

# OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

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Message from Deputy Secretary Jim Shelton, III

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Throughout President Obama's administration, the U.S. Department of Education has embraced new principles of open government: transparency, participation, and collaboration. Our commitment continues. Building on early successes, *Open Government* at the Department of Education continues to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

We remain committed to unprecedented transparency as we continue to release education datasets to the public. The Department of Education is a leader among government agencies in posting data to data.gov. Privacy, confidentiality and data integrity are essential in order to get the greatest benefit from transparency, collaboration and participation. Toward this end, the Department formalized the charter for the Education Disclosure Review board. The board is operating and during Fiscal Year 2013, it reviewed the release of numerous high-value data sets to ensure the highest standards of privacy, security and integrity.

One of our flagship initiatives, the Navigating Education Data Inventory, intends to make the vast amount of education-related data more accessible and easier to navigate. Our goal is to provide searchable data that helps researchers, innovators and educators advance new studies, products and services that will improve our schools and give more students a chance to succeed.

We have simplified the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, making applying for aid easier by collaborating with the IRS, so that students can transfer their family's financial records directly from the IRS, dramatically increasing the ease of completing a FAFSA.

Since the last update to this plan in 2012, states participating in Race to the Top provided data for schools years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. We added a progress area to the Annual Performance Report allowing the public, grantees and others to track progress toward meeting ambitious goals for student outcomes. This new capability allows users to analyze a State's performance across multiple years of the grant period.

The ConnectED initiative, a part of the National Education Technology Plan, is a key component of our open government plan. ConnectED is a partnership with the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) that will connect nearly every school to the internet via high-speed broadband over the next four years. This new capability can provide students and teachers with access to engaging digital resources and opportunities to collaborate with peers and experts. Using powerful tools to solve real problems will be an integral part of their learning experience.

## OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

I am proud of the innovative culture that infuses the Department of Education. We have made great progress in communicating effectively with the public and our stakeholders through platforms and tools that help them connect with us and give ongoing access to resources that help them make the best decisions about education.

By working together to provide an *Open Government*, we can make progress in closing the opportunity gaps that exist in our nation. We can help make the American dream a reality for more of our citizens. We are excited about the work ahead, and we look forward to your suggestions about what we can do to improve this plan.

# OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## **Open Government Organizational and Management Information**

Contact e-mail: [opengov@ed.gov](mailto:opengov@ed.gov)

Open Government Initiative at ED's website: [www.ed.gov/open](http://www.ed.gov/open)

## **Senior Accountable Officials**

James Shelton III, Deputy Secretary, Office of the Secretary

## **Open Government Steering Committee Members**

Jill James (co-chair)	Office of Communications and Outreach
David Harrity (co-chair)	Office of the Chief Information Officer
Dana Kelly	National Center for Education Statistics
Ted Socha	National Center for Education Statistics
Kelly Worthington	National Center for Education Statistics
Ross Santy	National Center for Education Statistics
Abraham Martinez	Federal Student Aid
Gail Matthews	Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Jeanne Nathanson	Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Steven Corey-Bey	Office of the Chief Information Officer
Corwin Jennings	Office of Civil Rights
Jay LeMaster	Office of Career, Technology, and Adult Education
Bucky Methfessel	Office of the General Counsel
Joseph South	Office of Education Technology
Michael Deshields	Office of the Inspector General
Julian Alcazar	Office of Innovation and Improvement
Adam Bookman	Office of Innovation and Improvement
Ty Harris	Office of Innovation and Improvement
Jim Nosal	Office of Innovation and Improvement
Gregory Smith	Office of Management
Michael Itzkowitz	Office of Post-Secondary Education
Meredith Miceli	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Vicki Myers	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Newton Piper	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

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## I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Education considers open government to be a critical component in achieving the administration's ambitious education goals, which are:

- The U.S. is to become No. 1 in the world in the percentage of the population with a college degree by 2020; and
- The U.S. is to significantly reduce gaps between low-income and minority students and their peers in high school graduation and college access and success by 2020.

The principles of open government are now vital to effectively communicating and interacting with the general public, students, parents, teachers, and all stakeholders engaged in public education. These principles have changed its internal culture and how the Department of Education operates. This document is one milestone in a series of changes designed to improve the way the Department shares information, learns from others, and collaborates to develop the best solutions for America's students.

While open government work often involves new technologies and sharing collected data with the public, at its core, open government in education is about building and fostering relationships and dialogue among those interested in improving teaching and learning, developing good ideas, and using those ideas to set the right policies and strategies to help our students and teachers. Every step of the way, the Department of Education can connect with and learn from everyone with a passion to learn and ideas to share.

Open government practices became a priority at the Department of Education in 2009, with the confirmation of Secretary Arne Duncan on January 20, and the issuance of the President's open government directive, *Transparency and Open Government*, on January 21, 2009. Together, these events marked a significant change in the Department's approach to transparency, public participation, and collaboration. The objectives of open government have touched all Department activities during the first term of the administration and serve as the foundation on which the Department continues to build. From that work, the Department has developed a set of open government goals that align and drive us toward greater transparency, collaboration, and participation with our constituents and partners and within the organization itself. These goals are:

- Goal 1: Increase the Department's transparency and accountability.
- Goal 2: Solicit and incorporate more public input, including from students, families, educators, and community partners, into Department operations and programs.
- Goal 3: Increase collaboration and communication with other organizations.
- Goal 4: Create a culture of openness within the Department.

## II INTRODUCTION

This Open Government Plan for the Department of Education articulates Secretary Arne Duncan's response to the Office of Management and Budget's *Open Government Directive* (OMB M-10-06). That directive requires departments and agencies to document specific steps that will achieve the transparency, participation, and collaboration goals of President Obama and his administration. This plan expresses the values that are held by the Secretary and how this Department will continue to expand openness in government.

The Department of Education embraces the principles of increased transparency, participation, and collaboration as essential to accomplishing its mission. By focusing on open practices and increasing access to data, we anticipate the creation of new information and knowledge that will help promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

The Department has developed a set of strategic goals and objectives for openness that will drive its work forward and allow it, and the public, to measure and assess its progress. These goals are:

### **Goal #1: Increase the Department's transparency and accountability.**

*Objective 1.1:* Provide clarity and guidance on privacy rules and regulations to ensure that information and data can be shared in a timely manner with the public while still protecting individual privacy as required by law.

*Objective 1.2:* Make more data and information available to the public.

*Objective 1.3:* Improve the timeliness of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) processing and document release.

*Objective 1.4:* Increase the transparency of the grant application and award process.

*Objective 1.5:* Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs.

*Objective 1.6:* Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

### **Goal #2: Solicit and incorporate more public input into Department operations.**

*Objective 2.1:* Provide more insight into the agency's decision-making process.

*Objective 2.2:* Provide regularly updated project maps, dated milestones, and financial data regarding open government and other key initiatives.

*Objective 2.3:* Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders, including students, families, educators, and community partners, in decision-making.

*Objective 2.4:* Empower students, families, educators, and community partners to have a voice in the development and implementation of Department-funded education projects at the state and local level.

### **Goal #3: Increase collaboration and communication with other organizations.**

*Objective 3.1:* Enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities.

### **Goal #4: Create a culture of openness within the Department.**

*Objective 4.1:* Encourage openness and communication about effectiveness within the Department.

*Objective 4.2:* Enhance Departmental internal collaboration capabilities.

### **III TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION, AND COLLABORATION IN PROGRAMS**

#### **A New 2014 Initiative for Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration in Programs: Department of Education Disclosure Review Board (ED-DRB)**

The U.S. Department of Education Disclosure Review Board (ED-DRB) is responsible for the review and approval of the disclosure avoidance protections used to protect privacy in the Department's public data releases. During fiscal year 2013, the ED-DRB was formally chartered by the Department, assisted numerous Principal Offices (POs) with their selection and implementation of disclosure avoidance methods, and approved the privacy protections for a number of high-value data files for public release.

##### ***Approval of the ED-DRB Charter***

Although the Department of Education Policy Committee approved the creation of the ED-DRB in May 2012, there were many details about the ED-DRB's ultimate scope, mission, functions, and organization that were still to be determined. Although disclosure review boards have been considered a best practice for many years in federal statistical agencies, the creation of a disclosure review board by a non-statistical agency, to review program/administrative data releases, is believed to be novel. Consequently, much of the group's work throughout fiscal year 2013 was focused on articulating the ED-DRB's scope, mission, functions, and organization. Representatives from POs met regularly to reach a common understanding about the ED-DRB's ultimate scope and functions, to benchmark the structure and functions of statistical agency disclosure review boards, and to codify that information into a formal charter for the group. While the chartering of the ED-DRB in August 2013 marks a major accomplishment for the Department overall, the ED-DRB membership remains committed to continually refine and improve the functions of the ED-DRB as it continues its formal operations in fiscal year 2014 and beyond.

##### ***Capacity Building***

It should be noted that one of the ED-DRB's greatest achievements during fiscal year 2013 was capacity building among the group's members and their respective POs in the field of disclosure avoidance. In particular, the collaborative process used by the board when developing the disclosure avoidance methodology to use for the release of the School-level Achievement Results for State Assessments in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics was an instructional experience for many of the board members. Working through the challenging issues surrounding that release, in particular, led the ED-DRB's members to a shared understanding of the need for coordinated disclosure avoidance, the challenges associated with the process, and the implications that differing methodologies have on the precision and coverage of data.

## ***Major Data Releases Reviewed***

The ED-DRB reviewed and approved a number of high-value data releases during fiscal year 2013. While a few of these data releases were annual updates of previously released data files, others (like the State Assessment Achievement Results) were major, new releases of data. These data releases are available on the [Data.Gov website](#).

## **B Technical Assistance on Publishing and Sharing Data While Preserving Confidentiality**

Providing clarity and guidance on methods for publishing usable data, in a timely manner, while protecting privacy, continues to be a major priority for the Department. Over the past two years, the Department has: (1) established a Department-wide Disclosure Review Board (see section A) responsible for coordinating, reviewing, and approving the privacy protections for the Department's public data releases; (2) provided substantial general technical assistance to states and districts on the subject of privacy protections for public data releases; and (3) provided targeted assistance, on request, to education stakeholders on improving their privacy protections for public data releases.

### **General Technical Assistance on Privacy Protections**

Over the past two years, the Department's Privacy Technical Assistance Center has provided substantial, general technical assistance to state and local educational agencies on the subject of privacy protections for public data releases. This technical assistance has come in the form of:

- [Case studies](#),
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#),
- Webinars, and
- Numerous conference presentations.

### **Targeted Technical Assistance on Privacy Protections**

In addition to the general technical assistance offered through the agency's Privacy Technical Assistance Center, the Department has provided in-depth, targeted assistance to several state and local education stakeholders facing particular challenges relating to disclosure avoidance and privacy protections in data files and tables intended for public release.

## **C Race to the Top—Game-Changing Reforms**

During fiscal year 2013, the Department used the approximately \$550 million appropriated for the Race to the Top program for fiscal year 2012 to make 16 awards to local educational agencies under the Race to the Top – District program and 5 awards to States under the Race to the Top Early Learning – Early Learning Challenge program. The applications for the [Race to](#)

[the Top – District grantees](#) supported with these funds can be found on ED.gov. The applications for the successful [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant State applicants](#) can also be found on ED.gov.

