

OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

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Message From Deputy Secretary Miller

June 25, 2010

President Obama is committed to the principles of open government: transparency, participation, and collaboration. On his first day in office, the President sent a memo directing all federal agencies to create unprecedented levels of openness in government. The team at the U.S. Department of Education took it to heart.

We are committed to unprecedented transparency as we administer the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. We posted on the Department's website all the applications we received from States under the *Recovery Act's* State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, as well as detailed reports on jobs saved.

For Race to the Top, the State education reform program, we provided a detailed description of the process we would use to review and select the winners. For the first round, we posted reviewers' scores and comments so that everyone could see and learn from reviewers' work, and we will do the same for the second round.

A year ago, as we began preparing for the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, members of the senior staff and the Secretary visited all 50 States on a listening and learning tour to hear Americans' ideas about *No Child Left Behind* and education reform. We also invited people to share their ideas on the Web.

In March, we posted our draft *National Education Technology Plan* on the Department's website. We invited people to share their comments, videos, and examples of how technology is changing and improving education.

To help spur innovation, our Investing in Innovation team created an innovation portal—a website where education innovators can share ideas and collaborate, where funders and educators can point out needs, and where people can gather to propose, develop, fund, implement, and improve education solutions in and outside of the classroom.

We also posted on the Web names of political appointees working at the Department. We encouraged Department employees to offer their ideas on how to make our work more effective and efficient.

These are just a few of the ways the Department of Education is committed to open government.



We have plans to extend transparency to other areas. Our goal is to make transparency, public participation, and collaboration with partners “the way we do things” across Department programs and throughout our organization.

Right now, by releasing more data than ever before, we are supplying parents and students with vital information to empower them to make the best decisions about their education. We invite teachers, administrators, local and State officials, parents, and students to participate in our decision-making and hold us accountable. When we collaborate with the American people, we increase opportunities to identify novel and imaginative ways to meet the President’s goal that, by 2020, the United States once again will lead the world in college completion.

We will be shining a light on data and information that show where we are as a nation and what we must do to reach the President’s goal. We will be encouraging States, communities, and schools to do likewise so that all education stakeholders—educators, parents, students, and the public—have the information they need to make good decisions for children.

We look forward to hearing from you and from all others who have a stake in education about what we can do to improve this plan.

Anthony W. Miller



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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.

Open government is now vital to effectively communicating and interacting with the general public, students, parents, teachers, and all constituencies engaged in public education. It is also about changing the way the Department of Education operates and its internal culture. This document represents a 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 good ideas to share.

Open government practices became a priority at the Department of Education in 2009, with the confirmation of Secretary Arne Duncan on Jan. 20, and the issuance of the President's open government directive, *Transparency and Open Government*, on Jan. 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 year of the administration and serve as the foundation for this plan. From that work, the Department has developed a set of open government goals that will align and will 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 into Department operations.
- Goal 3: Increase collaboration and communication with other organizations.
- Goal 4: Create a culture of openness within the Department.



Examples of key existing and planned Department activities aligned with these goals include the following:

- **Financial Transparency of ED programs funded under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act***

On Feb. 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (*Recovery Act* or *ARRA*). As of March 31, 2010, over \$75 billion in ED *Recovery Act* funds had been awarded. This has placed enormous responsibility on the Department to ensure not only that we are transparent with our accounting of these funds, but also that the States receiving these grants account accurately and fully to the American people on how the funds are used ([Department of Education information related to the economic Recovery Act of 2009](#)). The Department has responded to this responsibility by greatly improving transparency and accountability regarding State financial management of the Department's funding.

- **Listening and Learning Tour**

In May 2009, Secretary Arne Duncan launched his Listening and Learning Tour ([Education Secretary Launches National Discussion on Education Reform](#)) to engage the public directly in discussing education reform in America. The Department used the input we received from this nearly yearlong dialogue led by the Secretary and senior staff in meetings across America in preparing the comprehensive Blueprint for reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* ([A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)).

- **Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation Programs**

Both the Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation (i3) programs are funded under the *Recovery Act*. These two competitive grant programs support this administration's belief that the best ideas do not have to come from Washington, but that Washington can help to support the best ideas. Race to the Top provides incentives to States to implement large-scale, system-changing reforms that are designed to improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase graduation and college enrollment rates. The Department, in implementing Race to the Top, has demonstrated unprecedented transparency, by posting all applications as well as peer reviewer scores and comments for all to see on our website at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/index.html>.

The i3 program will provide support to develop path-breaking new ideas, validate approaches that have demonstrated promise, and help scale up our nation's most successful and proven education innovations. To further support innovation, the Office of Innovation and Improvement has launched the Open Innovation Portal, a



public forum for all who wish to participate in creating opportunities for partnerships and local private and public funding. This Web portal connects grant applicants, stakeholders, funders, and other participants to cultivate innovative ideas related to education.

- **College.gov**

College.gov ([college, education, and financial aid info](#)) is a community site sponsored by the Department's Federal Student Aid (FSA) office. The site is maintained for students, their families, teachers, and counselors. It is a gateway to resources ranging from student aid applications to career counseling. This model connects with stakeholders in social communities and helps to leverage social media capabilities to support both temporary workgroups and permanent professional groups, e.g., teachers.

- **Flagship Initiatives**

ED Data Express

ED Data Express is a website designed to improve the public's ability to access and explore high-value, State-level data collected by the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). ED Data Express helps parents learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the schools in their community. It helps teachers learn about which instructional methods meet the needs of their students. It helps school administrators and policy-makers learn about which programs are most effective in improving outcomes for students. And it helps researchers gain access to information to help determine what works and what does not.

Open Innovation Portal

Funding for innovation and research and development in education doesn't come from just government; philanthropists, venture capitalists, and other private-sector organizations are also highly engaged in this work. The Department has recognized that, in addition to funding innovative work, it can play the role of catalyst and broker for innovation. By using its public voice, it can help innovators and funders find each other and make connections that can lead to more innovative projects being undertaken as well as increased capital formation in the education sector. This is the role of the Open Innovation Portal—to serve as a catalyst and broker of innovation.

Open Government Steering Committee



The Open Government Steering Committee at the Department is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Department's Open Government Plan. In light of this responsibility, the committee needs to be forward thinking in regard to openness in government, potentially serving as a testing ground, model, and innovator in open government work.

The committee plans to undertake two projects initially to embark on this mission. It will investigate how to run internal meetings to achieve more engagement with the public. It will also develop a public openness policy document, modeled after online privacy policies, that will describe how and where openness works in the Department, including providing information on how public comments are used in decision-making and for other purposes.

- **Strategic Action Plan for Transparency**

The Department's *Strategic Action Plan for Transparency* summarizes the electronic data that the Department publishes, including electronic data available at Data.gov, USASpending.gov, and Recovery.gov as well as data made available by FSA and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Much of the data collected by the Department is housed in *EDFacts*, 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 strategic plan will focus on ways to increase the amount of data shared with the public from *EDFacts*.

- **Public Participation**

The Department encourages public participation using Web-based collaboration tools. We will continue to use Web-based tools available at ED.gov and other third-party offerings to engage the public in a discussion on education topics. As part of the development of the Department's Open Government Plan, in February and March 2010, the Department, along with other federal agencies, used [IdeaScale](#), an online discussion tool, to gather public feedback. During that period, the public contributed 114 ideas and 200 comments. The Department reviewed this feedback and has taken it into consideration in formulating its Open Government Plan.

- **Enhancing the Department's Website**



The Department of Education's website is in the process of deploying a robust Web 2.0 platform, making it easier to engage the public using collaboration capabilities. The platform's modular architecture adds the capability to allow public commenting on Web pages, voting on content items, discussion forums, and more. The Department uses a mixture of these tools to communicate with the public. The new platform will also make it easier for various groups within the Department to publish their work and engage with the public directly.

- **OpenED**

Internally, Department employees can participate and collaborate online using the OpenED portal, which has been operating since 2009. Over 25 percent of employees have logged on to the OpenED Forum, accumulating a total of 8,519 visits to the site from its inception to March 2010. OpenED has a robust governance structure ensuring that all input is reviewed and considered in senior leadership decision-making.

The first year-and-a-half of this administration has laid a strong foundation for an open Department built solidly on the foundations of transparency, participation, and collaboration. In the coming months, the Department will build upon this foundation to address the sustainability of openness by (1) institutionalizing open government practices with standards and procedures to ensure that these principles are adopted across the agency; (2) ensuring that our Open Government Plan continues to be aligned with the Department's mission as our strategic plan evolves and as we work with Congress to reauthorize the *ESEA*; and (3) continuing to investigate, innovate, and experiment with open government practices so as to find solutions and processes that work effectively. With this Open Government Plan, the Department will strive to give the American people a transparent, participatory, and collaborative Department that works for *and with* the public to improve education in this nation.



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. Also important, this plan expresses the values that are held by the Secretary and this Department concerning the role of 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 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 in decision-making.



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.

The Department has already begun and will continue to develop and implement activities that use these goals for producing higher-quality outcomes in more open and inclusive ways. Examples include:

Secretary Duncan and senior staff visited all 50 States on a [Listening and Learning Tour](#). During this tour, parents, teachers, students, and the general public heard and shared information about the *No Child Left Behind Act* and new education reform. The Department deployed social media tools to enable the public to [join the discussion online](#). This online discussion remains open, and the Department continues to review all feedback and ensure these tools are available for future reform activities. (Objectives 2.1 and 2.3)

The Department implemented a series of forums with stakeholders, such as representatives of schools, organizations, and State and local governments, to increase participation in discussions on topics such as the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, *Race to the Top*, and the administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 budget request. Transcripts and videos of the meetings are posted on the Web for those who are unable to attend. (Objectives 1.4, 2.1, 2.3, and 3.1)

The Department launched the [Federal Student Aid Data Center](#) to provide a centralized source of information and data about the operation of federal financial assistance programs. (Objectives 1.2 and 2.2)

The Department posted spending and activity [reports](#), information about [technical assistance](#), staff contacts with [lobbyists](#), and [more](#) regarding the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. (Objectives 1.2, 1.4 and 2.2)

Every recent session of the [Federal Student Aid Conference](#) was videotaped and posted on the Web. Future sessions will also be recorded and posted. The Department is implementing innovative solutions to capture, store, and distribute extensive video content going forward, increasing opportunities for collaboration with the public. (Objective 1.5)



Names of [political appointees](#) and biographies of [senior leaders](#) are easily accessible from the ED.gov home page. We will continue this level of easy access to information about key Department leaders. (Objective 1.5)

In February 2009, Secretary Duncan established the OpenED project to help identify cost savings and improvements across the agency. OpenED is a Department-wide employee idea-capture-and-collaboration project that allows employees to engage in ongoing, productive discussions about ways to enhance the work of the Department. It draws upon the institutional knowledge and creativity of all Department employees to improve programs and Department operations. The Department will continue to leverage this tool to increase transparency among internal stakeholders. (Objectives 4.1 and 4.2)



II. Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration in Programs

A. *Race to the Top–Game-Changing Reforms*

Aligned to goals:

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

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

2.1: Provide more insight into the agency’s decision-making process.

