operations by reducing hiring lead times, improving executive recruitment strategies, revising outdated HR policies, expanding training opportunities, and improving management practices.

Goal 6: Details

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target 2015	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015			Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
6.1.A. Staffing gaps percentage ¹¹⁴	FY: 2013 15%	15%	4%	4.3%	15%	MET			NA	NA	
New Metric Percent of selections made per job opportunity announcement (JOA)	FY: 2015 46.4%	NA	NA	46.4%	NA	NA	/		48.7%	51.2%	/
6.1.B. EVS Employee Engagement Index	FY: 2012 64.7%	66%	67%	68%	69%	NOT MET			71%	72%	
6.1.C. Time to hire	FY: 2013 65%	65%	85%	67.6%	68%	NOT MET			69%	70%	

¹¹⁴ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were both NA.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target 2015	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015			Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
6.1.D. Effective Communication Index	FY: 2012 48%	49.6%	50%	51%	50%	MET	<p>51.0% 50.0% 49.0% 48.0% 47.0% 46.0% 45.0%</p> <p>50.0% 0%</p> <p>6.1.D</p>	51%	52%	<p>52.0% 51.0% 50.0% 49.0% 48.0%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>	
6.2.A. Percentage of A-133 Single Audits Overdue for resolution	FY: 2012 57%	52%	37%	20%	43%	MET	<p>43.0% 20.0% 0%</p> <p>6.2.A</p>	37%	31%	<p>60.0% 40.0% 20.0% 0.0%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>	
6.2.B. Compliance rate of contractor evaluation performance reports	FY: 2013 85%	85%	97%	98%	100%	NOT MET	<p>100.0% 98.0% 75.0%</p> <p>100.0% 0%</p> <p>6.2.B</p>	100%	100%	<p>100.0% 95.0% 90.0% 85.0% 80.0% 75.0%</p> <p>2013 2014 2015</p>	

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target 2015	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015			2015	Missed	Exceeded	2016	
6.3.A. Percentage of states who annually rate the Department's technical assistance as helping build state capacity to implement education reforms ¹¹⁵	FY: 2013 54%	54%	75%	69%	67%	MET			77%	85%	
6.4.A. Number of Department IT security incidents	FY: 2012 756	755	445	580	682	MET			551 ¹¹⁶	523 ¹¹⁷	
6.4.B. EVS Results-Oriented Performance Culture Index	FY: 2012 53%	54%	56%	57%	56%	MET			57%	58%	

¹¹⁵ In FY 2016, the metric's data source will be changed to the 2015 Grantee Satisfaction Survey. Thus, in FY 2016, the baseline and targets will be updated to reflect the change. There is also variability with this metric due to ESEA reauthorization and the impact on the programs included.

¹¹⁶ FY 2016 target was reduced based on actual incidents reported in FY 2015 and then reducing that actual by 5%.

¹¹⁷ FY 2017 target was reduced by 5% from the FY 2016 target.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	Actuals			Current Year Target	Current Year Results	Actual-to-Target 2015		Out-Year Targets		Trend Line (Actuals)
		2013	2014	2015	2015		Missed	Exceeded	2016	2017	
6.4.C. EVS Leadership and Knowledge Management Index	FY: 2012 60%	61%	61%	62%	62%	MET			63%	64%	
6.4.D. Total usable square footage	FY: 2012 1,563,641	1,573,317	1,533,239	1,530,864	1,525,937	NOT MET			1,459,937	TBD	
6.4.E. Rent cost	FY: 2014 \$74.3M	\$71.7M	\$74.1M	\$72.7M	\$80.3M	MET			\$80,300,000	TBD	

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

- 6.1.A. Mission Critical Occupation (MCO) Staffing Gap Report; quarterly
- 6.1.B. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS); annually
- 6.1.C. Federal Personnel/Payroll System (FPPS) Datamart; quarterly

