

The Department's Approach to Performance

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

In accordance with the *GPRA Modernization Act of 2010*¹, the Department's framework for performance management starts with the four-year *Strategic Plan*, including its two-year Agency Priority Goals (APG), which serve as the foundation for establishing and implementing long-term priorities and performance goals, objectives, and measures by which the Department can gauge achievement of its stated outcomes. Progress towards the Department's strategic goals and its APGs is measured using data-driven review and analysis. Additional information on performance management is available in the *Annual Performance Plans and Annual Performance Reports*.

The *FY 2018–22 Strategic Plan* is comprised of four strategic goals and five FY 2020 and FY 2021 APGs. The *Strategic Plan* aims to align the administration's yearly budget requests and the Department's legislative agenda, supported by the considerable experience and resources available from its staff. The Department will implement a new Strategic Plan for FY 2022–26 that will include new strategic goals and strategic objectives. Additionally, new APGs will be implemented for FY 2022 and FY 2023. Questions or comments about the *Strategic Plan* should be emailed to PIO@ed.gov.

FY 2018–22 Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Support state and local efforts to improve learning outcomes for all prekindergarten–grade 12 students in every community.	
Strategic Objective 1.1	Increase high-quality educational options and empower students and parents to choose an education that meets their needs.
Strategic Objective 1.2	Provide all prekindergarten–grade 12 students with equal access to high-quality educational opportunities.
Strategic Objective 1.3	Prepare all students for successful transitions to college and careers by supporting access to dual enrollment, job skills development and high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
Strategic Objective 1.4	Support agencies and institutions in the implementation of evidence-based strategies and practices that build the capacity of school staff and families to support students' academic performance.
Strategic Goal 2: Expand postsecondary educational opportunities, improve outcomes to foster economic opportunity and promote an informed, thoughtful and productive citizenry.	
Strategic Objective 2.1	Support educational institutions, students, parents and communities to increase access and completion of college, lifelong learning and career, technical and adult education.
Strategic Objective 2.2	Support agencies and educational institutions in identifying and using evidence-based strategies or other promising practices to improve educational opportunities and successfully prepare individuals to compete in the global economy.
Strategic Objective 2.3	Support agencies and educational institutions as they create or expand innovative and affordable paths to relevant careers by providing postsecondary credentials or job-ready skills.
Strategic Objective 2.4	Improve quality of service for customers across the entire student aid life cycle.
Strategic Objective 2.5	Enhance students' and parents' ability to repay their federal student loans by providing accurate and timely information, relevant tools and manageable repayment options.
Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen the quality, accessibility and use of education data through better management, increased privacy protections and transparency.	
Strategic Objective 3.1	Improve the Department's data governance, data life cycle management and the capacity to support education data.
Strategic Objective 3.2	Improve privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data both at the Department and in the education community.
Strategic Objective 3.3	Increase access to, and use of, education data to make informed decisions both at the Department and in the education community.
Strategic Goal 4: Reform the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the Department.	
Strategic Objective 4.1*	Improve regulatory processes.
Strategic Objective 4.2	Identify, assess, monitor and manage enterprise risks.
Strategic Objective 4.3	Strengthen the Department's cybersecurity by enhancing protections for its information technology infrastructure, systems and data.
Strategic Objective 4.4	Improve the engagement and preparation of the Department's workforce using professional development and accountability measures.

* Strategic Objective 4.1 was revised due to **Executive Order 13992, Revocation of Certain Executive Orders Concerning Federal Regulation**

¹ *GPRA Modernization Act of 2010* amends the *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993* (GPRA).