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.

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

The Race to the Top program, a \$4.35 billion fund created under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)*, is the largest competitive education grant program in U.S. history, warranting unprecedented transparency and participation to ensure the best possible results. The \$4 billion for the Race to the Top State competition is designed to provide incentives to States to implement large-scale, system-changing reforms that improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, and increase graduation and college enrollment rates.

From the beginning, the Department has made it a priority to conduct the historic Race to the Top competition with the utmost transparency, participation, and collaboration. When the Department issued the original criteria for the competition, the Department could have waived the requirement to solicit comments from the public because it was the first competition under the program, but the Department decided instead to take public comment, believing that input from stakeholders across the country would strengthen the program.

The notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria (NPP), published in July 2009, prompted an outpouring of public comments. Over 1,160 commenters submitted thousands of unique comments, ranging from one paragraph to 67 pages. Parents submitted comments, as did professional associations. Scores of public officials and educators, governors, chief State school officers, teachers, and principals



weighed in with suggestions and critiques. Individuals from all 50 States and the District of Columbia, including over 550 individuals and 200 organizations, commented on the notice. The extensive and thoughtful public commentary on the NPP was invaluable in helping the Department revise, improve, and clarify the priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria for the Race to the Top program.

When we published the final application in November 2009, we included—in addition to the criteria—the detailed scoring rubric that we had decided to give RTT reviewers to help them judge the extent to which applications met the selection criteria.¹ The purpose was to be absolutely transparent with the public and with applicants about how the peer reviewers would judge applications for this historic competition.

In an effort to help States understand the application, we hosted two technical assistance planning workshops before the Phase 1 deadline, in Denver, Colorado, and Baltimore, Maryland, and one workshop before the Phase 2 deadline, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At the Phase 2 workshop, representatives from Delaware and Tennessee, the Phase 1 winners, discussed their plans and laws, talked about their approaches to building statewide collaboration, and answered questions from other States. All the workshops were open to the public, and the Baltimore and Minneapolis workshops included a conference call to facilitate attendance for interested parties who otherwise could not participate. A total of 216 participants attended the two Phase 1 workshops, including participants from 49 States and the District of Columbia, and 131 participants attended the Phase 2 workshop, including participants from 40 States and the District of Columbia. As part of this effort, and to further promote transparency, we posted on our website the slides and transcripts from the workshops, as well as evaluations from attendees. This information is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/technical-assistance.html>.

We also formed a cross-functional team within the Department that met regularly to respond to the many questions sent to our e-mail inbox or left on the dedicated phone line that the Department established for Race to the Top. Since November 2009, we have received over 1,000 inquiries. Based on

¹ The scoring rubric can be found starting on page 75 of the application, which is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/application.doc>



the questions we received from the public, we made frequent updates to our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.²

When we issued the original notices, we committed to publishing every State's application—together with the final scores each received and the transcript and/or video of each finalist's presentation—on our website at the conclusion of each phase of the competition.³ After we received the Phase 1 applications, there was tremendous public interest in the applications, and so we decided to publish them even earlier. After we announced the Phase 1 awards, we published all reviewer's scores and comments (without the reviewers' names), as well as the videos of the finalists' presentations. We will do the same for Phase 2. This information is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/index.html>.

We have conducted the peer review process with as much public transparency as is appropriate given the competitive nature of the grant process. This began when the Secretary issued an [open call for reviewers](#); in response, we received about 1,500 nominations and applications. We have also published our reviewer training materials, the evaluation of the training by reviewers, a detailed description of how the reviewers were selected, a summary of the application review process for the public, and, at the conclusion of Phase 1, the reviewers' names and biographical information. This information is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/application-review.html>.

It is worth noting that the Race to the Top selection criteria themselves also have a substantial focus on transparency (e.g., the criteria in Section C, Data Systems to Support Instruction, and criterion (D)(4), which rewards States for plans to publicly report data on teacher and principal credentialing programs) and on collaboration (e.g., criterion (A)(1), which encourages collaboration between school districts and the State, and criterion (A)(2), which rewards States for achieving broad stakeholder support). The full Race to the Top criteria are available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

² For ease of use, those addenda and the original document have been incorporated into one document. See <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/faq.html>

³ The deadline for Phase 1 of Race to the Top was Jan. 19, 2010, with awards announced March 29, 2010. States that did not receive funding, or that did not apply in the first phase, could apply for funding in Phase 2, with applications due by June 1, 2010.



Finally, as the Department embarks on providing an unprecedented level of flexible, collaborative technical assistance for grantees, we will continue to work not only to support our grantees but also to share their lessons nationwide.

Open Licensing Requirements

As part of their grants, States are required to make any work developed with the funds freely available to others. States may do this by posting their work on a website that we identify (unless the work is otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information).

Forty States and the District of Columbia answered the challenge in Phase I. With their leadership, stakeholders in their States sat down together, looked hard at what is and is not working in education, and developed bold and creative reform plans that give us great hope for the future of America.

On March 4, 2010, we announced that 16 applicants advanced as finalists:

Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

On March 29, the Department announced that Delaware and Tennessee were the winners in Phase 1 of the Race to the Top competition.

Find the complete applications, scores, and reviewers' comments for all applicants in their entirety online at [Resources - Race to the Top Fund](#).

B. *Race to the Top Assessment Program*

Aligned to goals:

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

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.

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



The Race to the Top Assessment Program is a \$350 million grant competition designed to fill an urgent need in the nation's educational system. It seeks to provide valid and instructionally useful assessments that provide accurate information about what students know and can do. These assessments will be anchored in standards designed to enable every student to gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college or the workplace by the time he or she graduates from high school.

These grants will support the work of a consortium of States that develop and implement common, high-quality assessments aligned with common college- and career-ready K–12 standards. The use of common assessments based on common standards will promote a culture of higher expectations as well as collaboration on best practices. States will use these assessment systems to expand instructional practice and support continuous improvement that meaningfully improves school and educator effectiveness and enhances program impact.

Transparency and Public Input

To ensure that this program makes the most effective use of funds, the Department held 10 public meetings to accept input from experts and other stakeholders. At these meetings, held between November 2009 and January 2010, 42 invited assessment experts joined representatives from 37 State education agencies and nearly 1,000 members of the public for over 50 hours of public and expert contribution on critical questions about assessment and assessment design. Additionally, the Department solicited written input and received over 200 comments.

All written input as well as the materials presented at the public input meetings and transcripts are available on the Race to the Top Assessment Program's website at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html>.

Notice Inviting Applications

On April 9, 2010, the Department published the final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria for the Race to the Top Assessment competition. These materials, as well as the application and answers to frequently asked questions, are all posted on our website and accessible to the public at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment>.



To assist prospective applicants in preparing an application and to respond to questions, the Department hosted a Technical Assistance Meeting on April 22, 2010, and hosted a number of conference calls in which prospective applicants could ask questions of the Department's program team. For those unable to attend, transcripts of all these events were made available on the Race to the Top Assessment program website at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment>.

As with the Race to the Top State competition, all applications—both successful and unsuccessful—as well as reviewers' comments and scores will be posted.

Open Licensing Requirements

As part of their grants, States are required to make any work developed with the funds freely available to others. States may do this by posting their work on a website that we identify (unless the work is otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information).

C. *The Listening and Learning Tour—Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization*

Aligned to goals:

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.

This past year Secretary Duncan and senior staff visited all 50 States on a [Listening and Learning Tour](#) to hear from parents, students, and the general public about the *No Child Left Behind Act* and education reform. Americans were invited to [join the discussion online](#).

The staff took the lessons they learned from across America and included them in the [Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#).

This Blueprint for revising the *ESEA* asks States to adopt college- and career-ready standards, and rewards schools for producing dramatic gains in student achievement. The proposal challenges the nation to embrace educational standards that would put America on a path to global leadership.



The Blueprint provides incentives for States to adopt academic standards that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to create accountability systems that measure student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate and succeed in college.

D. Investing in Innovation (i3)

Aligned to goals:

- 1.4: Increase the transparency of the grant application and award process.*
- 1.5: Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs.*
- 1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.*
- 2.1: Provide more insight into the agency's decision-making process.*
- 2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.*
- 3.1: Enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities.*

i3 is an innovative grant fund established as part of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)*. It provides support to local education agencies (LEAs), and nonprofit organizations in partnership with (a) one or more LEAs or (b) a consortium of schools.

Applicants must address one of the four areas that are driving the Obama administration's school reform agenda:

- Supporting effective teachers and principals;
- Improving the use of data to accelerate student achievement;
- Complementing the implementation of standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and careers; and
- Turning around persistently low-performing schools.

Unlike many other federal grant programs where evidence is just a selection criterion, in the i3 program, evidence is both a selection criterion and an eligibility requirement. The i3 regulations also include specific definitions for what constitutes strong evidence and moderate evidence and will award three types of grants based on these levels of evidence. *Validation grants* will require moderate evidence and will be aimed at validating and spreading promising programs on a State or regional scale, and the *Scale Up grants* will require strong evidence and will be aimed at bringing proven programs to national, regional or State scale. *Development grants* will require a



reasonable hypothesis and will support development of high-potential and relatively untested practices, strategies, or programs. The Department expects to make Development grants of up to \$5 million each; Validation grants of up to \$30 million each; and Scale Up grants of up to \$50 million each. Complete information on the i3 program can be found at the [Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)](#) website.

In keeping with the innovative nature of this program, i3 has modeled transparency principles throughout its development. The Department published the notice of proposed priorities (NPP) to obtain public comment (though it could have waived this requirement because this is the first competition under this program), hosted webinars following the NPP publication to answer questions, and, after publishing the notice of final priorities, held pre-application meetings in three cities (Denver, Baltimore, and Atlanta) to further engage the public in the competition. These sessions were also made available via webinar. Approximately 1,000 people attended the meetings, with an additional 2,000 participants via webinar.

The Department has applied transparency principles to the peer review process. An open call was made for peer reviewers, including visible posting on ED.gov, and approximately 1,000 applications were received for peer reviewer positions.

To further support innovation, the Office of Innovation and Improvement has launched the Open Innovation Portal, a public forum for all who wish to participate in creating opportunities for partnership and local private and public funding. See below in the Flagship initiatives for more detail on the Open Innovation Portal.

E. *Draft National Education Technology Plan*

Aligned to goals:

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger education community.

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.

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



On March 3, 2010, the Department released a draft of the National Educational Technology Plan, *Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology*.

This plan was prepared for the Office of Educational Technology by leading researchers and practitioners. It represents their best ideas about how we can advance the teaching and learning capabilities of our 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.

In keeping with the Open Government Initiative, the Department has published the draft of the plan on the Department's website at [National Education Technology Plan 2010](#). The public has been invited to review it, comment on it, and provide examples of research and practice associated with it. The Department welcomes 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.

You can find Secretary Duncan's complete remarks at [Using Technology to Transform Schools--Remarks by Secretary Arne Duncan at the Association of American Publishers Annual Meeting](#).