During fiscal year 2014, the Department used the approximately \$520 million appropriated for fiscal year 2013 to make 5 new awards to local educational agencies under the Race to the Top – District program and 6 awards to States under the Race to the Top Early Learning – Early Learning Challenge program, and to pay peer-review costs and provide technical assistance to grantees. This brings the total to 21 local educational agencies that have been awarded grants under the Race to the Top – District program and 20 States that have been awarded grants under the Race to the Top Early Learning – Early Learning Challenge program. The applications for the [Race to the Top – District grantees](#) supported with these funds can be found on ED.gov. The applications for the successful [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant State applicants](#) can be found on ED.gov.

For fiscal year 2014, Congress appropriated \$250 million to establish a new Race to the Top initiative for competitive awards to States for early childhood care and education.

### Annual Performance Report

Since the last update, States have provided data for school years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. In addition, the Department has made significant improvements to the Race to the Top Annual Performance Report (APR) system to make more information publicly available. For example, in 2013 the Progress Area was added to the APR. The Progress Area allows the Department, grantees, and the public to follow grantees' progress in implementing comprehensive education reform plans and meeting ambitious goals for student outcomes across the grant period. The Progress Area includes key data elements that grantee States have reported in the current year's APR as well as in prior years, representing States' performance and progress against the annual or four-year targets in their Race to the Top plans. The Progress Area is available for grantees that have reported data for two or more Race to the Top APRs. This feature allows users to analyze State performance across multiple years of the grant period.

In addition, in 2014, the State Comparison Area was added to the APR. The State Comparison Area of the Race to the Top APR allows the Department, grantees, and the public to follow grantees' progress in implementing comprehensive education reform plans as compared to other grantees. The State Comparison Area includes key data elements that grantee States have reported for each grant year. This interactive feature allows users to select a school year, data element, and up to three States to compare.

The [APR](#) is available on the [Race to the Top website](#).

## State-specific reports

For each State that has been awarded a Race to the Top State Grant, the Department annually produces a State-specific summary report that highlights successes and accomplishments, identifies challenges, and provides lessons learned from implementation. For the 12 Phase 1 and Phase 2 grantees (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Tennessee), the Department has made publicly available the State-specific annual reports for the first three years of implementation.

For the seven Phase 3 grantees (Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), the Department has made publicly available the Year 1 State-specific annual reports. (For the Phase 3 grantees, the Year 1 reports cover the period from approximately December 2011 through December 2012.)

The [State-specific reports](#) are available on ED.gov.

## Technical assistance

An important component of the Race to the Top State Grant program is the technical assistance and support the Department provides to the States, through the Reform Support Network, as the grantees are implementing their approved plans and undertaking comprehensive education reform in their State. The Department works closely with the grantees to identify and address their needs, by identifying external experts that can support the grantees and creating communities of practice so that grantees can learn from one another and build on one another's work. The Department makes information about the communities of practice and the resources and tools developed to support the grantees publicly available on the [Reform Support Network](#) website.

## D Race to the Top Assessment Program

Since the Department awarded grants to two consortia of states in September 2010 to develop comprehensive assessment systems, the Department has undertaken several activities to support and better enable transparency.

### Technical Assistance Public Meetings

The Department hosted four public information and technical assistance meetings for the consortia of States. The meetings – addressing state and local technology infrastructure; automated scoring; and creating valid, reliable, and fair assessments for students with disabilities and English learners – provided an opportunity for the consortia and the public to hear from experts, discuss approaches to addressing the issue, and suggest solutions together. For each meeting, the Department has made information available, including the agenda and expert biographies, participant list, presentations, and a transcript of the meeting.



## Program Review and Annual Reports

The Implementation and Support Unit, Responsible for the Race to the Top program, developed a program review with grantees and made information about the program review publicly available.

As a component of the program review, in 2013 the Department established the Race to the Top Assessment Technical Review. The Technical Review brought together national experts in assessment design, psychometrics, academic content, and assessing students with disabilities and English learners to review documentation from each consortium. They analyzed the consortia's progress meeting the requirements laid out in the Race to the Top Assessment program and identified how the Department can better partner with the consortia during this critical development phase. Information about the [Technical Review](#), including a summary of the spring 2013 Technical Review for each consortium, is available on ED.gov.

In addition, each year of the grant, each consortium submits an annual performance report, which provides summary overview information about the consortium's progress. The [APRs](#) are available on ED.gov.

For each year of the grant, the Department has produced a report for each consortium summarizing the consortium's progress, identifying lessons learned, and next steps for the key activities related to the development of the next-generation assessment systems. The [reports](#) are available on ED.gov.

## Grantee Websites

Both consortia, as part of their grant, have developed public websites that provide a wealth of information about the development of the assessment systems, including technical documentation and fact sheets and presentations. The consortia have also both released practice tests and sample items for the public to try out the assessments. The websites are the [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium](#) and the [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers \(PARCC\)](#).

## E The Listening and Learning Tour—Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization

In 2014, the Department continues to seek public and stakeholder input in a variety of ways. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education has held numerous conference calls and meetings with States, school districts, community and advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders regarding improvements to the School Improvement Grants program to better support State and local efforts to turn around the Nation's lowest-performing schools. The Department has also used grantee meetings as a forum to hear from students, teachers, and others and to bring their voices to the forefront of our work. The Department continues to have regular meetings to gain input on ESEA flexibility implementation and lessons learned



from all of these key stakeholders as well. The Department has also provided leaders in states and local communities with three opportunities to provide comments to shape the new Preschool Development Grants competition to support local and state preschool development. In the 20 RTT-ELC states leaders meet regularly to share their successes and problem solve solutions to barriers that arise as they reform and build systems to assure children enter school healthy and prepared for school.

In 2012 and 2013, the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and top Department officials visited numerous schools and the Department held and participated in town hall meetings throughout the year. Each fall the Secretary takes a Back to School Bus Tour. In 2012 the [Education Drives America tour](#) went coast-to-coast, highlighting education successes and engaging communities in conversations about school reform (P-12), college affordability and completion, and the link between education and jobs. In 2013 the [Strong Start, Bright Future tour](#) took the Secretary throughout the Southwest to highlight the importance of ensuring that all students benefit from high-quality educational opportunities. Plans are in progress for a 2014 tour.

### **F Investing in Innovation (i3)**

In 2014, the i3 program continues to support the goal to increase the transparency of the grant application and award process. The i3 program posts all relevant application materials on the i3 website, including links to the Notices Inviting Applications, application packages, webinars, and FAQ documents. Additionally, the i3 program posts overview information after each closing date about the number of applications received and the list of applicants. When the program announces the highest-rated applicants each fall, these applicants' project narratives and technical review forms are posted on the website along with an overview document that discusses the i3 competitions for that year. Learn more at the [i3 website](#).

### **G National Education Technology Plan**

The National Educational Technology Plan, *Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology*, was prepared for the Office of Educational Technology by leading researchers and practitioners. It represents their best ideas about how the nation can advance the teaching and learning capabilities of its schools. The plan is designed to close the gap between the technology-rich and engaging experiences that dominate many students' lives outside of school and many students' experience in school, while preparing them for success as global citizens and in college and careers. It presents five goals with recommendations for states, districts, the federal government, and other stakeholders. Each goal addresses one of the five essential components of learning powered by technology: Learning, Assessment, Teaching, Infrastructure, and Productivity.

The [National Education Technology Plan](#) is scheduled to be updated this year.

In keeping with the Open Government Initiative, in November 2010 the Department published the [draft of the plan](#) on the Department's website. The public was invited to review it, comment on it, and provide examples of research and practice associated with it. The Department welcomed suggestions about ways to accelerate the development and adoption of tools and resources that merge education and technology, as well as incentives to help spark innovation and scale up the most effective products.

In November 2010, the National Education Technology Plan (NETP) was released, incorporating many ideas and comments submitted from the public via ED.gov. For example, a call came from the public to release the plan in numerous accessible formats. As a result, NETP is available as NIMAS, DAISY and Braille Ready File (BRF) formats in addition to PDF and web versions. The Education Technology Plan continues to be a centerpiece in the discussion of the future of learning and teaching and a continual collaboration between teachers, administrators, researchers, content vendors, education solution providers and open technology communities.

The National Educational Technology Plan established a vision for how technology could provide students with access to engaging digital resources, opportunities to collaborate with peers and experts, and powerful tools to solve real problems as an integral part of their learning experience. The plan also aims to ensure that affordable devices are available to support students' digital learning, teachers are prepared to thrive in connected classrooms, and high-quality digital learning resources are available to teachers and students at any time and any place.

Schools must have modern technology infrastructure, and students must have access to the best resources—regardless of where they live—so that they are prepared to thrive in a globally connected world.

In 2013, President Obama announced the [ConnectED initiative](#), which aims to make the vision outlined in the National Educational Technology Plan a reality by ensuring classrooms across the country are connected to high-speed internet. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) answered the President's call to action, announcing efforts to modernize and expand the [E-Rate program](#) to more fully meet the needs of schools and libraries as they connect to high-speed broadband.

In January 2014, the President announced that—with the support of the Federal Communication Commission—America will make a major down-payment on the goals of the National Educational Technology Plan and ConnectED, connecting more than 15,000 schools over the next two years—without adding a dime to the deficit.

And to help educators leverage new technologies and high-speed Internet, the Obama administration has announced the [ConnectEDucators program](#), which would help educators to leverage technology and data to personalize learning and improve instruction, ensuring that—

as schools increase access to broadband Internet through the ConnectED initiative—teachers and principals are prepared to use these resources in a way that increases student learning and achievement. This new proposed program would complement the efforts of local school districts to personalize learning through the [Race to The Top-District](#) program.

### **H Federal Student Aid (FSA) College.gov**

In July 2012, College.gov was retired as a stand-alone website and its content was incorporated into [StudentAid.gov](#) as part of the Integrated Student View (ISV). For more information about the ISV, please refer to Sec IV Part D of this report.

## IV STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

### A New 2014 Flagship Initiative, Transparency: Navigating ED's Data Inventory

The Education Data Inventory initiative is a centralized, metadata repository of data collected by the Department of Education, excluding personnel and administrative data. This tool serves both internal and external stakeholders and aligns with the open data principle of government efficiencies. Internally, the Data Inventory reduces reporting burden, improves data collection practices across the agency, and strengthens program office's data understanding.

Additionally, employees can quickly identify previously collected data and reduce research time when referencing historical data. For external customers, the Data Inventory provides a searchable, one-stop-shop, to find data collected by the Department. The Data Inventory also connects metadata to previously published data files on sites such as data.gov or Ed.gov.

On November 25, 2013, a Beta version of the Education Data Inventory was released to the general public on the [data inventory website](#). This fully operational beta version allows the public to search available records and review the inventory tool as a whole. Increased engagement with the public will be forthcoming through previously established communication tools, such as the Ed.gov blog.

The Data Inventory provides a link between data collected by the Department of Education and Department of Education data files made publicly available through Data.gov or ED.gov.