THE DEPARTMENT'S AGENCY PRIORITY GOALS

The Department identified five APGs for FY 2020–2021. These goals aimed to increase education choices, enhance multiple pathways for student success in career and job ready skills, improve the Department's Federal Student Aid (FSA) customer service, improve student privacy protection and cybersecurity at institutions of higher education (IHE), and provide regulatory relief and burden reduction to stakeholders. The Department discontinued reporting on the APGs with the change of administration in January 2021. GPRA requires agencies to report quarterly updates of progress

APG	<p>Education Freedom: Improve awareness of and access to high-quality K-12 education opportunities for students and families. By September 30, 2021, the Department will increase both the number and percentage of total charter school students and total scholarship students nationwide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charter school enrollment will increase from 3.29 million to 3.51 million (6.90 percent of all students in public schools). The number of scholarship students, including participants in state-based vouchers, tax-credit scholarship, and education savings account program, will increase from 482,000 to 579,250 (1.10 percent of the total school age population). The number of parents who receive support and engagement through technical assistance and other resources will increase by 5 percent per year.
Related Strategic Objective	<p>Strategic Objective 1.1: Increase high-quality educational options and empower students and parents to choose an education that meets their needs.</p>
APG	<p>Multiple Pathways to Success: Improve nationwide awareness of and access to career pathways that support job skills development and career readiness. By September 30, 2021, the Department will, through programs such as the Career and Technical Education and Adult Education State Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the creation and expansion of integrated education and training (IET) programs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Increase enrollment of participants in IET programs to 56,000. Support the enrollment of Career and Technical Education concentrators in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Increase by 25,000 the number of federal financial aid recipients who earn a postsecondary credential in STEM.
Related Strategic Objective	<p>Strategic Objective 1.3: Prepare all students for successful transitions to college and careers by supporting access to dual enrollment, job skills development and high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).</p>
Related Strategic Objective	<p>Strategic Objective 2.3: Support agencies and educational institutions as they create or expand innovative and affordable paths to relevant careers by providing postsecondary credentials or job-ready skills.</p>
APG	<p>FSA Customer Service: Leverage the Next Generation Financial Services Environment (Next Gen FSA) to improve and personalize customers' experience with Federal Student Aid (FSA). By September 30, 2021, FSA will transform its relationship with prospective and current customers through deployment of significant components of the Next Gen FSA that result in a personalized experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of individuals submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid® (FAFSA®) through a mobile device will increase to 2.6 million. The overall customer satisfaction level throughout the student aid life cycle, as measured by the FSA Customer Satisfaction score*, will increase.
Related Strategic Objective	<p>Strategic Objective 2.4: Improve quality of service for customers across the entire student aid life cycle.</p>
APG	<p>Student Privacy and Cybersecurity: Improve student privacy and cybersecurity at institutions of higher education (IHEs) through outreach and compliance efforts. By September 30, 2021, the Department will participate in 12 engagements with sector-related non-governmental organizations to inform the development of five best practice programmatic improvements.</p>
Related Strategic Objective	<p>Strategic Objective 3.2: Improve privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data both at the Department and in the education community.</p>
APG	<p>Regulatory Reform: Provide regulatory relief to education stakeholders as necessary and appropriate**. (Related Strategic Objective: 4.1) By September 30, 2021, the Department will provide regulatory relief for education stakeholders by taking no fewer than eight deregulatory actions, which includes reduction in paperwork burden.</p>
Related Strategic Objective	<p>Strategic Objective 4.1: Improve regulatory processes.</p>

* The Federal Student Aid Customer Satisfaction Score is an annual composite metric that measures the overall customer satisfaction level throughout the student aid life cycle for FAFSA® applicants (mobile and FAFSA.gov), Title IV aid recipients in school, and borrowers in repayment. The score is based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index surveys.

** The APG was discontinued due to **Executive Order 13992, Revocation of Certain Executive Orders Concerning Federal Regulation**

made towards achieving APGs to a centralized website: **Performance.gov**. These APGs are intended to focus efforts toward achieving the priorities of the Administration leadership under which they were established. Consistent with this intention, when a Presidential election leads to a change in Administration, reporting on the APGs established by a different Administration to Performance.gov is discontinued in a transition year (e.g., 2021) for the remainder of that APG cycle's performance period (e.g., FYs 2020–2021 APG cycle).