F. *Financial Transparency of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)*

Aligned to goals:

- 1.2: Make more data and information available to the public.*
- 1.4: Increase the transparency of the grant application and award process.*
- 2.2: Provide regularly updated project maps, dated milestones, and financial data regarding open government and other key initiatives.*

Historically, the federal government accounts for only 9 percent of total U.S. spending annually on public education, with State and local governments providing the remaining 91 percent of funding, and States maintaining primary authority over education spending. As a result of the 2008 recession, however, State and local governments faced severe revenue shortfalls, limiting their ability to fund education at previous levels given balanced-budget restrictions. The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*



of 2009 (ARRA) created the one-time \$48.6 billion State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) to address this crisis. Both ARRA and the Department demand accountability and transparency regarding this massive infusion of federal funds into the public education system. For example, the Department posted all SFSF applications and amendments to ensure stakeholders are informed about a State's use of the program funds. The Department intends to build on this practice to create a new level of transparency regarding State education spending on an on-going basis.

First, the Department is shining an unprecedented spotlight on the flow of SFSF funds at both the State and program levels. All SFSF agencies are required to submit weekly spending updates by program to Recovery.gov. The Department of Education has gone above and beyond this requirement by aggregating these data into formats more meaningful to education stakeholders. Weekly reports of obligations and outlays for each State by program, and for each program by State, are posted at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/reports.html>

Second, the Department is providing unprecedented transparency with regard to the education funding requirement that States use federal funding to maintain overall support rather than allowing funds to be shifted elsewhere (Maintenance of Effort or MOE). For SFSF, each State must assure that it will provide, for each of fiscal years (FYs) 2009 through 2011, at least the levels of support for elementary and secondary education and for public institutions of higher education as it provided for FY 2006. If a State is unable to maintain the required levels of support for education, it may apply for and obtain a waiver of the MOE requirements if it is able to demonstrate that it has not reduced the percentage of total State revenues spent on education. Examples of how the MOE compliance effort ensures transparency include:

- All SFSF applications and amendments are posted at:
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/resources.html>
- Requests for MOE waivers and status of the waiver applications are posted at:
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/applicant.html>
- All SFSF Guidance and Monitoring Plans are posted at:
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/statestabilization/applicant.html>



Finally, *ARRA* provided a new level of transparency into the spending of federal funds at a granular level via the required Section 1512 Quarterly Reporting by recipients regarding *ARRA* awards, spending, and job creation. These data are compiled and posted by the Recovery, Accountability, and Transparency Board on Recovery.gov. To serve the financial transparency needs of education stakeholders, however, the Department aggregates these data at the State level by program and the program level by State. The posted data include the detailed jobs narratives provided by each State on jobs created with SFSF funds, allowing an unprecedented window into the use of funds by State and by program. The Department's Section 1512 reports are posted at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/spending/impact2.html>

The Department intends to build on these SFSF/*ARRA* practices to enhance the transparency of all of its *ARRA* and ongoing grant programs at the State level.

G. *Federal Student Aid (FSA) College.gov*

Aligned to goals:

- 1.5: Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs.*
- 2.1: Provide more insight into the agency's decision-making process.*
- 2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.*

College.gov conveys the Department's strong belief that postsecondary education is an achievable goal for anyone, regardless of income, ethnicity, age, or gender. With students' input and participation, College.gov was created for high school students and their families as a comprehensive online resource with help features and other tools they need to start the process that leads to college attendance. College.gov seeks to build an online community that fosters hope for getting to college, highlights the opportunity of education beyond high school, and empowers users with clearly defined resources to reach their college dreams.

The College.gov team has worked to bring transparency, participation, and collaboration to this online experience. Before beginning work on the project, a "listening tour" was held to gauge the needs of the public. Students and families from across the country revealed that they needed answers to the most basic questions on attaining education beyond high school.



Students said they wanted to hear from and be inspired by others like them. Through focus groups and usability testing, the target audience's voice is continuously heard on matters of site design, content, and features. We consider user feedback extremely valuable. Every user-submitted suggestion is logged, discussed by the team, and then considered during the change management process. A short survey on the site allows the team to monitor satisfaction levels, and these responses always trend favorable. All survey data and site metrics are documented and analyzed each month to identify areas for improvement.

Site features that encourage participation include:

"I'm Going" Billboards

College.gov allows users to submit their inspirational messages and pictures, or "billboards," that are posted on the home page to remind them that this site is for students and by students. Users can then e-mail their billboards to friends and family or embed their billboards into their own sites or blogs. All users are able to browse through student-made "I'm going" billboards on the home page, that creates a sense of unity and joint purpose.

Student Videos

College.gov features inspirational videos and profiles of current college students and their parents, describing the paths they took to get to college, despite the obstacles they faced. This feature demonstrates that the dream of going to college is possible.

Facebook Presence

Building a community on Facebook allows students to share College.gov in an easy way that connects with their peers. The fan base is growing, with almost 13,000 followers. They receive biweekly wall posts on new features, relevant content, and interesting links.

Personalized Roadmap

This is an interactive tool for students to create an "I'm going" personalized roadmap, that details the steps to take to obtain a college education. These can be printed out as a single page or a wall-sized poster, or saved as the desktop on a user's computer.



Content

Content is organized and presented in a way for students to easily find the answers to their higher education questions: Why Go? What to Do? and How to Pay? Links to valuable online resources, such as College Navigator (school search site), *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA), and FAFSA4caster, are prevalent throughout the site.



III. Strategic Action Plan for Open Government

While the Department feels that it has made some great strides in transparency, participation, and collaboration over the past year, we recognize that there are continuous improvements we can make that will allow greater insight into internal processes and plans and ensure a constant, open dialogue with our stakeholders. Below are listed several new and ongoing efforts by the Department to ensure we are indeed fulfilling our responsibilities to members of the public to increase transparency, build collaborative relationships, and increase public participation.

A. *Flagship Initiative, Transparency: ED Data Express*

Aligned to goals:

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

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

The President's goals for education are:

- for the United States to become number one in the world in the percentage of population with a college degree by 2020; and
- for the United States to significantly reduce gaps in high school graduation and college access and success by 2020.

In order to achieve these goals, accurate, timely, and reliable information is needed to make changes that will significantly and quickly improve our education system and measure progress against the President's goals. For example:

- Parents need to know the strengths and weakness of the schools in their community and be able to compare the schools their children attend to other schools in their community and in neighboring communities.
- Teachers need to know which instructional methods meet the needs of their students and which interventions are most effective in addressing difficult problems. School administrators and policymakers need to know which programs are most effective in improving outcomes for students so programs



that work can be scaled up and those that aren't as effective can be improved or discarded.

- Researchers need access to information to help determine what works and what does not, identify areas where more information is needed, and drive innovative ideas to improve outcomes for students.

As technology rapidly transforms and improves the ability to share information and use it to improve outcomes for students, we must ensure individual privacy continues to be protected, people understand what the information means, and data are used appropriately.

A combination of strategic actions will be taken as part of the Transparency in Education Initiative, such as using ED Data Express to improve access to Department data and developing and implementing more robust technical assistance to ensure that privacy is protected.

ED Data Express Details

ED Data Express is a website designed to improve the public's ability to access and explore high-value State-level data collected by the Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). The site is in the final stages of development and 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. Data can be viewed in three ways: a State profile page, a data element explorer, and a build-a-table page. The State profile pages include charts and tables with key data for each State. The data element explorer allows users to view a single element across all States, both graphically and in a table. The build-a-table page allows users to build customized tables by selecting specific indicators and specific States. 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.

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 envisioned as its primary users. As such, the site is designed to accommodate different interests and types of users. For example, someone interested in quick information about a single State can view the State profile page for a general overview. Someone who is interested in information about a particular data element or who wants the flexibility to build a custom query can use the data element explorer or build-a-tables tool. The three tools incorporate graphs and charts to help users visualize the data. Future versions of the site will include additional data visualization tools, such as a mapping feature and enhanced graphing tools. ED Data Express is not intended to meet the needs of individuals, researchers, or organizations looking to do complex analyses; for that reason, it provides links to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) tools, so that users who are interested in using full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States may obtain those data. NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations.

ED Data Express is also designed to interface with social networking applications, such as Facebook and Digg, to better share information in these newly emerging channels. As the public adopts new ways to access and use information, the more the Department can adapt and share information via these new channels, the more success we will have in reaching our audiences and addressing their interests.

OESE expects to launch the site during the summer of 2010, contingent upon final Departmental clearance and approval.

Promoting Transparency

All information contained on ED Data Express is currently publicly accessible in State-specific files. However, it is published in various places on the Department's website, mostly in a PDF format. The information is currently difficult to find, burdensome to update, and frequently is released with significant delays. The burden of compiling and using the data in this format is very high, since a user must open every State's PDF file and manually consolidate the information into a file that can be used for analysis. A design goal of ED Data Express is to provide an innovation with a clear "relative advantage" over the current process that is simple to use and provides various ways of viewing the data. In ED Data Express, the information will be consolidated into one location, and users can quickly select the information they need, view it several different ways, and download it into Excel for further analysis. With the data more readily accessible and easy to explore, the site will facilitate the ability of States and grantees to learn from one another, and help



the Department learn how to share information properly with people who want to look at data but are less familiar with its use than researchers.

Promoting Participation

The increased accessibility and ease of use improve the ability of people to view, consider, and use the State-reported data. It enables the public and grantees to identify States that may be getting better results or using different approaches, and thus helps to inform their own decision-making and program development.

In addition, the ED Data Express website includes a user feedback survey that allows OESE to receive ratings, comments, and suggestions from users about the site. The survey tool is flexible so that OESE can add different questions to encourage continued feedback and dialogue. OESE has discussed the website at ED*Facts* and NCES conferences, and will continue to use those opportunities to discuss the site and solicit suggestions from attendees. OESE is also planning to meet with the ED*Facts* team's Standing Task Force, which is a group of approximately 10 SEA representatives (some of whom are ED*Facts* coordinators). ED*Facts* uses this task force as a sounding board for major new initiatives that they have proposed. OESE believes that this group could be a useful partner, especially in moving forward with the launch of the site and for future enhancements.

B. *Flagship Initiative, Collaboration: Open Innovation Web Portal*

Aligned to goal:

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

The American education system is not what it could be. In cities and towns around the country, there are schools where students are as likely to leave high school with no credential as they are to leave with a diploma, to say nothing of the postsecondary education they increasingly will need to secure meaningful and lasting employment. Recognizing this, and tired of tolerating mediocre schools for thousands of the neediest and most at-risk students, President Obama and Secretary Duncan have made education a centerpiece of the Obama administration's domestic policy agenda.

Such fundamental change in American education, from a global laggard to a global leader, will require acknowledgement of problems for which there are existing solutions and those that have remained stubbornly intractable. For the latter type of challenge, an education sector that embraces and supports educational innovation is essential. To meet the challenge, there needs to be commitment,



vision, and creativity from stakeholders across the education sector—from experienced educators who work with students every day, from entrepreneurs who may have never worked in a classroom but may have the next great idea for education, and from education funders that have both contributed some of the most important reforms in education and undermined the scaling of effective innovations. Moreover, all of these stakeholders must be communicating and collaborating with each other.