The U.S. Department of Education fiscal year 2013 Annual Performance Report and fiscal year 2015 Annual Performance Plan provides guidance on the strategic targets for the Data Inventory datasets totals. For fiscal year 2013, a baseline of 55 publically available datasets was established. The strategic targets for fiscal years 2014-2016 are listed in the following table:

	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2016
Number of public data sets included in the Department's data inventory and thus linked to Data.gov or ED.gov websites	66	79	94

A working group of Data Strategy Team members is engaging program offices to ensure efficiency and collaboration in this initiative. Streamlined data collection will lessen reporting burden for the program offices, as well as improve the timeliness of inventory updates. Both benefits will support the sustainability of the Data Inventory and allow for continued improvement.

### **B New 2014 Flagship Initiative, Participation: Early Participation and Input in Policy- and Rule-Making**

As part of its implementation of Executive Order 13563, "Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review," issued by the President on January 18, 2011 and the Department's retrospective analysis of its regulations, the Department receives comments on proposed regulations open for public comment and other requests for comment that are posted on regulations.gov. Specifically, the Department is interested in the public's thoughts about how the Department can make its proposals more effective, efficient, and easily understandable to help achieve better outcomes for students while minimizing burden and streamlining requirements, where possible. The Department seeks comments on regulations that may be outmoded, ineffective, insufficient, or excessively burdensome, as well as regulations that could be modified, streamlined, expanded, or repealed to be more effective and efficient, achieve better outcomes for students, and be easier to understand.

The Department takes early participation and input seriously, and conducts outreach on a number of important initiatives through in-person and online contact. We intend to continue to build upon these efforts in the future.

### **C New 2014 Flagship Initiative, Collaboration: Federal Registry for Educational Excellence (FREE.Ed.gov)**

The Federal Registry for Educational Excellence (FREE) makes it easier to find digital teaching and learning resources created and maintained by the federal government and public and private organizations. The Department of Education's FREE.Ed.gov website was conceived in 1997 by a federal working group in response to a [Presidential memorandum](#) on expanding access to internet-based educational resources for children, teachers and parents. The site was launched a year later. It was redesigned and re-launched for the first time in November 2006.

In June 2013 the Department launched a [new version of FREE.Ed.gov](#) powered by the [Learning Registry](#), an open database for sharing digital learning resources. This partnership provides customers – educators, parents and students – with a broader inventory of educational materials from federal agencies and public and private organizations. More than 400,000 freely available resources are included in the new FREE.

The new site incorporates responsive design for mobile devices. It is now easier to share content in FREE on social media networks. By modernizing the technology behind FREE, the Department is preparing a platform for future enhancements. The Department plans to gather more expertise from the education community and incorporate more customer-generated input. The Department will be working with customers to identify and prioritize possible new features so customers can rate, tag, and comment on specific resources, as well as possibly save their favorites for future reference.

FREE is maintained by the Office of Communications and Outreach and the Office of Educational Technology in partnership with the Advanced Digital Learning Initiative. The Department welcomes feedback on the new FREE. Send comments and ideas to [FREE@ed.gov](mailto:FREE@ed.gov) or on Twitter [@FreeResources](https://twitter.com/FreeResources).

### **D Flagship Initiative, Transparency: Federal Student Aid Integrated Student Experience**

Integrated Student Experience is the Department's signature initiative per Executive Order 13571 on "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service." The Integrated Student Experience (ISE) initiative supports this vision by providing students and parents with a necessary enhanced customer experience across the student aid lifecycle, resulting in increased financial aid awareness and a simplified application and servicing experience. The consolidation effort focuses on transitioning the presentation of content, functionality and tools of FSA's 14+ separate student-facing websites into one user experience. ISE will deliver holistic, high-quality information about the financial aid process resulting in improved rates of customer self-service opportunities and establishing clear mechanisms for customer feedback. Social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter) will also be integrated into ISE for a more enhanced customer experience.

#### ***FAFSA State API***

Students across nine states<sup>1</sup> can now use the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) to apply for both federal and state student financial assistance. The [U.S. Department of Education's \(ED\) Application Programming Interface \(API\)](#) service was established to allow students who have completed and submitted an application via [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) to electronically transfer data they provided on their application to agencies administering state financial assistance programs. The API functionality promotes the use of technology to address state data collection needs while reducing application reporting burden for students and their families and protecting the privacy of students. Eligible students completing the application through ED's [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov) will be linked to their state's financial assistance Web site (as determined by the applicant's state of legal residence), provided that [ED has approved the state's participation in the API](#) process. Once on the state's secure Web site, state scholarship and grant agencies will receive FAFSA data that the student has entered and submitted to ED. This is yet another way ED continues to simplify the federal and state financial aid application process for students and utilize technology to [unlock the power of education data](#).

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<sup>1</sup> California, Iowa, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Indiana

### ***StudentAid.gov***

In July 2012, [StudentAid.gov](http://StudentAid.gov) was launched to support the ISE. This site is the first step in a multi-phase project to provide consumers with a one-stop website where they can access federal student aid information, apply for federal aid, repay student loans, and navigate the college decision-making process. Whether the user is a student, a parent, or a borrower in repayment, StudentAid.gov has useful information for you. The site, available in English and Spanish, combines content and interactive tools from several Department websites and makes it easy to find the information needed. It also features videos and infographics to help answer the most frequently asked questions about financial aid. In May 2014, the office of Federal Student Aid launched a new feature on its streamlined website, StudentAid.gov, which allows aid recipients to access their federal student aid history directly on the site. Students, parents, and borrowers can now log in to StudentAid.gov to view their federal student loan and grant information from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS).

### ***Mobile Accessibility***

To further enhance the customer experience, StudentAid.gov uses responsive design to ensure all of its content and tools are fully accessible on smartphones and tablets in addition to desktops. Similarly, the Financial Aid Toolkit, available at [FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov](http://FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov), also employs responsive design to ensure guidance counselors and mentors can access information and resources about federal student aid via desktops, smartphones and tablets.

### ***MyStudentData***

FSA developed MyStudentData in the spirit of open government, accessibility, and helping customers make informed decisions. The MyStudentData download function was developed as part of the Education Data Initiative, which is designed to make customers' education-related data available, machine-readable, and accessible while protecting personal privacy. This functionality is available to customers on [FAFSA.gov](http://FAFSA.gov), [NSLDS.ed.gov](http://NSLDS.ed.gov), and [StudentAid.gov](http://StudentAid.gov). On [FAFSA.gov](http://FAFSA.gov), customers can use the function to download certain data elements from their FAFSA. On [StudentAid.gov](http://StudentAid.gov) or [NSLDS.ed.gov](http://NSLDS.ed.gov), a customer can use the function to download loan, grant, enrollment, and overpayment information. In both cases, information is placed into a user-friendly, machine-readable, plain-text file.

### ***Customer Listening Initiative***

This is an initiative underway geared toward understanding the current state of customer interactions with FSA in order to help guide decisions, prioritize customer-facing initiatives, overcome disconnected service delivery and practices, and prep FSA to serve customers across touch points. It aggregates customer feedback from all channels and disseminates insights across the organization to address issues and improve the experience. This includes routine engagement around customer feedback. Currently, the FSA Digital Engagement Team has a robust customer listening process that is used to inform content development and uncover



customer issues. For example, @FAFSA Twitter Office Hours are held monthly in collaboration with key stakeholders.

### ***FAFSASimplification/IRS Data Retrieval Tools***

The new FAFSA (*Free Application for Federal Student Aid*) has reduced the number of questions and uses skip logic so families do not have to answer questions that do not apply to them. Additionally, in collaboration with the IRS, students can now transfer their family's tax information directly from the IRS once they have completed their tax returns, dramatically decreasing the time it takes to complete a FAFSA.

## **E Flagship Initiative, Participation: Public Challenges and Contests**

The Department hosts, partners on and supports challenges and contests that engage students and encourage their creative participation to envision the future and share their perspective on the importance of promoting educational excellence and ensuring equal access to educational opportunities. The Department is planning a series of challenges and contests for the future, and below are some of the challenges from the past three years.

### ***College Net Price Calculator Student Video Challenge***

The Department held a contest encouraging college and high school students to come up with creative videos that explain net price calculators and why they are a valuable resource. Three students each won a \$1,500 prize for creating the top-scoring videos in the Department's College Net Price Calculator Student Video Challenge. The Department used these videos to broaden awareness of net price calculators among students and will continue outreach efforts to several stakeholder groups, organizations, college counselors and student body leaders. See [the winning videos and all submissions](#).

### ***Why Open Education Matters Student Video Challenge***

The Department partnered with Creative Commons and the Open Society Foundation and challenged students to create videos explaining the potential of Open Education. The prize winners were determined by a panel of distinguished experts, including Davis Guggenheim, Nina Paley, Liz Dwyer, Anya Kamenetz, James Franco, Angela Lin, and Mark Surman. The contest was a partnership between Creative Commons, The Open Society Institutes and the U.S. Department of Education. All prize money was provided by non-governmental sources. All of the videos are licensed CC BY, which means others may distribute, remix, and build upon them, even commercially, as long as they give credit to the creators. See the videos at [whyopenedmatters.org](http://whyopenedmatters.org).

### ***StopBullying.gov Student Video Challenge***

The Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the other Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention invited students to participate in a video challenge to

create a public service announcement to communicate peer-to-peer “how youth can be more than a bystander and help kids who are involved in bullying.” This contest received more than 900 submissions and further engaged youth and educators by facilitating public voting on the finalists’ videos. See the [finalists’ videos on StopBullying.gov](#).

### ***Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Challenge***

The Department invited schools, national service programs, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations to work together to propel improvement of lowest-performing schools. This Challenge was for the 2012-2013 school year. The Department asked challenge participants to focus on the neediest schools, invest in the capacity to work together, align efforts to key student outcomes and celebrate and share success. Visit the [winners’ gallery and all submissions](#).

### ***White House Student Film Festival***

The Department provided key input and support for the White House Student Film Festival, which invited students to “tell us why technology is so important, and how it will change the educational experience for kids in the future.” The contest received more than 2,500 official entries. The students’ videos tell compelling stories about the potential of ConnectED classrooms, students and educators. Watch the [16 official selections](#).

## **F Flagship Initiative, Collaboration: Connected Communities of Practice**

The [2010 National Education Technology Plan](#) demonstrates the importance of educators becoming more connected to resources, tools, colleagues, experts, and learning activities, both within and beyond schools. Participation in online communities of practice is a key way educators connect. Robust online participation contributes both to individual excellence and to the vitality of the profession as a whole. The [Connected Online Communities of Practice project](#) stewards a scalable, sustainable ecology of online communities in education to improve teacher and leader effectiveness, enhance student learning and increase productivity.

In collaboration with a wide range of educational organizations, the Connected Online Communities of Practice project is increasing the quality, accessibility, and connectedness of existing and emerging online communities of practice through four types of activities:

- Launching and leading new online communities of practice that address pressing needs in education and help us learn more about how such communities work best
- Conducting design experiments within “testbeds,” online communities of practice run by collaborating organizations in which project staff will develop, facilitate, and evaluate selected content and activities that help address pressing questions

- Undertaking case studies of both interesting communities of practice and of individual educational professionals' use of online communities and other forms of social media to connect
- Developing ideas about new designs and infrastructure that could better support educators in making productive connections

The Connected Online Communities of Practice project [shares its reports and briefings online](#). *Connect and Inspire: Online Communities of Practice in Education* is the main report of the Connected Online Communities of Practice project and will be published in several versions over the course of the project. The project is also conducting primary research on online communities of practice in education. In addition to informing the projects' other publications, results of that research will be disseminated through academic publications.