Goal 1. Support state and local efforts to improve learning outcomes for all P–12 students in every community.

Strategic Goal 1 focused on outcomes related to the transition from the *No Child Left Behind Act* to implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* in December 2015. The hallmark of the ESSA is the flexibility it provides for states to do what is best for children while preserving important protections for economically disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English learners, and other vulnerable students. The law requires that states take steps to ensure all students have access to excellent teachers and positive, safe learning environments that equip them for college and career success. In FY 2021, \$41.8 billion was appropriated to the Department in support of Strategic Goal 1.

The Department encourages families to be aware of educational opportunities and options so that they can make the best choice for their student's needs. Access to high-quality educational opportunities should be afforded to all students. In FY 2021, the Department continued to support greater state and local flexibility in elementary and secondary education and encouraged providing school choice options to families. The Institute of Education Sciences' (IES)-funded **Research on Education Access and Choice (REACH) Center** continued to study all forms of school choice and provide evidence-based resources through its **What Works Clearinghouse** to inform and improve choice policy design and implementation to increase opportunities and outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the modes and quality of educational instruction varied across the nation. The Department provided support and assistance to state education agencies (SEA), local educational agencies

(LEA), families, and other stakeholders in the education community through various resources such as grants, technical assistance, and outreach activities. Resources included three volumes of the Department's COVID-19 Handbook, which focused on **strategies for safely reopening elementary and secondary schools, roadmap to reopening safely and meeting all students' needs, and addressing the impact of COVID-19 on higher education students, faculty, and staff**. The Department published websites that shared best practices and lessons learned as schools reopened for in-person learning. Additionally, the Department provided guidance on the use of *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (ARP) funding to include the Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative which called on states to use ARP funding to build effective summer programs to help address the lost instructional and extracurricular time students may have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for underserved communities.

Goal 2. Expand postsecondary educational opportunities, improve outcomes to foster economic opportunity and promote an informed, thoughtful and productive citizenry.

Strategic Goal 2 focused on expanding the Department's efforts to support innovative and accessible paths to postsecondary credentials and job-ready skills training. In addition to supporting expanded postsecondary opportunities, the Department has multiple initiatives focused on affordability. These initiatives ensure borrowers have the best information available to make postsecondary program selection and associated borrowing decisions. The Department also continues to help students understand their financial aid options and repayment obligations. In FY 2021, \$31.9 billion was appropriated to the Department in support of this Strategic Goal 2. The Department awarded more than 6,000 discretionary grants designed to strengthen the capacity of colleges and universities to promote reform, innovation, and improvement in postsecondary education; promote and expand access to postsecondary education; and increase college completion rates for the nation's students. In addition, funding for Strategic Goal 2 also supports the Department's enhancements to FSA customer service.

The Department continues efforts to help prepare the nation's workforce of tomorrow with the right skills and credentials of today. In FY 2021, the Department continued

the reTHINK Adult Ed Challenge, which targeted the design of 100 or more new preapprenticeship programs involving partnerships between adult education providers, sponsoring apprenticeship organizations, and employers. The selected finalists came from a variety of institutions including institutions of higher education, local education associations, community or faith-based organizations, and correctional facilities. The Department awarded one grand prize and four runner-up awards between \$100,000 and \$250,000 to fund model design, scale-up and program implementation. The Department also supported the adult education and literacy practitioners with online professional development to support them in delivering virtual instruction during the pandemic.

FSA provides more than \$120 billion annually to students and their families. Enhancing the service provided to customers and stakeholders continues to be priority. In FY 2021, Aidan®, the **StudentAid.gov** virtual assistant, became available to all **StudentAid.gov** website visitors. FSA will continue to improve the user experience by adding new content, developing new capabilities, and refining the artificial intelligence model.