- 6.1.D. OPM FEVS; annually
- 6.2.A. Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) Audit Accountability & Resolution Tracking System (AARTS); annually
- 6.2.B. Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) www.ppirs.gov "PPIRS Compliance Report"; annually
- 6.3.A. Baseline is from the Race to the Top State Lead Survey, n=19. Future data will come from the Annual Grantee Satisfaction Survey; annually
- 6.4.A. Operational Vulnerability Management Solution (OVMS) System; quarterly
- 6.4.B. OPM FEVS; annually
- 6.4.C. OPM FEVS; annually
- 6.4.D. Department's Master Space Management Plan; annually
- 6.4.E. Department's Master Space Management Plan; annually

Note on performance metrics and targets: These metrics were established as a part of the *FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan*. Metrics may be updated or revised to reflect awareness of more accurate data or clarifications. Such updates or revisions are identified in footnotes.

Analysis and Next Steps by Objective

Objective 6.1: Effective Workforce

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department's staffing gaps have been successfully reduced and continue to maintain a stable, minimum level of 4–5 percent, which is well below the FY 2015 target level of 15 percent. The Department also continues to reduce hiring lead times and completed approximately 68 percent of hiring actions within 90 days from the date the action was received to the tentative job offer. In FY 2015, the Department opened a new career center to assist employees in reaching their career development goals and successfully developed, marketed and deployed a boot-camp style supervisory training course for supervisors and managers. This mandatory three-day *Supervisor Essentials* course is facilitated by Department subject matter experts and provides new and existing supervisors with the essential tools in a participatory environment that encourages students to develop cross-component networks to share best practices. Additionally, the Department received full OPM certification for its Senior Executive Service performance management program for the first time in eight years.

The Department's strategic goals are vast: supporting postsecondary education, CTE, adult education, elementary and secondary education, early learning, equity, and continuous improvement of the education system. To achieve its objectives, the Department's workforce must have the right skills and be led by skilled and engaging supervisors and managers. The Department is enhancing employee productivity by aligning priorities and goals at every level in the organization with the Department's strategic objectives. The Department has achieved consistent, incremental progress in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results. Since 2010, the Department has improved scores in the Employee Engagement Index of the FEVS from 62.6 percent to 68 percent in 2015. In FY 2015, the Department implemented a successful engagement strategy that resulted in 50 percent of subcomponents increasing their employee engagement scores between 1 and 12 percent, and 72 percent of subcomponents achieving employee engagement scores above the governmentwide average.

The Office of Human Resources (OHR) worked with all Departmental offices to prioritize the revision and updating of key human capital policies, conducted extensive outreach efforts to hiring managers, and expanded supervisory and managerial training and development opportunities.

Human capital management plays a critical role in the Department's ability to fulfill its mission. By effectively planning for workforce changes, addressing skill gaps, and providing timely guidance and hands-on options for recruitment, staffing, and retention, the Department can provide consistent oversight, execution, and support for its programs.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Department has improved managers' awareness of key hiring activities and timelines. Classification and hiring activities have been automated for real-time tracking, which allows HR staff to focus on more complex questions. In FY 2016, the Department will continue outreach efforts to hiring managers on personnel flexibilities and improve HR tracking tools to support managers in hiring the best employees for their positions.

Objective 6.2: Risk Management

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

Risk management focuses on creating an environment where grant and loan funds are used for the right purpose and achieve program success. The Department has worked to increase its ability to provide the right technical assistance and oversight to help grantees achieve program goals. Some of that work is accomplished through improving the quality and thoroughness of risk assessments conducted by the Department assuring that grantees are ready to manage the funds awarded. During FY 2015 the Department conducted preaward risk reviews for 100 percent of competitive grant programs. Other work has included improving the program staffs' skills in the area of fiscal monitoring through training and technical assistance. In FY 2015, the Department far exceeded its goal of timely audit resolution—the target was set at no more than 43 percent resolved overdue, and the actual percentage achieved was 20 percent. This was achieved by focusing on timeliness and fostering close working relationships with programs and support offices. In addition, a comprehensive training program to support the implementation of the new Uniform Guidance was developed and implemented for both grantees and Department staff, which included a strand on audit-related requirements.