The Department of Education is taking the lead in supporting such a collaborative environment by launching an online community, the [Open Innovation Portal](#), where education stakeholders of all types can spotlight areas of need, propose and suggest improvements to solutions, and fund, implement, and improve these solutions in and outside of the classroom. Through this effort, the Department seeks to create an infrastructure that will support widespread, transformative innovations and the focused, incremental improvements that will be required to ensure that every American child has the opportunities that a world-leading education system should provide.

In October 2009, Secretary Duncan announced the proposed priorities for the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund, a \$650 million grant program that will provide seed funding for promising new ideas, support the development of robust evidence for solutions that have shown significant early accomplishments, and scale up proven solutions so that many more students across the country can benefit. Secretary Duncan called i3 “an unprecedented investment in cutting-edge ideas that will produce the next generation of school reforms,” yet it is only the beginning of the Department of Education’s efforts to create an innovation pipeline for education.

As of March 29, 2010, the Open Innovation Portal had 2,851 members. A total of 76 ideas had been submitted, with 88 percent of them having received at least one question, answer, or comment. An active network is developing, with 716 network requests, 455 private messages, 254 idea questions, and 74 idea comments. The Department is encouraged by the early success of this innovative collaboration tool.

Open Innovation Portal Details

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 Assistant Deputy Secretary Jim Shelton put it, “Successful 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.”

As a result, key innovation stakeholders—foundations, innovators, and practitioners (e.g., teachers, school administrators, and parents) —share these similar challenges in collaboration and communication: foundations need a system for identifying new, grassroots ideas and sharing new knowledge; innovators need a process for identifying practitioner needs and for gaining greater access to investors; and practitioners require a venue to express their needs or access proven innovative ideas to strengthen education. All these stakeholders need mechanisms for quickly identifying practices and programs that are working and scaling them up to reach more students. There is also another, underutilized stakeholder in the education sector—the public—that is not traditionally viewed as a meaningful participant in the development of innovation and is often left out of conversations about needs and solutions.

With its role as both a convener and facilitator, the Department of Education can play a unique part in helping stakeholders to overcome these practical challenges. The Department intends to facilitate innovation by structuring a public exchange, one where practitioners define challenges in the field, innovators introduce and refine solutions, and funders support ideas from all parts of the education community.

The Open Innovation Portal, an online platform, will facilitate educational innovation by bridging the communication and coordination challenges in the education community. This is the first national forum where entrepreneurs, education stakeholders of all types, and funders can partner to develop and fund innovative ideas in the education sector. Through this portal, the Department will serve 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.

How the Open Innovation Community Works

The Open Innovation Web Portal is a Web 2.0 innovation ecosystem that combines features of both a community and a marketplace. As a community, the portal creates a social network that strengthens relationships, facilitates connections, and promotes collaboration. As a marketplace, the portal creates an innovation process that taps the wisdom of the community to identify and provide resources for the most promising ideas in education.



Portal users will register for the site and create online profiles with their background and basic contact information. All registered users, whether teachers, administrators, or members of the general public, are invited to be innovators and post their solutions on the portal. Solutions are posted to categories of educational challenges of interest to the community, the Department, and potential funders. Initial challenges will be aligned with i3 priorities, such as supporting effective teachers and school leaders and serving schools in rural LEAs.

An online form captures detailed information about the proposed solution, including the nature of the problem, the merits of the approach, the scalability of the idea, and the resources required to succeed. Users can upload supporting materials, including videos and Web links. Once posted, members of the community can collaborate on solutions. They can also rate, rank, comment on, and ask questions about solutions, as well as offer resources to support the proposed solutions. Through this collaborative process, the best ideas rise to the top, and weaker ideas either improve or are filtered out.

Looking to the Future

There is immediacy around the development of this online community. The Department of Education wants it to be an asset for prospective applicants to i3, but the functionality of the community will improve over time in a process mirroring that of the ideas on the website. New features will be added in response to emerging needs of the community and improvements in technological capacity.

More important, the power of an online community—particularly one driven by the collective creativity, knowledge, and experience of its users—increases as the number of users grows.

Moreover, the need for an online community of this type, and its relevance to education innovation, will continue beyond the first round of i3. In the proposed Fiscal Year 2011 budget for the Department of Education, President Obama and Secretary Duncan are requesting \$500 million for a second innovation-focused competitive grant competition. Solutions that did not receive funding in the first i3 competition will have time to improve, potentially by incorporating the resources of the online community, and new ideas will emerge in the interim (along with new needs).

This moment represents a unique opportunity to make radical and lasting change in American education. The Department of Education sees the need to bring together some of the nation's most successful and innovative leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to capitalize on this moment, while adding new voices from



previously unrepresented stakeholders.

The development and management of the portal are themselves manifestations of the collaboration needed to move educational innovation to a new level. The Office of Innovation and Improvement is partnering with Spencer Trask Collaborative Innovations (STCI), which is known for building innovation ecosystems for organizations. “The Department of Education understands the need to bring together some of the nation’s most successful and innovative leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to capitalize on this moment,” according to Michael J. Turillo, vice-chairman of STCI.

The Open Innovation Portal will be a significant step forward in the Department’s commitment to become an engine of innovation for American education.

C. *Flagship Initiative, Participation: Open Government Steering Committee*

Aligned to goals:

- 2.1: Provide more insight into the agency’s decision-making process.*
- 2.2: Provide regularly updated project maps, dated milestones, and financial data regarding open government and other key initiatives.*
- 2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.*
- 4.1: Encourage openness and communication about effectiveness within the Department.*

Investigate Strategies for Holding More Open Meetings

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. The committee wants to undertake experimental and forward-looking activities relating to open government. 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 Steering Committee will investigate methods for more inclusion of the public in internal meetings. This could include publishing agendas of meetings, accepting moderated comments on the meeting agenda, and other strategies. The committee wants to explore forward-learning strategies that it could share later with other groups in the Department (e.g., making available and/or broadcasting video of more ED meetings and events).



Open Government Policy Document

During a recent meeting the steering committee identified an opportunity to clarify how open government functions. One potentially confusing outcome of open government activities is opening numerous avenues to connect to the Department. Some of these avenues might appear open when in fact they are not. For example, while the Department currently uses Twitter as a forum to communicate information to the public and bring members of the public together to engage each other in conversation, the Department does not currently systematically monitor its Twitter timeline for input and responses from the public. On the other hand, comments submitted in the online Web forum for the National Education Technology Plan were rigorously examined and are being incorporated into the final product. Similarly, ideas from the public on the Open Government Plan were included in the analysis process for developing the plan itself. These varying uses of public input can create a potentially confusing situation for the public, as it may not always be clear whether their input is being heard or how it is processed once it is heard.

To help remedy this situation, the Steering committee will develop an Open Government Policy (similar to “privacy policies” developed by many websites). This policy document will describe in plain language how and where public input is used. It will describe how to reach the open government steering committee, and will provide other appropriate information. Of course, the public will be asked for input on what information should be included in this document, and the document will be updated periodically to reflect changes and new information. The first draft of this document will be released in fall 2010.

D. *Timely Publishing of Electronic Data*

1. Data.gov

Aligned to goals:

- 1.2: Make more data and information available to the public.*
- 2.2: Provide regularly updated project maps, dated milestones, and financial data regarding open government and other key initiatives.*

Data produced by government agencies are often hard to find or are published in proprietary formats of limited utility. As a result, a wealth of information remains untapped by the ingenuity and creativity of the American people. Data.gov is a user-friendly platform that provides access to federal data sets. With a searchable data



catalog, Data.gov helps the public find, access, and download non-sensitive government data and tools in a variety of formats.

The Department is currently linking a number of data sets to Data.gov and will continue to do so as quickly as practicable.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been the traditional source of high-value⁴ data at the Department of Education.

Recently, the Federal Student Aid Data Center was launched to provide a centralized source of information and data related to the federal financial assistance programs. Many of the high-value data sets are released simultaneously on both the [FSA Data Center](http://FSADataCenter) and Data.gov.

The entire high-value public use data collection of NCES is currently available online either at NCES.ed.gov or at Data.gov. All new public use data sets are posted to Data.gov when they are released.

In addition, the Department has recognized that privacy and data security concerns are central to accessing and managing education data. To help support this aspect of data access, the Department is working to provide more technical assistance in the areas of privacy and data security for State and local agencies as well as researchers and other parties engaged with education data. To accomplish this, the Department will be establishing the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) by fall 2010.

At the time of this document's publication, we currently have the following data available at Data.gov (we have also included examples of the types of questions these data sets are intended to answer):

- [**FAFSA Application Volume**](#)

This report provides information on the number of *Free Applications for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSAs) processed. It provides the number of applications by the applicant's State of

⁴ High-value information is information that can be used to: increase agency accountability and responsiveness; improve public knowledge of the agency and its operations; further the core mission of the agency; create economic opportunity; or respond to need and demand as identified through public consultation.



legal residence and by postsecondary institution, as listed on the applicant's FAFSA. Numbers are reported in two categories: dependent students and independent students. The following questions are answered: How many students took the first step toward applying for college financial assistance by filling out the FAFSA? How many students in each State filled it out? What is the breakdown by postsecondary institution of the number of students who filled it out?

- **Common Core of Data (CCD) Local Education Agency Universe Survey**

The 1986–87 to 2007–08 Common Core of Data Local Education Agency Universe Survey consists of data submitted annually to NCES by State education agencies in the United States and the territories. The purpose of the survey is to provide a listing of all school districts providing free public elementary and secondary education, along with basic descriptive statistical information on each school district listed.

- **State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Data (CCD)**

- **State Fiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Data (CCD)**

The 1986–87 to 2007–08 Common Core of Data State Nonfiscal/Fiscal Surveys of Public Elementary/Secondary Education consists of data submitted annually to NCES by State education agencies in the United States and the territories. The purpose of the surveys is to provide information about students and staff and about sources and expenditures of funds in public elementary and secondary education.

- **[Common Core of Data \(CCD\) State Dropout and Completion Data](#)**

The primary purposes of the 2005–06 to 2006–07 State Dropout and Completion Data Files are to report the numbers of dropouts from each of grades 9 through 12 and the relevant event dropout rates , and to report the numbers of high school diploma



recipients, other high school completers, and the relevant Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR).

- **[National Household Education Survey \(NHES\)](#)**

This household-based survey provides descriptive data on the educational activities of the U.S. population and offers a variety of statistics on the condition of education in the United States. The NHES surveys cover learning at all ages, from early childhood to school age through adulthood. The NHES has been conducted since 1991, and has modules covering early childhood care, parent and family involvement in education, after-school program participation, school safety, library usage, adult education, school readiness, and civic involvement (1991 to 2007).

- **[Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 \(ECLS\)](#)**

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS), Kindergarten Class of 1998–99 followed a nationally representative sample of children who were kindergartners in 1998–99 from kindergarten through eighth grade.

