

# Educational Opportunity Centers' GPRA and Efficiency Results: 2013–14

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## Introduction

The Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program aims to provide counseling and information on college admissions to qualified adults, at-risk students, and high school dropouts under the age of 19<sup>1</sup> who want to enter or continue a program of postsecondary education. To evaluate the success of the EOC program, the U.S. Department of Education's annual Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) report includes two indicators of EOC program success and one measure of EOC program efficiency.

The 2013–14 reporting year was the third year of the 2011–2016 funding cycle, and the calculation rules for participant outcomes and program efficiency in 2013–14 are the same as those used in the previous reporting year.

## Program Success Measures for Educational Opportunity Centers Projects

The two EOC program success measures are postsecondary enrollment rates and the percentage of participants classified as both low-income and potential first-generation college-going individuals.

Postsecondary enrollees are the college-ready participants who enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the school year or by the next academic term. Participants are classified as college-ready if they received a high school diploma during the reporting year or already had a high school diploma before receiving program services.

The second outcome measure for the EOC program is the percentage of participants classified as both low-income and potential first-generation college students. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) requires at least two thirds of participants in an EOC project to be low-income, potential first-generation students.

## Selected Findings

Table 1 displays the number and percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions, as well as the number and percentage of participants served who were low-income and potential first-generation college students. The table also includes the total number of participants served and the number of college-ready participants served. The data are presented at the program level and at the individual project level. The calculation methodology for Table 1 is discussed in the appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> EOC projects may serve individuals younger than 19 years old if such students cannot be served by the Talent Search program.

## Postsecondary Education Enrollment

- For 2013–14, the EOC program-level postsecondary enrollment rate (PSE) was 57.6 percent of all college-ready participants. This rate was 1.4 percentage points below the 2012–13 program-level postsecondary enrollment rate (59 percent).
- The decline in the PSE rate between the 2012–13 and 2013–14 reporting years was not isolated within a small number of grantees. In 2013–14, 68 grantees (out of 126) experienced a decrease in the postsecondary enrollment rate. Of these, 10 exhibited decreases between 10 and 19 percentage points and seven exhibited decreases of 20 percentage points or more. Of the 17 grantees that experienced a decline in the postsecondary enrollment rate of 10 percentage points or more, eight had postsecondary enrollment rates above 80 percent in 2012–13. By 2013–14, only one of those eight grantees still had a postsecondary rate above 80 percent.

## Participant Eligibility

- In 2013–14, 77.1 percent of participants served were classified as low-income and potential first-generation students at the program level. This percentage was slightly lower than the 2012–13 program-level rate of 78.2 percent. Only two grantees in 2013–14 failed to meet the HEOA requirement that two thirds of participants served are low-income or potential first-generation participants.

## Postsecondary Enrollment by Types of Postsecondary Institutions

Table 2 displays the number and percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in two-year, four-year, other (i.e., vocational or proprietary), or unknown types of postsecondary educational institutions, at both the program and the project level, as well as aggregated by the type of grantee institution. The overall enrollment rate was highest for participants served by two-year grantee institutions (62.3 percent), followed by grantees that are not institutions of higher education (57.2 percent). Four-year grantee institutions had the lowest overall enrollment rate (54.3 percent).

In general, EOC participants were more likely to enroll in a two-year postsecondary educational institution (67.6 percent) than a four-year institution (20.8 percent), other type of institution (11.4 percent), or unknown type of institution (0.3 percent). Overall, the percentage of participants enrolling in four-year institutions increased by one percentage point between the 2012–13 and 2013–14 reporting years, while the percentage of participants enrolling in two-year institutions decreased by one percentage point.

In 2013–14, participants tended to enroll in a postsecondary educational institution of the same type as the grantee institution through which they participated in the EOC program:

- More than one quarter (26.5 percent) of enrollees at four-year grantee institutions enrolled in a four-year college or university, compared with only 14.9 percent of enrollees who participated at two-year grantee institutions.

- More than three quarters (76.7 percent) of participants served by two-year grantee institutions enrolled in two-year postsecondary institutions, compared with 59.7 percent of participants served by four-year grantee institutions.

The calculation methodology for Table 2 is presented in the appendix.

## Limitations of the Data and Findings

The program-level and grantee-level results in Tables 1 and 2 need to be interpreted with caution. First, these results were created using program-level data, which provide little information about the mechanisms through which grantees may experience more or less success in terms of postsecondary enrollment. Data are not collected at the student level, and we therefore cannot determine which factors or experiences may be related to higher probabilities of enrollment in postsecondary education. Similarly, we cannot measure differences between individual projects that may account for differences in postsecondary enrollment rates across grantees. For example, a project may have lower than average rates because it serves more students with a high risk of academic failure who have low educational aspirations. In addition, one must consider that the performance measure refers exclusively to the outcomes of college-ready program participants, who accounted for only 65.1 percent of all program participants served in 2013–14 (see Table 1). Although the enrollment measure is unquestionably the most important performance measure for the EOC program, the program is also presumably helping the remaining one third of its participants (who are not yet college-ready) make steady progress toward postsecondary education enrollment.