Risk management is also an essential aspect of contract monitoring, which is achieved by actively assessing program and performance risks inherent in contracts through oversight and support and issuance of policy and guidance to program and contract officials. The Department has sustained high performance in compliance with contractor performance reporting requirements, leading the government with a 98 percent compliance rate for FY 2015. Only four agencies reached a compliance rate of 90 percent in FY 2015, and the average compliance rate of all 64 agencies reported was only 30 percent.¹¹⁸

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Department will continue to monitor contractor performance reporting requirements and work to attain the 100 percent compliance goal set by OMB.

The Department will continue collaborating with offices to reduce the number of overdue audits and leverage audit follow-up data to manage grantee risk by providing additional technical assistance and training on audit requirements related to the Uniform Guidance. The Department will focus its work with program offices to increase understanding and application of the results of Entity Risk Reviews related to audit data, with an emphasis on strategies to mitigate risk through effective and timely corrective action and follow-up.

Collecting quantitative data on the risk posed by grant recipients, and the extent to which the Department makes progress building capacity to address this risk, remains a challenge. Building the capacity of the Department to conduct more sophisticated analysis of data, both structured and unstructured, will be critical to addressing that challenge. The Department will work toward building quality, accessible sources of data on grant and grantee performance, sharing information about risks and mitigation across program offices, and building the grant staff capacity—in both knowledge and numbers—to monitor the financial and administrative components of grant performance.

These efforts will ultimately improve the capacity of our grantees to provide quality programs and services.

¹¹⁸ Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) (www.ppirs.gov) "PPIRS Compliance Report."

Objective 6.3: Implementation and Support

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

2015 was the first year of implementation for OESE's new Office of State Support (OSS). The reorganization was approved in the fourth quarter of FY 2014 and OSS was created in early October. OSS is designed to provide improved state-centered support across related Department programs and offer more transparent, higher quality, and better differentiated support to meet the varied needs among states. The matrix organization model adopted by OSS ensures that a state has a primary contact within the Department and this individual serves as the liaison across key state-administered grant programs and major federal funding streams that flow to each state and district. By consolidating processes and technical assistance, the Department will be able to more effectively customize its outreach to individual states and model the critical partnerships that states should have with their respective districts.

The office is working to deepen staff knowledge and build or pilot systems and routines that allow OSS to support states with implementation through a systemic approach to technical assistance and the design and implementation of key processes, such as performance management and knowledge management, in order to ensure sustainability.

Educator equity is one area of increased attention and support during the past year. In July 2014, the Department announced the Excellent Educators for All initiative designed to move America toward the day when every student in every public school is taught by excellent educators. An Equitable Access Support Network (EASN) was set up to provide support and technical assistance to states to ensure that they had strong plans and targeted strategies so that students in poverty and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Transitioning to the new OSS is a significant change that will take time to implement fully. OESE and OSS leadership are still establishing new processes and procedures, and the transition will take place gradually. Compounded by budget constraints, continuing challenges include staffing, appropriate professional development, and support for staff.

Building new and stronger relationships with states and stakeholders requires significant outreach and effort. The Department continues to communicate with stakeholders and grantees—through printed publications, the PROGRESS blog, OSS technical assistance, YouTube videos, and speeches—and broadly share lessons learned across grantees and nongrantees and with the general public about the reforms being implemented at the state and local levels. Next steps also include launching an updated state performance review, implementing against a new strategic technical assistance plan, and adjusting plans to prepare for ESSA implementation.

Objective 6.4: Productivity and Performance Management

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

The Department takes pride in fostering a culture where managers and employees have the information and technology to perform their jobs well even when they are not physically onsite. The Department instituted tools and techniques for managers and employees to make performance goal setting, tracking, and feedback a regular work practice throughout the year.