- **[National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#)**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the “Nation's Report Card,” is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. NAEP includes data from Main NAEP, Long-term Trend NAEP, and the High School Transcript Data (1970–2009).

- **[National Postsecondary Student Aid Study \(NPSAS\)](#)**

NPSAS is a survey of student financing of postsecondary education in the United States. Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at all types of postsecondary institutions in the U.S. in 2007–08 are represented. These include public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit sector institutions at every level: less-than-2-year, 2-year, 4-year, and graduate only.



- [Postsecondary Education Quick Information System \(PEQIS\)](#)

This file contains data from a quick-response survey using the Postsecondary Education Quick Information System (PEQIS). It provides national estimates on postsecondary education topics (e.g., distance education, dual-enrollment) among 2-year and 4-year Title IV eligible, degree-granting institutions.

- [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study \(TIMSS\)](#)

This 2007 school-based assessment provides descriptive data on the educational outcomes of U.S. fourth- and eighth-graders in mathematics and science, as well as factors that may be related to achievement in these subject areas. In addition to the assessment, background data is collected from students, their teachers, and schools. TIMSS has been administered every four years since 1995.

Additionally, NCES is in the processes of posting the following data sets to Data.gov:

NCES Data Releases Scheduled from June 1–30, 2010

- 2008–09 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education school-level nonfiscal data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- Fiscal Year 2008 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education State Fiscal (National Public Education Finance Survey) data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- 2007–08 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education Agency school district-level dropout and graduation data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- Final revised 2007–08 Common Core of Data Elementary and Secondary Education State-level nonfiscal data file [Format: tab-separated values text files (.txt)]
- Fall 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) Enrollments [Format: csv files]



- Enrollments by race/ethnicity, gender, attendance status, and level of student
- Enrollments by age category, gender, attendance status, and level of student
- Enrollments by residence and migration of first-time freshmen
- Enrollments by total entering class and retention rate
- Major field of study, race/ethnicity, gender, attendance status, and level of student 2008
- Total entering class and retention rates
- 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) Graduation Rates for the 2002 Cohort at 4- year institutions and the 2005 cohort at 2-year institutions and less-than-2-year institutions [Format: csv files]
 - Graduation rate data for cohort year 2002 4-year and cohort year 2005 2-year institutions
 - Graduation rate data for cohort year 2005 less-than-2-year institutions
- Fiscal Year 2008 Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) Financial Statistics [Format csv files]
 - Public institutions—GASB 34/35
 - Public institutions—GASB 34/35 (Component units using FASB)
 - Public institutions—GASB 34/35 (Component units using GASB)
 - Private not-for-profit institutions or public institutions using FASB
 - Private for-profit institutions
- Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) 2004 cohort of entering students as of 2009
 - Create tables and graphs quickly and efficiently using [Quick Stats](#) [Data tool]
 - Create complex tables and run linear and logistic regressions using [DAS 2.0](#) [Data tool]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS89) Technology-based Distance Education for Public Elementary and Secondary School Students, 2004–05 [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS92) Educational Technology in U.S. Public Schools, Fall 2008 [Format: ASCII flat file]



- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS93) Educational Technology in Public School Districts, Fall 2008 [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS 95) Teachers' Use of Educational Technology in U.S. Public Schools [Format: ASCII flat file]
- Fast Response Survey System (FRSS 96) Alternative Schools and Programs for Students at Risk of Educational Failure, 2007–08 [Format: ASCII flat file]

2. **Data.Ed.Gov**

Aligned to goals:

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

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

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

Data.ed.gov is part of the Department of Education's (ED) Open Government initiative to make high-value data sets publicly available in user-friendly, machine-readable formats. Data.ed.gov organizes, makes accessible, and highlights data from ED's diverse set of programs. It will serve as a one-stop shop for education data, allowing practitioners, researchers, and the public to access data that can inform their work in classrooms and communities across America.

The open grantmaking section of Data.ed.gov is what distinguishes it from the Data.gov project that provides a library of data sets from across the federal government. Data.ed.gov adds tools to help users understand data associated with ED grant programs and other information collections; analyze ED's investments to date; and view grant proposals that the Department has received. These tools will include charting and graphing, mapping of information, and filtering and sorting of grant applications. Data.ed.gov will allow the public to follow and evaluate the entire grantmaking process cycle, from intent to apply, to submission of applications, and to the announcement of grantees. The first competitive grant programs that will be available on this new website are the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and Promise Neighborhoods. The available data sets will expand over



time.

Summary of Key Functionalities of Data.ed.gov

Charting and Graphing

Data.ed.gov will include charting and graphing analysis tools that allow the public to understand broad trends in the data sets. For example, users may select a specific criterion or multiple criteria—e.g., absolute priorities, grant types, and applicant types—and see how many applications meet those criteria.

Mapping

The mapping function of the website will allow the public to see which initiatives are funded in their communities. Users will be able to view grant applications on a map with a Congressional district or school district overlay. Data.ed.gov will use MapBox, a fully configured, open-source, geospatial mapping tool that is available across the federal government

Filtering and Sorting

The end-users of data.ed.gov will also be able to sort and filter data from the application pool using several combinations of application criteria. For example, one could search for all LEA applicants in Seattle that applied under absolute priority two.

Data Exporting

Users may export data sets directly from data.ed.gov, as they can from data.gov. However, users may export data sets that are filtered according to their selected criteria rather than exporting the entire data set.

Challenges to Resolve

ED's grant submission process poses challenges to the creation and release of data sets that meet ED's goal of increased openness and transparency. These challenges were highlighted during the Office of Innovation and Improvement's (OII) recent effort to process over 1,600 i3 applications, 50 percent of which had some component that had to be sent to a data center for processing. The following challenges must be addressed in order to meet ED's Open Government goals around transparency in an efficient manner:



- Standard OMB approved, government application forms (SF-424 and SF-524) cannot be customized.
- GAPS/G5 does not offer a mechanism to collect supplemental information in a standardized format:
 - Without the use of supplemental forms, each application must be manually parsed to identify information, such as partners, project locations, etc.
Using simple Web-forms as part of the application, while not currently standard, allows live data validation and reduces clean-up at the back end of the process

Planned Next Steps

- Develop a budget for ongoing development and scaling.
- Develop a process for responding to public feedback and implementing recommendations.
- Identify internal resources (e.g., personnel, technology) necessary for ongoing support.
- Develop a system for identifying grant competitions and/or data sets to profile on data.ed.gov.
- Research and propose solutions for better supplemental information collection.

3. eRulemaking

Aligned to goals:

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders for decision-making.

To facilitate the public's involvement in the Department's rulemaking process, the Department participates in [Regulations.gov](https://www.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, as well as a limited number of our other regulatory documents requesting public comment. We note that, with respect to other regulatory documents, the Department accepts public comments through e-mail and regular mail. We anticipate that the Department will expand its use of Regulations.gov to include these other regulatory documents in the future.

A recent search of Regulations.gov showed that the Department of Education has received and posted more than 6,300 public submissions on 980 notices and 100 rulemakings.

4. IT Dashboard

Aligned to goals:

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

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

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

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, we foresee 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, we can have effective discussions about the impact and results of investment decisions.



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

We will continue to respond timely, thoroughly, and transparently to any feedback received through the IT Dashboard. As appropriate, we will modify our agency processes to address weaknesses that may be identified. We will route specific suggestions for improvement or ideas that affect the portfolio through our 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 USAspending.gov.

5. **Recovery.gov** ***American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)***

Aligned to goals:

- 1.2: Make more data and information available to the public.*
- 1.4: Increase the transparency of the grant application and award process.*
- 1.5: Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs.*
- 2.2: Provide regularly updated project maps, dated milestones, and financial data regarding open government and other key initiatives.*

The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)* requires an unprecedented level of transparency into government spending. In particular it mandates:

- The creation of “a web site on the Internet to be named Recovery.gov, to foster greater accountability and transparency in the use of funds made available in this Act.”



- Recovery.gov is operated by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, which was also created by the *Recovery Act*. <http://www.recovery.gov>
- The creation of an agency-specific Recovery Web page located within the agency site and identified on the home page. <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/>
- Weekly reporting by agencies on obligations, outlays, and activities
- Quarterly reporting by recipients on awards, spending, jobs impact, and project status.

The Department of Education has been an active participant in the development and ongoing evolution of these sites and tools since their inception. As a result of these initiatives, education stakeholders can now track on a weekly basis the speed with which the Department is awarding its *ARRA* funding and the extent to which States are putting this money to work. This provides a new level of accountability for federal and State education spending. At the local level, parents and community members can enter the zip code of their local school district, identify exactly how much *ARRA* funding has been awarded and spent to date, and scrutinize vendor payments over \$25,000, holding local officials accountable for their decisions.

As the Department gains experience with the new level of transparency provided via Recovery.gov, the Department is continuing to address the issue of presenting its data in a user-friendly format to ensure its use by the widest possible variety of stakeholders. In doing so, the Department has gone beyond the requirements of Recovery.gov in the following areas:

- Weekly *ARRA* spending to date is posted on ED.gov/recovery with detailed State and program-level detail. This provides the appropriate level of aggregation to help the public understand the flow of funds in their State to different programs, and for program advocates to understand State-level differences in the flow of funds for the program in question.
- Section 1512 award, spending, and jobs reporting data are posted on ED.gov/recovery at the State and program levels.



This allows the public to assess their State's progress in using *ARRA* funds to save or create jobs, and allows policymakers to evaluate the impact of different ED *ARRA* programs relative to job creation.

This enhanced level of transparency for *ARRA* programs, and the attention to both the availability and accessibility of the information presented, have set a new standard of transparency for the Department. The next step for the Department is to apply these principles to all programs, not just to *Recovery Act* programs. In particular, more detailed, sub-award reporting will be critical to achieving greater transparency into education funding at the local level.

6. **USASpending.gov**

Aligned to goals:

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

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

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

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

The ***Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006*** (S. 2590) is an act of Congress that requires the full disclosure to the public of all entities or organizations receiving federal funds beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2007. The purpose of the act is to provide the public with information about how their tax dollars are spent in greater detail in order to build public trust in government and credibility in the professionals who use these dollars.

The act requires a single searchable website, accessible by the public for free, that includes the following information for each federal award:

1. The name of the entity receiving the award;
2. The amount of the award;
3. Information on the award including transaction type, funding agency, etc;



4. The location of the entity receiving the award; and
5. A unique identifier of the entity receiving the award.

Federal awards include grants, sub-grants, loans, awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of financial assistance as well as contracts, subcontracts, purchase orders, task orders, and delivery orders. The legislation does not require inclusion of individual transactions below \$25,000 or credit card transactions made before Oct. 1, 2008.

The searchable website USAspending.gov was launched in December 2007, and is maintained by the Office of Management and Budget. The site provides the public with the ability to look at contracts, grants, loans, and other types of spending across many agencies. The data available on USAspending.gov are provided by the Federal Assistance Awards Data System (FAADS) and the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS).