### G Flagship Initiative, Transparency: ED Data Express

[ED Data Express](#) was first launched in summer 2010 and is now in its third version since its initial release. It focuses mainly on data reported by States on key K–12 programs funded by OESE. The site currently includes data from EDFacts, Consolidated State Performance Reports (CSPR), State Accountability Workbooks, and NCES. ED Data Express utilizes a Web-enabled database application that allows users to select a particular data element (or set of data elements) and view it in several different ways. The site includes current and previous year data on student performance, demographics, accountability, and some statistical components. The site has three sections: a State Snapshot page, a Data Element Explorer, and a Build-a-State-Table page. The site is designed to be interactive and to present the data in a clear, easy-to-use way, with options to download information into Excel or manipulate the data within the website. Members of the general public, grantees, stakeholder groups, media, and Department of Education personnel who are interested in K–12 grant-related data are its primary users.

The State Snapshot pages include charts and tables with key data for each state. In its newest version, this section was updated to add interactivity so that users can expand or collapse sections that are of interest to them. The visualization of the data was updated based on recommendations from users and a design expert.

The Data Element Explorer allows users to view a single element across all states. The current version of the site has four tools in this section: Graphs and Tables, Data Mapping, Trend Lines, and Conditional Analysis. Each section has visually appealing displays, and is designed to allow for a variety of views for different types of users.

The Build-a-State-Table page allows users to build customized tables by selecting specific indicators and specific states. Users are able to organize the data in a variety of ways, and download data for further exploration. In addition to the data-viewing tools, the site includes an "about" page with information about the collections and guidance for appropriate use, a page with definitions of important terms, a frequently asked questions page, and links to other

education data resources. ED Data Express is also designed to interface with social networking applications, such as Facebook, to better facilitate information-sharing.

Over the past year, enhancements to the site have mostly been minor visual improvements on the public facing site, and change to the administrative tools. The administrative enhancements have improved the efficiency of operating the site and will allow for an earlier release of most of the key data elements on the site. The Department will soon be implementing additional enhancements to the site, which will include a few more efficiency-related improvements, release of maps displaying district-level data, and the ability to personalize the site. All public facing changes to the site are subject to final approval by the Department.

### **H Flagship Initiative, Collaboration: Open Innovation Web Portal**

The Invest in Innovation (i3) Fund represents the Department of Education's most substantial direct investment in innovation to date, yet the Department recognizes that creating and sustaining innovation in the field will require not only successful grant competitions but also the reshaping and retooling of how innovation happens in the education sector. As Deputy Secretary Jim Shelton put it, "[s]uccessful ideas fail to scale, and the education sector lacks effective venues where good ideas can be identified, refined, and scaled as part of an ongoing innovation cycle that both introduces new ideas and improves on the ones that already exist."

The Open Innovation Portal, an online platform, facilitated educational innovation by bridging the communication and coordination challenges in the education community. This was the first national forum where entrepreneurs, education stakeholders of all types, and funders could partner to develop and fund innovative ideas in the education sector. Through this portal, the Department served as a facilitator of partnerships and a convener of like-minded individuals to accelerate the development, identification, and broad use of innovative products, practices, and processes to improve education in schools. The Department retired the portal's online platform but continues to host challenges and collaborate with the public on the Challenge.gov platform at [Challenge.gov/ED](http://Challenge.gov/ED). See the Flagship Initiative for Participation through Public Challenges and Contests in Section E for more details about the Department's challenges.

### **I Flagship Initiative, Participation: Open Government Steering Committee**

The Open Government Working Group (also called the Open Data/Open Government Working Group and formerly called the Open Government Steering Committee) is charged with overseeing open government activities within the Department, including oversight of the progress of the work described in this plan. It is a subgroup of the department-wide Data Strategy Team, which meets monthly. The working group undertakes experimental and forward-looking activities relating to open government and open data. It hopes that some or all of these experiments will be models adopted on a larger scale within the Department and perhaps elsewhere.

To ensure that the principles of open government are reflected in the ongoing work internal to the Department, the Open Government Working Group investigates methods for more inclusion of the public in internal meetings. These methods could include publishing agendas of meetings, accepting moderated comments on the meeting agenda, and other strategies. The working group wants to explore forward-learning strategies that it could share later with other groups in the Department.

The Department is [live streaming](#) meetings and events each week and publishing videos on [YouTube](#). Secretary Arne Duncan publishes a monthly response to social media questions from the public on YouTube (#AskArne). This has led to greater awareness to Department operations and expands our practices of direct communication with the public.

### **J Ongoing Initiatives for Timely Publishing of Electronic Data**

#### ***New Initiatives for Timely Publishing of Electronic Data for 2014***

##### **Comprehensive Data Plan**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Strategy Team is coordinating with program offices to create a comprehensive data plan that will include a data calendar and data release schedule. This initiative will create a streamlined and transparent approach to the timely publishing of electronic data in 2014. It will also provide increased accountability with data publishing timelines.

NCES remains committed to open government efforts and has published 20 ED Facts data files, through Data.gov, since fiscal year 2013. This effort included updating historical records to ensure the majority of available EdFacts files were published. As such, NCES does not anticipate routinely publishing such a large volume of data files in the future. Through the end of fiscal year 2014, NCES expects to release approximately 10 additional EdFacts data files through Data.gov.

##### ***Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education Programs***

The Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) collects and releases data for two federally funded programs—Adult education and literacy programs authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and career and technical education authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins Act). OCTAE provides public access to data on the performance of students in these programs through the [National Reporting System \(NRS\)](#) website for adult education data and the [Perkins Collaborative Resource Network \(PCRN\)](#) website for data on career and technical education.

##### **Stakeholder Involvement on Career Pathways**

Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier and staff continually engage the public and stakeholders directly in discussions regarding how CTE will address the educational and

economic needs of youths and adults preparing to participate in the knowledge-based, global marketplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In April 2014, the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Labor (DOL) issued a [Request for Information \(RFI\) on Adoption of Career Pathways Approaches for the Delivery of Education, Training, Employment, and Human Services](#).

The Departments seek to further support the development of high-quality career pathways systems by jointly soliciting information and recommendations from a broad array of stakeholders in the public and private sectors, as well as in State, regional, tribal, and local areas. The public's and stakeholders' experience and unique perspectives can have considerable influence on the Department's strategic investments and technical assistance activities to support the development of career pathways systems.

They hosted a webinar, presented data quality sessions at the National Association of Career and Technical Education Information Conference in Louisville, KY, and hosted in Washington, DC the project directors of the Native American Career and Technical Education Program, Native Hawaiian Career and Technical Education Program, and Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Career and Technical Institutions Program.

### ***Civil Rights Data Collection***

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) continues to conduct the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), formerly the Elementary and Secondary School Survey (E&S Survey), to collect data on key education and civil rights issues in our nation's public schools. The CRDC collects a variety of information including, student enrollment and educational programs and services, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, limited English proficiency and disability. The CRDC is a long-standing and important aspect of the Department's Office for Civil Rights' overall strategy for administering and enforcing the civil rights statutes for which it is responsible. Information collected by the CRDC is also used by other Department offices as well as policymakers and researchers outside of ED.

ED.gov links to existing and updated [CRDC content](#). OCR continues to keep all of its CRDC information current, and relevant to the greater education, policymaking and public communities that depend on the use of the data to inform the ongoing discussions concerning America's schools.

To access CRDC data from the 2000, 2004, 2006, 2009-10, and 2011-12 surveys, go to [OCRData.ed.gov](http://OCRData.ed.gov).

The CRDC for the 2011-12 school year was collected from every public school and school district in the country. The school and district level data collected by the CRDC was posted in March 21, 2014 on the [CRDC website](#).

OCR has issued four documents analyzing key aspects of the 2011-12 data:



- [Data Snapshot: Discipline](#)
- [Data Snapshot: Early Learning](#)
- [Data Snapshot: College and Career Readiness](#)
- [Data Snapshot: Teacher Equity](#)

To access questions and answers about the 2011-12, see the [OCR factsheet on ED.gov](#).

To access 2011-12 CRDC Table Layouts with Definitions, see the [CRCD table layouts on ED.gov](#).

OCR has received Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval to conduct the 2013-14 CRDC. The 2013-14 CRDC will include every public school and school district in the country. It will include most of the data items collected by the 2011-12 CRDC and a small number of new data items. OMB has also approved an additional set of new data items that will be optional for the 2013-14 CRDC and be mandatory for the 2015-16 CRDC.

To access questions and answers about the 2013-14 and 2015-16 CRDC, see the [questions and answers on ED.gov](#).

To access additional important information about the 2013-14 and 2015-16 CRDC go to the [additional CRDC information provided on ED.gov](#).

A detailed list of [CRDC data elements](#) can be found on ED.gov.

### ***The Learning Registry***

The Learning Registry project is continuing to work with a number of state governments, nonprofits, commercial organizations and federal agencies to help share information about the best learning resources as broadly as possible. New features developed by various stakeholders in this open source project include improved search tools, new metadata descriptions for content and better integration with authentication and other standards. The project has seen a significant increase in the number of learning resources made available through the system over the last year as well.

The following resources will provide further information regarding the Learning Registry project:

- [Community homepage](#)
- [Source code](#)
- [Tech specification](#)

### ***RSA Management Information System***

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) provides a Formula Grant Award Calculator for its largest program (the Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants program) to allow the public to see exactly



how formula grant awards are calculated state by state. RSA provided historical data in order for people to view trends over time – back to fiscal year 2010.

Additionally RSA posts grant awards on its website in order to enhance transparency about which grantees receive how much money. Over 13,000 reports submitted by grantees have been published on the site, as well as a complete archive of the past 15 years of sub-regulatory policy.

### **Data.gov**

In response to the May 2013 [Executive Order](#), *Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information*, the White House, OMB and the General Services Administration worked together with the federal agencies to create a new Data.gov platform. The new platform enhances the customer experience, streamlines the design and search features and modernizes the method for how agencies populate the catalog with their dataset descriptions.

The Departments of Education and State together host the [Data.gov Education Community](#). The [ED Data Inventory](#) generates the descriptions that are posted at [ED.gov/data.json](#) and [Data.gov harvests](#). In addition to participating on the interagency platform, the Department makes available quick access and ready reference links available for developers and researchers at [ED.gov/developer](#) and [ED.gov/data](#).

### **Engaging with Developers and the Education Technology Community**

The Department engages with the education community and interested developers and entrepreneurs through social media outlets and the Department's official Homeroom Blog. More than 150 of America's entrepreneurs, software developers, education experts, and policymakers came together October 9, 2012, for an Education Datapalooza at the White House. The gathering was a chance to celebrate new products, services, and apps – all built with freely available data from the government and other sources – that have the potential to help American students succeed and that empower students and their families to make informed education decisions. See videos of talks from [Education Datapalooza 2012](#).