In FY 2020, the Department successfully placed more than 40 million federal student loan borrowers in administrative forbearance status. In FY 2021, FSA has ensured that student loan servicers have kept borrowers in a suspended repayment status, without accruing interest or being subject to adverse credit reporting. The Department is preparing to successfully return federal student loan borrowers to repayment in February 2022.

Goal 3. Strengthen the quality, accessibility and use of education data through better management, increased privacy protections and transparency.

Strategic Goal 3 focuses on strengthening data-driven decision-making in education by focusing on the ways the Department manages and makes available education data, while protecting student privacy. The Department is committed to improving how staff and stakeholders access, use, and share meaningful data on education while protecting privacy. These improvements enable the Department to provide stakeholders in the education community with timely and accurate information that allows them to make informed decisions. Approximately \$574 million in discretionary resources was appropriated to support Strategic Goal 3 in FY 2021.

In December 2020, the Department completed and published its inaugural **Data Strategy**. The Data Governance Board guided the development of four goals—strengthen agencywide data governance; build human capacity to leverage data; advance the strategic use of data; and improve data access, transparency, and privacy—with 19 objectives. This Data Strategy provides a road map for the agency to improve education outcomes and lead the nation through evidence-based policy and data-driven decisions.

The Department collected information necessary to facilitate clear and transparent reporting on the implementation of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* (CARES Act); the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021* (CRRSAA); and the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*. The Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) Transparency Portal was launched, which allows the Department to track performance, hold grantees accountable, and provide transparency to taxpayers and oversight bodies. Additionally, the Department completed its first collection of annual performance reports from organizations that received CARES Act grants, using capabilities within the ESF Public Transparency Portal to enable grantees to submit annual performance reports on funding authorized through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds.

The Department is committed to protecting student's education data both within the Department and at educational institutions. In support of this commitment, in FY 2021, the Department engaged with nearly 1,000 schools to inform, collaborate, and improve the security of student financial and privacy data. This engagement has led to improvements in outcomes, reduction of risks, and enhanced cybersecurity and student data privacy. FSA's postsecondary cybersecurity team conducted more than 20 outreach activities, both in response to breach incidents and proactively to improve compliance with cybersecurity safeguards. Additionally, the Department conducted outreach initiatives to more than 500 IHEs in response to Microsoft Exchange vulnerability to ensure that IHEs were aware of the vulnerability and took appropriate actions to remediate or prevent potential exposure.

In FY 2021, the ESF **Public Transparency Portal**, launched in November 2020, was updated throughout the year to display awards made to and expenditures made by states, districts, and colleges authorized through the CARES Act, CRRSAA, and the ARP. The portal is used for key data collections associated with the ESF—specifically, the HEERF, GEER, ESSER, and equivalent Outlying Area funds. The Public Transparency Portal allows the Department to track performance, hold grantees accountable, and provide transparency to taxpayers and oversight bodies.

Goal 4. Reform the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the Department.

Strategic Goal 4 focuses in general on protecting taxpayers from fraud, waste, and abuse. This involves improving internal decision-making and operations to provide better delivery of services to stakeholders. In FY 2021, \$624 million was appropriated to support Goal 4.

Strategic Goal 4 includes the responsibility of the Department to implement enterprise risk management (ERM). The Department uses a coordinated approach to identify, measure, and assess challenges related to mission delivery and resource management. In FY 2021, the Department established the Office of Enterprise Data Analytics and Risk Management, which formally integrates ERM and operational internal controls activities and aims to provide leadership with actionable insights powered by data analytics. The office supports a culture of continuous process improvement in which data and awareness of enterprise risk are used to objectively inform strategic and operational decisions and optimize the Department's performance.

Strategic Goal 4 also includes the responsibility to ensure the Department's workforce is properly trained and accountable. In FY 2021, the Department established the Department-wide National Engagement Strategy (NES), focusing on four key engagement areas: Leaders Lead, Collaborative Management, Merit Systems Principles, and Training and Development. Implementation of the NES will formalize and streamline ideas and feedback as well as assist in sharing best practices across the Department.