The majority of grant and loan data, and some procurement data are submitted by agencies. An updated version of the USAspending.gov guidance was issued on June 1, 2009, and defines award reporting requirements necessary to comply with both the *Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)* and the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act)*. The updated guidance required federal agencies to report data on their awards in never-before-required timeliness and detail. In June 2009, USAspending.gov began processing agency file submissions twice per month, on the 5th and the 20th, instead of once per month. Data on the website is generally refreshed in the first and third weeks of every month.

The latest guidance is available at the following link: [M-09-19, Guidance on Data Submission under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act \(FFATA\)](#).

7. **EDFacts**

Aligned to goals:

- 1.2: *Make more data and information available to the public.*
- 1.5: *Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website Department about offices and key programs.*
- 1.6: *Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.*
- 3.1: *Enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities.*



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

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. It 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.

EDFacts centralizes performance data supplied by K-12 State education agencies (SEAs) with other data assets, such as financial grant information, within the Department to enable better analysis and use in policy development, planning, and management. The purpose of EDFacts is to:

- Place the use of robust, timely performance data at the core of decision- and policy making in education;
- Reduce State and district data burden and streamline data practices;
- Improve State data capabilities by providing resources and technical assistance; and
- Provide data for planning, policy, and management at the federal, State, and local levels.

Until now, EDFacts has been available only to Department and State analysts. In the interest of transparency, the Department plans to make these data publicly available for the first time and will start by moving five data sets to Data.gov this fiscal year:

- 1) Annual list of schools in need of improvement since 2004–05;
- 2) Annual list of Districts in need of improvement since 2004–05;
- 3) Annual list of statewide assessment results in reading since 2003–04;
- 4) Annual list of statewide assessment results in mathematics since 2003–04; and
- 5) Annual list of district-level graduation rates reported under ESEA for 2006–07 and 2007–08.

8. IDEAData.org

Aligned to goals:



- 1.2: Make more data and information available to the public.*
- 1.5: Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs.*
- 2.2: Provide regularly updated project maps, dated milestones, and financial data regarding open government and other key initiatives.*
- 3.1: Enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public and non-profit and private entities.*

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) provides public access to data about children and youths with disabilities served under Parts B and C of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* via the Data Accountability Center (DAC) at www.ideadata.org; technical assistance (TA) materials to support the collection, analysis, and reporting of *IDEA* data; and the forms and spreadsheets used for collection.

The Data Accountability Center (DAC) was funded in October 2007 by OSEP to provide information and TA to improve the quality of all State-reported data required by the *IDEA* and to encourage transparency and accountability. Its mission is to support the submission and analysis of high-quality *IDEA* data by reviewing data collection and analysis and providing technical assistance to improve State capacity to meet data requirements. The DAC's mission includes assisting OSEP by taking a leadership role in the Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network to support the vision of high-quality data.

DAC assesses State, regional, and national needs related to data collection, analysis, and reporting. This assessment includes needs related to monitoring data. DAC delivers technical assistance to States using a range of methods. These methods include annual data meetings; telephone, email, and listserv communication; conference calls; workshops and sessions at regional and national meetings; and in-State consultation. DAC provides customized TA for individual States via all methods. Finally, DAC develops technical assistance materials for States including, but not limited to, Q&A documents for specific data collections, data dictionaries, guidelines for collecting high-quality data through the State monitoring processes, and online training modules.



DAC offers a variety of relevant demographic and historical data as well as a newly launched analytic tool on the website. This analytic tool provides users with the most recent publicly available State-level *IDEA* data. The tool may be used to access data more easily. More data sets are being added to the tool and will be available in the future.

This website was developed and is maintained to be accessible in accordance with Section 508 of the *Rehabilitation Act*.

9. Federal Student Aid (FSA) Data Center

Aligned to goals:

- 1.2: *Make more data and information available to the public.*
- 1.3: *Improve the timeliness of FOIA processing and document release.*
- 1.5: *Maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs.*
- 3.1: *Enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities.*

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, compiles information from across the Department in an effort to promote transparency and to increase self-service opportunities for our customers and stakeholders. The site is intended to estimate customer needs and proactively provide information to them in a useful and easily accessible way.

To that end, in creating the Data Center, we reviewed routine requests received through the press, from the Hill or through the *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)* and produced a series of new data reports to respond to the most common requests. For example, we created the Programmatic Volume Reports, which provide users both federal student loan and grant data by school on a quarterly basis. In addition, customers can easily access application, school, lender, guaranty agency, and default data as well as the *Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (ECASLA)* Loan Purchase Program Activity Reports on the Data Center.

As our programs evolve and the needs of our customers change, we will continuously review the data we produce and update the site accordingly. In the months ahead, we plan to begin posting *Clery Act*



reviews and financial composite scores of schools. As these data become available, we will register them with the Data.gov website.

10. OpenED Employment and Hiring Solutions and Dashboard

Aligned to goals:

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

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

Veterans, transitioning service members and their families, need to receive accurate and consistent information regarding veteran's 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*.

ED Veterans Employment and Hiring Solutions and Dashboard is a website designed to improve agency collaboration with veterans and military families and to improve the public's ability to access veterans' hiring data and progress collected by the Department's Office of Human Capital Client Services.

11. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Aligned to goals:

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.

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

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

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

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), one of the principal federal statistical agencies, is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States and other nations. It provides statistical services for educators and education officials at the federal, State, and local levels; Congress; researchers; students; parents; and the media and the general public.



NCES is located within the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education.

The mission of NCES is to collect, analyze, report, and disseminate education information and statistics in a manner that:

- meets the highest methodological standards;
- is timely, relevant, and useful to practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and the public;
- is objective, secular, neutral, and non-ideological; and
- is free of partisan political influence and racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias.

NCES publishes public-use and restricted-use data sets and reports that describe, estimate, forecast, or analyze education statistics and ensure that all users have equitable and timely access to data. NCES statistics are used to track progress and trends, identify problems and opportunities for policy improvement, and manage and monitor programs.

With more than 20 survey programs, NCES covers education topics from birth through adulthood using cross-sectional databases, longitudinal studies, and student assessments. In addition, NCES coordinates participation in international assessments, administers quick-response surveys on pressing policy issues, and manages the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program, that enables States to draw knowledge from data. In conjunction with SLDS, NCES assists State and local education agencies in improving and using their data systems, and facilitates the exchange of ideas among States through sponsorship of the National Forum on Education Statistics.

NCES runs the Statistical Standards Program, which publishes the NCES Statistical Standards. It consults and advises on methodological and statistical aspects involved in the design, collection, and analysis of education data, and it administers and monitors restricted-use data licenses for the center's data products, assuring compliance with Section 183 of the *Education Sciences Reform Act*, which prohibits the release of personally identifiable information.



NCES activities include:

- Provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends;
- Report timely, useful, and high-quality data to education policy makers and data users;
- Publish reports to distribute education statistics to a wide audience;
- Provide data in the form of data files and Web tools available for research and analysis;
- Work with State and local education agencies on issues of data collection, maintenance, and analysis; and
- Assure compliance with Section 183 of the *Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA)*, which prohibits the release of personally identifiable information by the Department, and includes felony criminal penalties, including imprisonment.

NCES serves educators and educational organizations, federal, State, and local education officials, Congress, the news media, researchers, students, parents and the general public

You can find additional information about NCES at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) home page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education.

E. *Participation and Collaboration*

The Department is using a number of technologies to encourage public participation and collaboration. We highlighted college.gov at the beginning of this plan and describe several others below. While this is the future direction of the Department, it is just the beginning. Online communities are already becoming commonplace, a trend we expect to continue and accelerate. Some of these communities will be long term, such as college.gov, and others may be special-purpose focus groups that come into being to solve a problem and dissolve at the end of their work. Online interactive tools



can provide the rich participation and collaboration experiences needed to support educational communities of all kinds.

1. Public Participation at ED.gov

Aligned to goals:

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

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders for decision-making.

The Department of Education encourages public participation using Web-based collaboration tools. The Department of Education 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 of Education 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 public commenting on ed.gov Web pages can be found on the 2010 National Education Technology Plan page at <http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010>. 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 (<http://www.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.

The Department does not produce any education materials; however, we do maintain a one-stop website designed to make it easy for teachers, parents, students, and the general public to find education materials from sister federal agencies (e.g., National Science Foundation, NASA, Smithsonian, etc). The website, FREE, is one of the Department’s most popular Web offerings because nearly all of the 1,600 resources available there are free for re-use. Federal Resources for Educational Excellence is available at [FREE -- http://www.free.ed.gov/](http://www.free.ed.gov/).

2. Digital Systems Interoperability

Aligned to goals:

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

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

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 of Education 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, 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 of Education 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.

By spring 2011, we plan to have a strong interagency collaboration under way, having selected initial interoperable digital content standards for use by the collaborators. By summer 2011, we plan to begin implementing these standards within existing federal content repositories held by various partners, as well as developing tools and resources to assist private parties in adopting similar standards if they choose. By the end of 2011, we anticipate a voluntary, large-scale adoption of these standards by a broad set of stakeholders within and outside of government, driving a reliance on these standards in the marketplace and delivering more flexible, targeted educational materials into the hands of teachers and students.

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.

The [Office of Education Technology](#) is leading this effort.

3. Privacy Technical Assistance Center and Related Activities

Aligned to goals:

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.

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

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

Understanding and complying with privacy regulations can be a complex task for organizations and individuals that deal regularly in education data. The Department has recognized the need to provide a wider range of services and assistance to help ensure that privacy and confidentiality regulations are followed, while also helping to ensure that data are effectively and safely used under the law.

NCES, in collaboration with the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO), Office of the General Counsel, and other Department staff and offices will establish and maintain a **Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)** as a resource for SEAs, LEAs, the postsecondary community, and other parties engaged with education data. PTAC will adopt a one-stop approach to supporting the SLDS field in privacy, confidentiality, and security. Its staff will disseminate information, answer individual questions, conduct training, and, as appropriate, refer questions to experts in the Department (such as FPCO). To maintain this capability, PTAC staff will need to stay current on data privacy, confidentiality, and security issues, timely and accurate solutions, and the intricacies of developing and maintaining State and local data systems. This Center will be established by fall 2010.

In addition, NCES will issue quick-turnaround **Technical Briefs**, which will document for State SLDS staff the requirements of current privacy laws and regulations, as well as best practices in the field. Topics will include disclosure protection for personally identifiable information, statistical methods for protecting such information, data stewardship, electronic data security, and maintaining protection with data sharing. The first set of these briefs will be released in summer 2010.

Related to the Technical Briefs and the mission of PTAC, the Department will develop **Non-Regulatory Guidance** for States that pull together the content of the Technical Briefs, along with responses to the comments and questions they generate. This initial guidance material will be published in fall 2010.



4. Enabling More Web Publishing at ED.gov

Aligned to goals:

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

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

4.2: Enhance Departmental internal collaboration activities.

Another reason for choosing the recently selected open- source Web publishing technology as the ED.gov Web platform is that it provides streamlined methods for our offices to publish online content. Shortly after this plan is published, we will provide a new content management system that makes it easier to keep office Web pages updated with current information and developments and that includes RSS feeds. The goal is to encourage an open, continuously updated information hub powered by the offices that make up our Department. This ability creates a stronger connection between our employees and the stakeholders that rely on us.