The Department held [two data jams](#) at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University in December 2013. The Data Jams focused on data related to postsecondary education and led up to a second Education Datapalooza. For Education Datapalooza 2014 on January 15, 2014, more than 600 people packed into an auditorium to discuss innovation in higher education. The gathering was a response to President Obama's call in August 2013 to improve value and affordability in postsecondary education, in which he outlined an ambitious plan that included a major focus on innovation. Datapalooza participants gathered to celebrate innovative products, apps, websites, and other tools to help students get to and through postsecondary education. Many of the tools help students and families navigate the college choice and selection process. Others focus on improving teaching and learning, especially in

ways that leverage technology to improve online and classroom-based instruction. Watch videos from talks from Education Datapalooza 2014 on [YouTube](#).

The Department collaborated with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to host a data jam in conjunction with the [White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault](#) in April 2014; data visualizations and tools from this event are part of the [NotAlone.gov website](#). The Department is working with the White House to plan data jams as part of the [My Brother's Keeper Initiative](#).

The goal of the Education Data Jams and Datapaloozas is to spark interest and collaboration among entrepreneurs and developers in creating apps and other digital tools to facilitate easier access to education information for educators, students and their families.

### ***Data.Ed.Gov***

The Data.Ed.Gov website was retired in September 2012, and its contents have since been hosted on Data.gov. The Department continues to publish [interactive datasets related to grant applications and awards](#).

### ***eRulemaking***

To facilitate the public's involvement in the Department's rulemaking process, the Department participates in Regulations.gov, an electronic government-wide access point that enables the public to submit comments on different types of federal regulatory documents and to read and respond to comments submitted by other members of the public during the public comment period. Regulations.gov improves the public's access to and participation in rulemaking by providing one central electronic location to search, retrieve, and read all federal regulatory material. Through this site, the public can view a description of regulations currently open for comment, read the full text of these documents and any supporting regulatory documents, and submit comments to the appropriate federal agency. The public uses Regulations.gov to access Department of Education proposed, interim final, and final regulations, and the Department recently expanded its use of Regulations.gov to solicit and accept comments on other regulatory documents, including requests for information, proposed discretionary grant priorities, and requests for comment on information collections under the Paperwork Reduction Act.

To further facilitate and encourage productive regulatory feedback, the Department recently updated its [Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review webpage](#). This web page contains a link to Department of Education regulations and other regulatory documents open for public comment via Regulations.gov, a link to all existing Department of Education rules via the electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR), and a link to an easy-to-use form for submitting comments on existing regulations. All links are conveniently found in the same location as the Department's plan for the retrospective analysis of regulations, status reports on the Department's retrospective review efforts, and [contact information](#).

### ***IT Dashboard***

The IT Dashboard was launched in 2009, with a goal of showing the public how federal information technology (IT) investments are performing. At this point, the information in the dashboard provides a portion of the information necessary to support decisions regarding the Department's IT portfolio. As the amount of information in the dashboard grows and the public forms connections between IT investments and results, the Department foresees a time when public review and comment will be one of the evaluation criteria used for decisions regarding how we spend IT dollars.

Internally, the visual presentation of information in the dashboard is valuable as a tool to allow senior executives in the Department to quickly recognize key characteristics of the overall portfolio. As additional views are developed, the Department can have effective discussions about the impact and results of investment decisions.

The Department has added steps in our operational IT management processes to ensure the dashboard is populated with current information. Going forward, the Department will seek ways to incorporate comments, suggestions, risks, and issues received from the public into the Department's governance and capital planning processes.

The Department will continue to respond timely, thoroughly, and transparently to any feedback received through the IT Dashboard. As appropriate, the Department will modify its agency processes to address weaknesses that may be identified. The Department will route specific suggestions for improvement or ideas that affect the portfolio through its Enterprise Architecture processes.

OMB is currently using the IT Dashboard as a way for federal agencies to submit their IT investment data. Agencies will update their IT investment data monthly and submit their complete data for every budget year, beginning in 2011. OMB plans to expand the amount of data and extend the analytical capabilities of the IT Dashboard over time.

The IT Dashboard is available at [ITDashboard.gov](http://ITDashboard.gov).

### ***USASpending.gov***

Data on the Department's spending on grants is included on [USASpending.gov](http://USASpending.gov), alongside other federal spending information.

For more details, see spending data maps, timelines and advanced search on USASpending.gov:

- [Prime Award Spending Data: Grants from Department of Education](#)
- [Sub-award Spending Data: Grants from Department of Education](#)

### ***EDFacts***

EDFacts is a U.S. Department of Education initiative to put performance data at the center of policy, management, and budget decisions for all K–12 education programs. EDFacts is a multidimensional data system that includes:

- (1) an electronic submission system that receives data from States, districts, and schools;
- (2) analytical tools for analysis of submitted data; and
- (3) reporting tools for Department staff and data submitters to ensure better use of those data.

The EDFacts system and the team that manages it are now part of the NCES. See the above section on the new Comprehensive Data Plan for timely publication of data from NCES, which include EDFacts updates and plans.

### ***IDEAData.org***

The Office of Special Education Programs within OSERS is dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21 by providing leadership and financial support to assist states and local districts. The [\*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 \(IDEA\)\*](#) authorizes [formula grants](#) to states and [discretionary grants](#) to institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations to support research, demonstrations, [technical assistance and dissemination](#), technology and personnel development and [parent-training and information centers](#).

The [IDEA Data Center](#) provides technical assistance to build capacity within states for collecting, reporting, and analyzing high-quality IDEA data. The public can access and download recent and archived data related to [IDEA](#).

### ***Federal Student Aid (FSA) Data Center***

In September 2009, Federal Student Aid established the FSA Data Center, a centralized, online source for FSA programmatic data. The Data Center, available at [www.FSADataCenter.ed.gov](http://www.FSADataCenter.ed.gov), compiles information from across Federal Student Aid in an effort to promote transparency and to increase self-service opportunities for our customers and stakeholders. To identify new data sets, FSA routinely reviews requests received through the press, Congress or the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Since its launch, the information and reports proactively released on the site has increased dramatically. The FSA Data Center continues to post federal student application, loan and grant data by school. In addition, the site includes default rates, Title IV contracts, and several reports focusing on school compliance, such as financial composite scores, Proprietary Schools 90-10 Revenue Percentage and Clery Act reviews. In 2013, Federal Student Aid added a section on the FSA Data Center about the outstanding federal student loan portfolio that includes quarterly reports by loan program loan status, and repayment plan. In recent years, the FAFSA Completion Tool was also added on the FSA Data Center.

[The FAFSA Completion Tool](#) provides high schools with current data about their FAFSA submissions and completions so schools can track their progress and help to ensure that their students complete a FAFSA. Previously, high schools relied on self-reported surveys to estimate their FAFSA completion rate and that data can be inaccurate. For this reason, Federal Student Aid is providing high schools with current data about their FAFSA submissions and completions so that high schools can track their progress and help to ensure that their students complete a FAFSA. A completed FAFSA allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine a potential student's eligibility for federal student aid – a key factor in families' college decisions. Data for the high school graduating class of 2014 is now available on [StudentAid.gov](#).

More information about the FSA Data Center can be found at [FSADataCenter.ed.gov](#).

### ***OpenED Employment and Hiring Solutions and Dashboard***

The Department remains committed to improving employment opportunities for veterans, individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities across all occupations, including mission critical positions and grade levels. The Department is utilizing all strategies to recruit and hire veterans and individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to, The Pathways Program, Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), Project Search Program, and Special Hiring Authorities.

Veterans, transitioning service members, and their families, need to receive accurate and consistent information regarding veterans employment. Researchers and the public need access to information to help determine what is working and what is not and the progress that the agency is making with Executive Order 13518, “Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government.”

The Department held its first career fair titled, “Career Fair for Individuals with Disabilities and Veterans.” Human Capital and Client Services (HCCS) partnered with the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Services (EEOS) to host an onsite career fair that attracted over 300 candidates for employment consideration. In addition to employment opportunities, there were three sessions: Find and Apply for Federal Jobs, Executive Order 13548 – Increasing Federal Employment for Individuals with Disabilities, and Preparing Federal Resumes.

The Department’s career counselors provide services to veterans and disabled veterans via [Iwork@ed.gov](mailto:Iwork@ed.gov) e-mail account where requests are made from veterans. These requests consist of: educating veterans about the organization’s mission, informational guidance on how to tailor a resume for Federal employment, and instruction on navigating the Federal hiring process. In fiscal year 2013 services expanded to assist veteran spouses. All vacancy announcements in the Department invite veterans and their spouses to take advantage of services offered to assist with the right tools to seek Federal employment.

The Department has projected approximately 0.3% increase for each fiscal year to successfully and effectively impact the Department’s veterans and disabled veterans hiring initiatives. The Department continues to collect data and track the progress of hiring veterans and disabled veterans.

HCCS has fully implemented the Department's Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) and the Department's plan for Individuals with Disabilities (IWD) that outlines goals of hiring and retention strategies for Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and Individual with Disabilities. The [DVAAP and IWD can be found on the Department's website](#). OM and HCCS will continue to maintain and update information on veterans and individuals with disabilities hiring and employment on the Department's website to improve public access to hiring data and progress.

### **K Participation and Collaboration Initiatives**

#### ***New Participation and Collaboration Initiatives for 2014***

Two new flagship initiatives for 2014 focus on participation and collaboration: Early Participation and Input in Policy- and Rule-making and Federal Registry for Educational Excellence (FREE.Ed.gov).

#### ***Twitter Town Halls***

In an unprecedented level of openness for a cabinet-level official, during 2011, Secretary Duncan held five Twitter town halls with the public, where the Secretary asked the public to submit questions online, and he answered them either live on video or via Twitter replies. Additionally, every few weeks, Secretary Duncan personally answered, via video, questions and comments that the public had posted to his Facebook page. In 2013 on Twitter's blog, the Twitter team highlighted Secretary Duncan's effective participation in a [debate with education experts](#) and his willingness to have impromptu #AskArne chats at times that are more convenient for his followers and the [Twitter community](#).

The Department of Education and Secretary Duncan are committed to expanding open communication with the public through social media and other forms of digital communication.

## OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The US Department of Education's [Twitter accounts are located at ED.gov](#) and at time of this update are:

### *ED Twitter Accounts*

[Arne Duncan](#)

[ED Outreach](#)

[EDCivilRights](#)

[EDFedRegister](#)

[EDGovJobs](#)

[EDGreenRibbon](#)

[ED OII](#)

[EDPostsecondary](#)

[EDPressSec](#)

[EducationOIG](#)

[FreeResources](#)

[IES Research](#)

[Office of Ed Tech](#)

[USEDGov](#)

### *WH Initiatives on Twitter*

[EDPartners](#)

[HispanicEd](#)

[Kiran Ahuja](#)

[White House AAPI](#)

[White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans](#)

[White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities \(HBCUs\)](#)

### *ED Subagencies on Twitter*

[ERICinfo](#)

[FAFSA](#)

[FSAconf](#)

[GovBoard](#)

[NCES](#)

[NAEP NCES](#)

[REL NEI](#)

[RELMidWest](#)

[REL Northwest](#)

### *Empowering Students and Families as Stakeholders and Collaborators*

In the summer of 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Education announced family and community engagement as a required strategy in each of the Department's four proposed turnaround models for School Improvement Grants: closure, restart, turnaround and transformation.