## Efficiency Measure for Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) Projects

The efficiency measure for the EOC program is defined as the annual cost per participant with a successful outcome. In the 2013–14 reporting year, participants were classified as experiencing successful outcomes if they enrolled in postsecondary education during the reporting year (including the subsequent fall term) or persisted in secondary education or an alternative education program during the reporting year.

Similar to the performance measure, postsecondary enrollment was defined as the number of college-ready students who enrolled in postsecondary education during the reporting year. For the performance and efficiency measures, “college-ready participants” were participants who either received a high school diploma during the reporting year or had already received a high school diploma or credential at the time of first service.

In the 2013–14 reporting year, persistence in secondary education was measured among all students who did not have a high school diploma or credential at the time of first service during the reporting year. Participants who were enrolled in high school or in an alternative education program in the fall of the next academic year were considered to have persisted in secondary education. Persistence in secondary education is considered a successful student outcome because these students are making progress toward achieving the ultimate goal of enrolling in postsecondary education.

The cost per successful participant outcome across all projects was calculated by summing the amount of funding across grantees and dividing by the aggregated number of successful participant outcomes across grantees. The efficiency measure was calculated based on the full amount of funds available to the grantees.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the cost per successful student outcome, the efficiency measure in Table 3 presents the percentage of all participants served who experienced a successful outcome. Detailed calculation rules are provided in the appendix.

## Selected Findings

Table 3 shows the efficiency measure at the individual project level and at the program level, as well as aggregated by the type of grantee institution. The program-level efficiency measure shows that each successful student outcome cost \$536, on average. Overall, the annual cost per successful outcome increased by less than half a percentage point between 2012–13 and 2013–14 (from \$535 in 2012–13). This increase in the cost per successful outcome was driven mainly by the decline in the number of participants experiencing a successful outcome. There was an overall decrease in the number of participants served between reporting years (4 percent), the number of postsecondary enrollees (5.5 percent), and the number of participants who persisted in secondary education (6.8 percent). Moreover, there was a decrease in the number of participants who enrolled in postsecondary education and received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent between 2012–13 and 2013–14.<sup>3</sup>

Among grantees, a lower annual cost per successful outcome tends to indicate higher efficiency. Four-year and two-year grantee institutions spent less money per successful outcome (\$540 and \$495, respectively) than grantees that are not higher education institutions (\$584).

At the program level, 44.4 percent of 2013–14 EOC participants experienced a successful outcome, which is slightly lower than the 2012–13 rate of 45.2 percent. Grantees that are not institutions of higher education experienced a lower success rate (37.5 percent) than grantees that are two-year institutions (47.6 percent) and grantees that are four-year institutions (47.2 percent). The calculation methodology for Table 3 can be found in the appendix.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2013–14, 16 grantees were identified as receiving reduced awards: Central Florida Community College (P066A110061); Pensacola Junior College (P066A110281); Georgia State University (P066A110251); Western Kentucky University (P066A120041); Wayne State University (P066A110093); Creighton University (P066A110256); the University of New Mexico (P066A110154); Shawnee State University (P066A110014); the University of Cincinnati (P066A110131); Rogers State University (P066A110013); Southeastern Oklahoma State University (P066A110213); Inter American University of Puerto Rico/Arecibo (P066A120076); Inter American University of Puerto Rico/San German (P066A110078); Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico/Ponce\* (P066A110278); South Carolina State University (P066A110185); and the University of Texas/Arlington (P066A120007). To calculate the correct measure of efficiency for grantees with reduced funding, it was necessary to examine the total amount of funding available to the grantee, which was equal to the amount of funding the grantee received during the 2013–14 reporting year plus the remaining funds from the 2012–13 reporting year.

<sup>3</sup> In the 2012–13 reporting year, 22,824 seniors obtained a secondary school diploma and 70.1 percent enrolled in postsecondary education. In comparison, 23,326 seniors obtained a secondary school diploma and 68.9 percent enrolled in postsecondary education in 2013–14.

## Limitations of the Data and Findings

The cost per successful student outcome varied widely across projects, from a minimum of \$218 to a maximum of \$3,196. The average cost per successful student was \$536. When examining project-level efficiency measures, one should also take into account the percentage of total participants who experienced a successful outcome. If grantees served more participants than they were funded to serve, the project may appear more efficient, even if the percentage of participants experiencing successful outcomes was below average. Other factors—such as the number of participants served, the academic abilities of the participants, and whether a grantee served far more or fewer than the number of participants they were funded to serve—also need to be taken into consideration. For this reason, the efficiency measure should not be used to compare individual projects in the absence of knowledge about project goals and target populations, because doing so may lead to flawed conclusions.