5. Rehabilitation Services Administration ARRA Funding Guidance Assistance

Aligned to goals:

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

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.

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

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.

6. **OpenEducation.IdeaScale.com**

Aligned to goals:

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

2.3: Collect and use input from the public and other stakeholders in decision-making.

As part of the development of this plan, the Department, along with other federal agencies, used [IdeaScale](#) in February and March 2010 to gather public feedback. During that period, over 100 ideas and 200 comments were collected from the public. This feedback was reviewed and taken into consideration for the formation of this plan. Every idea was reviewed by a senior staff member and incorporated or aligned to existing projects, where appropriate, into the plan.

7. **Employee Participation Through OpenED**

Aligned to goals:

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

4.2: Enhance Departmental internal collaboration capabilities.

OpenED—President Obama pledged to look for budget-cutting ideas from the bottom up, saying he would establish a process through which every government worker could submit ideas on how to save money. In February 2009, to heed the President's call, Secretary Duncan established in the Department the OpenED project to help identify cost savings and improvements across the agency.

OpenED is an established, Department-wide, employee idea-creation and collaboration project created and managed by the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS), for the chief of staff in the Office of the Secretary (OS). Along with an e-mail account and hard-copy suggestion box, OpenED operates an online forum that provides the opportunity for employees to engage in ongoing, productive discussions about ideas to enhance the work of the Department. The



forum seeks to draw upon the institutional knowledge and creativity of all Department employees to improve programs and Department operations.

This IT application allows all employees access to the system using their network authorization. Once in the system, employees can enter an idea into the forum and other employees may read or comment on the new idea. All entries are accessible and visible to each employee in the agency. This open discussion typically leads to further development of the idea or results in a better solution surfacing relative to the topic. Employees can vote on ideas in the forum, resulting in the most highly rated idea (based on the greatest number of yes votes) rising to the top of the list. Employees are encouraged to enter into discussions and participate regularly in forum discussions. OpenED Forum can be accessed from connectED, the Department's Intranet site.

Sustainable governance structure

To sustain and manage all operations of the OpenED Forum, PPSS staff created a partnership between PPSS (OPEPD) and OS and set up a steering committee of staff representing both offices. PPSS staff run operations of OpenED Forum and OS staff provide leadership and input on operations.

The steering committee established a reading committee for the purpose of reviewing the hundreds of ideas submitted to the Forum.

The Reading Committee

The OpenED Forum Reading Committee reviews and manages the evaluation process of forum postings for the purpose of determining which ideas are beneficial that may improve or enhance the work of the Department. The Reading Committee connects with the Steering Committee throughout the review process to ensure concurrence between both committees and adherence to the goals of the OpenED Forum.

The Reading Committee consists of seven members, with six of them selected from three different principal offices. Each principal office designates a manager and non-manager staff member to represent its office. This mixed membership provides a balance between levels of



leadership within the Department. The Reading Committee serves for a period of six months, after which a new group of representatives from three other Principal Operating Components (POCs) are designated to serve.

Steering Committee's Role in the Idea Review

The Steering Committee determines the three POCs that will be asked to designate staff to work on the Reading Committee for a period of six months. The Steering Committee reviews the work of the Reading Committee, including its recommendations and POC reviews of ideas considered for implementation. The Steering Committee determines which ideas will be implemented and sends their recommendations to the chief of staff for approval. For each idea implemented, the Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Department employee who generated the original idea receives recognition by Department leadership.

PPSS staff on the Steering Committee represent the Department at the government-wide ideation community run by the Assistant Deputy Chief Technology Officer, Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President. PPSS staff respond to e-mails and calls from employees across the Department related to the OpenED initiative. The Steering Committee coordinates all Department-wide communications for OpenED and advertises regularly to encourage participation.

To date, 1,124 employees (approximately 25 percent of Department employees) have logged on to OpenED Forum, accumulating a total of 8,519 visits to the site since its inception. Currently, the forum contains eight topics for discussion, which have generated approximately 250 new ideas, producing 195 sublevel discussions about these ideas. One topic alone received 62 new ideas, generating 72 sublevel postings.

F. *Improving Internal Processes*

1. *Chief Privacy Officer*

Aligned to goals:

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.

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

1.3: Improve the timeliness of FOIA processing and document release.

With the Department's goal of increasing the amount of information and data that it makes available to the public, we have recognized the need to ensure that it is done by fulfilling our legal obligations to ensure individual privacy is protected. The Department has thus decided to create a new Chief Privacy Officer (CPO) position and locate it within the Office of Management. The CPO will coordinate work done in other Department offices, such as the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the General Counsel, Federal Student Aid, and other subsets of the Office of Management, such as the Regulatory and Information Management Services office. Among its many responsibilities, the CPO will be the tasked with:

- Serving as senior policy advisor on overall privacy policy, including legislative language, regulations, and other non-regulatory guidance drafted by Department offices on issues related to or including privacy, confidentiality, or data security;
- Advising other Department offices on the inclusion of privacy, confidentiality, and data security requirements in policies and programs;
- Coordinating on the development and delivery of privacy training and orientation for all employees and contractors; and
- Overseeing the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) and its administration of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*, the *Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment*, and the Military Recruiter provisions of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.

Although the position is still being developed, we hope to have it filled by late summer or early fall 2010.

2. Public Notifications

Aligned to goals:

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

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



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

The Department of Education notifies the public of important events and information updates via its website and other social media tools. Below is a description of the tools currently in use.

- 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. EDInfo, ED Review, Education Innovator, IESNews, Research e-News, Touching Base, PreventionED, and OVAE Connection are the currently available newsletters, and the Department will continue to create newsletters as new special topics are indentified. For more information on the Department’s electronic newsletters, please visit: <http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/>.
- ED.gov Blog—The ED.gov 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 plans on extending its blog tools to other offices within the Department. The main ED.gov blog can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/blog/>.
- 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 is located at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/landing.jhtml>.
- 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 is available at:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/>

- 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 feed is available at <http://twitter.com/usedgov> and others are listed at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html>.
- 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 is <http://www.facebook.com/ED.gov> and others are available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html>.
- 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. The YouTube channel for the Department can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/usedgov>.
- FedBizOpps.gov—The Department posts synopses of proposed contract actions as well as contract solicitations on [FedBizOpps.gov](http://www.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.

3. ED Records Management Program

Aligned to goals:

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.

1.3: Improve the timeliness of FOIA processing and document release.

The Regulatory and Information Management Services (RIMS) is responsible for developing and implementing strategies and



programs designed to ensure compliance with federal information management requirements.

In performing its responsibilities, the division:

- Serves as the Department's principal authority and representative on records management statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements to assure compliance with National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) directives.
- Develops records retention and disposition schedules for NARA approval. Disseminates NARA-approved records retention and disposition schedules for Department -wide implementation.
- Develops clear and consistent business rules (standards) for records management.
- Provides guidance and instruction to Department staff for the appropriate handling, maintenance, and disposition of records.
- Develops and provides print and Web-based training to Department employees and contractors regarding records management responsibilities. Oversees the implementation and management of Department-wide systems and databases that support the successful and efficient handling of records.

Information about the RIMS process for handling records is available online at [Records Management Process Information](#)

Information about the Regulatory Information Management Services organization is available online at [Regulatory Information Management Services](#).

4. ***Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Administration***

Aligned to goals:

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

1.3: Improve the timeliness of FOIA processing and document release.

In addition to publicizing the President's FOIA Memorandum and Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines, the Department of Education has taken many steps to ensure a presumption of openness is applied to all decisions involving the FOIA by increasing awareness through



training, proactive and discretionary release of records, and increasing efficiency.

Increasing Awareness Through Training: The Department of Education is developing a FOIA Training Curriculum with modules focused on the various groups of employees and their specific responsibility for administering the FOIA, i.e., program office FOIA coordinators, FOIA public liaisons, new employees, and managers.

- 1) The FOIA Overview Module, the first module in the series, will provide basic information about the FOIA, such as the FOIA's purpose, guidelines, exemptions, searches, and internal processes. The goal is for the module to be disseminated to new employees upon entry, and to all Department employees electronically on an annual basis.
- 2) The development of the modules is in progress and the FOIA Overview is expected to roll out before the end of the fiscal year.

Developing Processes for Proactive and Discretionary Releases of Records: The Department of Education has developed processes for proactive and discretionary releases of records. The Department has defined "proactive release" as the release of information in advance of a FOIA request; and "discretionary release" as the release of information that legally can be withheld but that the Department has decided, within its discretion, to release.

The Department is identifying types of documents that have been requested in previous years and now proactively releases responsive documents into the public domain via the FOIA e-Reading Room, in advance of receiving a FOIA request. Annually, the Department receives more than 700 requests for contracts, grant applications, and information about federally funded programs, including *ARRA*-related documents. For example, the Department recently proactively released over 33,000 pages of records related to its Race to the Top State competition, including State applications, peer reviewer comments, score sheets, and video presentations. These records may be viewed at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/index.html>. The Department's FOIA Service Center consults with senior agency personnel, including those in the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, Office of Communication and



Outreach, Contracts and Acquisitions Management, Office of the General Counsel, and relevant subject-matter experts from throughout the Department to identify material for proactive release, and it works in concert with the Office of the Chief Information Officer to publish such documents in the FOIA e-Reading Room.

In response to the U.S. Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines, the Department, through its two-level review process, works to ensure that a foreseeable harm is linked to any information falling within the scope of a discretionary exemption and if no harm is found—or the Department determines that the information may otherwise be released—the information is discretionarily released.

Implementing a two-level quality review of documents not fully released: The Department conducts at least a two-level review of documents that are deemed **not** fully releasable. During this second review, special attention is focused on ensuring a foreseeable harm has been established and segregated information is released. Since 2008, the Department has decreased its use of discretionary exemptions—specifically, Exemptions 2 and 5—by over 60 percent. Additionally, the two-level review is believed to significantly decrease the number of administrative appeals.

Populating the FOIA e-Reading Room in a manner to ensure rapid distribution of information: The Department populates the FOIA e-Reading Room with frequently requested documents, proactively released documents, and discretionarily released documents. In addition to these types of documents, the Department provides links directing requesters to program offices' websites to make it easier for the public to locate additional information that may be of use.

The Department of Education's FOIA Service Center has taken steps to ensure that the system it uses for responding to requests is effective and efficient. The FOIA Service Center has addressed the key roles played by the broad spectrum of agency personnel who work with FOIA professionals by:

- Reviewing FOIA policy. After a review of internal and external policies, procedures, and workload, the Department determined its FOIA regulation and agency directive both need updating. The update will promulgate streamlined processes to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, provide mandatory



requirements for program allocation of resource levels to fulfill the FOIA workload, and establish mandatory participation in training and meetings for FOIA professionals. Additionally, the Department's new FOIA regulation will provide the public with greater detail and specificity regarding Departmental FOIA policies, such as the manner in which the Department processes FOIA requests and the factors the Department considers to determine whether a fee waiver or reduction of fees is warranted, as well as the procedure by which FOIA requests are made. The final regulations also explain how to gain access to publicly available Department records. The FOIA regulation is in the final stages of approval, and the FOIA directive is expected to be issued for Departmental clearance before the end of the fiscal year.