In fall of 2010: the Department identified Family and Community Engagement in education as one of 14 overarching priorities for the awarding of discretionary grants.

Family Engagement has been a component of additional federal programs, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) initiatives, and Administration speeches: the Race to the Top Notice included family engagement as part of the invitational priorities as well as in the definition of a highly effective principal.



In November of 2010, the Office of Innovation and Improvement hosted the National Summit on Family Engagement.

In January of 2011, the President's State of the Union Address identified parents as partners in education.

In January of 2012, Secretary Duncan at the White House made remarks titled "For Democracy's Future: Education Reclaims Our Civic Mission," stating that we need to increase opportunities for students to have a voice in education decisions and to improve their communities and "not just be recipients of service." At that same event, the Department released a report titled *Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action*, which included nine steps the Department has committed to taking to advance a civic learning and engagement agenda. One of the action steps is to promote student and family participation in education programs and policies at the federal and local levels. The Department is currently conducting an internal audit of all education programs to identify opportunities for including students and families as stakeholders and collaborators, not just observers or recipients.

In December of 2012, Secretary Duncan joined more than 80 family engagement thought leaders at DC's Scholars' Stanton Elementary School to discuss the strong correlation between family engagement and academic outcomes, and how the Department of Education can provide more support.

In April 2014, the Department released a framework for schools and the broader communities they serve to build family and community engagement. The framework, explanation and information on

the framework, and the Secretary's announcement can be found on the ED.gov [Family and Community Engagement web page specifically for families, students and communities](#).

The Department is in the process of planning policy briefings, meetings, roundtables, and listening and learning sessions around the framework to bring together educators, administrators, community and faith-based representatives, students, and parents to discuss

*I want to have too many parents demanding excellence in their schools. ... [I want] all parents to be real partners in education with their children's teachers, from cradle to career. In this partnership, students and parents should feel connected--and teachers should feel supported. Parents can serve in at least one of three roles: Partners in learning, advocates and advisors who push for better schools and decision-makers who choose the best educational options for their children. When parents demand change and better options for their children, they become the real accountability backstop for the educational system. ... [I] need parents to speak out and drive change in chronically-underperforming schools where children receive an inferior education. With parental support, those struggling schools need to be turned around now—not tomorrow, because children get only one chance at an education.*

*-Arne Duncan, Mom Congress™ on Education and Learning Conference, May 2010*

what activities, strategies, plans, best practices, and systemic changes are needed to implement the framework statewide.

The Department and Secretary Duncan are committed to open communication with the public through forms of digital communication: webinars, blogs, mailboxes, newsletters, and twitter accounts. The Department provides information with the two newsletters, *Engaging Families* and *Touching Base*, and receives comments, questions and requests from parents, students, and the community through [parents@ed.gov](mailto:parents@ed.gov), [MilitaryContacts@ed.gov](mailto:MilitaryContacts@ed.gov), [FCE@ed.gov](mailto:FCE@ed.gov), and on Twitter @involveoutreach.

### ***Public Participation at ED.gov and through Outreach***

The Department encourages public participation using Web-based collaboration tools. The Department will continue to use Web-based tools available at ed.gov and other third-party offerings to engage the public in a discussion on topics related to education.

The Department recently deployed an open source Web publishing technology, in part to provide collaboration opportunities. Through its modular architecture, this technology provides www.ed.gov capabilities, such as public commenting on Web pages, voting on topics, and discussion forums.

In the future, the Department will use a mixture of these tools to encourage public feedback on education activities, classroom and administrative best practices, high-value data set releases, and other special topics as they arise.

An example of the public commenting on Ed.gov Web pages can be found at the [2010 National Education Technology Plan page](#). The Office of Educational Technology published a draft of this document online and invited the public to comment. The plan describes how information and communication technologies can help transform American education. It provides concrete goals to inform State and local education technology plans, and recommendations to inspire research, development, and innovation. “We are open to your comments,” Secretary Duncan said in a video announcing the plan. “Tell us about how technology has changed your school or classroom.”

Interested parties are able to attach comments specifically on individual pages of the plan. As part of the feature, participants are able to reply online to existing comments, creating a forum for discussion. This targeted feedback is being gathered and analyzed and will be contributory to future drafts of the plan.

The [ED.gov blog](#) is another tool used for gathering topical feedback. The blog features a “Join the Conversation” section that highlights blog posts where public feedback is encouraged. This extends engagement opportunities, such as the Department’s Listening and Learning Tour events, by providing an additional venue for the public to participate in the open discussion.

In addition to Web-based collaboration tools, the Department realizes that to effectively communicate with the general public, students, parents, teachers, and all constituencies engaged in public education, the Department must develop collaborative relationships through personal, interactive Outreach to education organizations and targeted stakeholders. To assess and meet the needs of families, for example, and to work toward closing the achievement gap, the Department has been holding ongoing family forums at headquarters and in key cities to reach Title I families, in particular. To better understand students, the Department has also established the “Student Voices” conversations for the Secretary and other senior officials to hear from students representing diverse interests, perspectives, and locales. These conversations reinforce the need for the U.S. to be No. 1 in the world in the percentage of the population with a college degree by 2020 with a focus on the importance of high school completion and college attendance and completion. The conversations have focused on identifying and overcoming barriers to college success and affordability.

With the goal of developing the best solutions for American’s students, the Department has focused on transforming the teaching profession for the 21st century by gathering input from teachers through the [Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence and Collaborative Teaching \(RESPECT\) project](#). This project consists of conversations with teachers whose comments will inform grant priorities and budget expenditures related to teacher preparation, professional development and general education reform. In April 2013 the Department released the *Blueprint for RESPECT*, available for download in PDF and ePUB formats. The Blueprint outlines seven key components:

1. A Culture of Shared Responsibility and Leadership
2. Top Talent, Prepared for Success
3. Continuous Growth and Professional Development
4. Effective Teachers and Principals
5. A Professional Career Continuum with Competitive Compensation
6. Conditions for Successful Teaching and Learning
7. Engaged Communities

Aggressive outreach to rural communities is another example of targeted outreach to teachers, families, students and stakeholders. This outreach blends both the use of Web-based tools and personal interaction. Contact with rural communities has resulted in the inclusion of rural priorities in grant programs and recognition of the need for rural communities to pool resources when applying for and implementing Department grants, for example.

### ***Digital Systems Interoperability***

Digital systems interoperability has been a design goal for many system architectures and standards groups for decades. Unfortunately, only limited success has been achieved to date. The Department has an opportunity to assist in achieving more secure, interoperable digital

systems, including those that manage student information, learning materials and financial data.

The benefits of interoperability are tremendous. It can permit schools and teachers to better exchange data with each other about students who move from one place to another. It can also allow educators to move past traditional paper-based textbook adoption models where every child must study and work from the same book, to purchasing content that is more specifically appropriate to each learner. Interoperability can also allow researchers to have access to more data and to integrate that data to analyze the education system in ways not currently possible, while still preserving strict privacy standards to protect students and others from inappropriate or unlawful access to their data.

Systems interoperability cannot be achieved by the federal government alone, but the Department of Education can play a role along with other federal agencies in fostering more interoperability and transparency, supporting a market-based adoption. The Department is currently engaged with a number of other agencies in determining the best, collaborative ways in which the government can provide assistance and stimulus to the market. In addition, the Department is actively in consultation with State and local governments and private entities to help design the correct solutions.

In addition to data, content and fiscal transparency, the Department is investigating how these interoperability standards can be used to streamline, simplify, and reduce costs for many of its data reporting requirements. Already EDFacts has been working with the reporting requirements to implement some standardized data formats, easing the technical and administrative burden on reporting agencies in some areas.

### **MyData Download**

The MyData Download initiative was launched to accelerate interoperability of student data by providing students and their parents with access to machine-readable copies of their own education records. Through this initiative, providers of systems that store student data will add a “MyData” button that permits students to download their data to create a personal learning profile that they can keep with them throughout their learning career. This will encourage developers to create tools for students to use in conjunction with their MyData files, such as a personal learning data repository or customized [support services based on their data](#).

### **Next Generation Assessments**

As part of the grants to two consortia of states to develop the next generation of assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards, these consortia are required to develop open, interoperable standards for sharing and accessing assessment items and producing student data.

## **Common Educational Data Standards**

NCES has been working closely with key stakeholders in federal and state agencies and in non-profit and private entities to develop voluntary standards and guidelines to assist state educational agencies in developing statewide longitudinal data systems. Additional information is [available on ED.gov](http://www.ed.gov).

## ***Privacy Technical Assistance Center and Related Activities***

The Department established the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) in 2010 as a “one-stop” resource for education stakeholders to learn about data privacy, confidentiality, and security practices related to student-level longitudinal data systems and other uses of student data. PTAC provides timely information and updated guidance on privacy, confidentiality, and security practices through a variety of resources, including training materials and opportunities to receive direct assistance with privacy, security, and confidentiality of student data systems. In fiscal year 2013, PTAC conducted seven targeted technical assistance site visits, presented at four national conferences, convened four regional meetings for state and local education officials, and hosted 12 technical assistance webinars. Additionally, in fiscal year 2013 PTAC provided online FERPA training for over 1,900 individuals, and reported more than 8,500 unique visits to its technical assistance resource website. In February 2014, PTAC released the guidance document “Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services,” which has received a substantial and enthusiastic reception from the K-12 education community, and has prompted a renewed dialogue about best practices for schools and districts to follow when contracting with vendors for online educational services.

## ***Enabling More Web Publishing at ED.gov***

The Department’s web team has expanded the use [of WordPress minisites](http://www.ed.gov) to make it easier for initiatives and selected offices to publish with more flexibility and independence and in a timelier manner.

## ***Rehabilitation Services Administration ARRA Funding Guidance Assistance***

In April 2009, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services conducted a series of teleconferences and webinars for its grantees and stakeholders to explain the guidance and respond to questions relating to ARRA funding. Through the teleconferences and webinars, RSA staff provided information concerning the availability of the funds and the uses of the funds to meet the goals of the ARRA, and the timelines for the expenditure and liquidation of the funds.

RSA notified grantees about and encouraged grantees to participate in webinars sponsored by the Department and it also conducted its own webinars in April 2009 and September 2009. Through these additional webinars, RSA staff informed agencies and other grantees of the reporting requirements specific to their programs' ARRA funds and responded to questions

covering the various fund requirements. Information concerning the uses of ARRA funds, including information from these webinars, is available to the public through [Recovery.gov](http://Recovery.gov).

As of September 30, 2010, the Department of Education's entire \$97.4 billion in Recovery Act appropriation has been awarded.

### ***OpenEducation.IdeaScale.com***

This dialogue concluded in May 2010. An archived version of the forum is still available at [OpenEducation.IdeaScale.com](http://OpenEducation.IdeaScale.com).

### ***Employee Participation Through OpenED***

Building on the successes of the OpenED portal, the Department redesigned OpenED and released Idea Engine on January 31, 2011. Idea Engine is an in-house space to generate ideas and solutions, where the Department's staff is encouraged to identify creative ways to get results; moving the Department from problem-oriented to solution-oriented.