Additionally, some supervisors used a best practice performance feedback worksheet with questions tied to FEVS results which enhanced proactive communication and built trust within work teams. The Department also developed a revised telework training course, *How to Make Telework Really Work*. Training sessions incorporated discussion on changes to the Department's updated telework policy and provided a forum for managers and employees to ask questions about telework and any concerns regarding space reduction and modernization plans. The Department saw an increase in the use of telework as a viable and effective tool that enabled employees to meet professional responsibilities while also offering a mechanism to reduce work/life stress.

To improve efficiencies and reduce costs associated with the Grant Award Notification process, the Department issued a Grant Bulletin establishing policy and guidance to support e-signature for formula grants.

In FY 2015, the Department implemented the second year of the ED Space Modernization Initiative, finalized space designs for two major subcomponents, and worked with the General Services Administration (GSA) to develop an aggressive construction schedule for the first major phase of the initiative in the Department's headquarters building. The Department identified business requirements, conducted market research with a broad group of stakeholders, and completed procurement for an automated hoteling and conference room reservation system. Department staff in San Francisco and Chicago were engaged in the process of redefining requirements for new space when current leases expire and worked with GSA to find federally owned space in San Francisco to avoid a large rent increase in 2014; the resulting solution will save the Department \$15 million in avoided rent and construction costs in 2017–18. The Department worked closely with its labor union partners to address space challenges in Washington, DC and regional office locations.

Challenges and Next Steps:

The Department adopted a creative and dramatic response to reduce overall administrative expenses through emergency space consolidation in the Washington, DC area. As a result, the Department will achieve substantial cost avoidance in FY 2016 and FY 2017. Though the strategy was developed with full collaboration and commitment of Department leadership, the affected principal offices, OCIO, and GSA, potential challenges include maintaining morale and productivity and sustaining recent gains in employee engagement.

Selected Strategies to Achieve Goal 6

The Department will build on the success of HR improvements of FY 2015 by continuing to strengthen HR operations, improving executive recruitment strategies, revising outdated HR policies, expanding training opportunities in critical areas, and improving labor relations management practices.

While continued focus on the IT automated response capabilities has led to reductions in the number of security incidents in FY 2016 and FY 2017, additional training for the Department's third-party partners will reduce the potential for personally identifiable information disclosures and ensure the proper protection of our customers' information. The Department's cybersecurity focus will remain on data protection and control. The Department will continue implementing various capabilities to control the flow of sensitive information, and prevent access to related systems, data, or other critical information and infrastructure by unauthorized individuals. These new capabilities with existing protective measures will ensure the protection of employee and customer data.

Finally, the Department must continue its work in developing customized change management strategies necessary to successful space redesign and reduce the Department's physical footprint. By consolidating units, renegotiating leases, and making reductions in the needed space, the Department will save rent costs.

Management Priorities and Challenges

The Department continues to make notable progress in capacity and infrastructure in support of mission delivery. Year after year, the Department has demonstrated its commitment to employees through investments in technology innovation and cybersecurity, by transforming the human resources systems and hiring processes, introducing helpful tools, and updating policies and procedures. Delivering on Goal 6 of the *Strategic Plan* is critical to achieving the other mission-focused goals. The continuing challenge, however, is in converting and applying increased and improved capacity in ways that help the Department overcome its longstanding management challenges, particularly in IT security and management, as well as in the administration and delivery of the student financial aid system.

The recent data breach at OPM in FY 2015 reiterated that agencies need to continue working towards cybersecurity. While the Department has focused significant resources toward the governmentwide “sprint” exercises and other strategic assessments of the Department’s IT security posture, critical work remains to be done. Numerous and continuous efforts are underway across the government and the Department to secure critical infrastructure and valued assets. To address noted areas of concern and vulnerability, key actions have resulted in the enhancement and increase of two-factor authentication as a requirement for accessing Departmental systems and peripherals. Additionally, there has been an intentional campaign to significantly decrease the number of privileged user accounts that are activated. Finally, the Department’s Chief Information Office continues to aggressively educate and test employees to help protect against phishing and other known schemes aimed at extracting personally identifiable information or other valuable data, and is helping other partners who must regularly or intermittently access and utilize our systems as well.