## Appendix

In this appendix, we provide the calculation rules for postsecondary enrollment rates and the percentage of participants served classified as low-income and potential first-generation students (Table 1); the percentage of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in specific types of postsecondary institutions (Table 2); and the efficiency measure (Table 3).

### A. Postsecondary Enrollment Rates

College-ready participants (i.e., the denominator for the postsecondary enrollment rate) for the EOC program were identified as students who received a high school diploma during the reporting year or students who already had a diploma at the time of first service during the reporting year. Postsecondary enrollment is only measured among these college-ready participants in the Annual Performance Report (APR) data. The APR data fields used to calculate the number of college-ready participants include the following:

- IV.A.1 Received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent [during the reporting year]
- III.A.3 High school graduate or high school equivalency graduate not already enrolled in postsecondary education [of project participants aged 19 or older]
- III.A.4 Postsecondary dropout with a secondary school diploma or credential [of project participants aged 19 or older]
- III.A.6 Potential postsecondary transfer [project participants aged 19 or older]

Postsecondary enrollees (i.e., the numerator for the postsecondary enrollment rate) are college-ready participants who enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the school year or by the next academic term. Postsecondary enrollees were identified using the following APR fields:

- IV.D.1 Received a secondary school diploma or equivalent during the reporting year and enrolled in a postsecondary education program
- IV.D.2 Had a secondary school diploma or credential at the time of first service in the reporting year and enrolled in a postsecondary education program

The numbers of college-ready participants and postsecondary enrollees were summed within each grantee and then aggregated to the program level. The postsecondary enrollment rate was then calculated by dividing the aggregated measure for college-ready postsecondary enrollees by the aggregated measure for college-ready participants:

$$\text{Postsecondary enrollment rate} = (\text{IV.D.1} + \text{IV.D.2}) / (\text{IV.A.1} + \text{III.A.3} + \text{III.A.4} + \text{III.A.6})$$

### B. Participant Eligibility: Percentage of Participants Classified as Low-Income and Potential First-Generation Students

The APR data field II.B1 was used to identify the number of participants classified as low-income and potential first-generation college students. The percentage of participants who fell into this category was calculated by dividing the number of low-income, potential first-

generation students by the total number of participants served by the grantee (APR data field II.A.3). The calculation of the second GPRA measure is therefore:

$$\text{Participant eligibility rate} = \text{II.B.1} / \text{II.A.3}$$

This eligibility rate was calculated both at the grantee level and at the program level.

#### C. Postsecondary Enrollment by Types of Postsecondary Institutions

Section IV.E of the EOC APR asks grantees to report the number of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in different types of postsecondary institution. To calculate the number of participants enrolling in two-year institutions, the data fields IV.E.1 and IV.E.2 (public two-year institutions and private, nonprofit two-year institutions) were summed. To calculate the number of participants enrolling in four-year institutions, the data fields IV.E.3 and IV.E.4 (public four-year institutions and private, nonprofit four-year institutions) were summed. To calculate the number of participants attending other types of institution, the data fields IV.E.5 (public or nonprofit vocational/technical institution) and IV.E.6 (proprietary school) were summed. Data field IV.E.7 provided the number of participants who enrolled in postsecondary education in an unknown institution type.

To calculate the distribution of enrollees across the different types of institutions, the number of participants in each group described above was divided by the total number of college-ready participants who enrolled in postsecondary education for each grantee (the sum of IV.D.1 and IV.D.2).

#### D. Calculation of the Efficiency Measure: The Cost Per Successful Participant Outcome

The cost per participant with a successful outcome was calculated by dividing the amount of EOC funding by the number of participants who experienced a successful outcome. A participant was considered to have experienced a successful outcome if he or she:

- a. Persisted in secondary education. This includes participants who lacked a secondary school credential at the time of first service and were enrolled in an alternative education program at the end of the reporting year but did not complete the program (IV.A.2), as well as participants who were enrolled in high school but did not complete the diploma (IV.A.3).
- b. Enrolled in postsecondary education. This includes participants who received a secondary school diploma or the equivalent during the reporting year and enrolled in a postsecondary education program (IV.D.1), as well as participants who had a secondary school diploma or credential at the time of first service in the reporting year and enrolled in a postsecondary education program (IV.D.2).

To measure program efficiency in the 2013–14 reporting year, the number of successful participant outcomes was summed across grantees. The total amount of EOC funding is the amount of funding (recorded in the Sector Allocation File) received by grantees that submitted APR data. The cost per successful participant outcome was calculated by summing the amount of funding across grantees and dividing by the aggregated number of successful participant outcomes across grantees:

Efficiency measure = 2013–14 funding / (IV.A.2 + IV.A.3 + IV.D.1 + IV.D.2)

In addition, the percentage of participants experiencing a successful outcome was calculated by dividing the number of participants experiencing a successful outcome (the sum of IV.D.1, IV.D.2, IV.A.2, and IV.A.3) by the total number of participants served (II.A.3).