All Department employees can present their innovative ideas for changes that can be made at ED. Other employees can weigh in, present their reactions and views, and help evolve the idea. Employees can vote on ideas that have been put forward by colleagues. As ideas are proposed to ED's senior leaders, employees are able to track the progress of their ideas and check their status. Individual offices, working groups, and interdisciplinary teams can have their own online space for targeted discussions. Employees can participate in groups that apply to their areas of concern and contribute to focused conversations germane to their interests. Finally, senior staff can pose a question to the Department's community, and challenge all staff to present their best ideas and solutions.

Over 25 percent of Department employees are registered users of Idea Engine. Employees have submitted 269 ideas through Idea Engine and cast over 3,000 votes for various ideas. At this time, 25 ideas have been fully implemented, and another 25 are in the process of being implemented.

In fiscal year 2014, the Department issued a challenge to all Department employees to come up with BigIdeas as part of the first ED-Storm event. Employees submitted over 130 ideas in response to the challenge and cast over 600 votes for the BigIdeas.

## **L Improving Internal Processes**

### ***New Internal Improvement Processes for 2014***

The Department of Education reports its progress on [Open Data Policy](#) and [Digital Government Strategy](#) on ED.gov. Digital services, open data and technology have great potential to help accomplish the Department's mission. The Digital Government Strategy aligns with many of the



Department's digital projects and initiatives already underway and spurs us to refine our strategic and tactical coordination.

To spearhead the Department's response to the Digital Government Strategy, the Department assembled a team of core staff from:

- the Office of Communications and Outreach,
- the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and
- the Office of Planning and Education Policy Development.

The team collects input and feedback from:

- the Department's customers,
- the Office of Education Technology
- the office of Federal Student Aid,
- the Institute for Education Sciences,
- the principal offices,
- the Data Strategy Team,
- the Open Government Steering Committee, and
- senior leadership.

The Department's progress toward meeting the Digital Government Strategy Milestones will be reported at least quarterly through the OMB Integrated Data Call and at [Ed.gov/digitalstrategy](http://Ed.gov/digitalstrategy).

### Digital Governance

Guiding principles for the Department of Education's initiative to reinforce a governance structure for developing and delivering digital services and managing data are: (1) better serving the Department's customers, (2) sharing ideas, solutions, and best practices across the Department, (3) offering more cohesive processes for the delivery of digital services, (4) ensuring cost effective delivery of services, (5) ensuring digital services provide value, and (6) reducing redundancies across the Department. As a first phase, the scope of authority includes Department websites (particularly subdomain websites, contracted websites, and technical assistance websites), mobile applications, and data publishing.

The Department outlined a proposed governance model and will pursue formalizing it through a new internal policy directive and processes for proposing new digital services. In the new process, key criteria will include customer-focus, use of shared services and platforms, and consolidation of the [Department's Web presence](#).

### Open Data

The goal of the Education Data Initiative, launched in January 2012, is to make data available to improve educational outcomes, accelerate innovation, and create jobs in the public and private



sector, all while rigorously protecting learner privacy. As part of the initiative the Department has held a series of [Education Dataplooza](#) events highlighting innovators from the private, nonprofit, and academic sectors who have utilized freely available government data to build products, services, and apps that advance postsecondary education in creative and powerful ways. In 2014 the Department plans to participate in one of the [NYU Gov Lab Open Data 500](#) workshops to connect federal agency officials with the business community with an interest in open data. See more about [engaging with developers, entrepreneurs and the education technology community](#).

See the above section about [Ongoing Initiatives for Timely Publishing of Electronic Data](#), which includes descriptions of the Department's process for inventorying all datasets and including them in the new Department data inventory and on Data.gov. Find resources including descriptions of Department data initiatives, open data sets and links to application programming interfaces (APIs) for developers on [Ed.gov/data](#) and [Ed.gov/developer](#).

### **Proactive Disclosure**

See the above section in this document regarding the ED Disclosure Review Board.

### ***Data Strategy Team***

The Data Strategy Team (DST) was formed in 2010 and chartered in May, 2011 to address the issue of inconsistent and uncoordinated data strategies among the various principal offices (POCs) within the Department of Education. The DST is co-chaired by the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the Privacy, Information, and Records Management Services (PIRMS), and includes representatives from nearly all of the Department's principal offices in addition to OPEPD. The mission of the DST is to coordinate the Department's public-facing data initiatives, by building cohesiveness in internal processes and data policies and by improving transparency in all matters surrounding ED's collection and release of data.

The Data Strategy Team supports this mission by coordinating the Department's public-facing data initiatives, by building cohesiveness in internal processes and data policies, and by improving transparency in all matters surrounding ED's collection of data. Coordinating the work across principal offices results in better, more consistent information for the public and improves their understanding of and access to data. The Data Strategy Team will support States' use of education data through data websites and technical assistance to grantees. Specifically, the Data Strategy Team will find best practices for the use and promotion of data policy.

Working groups are the primary conduit through which the work of the Data Strategy Team is accomplished. The results of these workgroups have been and continue to be critical to the Department's open government successes. For example:

- The Data Release Workgroup designed a process to improve the way that principal offices release data and data-based reporting to the public while still balancing the need to protect privacy and confidentiality. The workgroup matured into the Disclosure Review Board. (See the above section in this document regarding the ED Disclosure Review Board.)
- The Data Inventory Workgroup undertook the challenging task of defining what “data” are across the very diverse principal offices at the Department and began cataloging data holdings, in compliance with OMB’s requirements and discussed in GAO’s draft report, *Status of the Department of Education’s Inventory of Its Data Collections*, ([GAO-13-596R](#)). Upon launching the Data Inventory, elaborated on elsewhere in this document, the workgroup will turn its efforts to assessing internal needs for Department staff to interact with, update, and use the Data Inventory.

The Data Strategy Team will continue to coordinate data initiatives and improve transparency through efforts across the Department.

### ***.Gov Web Reform***

[The .gov reform effort](#) is part of President Obama's Campaign to Cut Waste, identifying unnecessary websites that can be consolidated into other websites to reduce costs and improve the quality of service to the American public. The President signed Executive Order 13571, "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service," April 27, 2011, which requires federal agencies, including ED, to take specific steps to strengthen customer service, including how they deliver services and information on federal ".gov" websites.

The Department has responded to this call to action. In July 2011, the Department owned 34 .gov domains. By May 2014, the Department had consolidated to 16 .gov domains. All of ED’s domains maintain Domain Name System Security (DNSSEC) compliance and all .gov websites are Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) compliant.

To learn more about our Digital Government Strategy, Web Improvement and Customer Service Plans, visit <http://www.ed.gov/digitalstrategy> and <http://www.ed.gov/open>.

### ***Chief Privacy Officer***

ED’s Chief Privacy Officer (CPO), continues to be responsible for coordinating and directing a number of open government initiatives within the Department, including: serving as a co-chair of ED’s Data Strategy Team; overseeing the Department’s Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), records management, and information collections initiatives; overseeing outreach and technical assistance relating to publishing student data while protecting confidentiality through the Privacy Technical Assistance Center and the Department’s Disclosure Review Board; and coordinating the Department’s response to various open government directives

including those relating to statistical uses of administrative data and the establishment of a data inventory.

For more information, see:

- [Privacy at ED on ED.gov](#)
- [ED's Privacy Impact Assessments on ED.gov](#)
- [ED's Privacy Act System of Record Notice \(SORN\) Issuances on ED.gov](#)

### ***Public Notifications via ED.gov and Digital Tools***

The Department of Education notifies the public of important events and information updates via its website and other digital tools including social media. The Department participates in the General Service Administration's [Digital Analytics Program](#) and analyzes its Web traffic and Web search metrics on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis. On ED.gov, the Department has a customer satisfaction survey, which provides the agency with quantitative and qualitative feedback from customers. These two sources of customer feedback and conversations with stakeholders identify what does and doesn't work well on ED.gov from a navigation and ease of use perspective. The Department is working on a visual redesign of the primary website at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) to improve the customer experience by:

- (1) providing a cleaner, less cluttered appearance;
- (2) optimizing the site for customers on smart phones and tablets; and
- (3) removing some rarely used navigation and interface elements.

As a second phase to ED.gov enhancements, the Department plans to improve the site search experience by adopting use of [DigitalGovSearch](#), a service provided by the General Services Administration. As a third phase, the Department plans to introduce a newsroom part of ED.gov optimized for customers on mobile devices.

Below is a description of digital tools currently in use on ED.gov and social media networks.

*Electronic newsletters*—The Department has multiple periodic electronic newsletters that inform parents, teachers, education stakeholders, and other members of the public. These electronic newsletters are open to the public via the Department's opt-in policy, in which subscribers may stop delivery at any time. *ED Review*, *Teachers Edition*, *Education Innovator*, *IESNews*, *Research e-News*, *PreventionED*, and *OVAE Connection* are some of the currently available newsletters, and the Department will continue to create newsletters as new special topics are identified. Visit [GovDelivery.com](http://GovDelivery.com) for more information on the [Department's electronic newsletters](#).

*ED.gov Blog*—The ED.gov Homeroom blog is a primary tool for the Department of Education to publish and promote up-to-date information on agency and the Secretary's events and news headlines. In addition to publishing information, the blog also allows for inclusion of videos, opportunities for public commenting, and electronic subscription via Really Simple Syndication (RSS) features found in third-party blog reading software. [The Department has extended its blog tools to other offices within the Department.](#)

*Media releases*—Frequently throughout the day, the Department of Education releases newsworthy items via its electronic press room. This section of ED.gov features press releases, speeches, media advisories, and the Secretary's weekly schedule. The Department's [press room can be found on ED.gov.](#)

*Federal Register*—The Department of Education frequently publishes proposed and final regulations, announcements and other documents in the Federal Register maintained by the Government Printing Office. The Department updates its website to provide a listing of Federal Register notices as well as a search capability. The Department's [Federal Register page can be found on ED.gov.](#)

*Twitter*—Twitter is an online social network tool that sends status updates to subscribers. The Department uses Twitter daily to send important updates of Department activities. The main [Department Twitter](#) and [others are listed on ED.gov.](#)

*Facebook*—Facebook is another online social network tool that the Department uses to send updates to subscribers. Facebook is used daily to send important updates about the Department and the Secretary. The main [Department Facebook page](#) and [others are available on ED.gov.](#)

*YouTube*—YouTube is a video-sharing service that the Department uses to distribute audio and video clips. The Department's YouTube channel features taped stakeholder meetings, messages from senior officials, and other special topic features. To find the YouTube channel for the Department, go to <http://www.youtube.com/usedgov>.

*FedBizOpps.gov*—The Department posts synopses of proposed contract actions as well as contract solicitations on [FedBizOpps.gov](#), which is the single point on the Internet where vendors can access information needed to bid on government contracts. Vendors wishing to do business with the Department may view synopses and download solicitations that they are interested in bidding on.

### ***ED Records Management Program***

The Department of Education Records Management Program received a score of 90 from the National Archives for its fiscal year 2013 Records Management Self-Assessment. This score means that the Department is at low risk of mismanaging its records. The Department has several initiatives either under way or planned for meeting the requirements of the Managing

Government Records Directive, including an electronic records management system project. The Department submitted all reports required by the Directive for fiscal year 2013.