The Department continues to enhance its hiring, staffing, training, and culture. Following efforts begun in FY 2014, the Department has streamlined hiring, and bolstered employee and labor relations and human capital policy development. OHR has introduced innovative strategies to expand the hiring tools used by managers, which reduced the time to hire, and allowed the team to focus on other critical customer issues and capacity concerns. For example, the Department’s human resource team is producing much-needed policy guidance at a faster rate than in the previous three years—publishing pivotal guidance, such as those related to the telework program, alternative work schedules, and the merit promotion plan—a clear result of improved staff technical and leadership capability.

In FY 2015, the Department continued bolstering its impact in the people and culture element, with an agencywide campaign to address employee engagement in each of the Department’s offices. The campaign included employee engagement planning, a roadmap of essential and best practices, and support from top-level management in each office. Additionally, the Department met OPM’s newly mandated performance standard, with every senior executive addressing employee engagement as a part of their annual performance agreement. Final participation rates resulting from the 2015 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey show significant gains in this area, with a 73 percent survey response rate—3 percent above the Department’s target—and over 9 percentage points more than the 2014 response rate.

The Department’s efforts to reduce significantly its real estate “footprint” and space inventory will have a major impact on management and culture. While reduction of the overall square footage is the primary goal, this is a long-term endeavor and the Department recognizes that it must manage several other indirect dependencies that can derail the expected progress. However, as noted above, the Department has made significant progress toward the first phase

of its headquarters building modernization and is completing plans to effect the move of two regional offices from more expensive leased space to less expensive federally owned space.

Other elements critical to sound management are showing positive trends and results as well. The Department reduced the cost of managing accounts receivables by outsourcing the management of most of that portfolio to a federal shared service provider, significantly reducing the cost per transaction. The Department recently launched a new initiative to migrate to 100 percent electronic vendor invoicing by FY 2018, which will both improve customer service and significantly reduce the internal processing costs of invoices. The Department's percent of compliance with contractor performance reporting requirements is the best in government, currently over 98 percent. To put these numbers in greater context, this performance ranks the Department as one of only four agencies that have compliance rates of 90 percent or more.

These efforts, taken as a whole, are positioning the Department to benefit from and leverage continuous improvement to increase its overall capacity, protect its assets, and support its employees.

Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Management Challenges

OIG works to promote efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in the programs and operations of the Department. Through audits, inspections, investigations, and other reviews, OIG continues to identify areas of concern within the Department's programs and operations and recommend actions the Department should take to address these weaknesses. The *Reports Consolidation Act of 2000* requires the OIG to identify and report annually on the most serious management challenges the Department faces. The *GPRRA Modernization Act of 2010* requires the Department to include in its agency performance plan information on its planned actions, including performance goals, indicators, and milestones, to address these challenges.

The Department remains committed to improved governance and better business processes. Management has worked closely with OIG to gain its perspective about the Department's most significant management and performance challenges. Last year OIG presented five management challenges. The Department provided to the OIG a high-level summary assessment, actions taken, and planned actions for each of the management challenge areas.

The FY 2016 management challenges are:

- (1) Improper Payments,
- (2) Information Technology Security,
- (3) Oversight and Monitoring,
- (4) Data Quality and Reporting, and
- (5) Information Technology System Development and Implementation.

These challenges reflect continuing vulnerabilities and emerging issues faced by the Department as identified through OIG's recent audit, inspection, and investigative work.

The full report, to include how the Department is addressing each management challenge area, is published by the OIG. To view the full report, go to:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/managementchallenges.html>.

Lower-Priority Program Activities

The Cuts, Consolidations and Savings volume of the President's Budget identifies the lower-priority program activities, where applicable, as required under the *GPRRA Modernization Act of 2010*, 31 U.S.C. 1115(b)(10). The public can access the volume at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget>.