### ***Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Administration***

The Department maintains a centralized FOIA program that operates through its FOIA Service Center (FSC).

### **Improvement Initiatives**

FSC is making concrete steps to reduce FOIA backlogs by at least 10 percent annually and to improve timeliness in responding to requests, which include:

- 1) Partnering with the Department's Office of the General Council's (OGC) Division of Business and Administrative Law to provide customized FOIA Training to help Departmental offices improve their FOIA practices and better understand the legal requirements and implications of the FOIA.
- 2) Holding regular meetings between Department's FOIA coordinators and FSC to establish dialogue among those individuals, in an effort to more effectively troubleshoot problems and facilitate timely responses.
- 3) Working with the Department's components to ensure records are reviewed in light of the memoranda issued by the President and the Attorney General, and whether or not the release of documents would adversely affect the mission of the agency.

To accomplish its FOIA mission, FSC strives to ensure that the public has access to as much information as possible while protecting any confidential and sensitive information. As a practice, while reviewing material for potential release under FOIA, the Department considers discretionary releases as a distinct step in the review process when applying FOIA Exemptions which allow for discretionary releases.

Additionally, FSC will continue to work with the Department's principal offices to identify information material that can and should be released to the public through the electronic FOIA Library. For example, FSC in concert with Departmental components has identified types of documents that have been previously requested and is continuing to focus on proactively releasing these documents into the public domain through the public electronic FOIA Library under the hyperlink for "Frequently requested information" at the ED.gov [reading room](#) or other public sites.

During the past year, the FSC established a working group with all the principal offices that award grants. The working group reached an agreement that they would increase proactive disclosure and their efforts to post grant awards online whenever feasible. One example of grant documents that the Department is posting online is all Race to the Top grant awards. Another example is the Office of Innovation posting its Student Improvement Grant awards.

Additionally, the FSC is continuing to work with other principal offices to post examples of winning grant awards.

In keeping with the Department's Open Government initiatives, FSC will continue to focus on process improvement, achieving greater operational efficiency, and improving customer service. In an effort to identify problem areas and formulate solutions that will enhance customer service and reduce response time to FOIA requests, FSC reviewed its FOIA policies and procedures. FSC's review of its existing FOIA Directive determined that this document needed to be updated. FSC is also developing standard operating procedures to include FOIA processing steps that will accurately reflect what the agency's obligations are under 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended. FSC plans to have this document completed by the end of fiscal year 2014.

### **Training**

FSC, in cooperation with OGC, provides technical advice, training, and related assistance to agency program office personnel with responsibility for FOIA administration to ensure a presumption of openness is applied to all decisions involving the FOIA.

### **Technology**

As an added effort to capture and improve timeliness in responding to requests, FSC deploys routine software upgrades in its electronic Freedom of Information Act case management tracking system (FOIAXpress). FSC is working on improving the Department's electronic FOIA Library and several technology-related initiatives to improve our electronic case management system for tracking requests.

Information about the Department's FOIA program (e.g., policy documents, annual reports, contact information, FSC organizational chart, etc.) is [accessible online](#).

### ***Congressional Requests for Information***

The Department's Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs (OLCA) primarily acts as the liaison between the Department and Congress, coordinating all Department matters relevant to Congress. OLCA has a leadership role in planning, developing, and implementing the Department's legislative goals and strategies; notifying Congressional offices of grant awards and Department initiatives; addressing appropriations and budget matters; and monitoring the status of legislative proposals.

OLCA's organizational structure consists of political leadership who work to effectively communicate the Administration's position on education issues, career staff for policy that advise on legislation, and Congressional affairs staff that aid in resolving constituent concerns.



OLCA also works with employees throughout the Department to respond to written and oral inquiries from individual members of Congress, prepare for legislative hearings, and facilitate meetings between members of Congress and Department senior officials.

OLCA receives and tracks inquiries through the Department's correspondence control system. Each Congressional inquiry is assigned to the appropriate principal office within the Department for response. The Department typically provides responses between two and six weeks, depending on the complexity of the inquiry.

OLCA is in daily contact with members of Congress and their staff. This interaction ensures that the initiatives of Congress and the Department are achieved. To ensure appropriate coordination on Congressional matters, please remember to refer all Congressional inquiries to OLCA for appropriate coordination and response. A list of [OLCA staff can be found on ED.gov](#).

Congressional members can contact OLCA through its main telephone line at 202-401-0020. Correspondence can be mailed to 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-3100.

### ***Whistleblower Protections***

The Department is well along with meeting the requirements of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel 2302 Certification Program. The Department's OIG Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman (WPO) was established in 2012 and, to date, several other activities have been completed to address the requirements of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act. The Department's Ombudsman led the effort in coordination with other appropriate offices to communicate, train, and provide resources regarding the rights and protections against retaliation to all Department employees. Accomplishments to date include all-employee communications about WPEA using both email and internal website postings. Detailed information and [links to resources](#) are available on the Department's website.

All new employees are provided the pamphlet "Know your Rights When Reporting Wrongs" as part of the New Employee Orientation. Additionally, all new employees are required to complete the NO FEAR training within 90 days (all employees must complete the same training biennially), which includes a module on whistleblower protection, rights, and responsibilities. New supervisors are instructed on whistleblower protections, merit system principles, and prohibited personnel practices as part of their required Human Capital Essentials training and all supervisors receive similar information as part of Essentials of Supervision training. Human resources professionals in the Department received training from the Office of Special Counsel in May 2014 on Merit Systems Principles, Prohibited Personnel Practices, and Whistleblower Protection. In addition, training is provided to the Department's principal offices when requested.

Planned activities include completing the posting of Whistleblower Protection Act information in all Department facilities, annual communication to all employees to refresh their awareness of Whistleblower Protection rights and protections, development of an online, on-demand



training module that will be available to all employees, and enhanced use of Departmental internal communication venues, such as the weekly notice of priority information using ED Notebook and information through the Department's intranet.

The Department's [NO FEAR ACT reports](#) are posted quarterly on ED.gov.

### ***Department Roadmap for Incorporating Principles of Openness into Core Agency Missions***

The Department of Education has made significant headway incorporating the principles of openness – transparency, collaboration and participation – into the Department's core missions and goals. Our commitment to increased transparency and open data are woven throughout our fiscal years 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. In October 2014 we shared a draft of our fiscal years 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and [asked for public comments](#) on Homeroom blog and via email. These comments informed and shaped revisions for the final version of the [fiscal years 2014-2018 Strategic Plan](#), which is available on ED.gov.

### **Using Evidence and Data to Drive Improvements in Education**

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

To guide our efforts, the Department has committed to goals and objectives in six areas during this next phase of the agency's work:

- **Early Learning**  
Improving the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through third grade, so that all children, particularly those with high needs, are on track for graduating from high school college- and career-ready.
- **Elementary and Secondary Education**  
Continuing to 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.
- **Postsecondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Adult Education**  
Increasing college access, affordability, quality, and completion by improving postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults.
- **Equity**  
Increasing educational opportunities for and reducing discrimination against underserved students so that all students are well-positioned to succeed.

- **Continuous Improvement of the U.S. Education System**  
Enhancing the education system's ability to continuously improve through better and more widespread use of data, research and evaluation, evidence, transparency, innovation, and technology.
- **U.S. Department of Education Capacity**  
Improving the organizational capacities of the Department to implement this strategic plan.

### Performance Plan, Targets and Reporting

The Department has identified performance measures centered on desired outcomes for each of the six strategic goals established by the fiscal years 2011–14 Strategic Plan and carried forward in the fiscal years 2014–18 Strategic Plan. Each goal section provides insight into how the Department will work to achieve its strategic goals, including key resources and programs that support each goal and its objectives.

See Performance Targets related to openness and open data in the Department's [Performance Plan Summary for 2013-2015](#) (a summary table appears on pages 22-26) – particularly the following goals, sub-goals, metrics and key strategies:

- Goal 4. Equity: Increase educational opportunities for underserved students and reduce discrimination so that all students are well-positioned to succeed.
  - Objective/Sub-goal 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.
    - Measure 4.1.A: National high school graduation rate
  - Objective/Sub-goal 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
    - Measure 4.2.A: Percentage of proactive civil rights investigations launched annually that address areas of concentration in civil rights enforcement
    - Measure 4.2.B: Percentage of proactive civil rights investigations resolved annually that address areas of concentration in civil rights enforcement
  - Key Strategy to Achieve Goal 4: The Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) will continue to use a variety of tools to ensure compliance with federal civil rights laws, including 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 inter-agency work groups to share expertise and best

practices.

- 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.
  - Objective/Sub-goal 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.
    - Measure 5.1.A: Number of public data sets included in ED Data Inventory and thus linked to Data.gov or ED.gov websites
    - Measure 5.1.B: Number of states linking K–12 and postsecondary data with workforce data
    - Measure 5.1.C: Number of states linking K–12 with early childhood data
  - Key Strategy to Achieve Goal 5: The Department will continue to assist states in developing longitudinal data systems capable of sharing key data elements across the education continuum from early learning to the workforce. Through these systems, for example, secondary schools can know how many of their students are enrolled in a postsecondary program, how many required remediation before actual courses for credit could be taken, and how many students continue in postsecondary education and obtain a postsecondary degree or credential.

To support the tracking and reporting of progress against the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives, the Department has created and continues to develop its [data profile on Performance.gov](#). It is also creating a set of information dashboards and data analysis tools to provide more relevance and context for senior leaders in gauging the impact of the Department's performance as a part of its ongoing strategic decision-making. All agency annual reports, including performance reports, are available on ED.gov under [Performance and Accountability](#).

## V CONCLUSION

At the Department, transparency, participation, and collaboration are vital to the success of the mission to improve the quality and accessibility of education in the United States. These are goals in and of themselves, inasmuch as the Department understands clearly that its stakeholders deserve an education agency that serves the people as efficiently, openly, honestly, and collaboratively as possible.

In writing and updating this plan, the Department has addressed the requirements of the President and his staff for developing the Department's Open Government Plan. While doing this, the Department has uncovered limitations to existing transparency, participation, and collaboration work. Some of these limitations arise from internal processes (e.g., challenges in data management and technology processes); others are not (e.g., privacy regulations and laws that limit how much data can be shared). These limitations represent challenges to the process of governing, and the Department is now, thanks to the process initiated by the Open Government Directive, fully engaged and committed to resolving these limitations wherever the law allows, and clarifying the limitations where it does not

Transparency, participation, and collaboration are the keys to ensuring that the Department can continuously serve the public better. Applying them as values to its business of supporting the education community will enable the Department to institutionalize transparency, participation, and collaboration; in effect, the Department will write these values on the "DNA" of its institutional culture, memory, and knowledge. By doing this, the Department believes it will be continuing to transform the Department to meet the requirements of the President and the needs of the people.

The Department looks forward to the public's feedback on how to improve this Open Government Plan. The plan is still developing, and it will be improved significantly by the public's suggestions. To provide comments, please visit the [open government initiative website](#) or send an e-mail to [opengov@ed.gov](mailto:opengov@ed.gov). The Department also welcomes specific questions, and will do its best to respond as quickly and thoughtfully as possible. The Department looks forward to taking additional steps to enhance transparency, participation and collaboration with public input and support, and intends to take the public's comments into account when updating this plan.





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