- Evaluating the agency's FOIA case management workflow system/procedures. The Department currently uses a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) case management and workflow system with many features and benefits. In an effort to ensure that the system for responding to requests is effective and efficient, the Department evaluated its use of various features. The Department found that the use of features, such as the redaction tool and electronic document file cabinet, has transformed the work of FOIA processing from paper, manual labor, and needlessly repetitive tasks to automated processes commanded by menus and icons. The Department system electronically stores, retrieves, redacts, and prints documents for delivery to FOIA requesters. It also keeps track of FOIA processing statistics and fees, and generates reports on the number, type, and disposition of FOIA requests processed. The Department has augmented technology and contractor support to achieve improvements at the processing level.
- Identifying a FOIA IT contact within the FOIA Service Center. In an effort to ensure FOIA professionals have sufficient IT support for the FOIA case management system, a FOIA public liaison has been designated as the IT administrator for the case management workflow system. Instead of calling the Department's Help Desk for IT support, FOIA coordinators are able to resolve most electronic FOIA issues through a single point of contact by calling the FOIA Service Center's hotline number.



The Department’s key FOIA processing metrics, the *2009 FOIA Annual Report*, and FOIA processes for handling FOIA requests, along with various other FOIA resources are posted on the Department’s FOIA home page at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/foia/foiatoc.html>.

The *2009 Annual Report* is posted in machine-readable format as required by the Open Government Directive. Additionally, in concert with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Department ensures its FOIA website is updated with many other user-friendly documents as well as with links to each program office’s FOIA e-Reading Room.

The Department has been working diligently to address its FOIA request backlog. As a result, there is a reduction in the total number of backlog cases since the end of FY 2009. Below is a chart that shows the backlog of requests and administrative appeals that remain pending at the end of the fiscal year indicated. The data are presented what is currently held by how many days held:

FY	FOIA Requests (number of days overdue)	Age-FOIA Request (average days held)	FOIA Appeals (number of days overdue)	Age-Appeal (average number of days held)
2009	419	58	28	85
2010*	404*	23*	24*	63*

**As of March 31, 2010*

The Department of Education shows a 12 percent increase in the number of requests in response to which records have been released in full when compared with the previous year’s annual report. In 2009, 720 records were released in full compared to 644 in 2008; 32 percent of requests received responses with records released in full. However, in 2009, 859 records were released in part compared to 1,029 in 2008, which indicates a 17 percent decrease in the number of requests in response to which records were partially released.



The Department of Education is taking a number of steps to improve timeliness in responding to requests and to administrative appeals. These steps include:

Improving FOIA intake procedures. The Department's FOIA Service Center has created standard operating procedures to ensure, at intake, that: only perfected requests are sent to a program office for search and processing; requests are assigned and electronically sent to the correct program office; and a target date is issued for when the case should be completed. Determinations regarding requests for fee waivers and expedited processing are made and communicated to the requesters by the intake team and issues are resolved before the case is assigned to a program office.

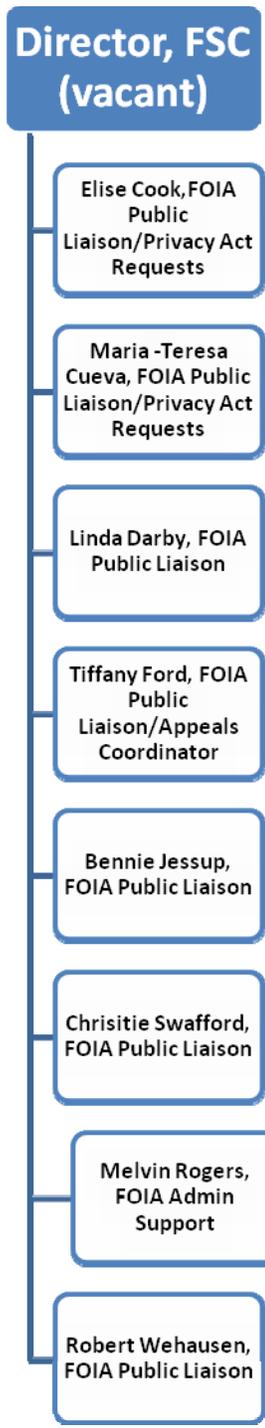
Creating access to documents in advance of receiving FOIA requests. The Department's FOIA Service Center assists program offices with populating the FOIA e-Reading Room with frequently requested documents, proactively released documents, and discretionarily released documents. The Department is providing access to these types of documents using hyperlinks, located in the e-Reading Room, to lead requesters directly to program offices' websites, making it easier for the public to locate information.

Increase awareness of Department's response to FOIA requests. Monthly, the Department's FOIA Service Center disseminates a Department-wide monthly report of overdue cases. Since many program offices use their own FOIA tracking mechanisms, the dissemination of this report provides an opportunity to ensure the integrity of the data within the case management workflow system. The report highlights the Department's total number of overdue cases, the number overdue by program office, number of days overdue, and average age median ages of cases. Additionally, the FOIA Service Center conducts bi-weekly appeals meetings to ensure new appeals are acknowledged and tracked and necessary supporting documentation is forwarded to the Office of the General Counsel for review.

The Department of Education is committed to assisting with the new Office of Government Information Services' FOIA mediation efforts.

[FOIA Service Center Organizational Chart and Contact Information \(as of 6/2/10\)](#)

FOIA Requester Service Center and Appeals Line—202-401-8365





5. Congressional Requests for Information

Aligned to goals:

1.3: Improve the timeliness of FOIA processing and document release.

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

The Department of Education's Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs (OLCA) has a wide range of responsibilities, the most important of which is to coordinate all Department matters relating 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 that communicates the administration's position on education issues, career staff for legislative 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, to prepare for legislative hearings, and to schedule and facilitate meetings between members of Congress and Department senior officers.

The inquiries that are received by OLCA are tracked through the Department's correspondence control system. Each issue submitted through a Congressional inquiry is assigned to the appropriate principal office within the Department for response. Responses are typically completed within three to four weeks, depending on the complexity of the inquiry.

Congressional members can contact OLCA through its main telephone lines at 202-401-1028 or 202-401-0020. Electronic mail can be submitted to olca@ed.gov. Correspondence can also be mailed to 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-3100.

OLCA is in daily contact with members of Congress. This interaction ensures that the initiatives of Congress and the Department are



achieved. (See [OLCA](#)). A list of OLCA staff can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/olca/contact.html> and is reproduced below.

Key OLCA Staff

Gabriella Gomez—Assistant Secretary
Lloyd Horwich—Deputy Assistant Secretary Jodie Fingland—Chief of Staff

OLCA Legislative Policy Staff

Doris Dixon—Legislative Affairs Specialist
Cynthia Hammond—Legislative Affairs Specialist
Linda Wilson—Legislative Affairs Specialist
Crystal Martinez—Confidential Assistant
Will Ragland—Confidential Assistant
Kristen Adams—Confidential Assistant
Shannon Diamant—Special Assistant
Thomas M. Kelley—Legislative Congressional Affairs Specialist
Jeffrey Chapman Jr.—Assistant to Thomas M. Kelley

OLCA Congressional Staff

Michael Hamlin—Congressional Liaison Specialist/Casework
Theresa Toye—Congressional Liaison Specialist/Correspondence
Allison Hester—Program Support Assistant
Barbara "Birdie" Dorsey—Program Support Assistant
Chuenee Boston—Grant Specialist
Jerine Coley—Office Automation Clerk

Executive Administrative Staff

Paula Shipp—Executive Officer
Lisa Carter—Management and Program Analyst

Contact information for this office is:
E-mail: olca@ed.gov
Phone: 202-401-0020 OR 202-401-1028



IV. Department Roadmap for Incorporating Principles of Openness Into Core Agency Missions

We will continue to build on the solid foundation put in place during this inaugural year of open government. Our next steps will shore up this foundation and address sustainability by (1) institutionalizing open government practices with standards and procedures to ensure that these principles are adopted across the agency, and (2) ensuring that the Open Government Plan continues to be strategically aligned with the agency's mission as our strategic plan evolves and we work with Congress to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. We will:

1. Institutionalize core principles across the Department: As the smallest Cabinet-level agency with just over 4,000 *full-time equivalent* (FTE) staff, but the fourth largest as measured by funding appropriation, the majority of the Department's resources are appropriately dedicated to the program offices. These program offices oversee grant programs, which means that central support staff resources are limited. For open government to fully succeed at the Department, the practices developed over the past year must be internalized and institutionalized at the program office level. Over the next year, the Department will:
 - a. *Develop guiding standards for grant application transparency that can be applied across programs.*

Aligned to goals:

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

Every grant program is different, but all should be subject to transparency principles. The Department has set a new standard for end-to-end transparency over the last year. We posted initial and approved applications for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund and School Improvement Fund, and applications, scores, and comments for Race to the Top applications. These programs invited State-level participants, so the number of applications is relatively low. The Department is undertaking two different but equally high-profile *ARRA* competitions—the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and the revamped Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). The Department has received a large number of applications for the i3 Fund and will have to use different approaches to achieve transparency on this scale. After gaining experience applying transparency principles to these diverse programs, the Department



will develop a consistent set of standards to implement across all grant programs and communicate best practices to aid in effective execution of those standards. Our timeline is as follows.

- April 2010—develop transparency policy for i3 (Completed)
- December 2010—develop transparency policy for TIF
- September 2010—publish competition results for both i3 and TIF
- October–December 2010—develop Departmental guiding standards and procedures for competitive grant transparency, provide examples of Best Practices representing the range of approaches for achieving transparency for different types of grants.

- b. *Develop guiding standards for financial transparency that can be applied across programs.*

Aligned to goals:

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

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

The Department has provided significant transparency into the flow of ARRA education grants to States through weekly agency reporting and quarterly recipient reporting. To increase transparency in State expenditures of Department funding, this level of reporting will be applied to non-ARRA programs on an ongoing basis. Over the coming year, the Department will develop user-friendly approaches, similar to the current ARRA weekly spending reports aggregated by State and by program, to presenting the State- and program-level funding already available on USASpending.gov at a granular level. In addition, the implementation of FFATA sub-award reporting will provide the Department with a new and more detailed source of transparency into the flow of funds. When this information becomes available, the Department will work to aggregate it in a format meaningful to Department stakeholders, similar to the current quarterly I Section 1512 reports posted on ed.gov. Our timeline is as follows.

- October–December 2010—program spending report systems developed and tested



- October–June 2011—FFATA sub-award reporting procedures developed and implemented
 - July 2011–December 2011—FFATA sub-award reports developed and tested
- c. *Develop procedures for updating Web content at the office, initiative, and program levels.*

Aligned to goal:

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

The Department's current Web design and content management workflow are barriers to effective use of the Web for many Department offices, initiatives, and programs. These barriers are, in turn, barriers to open government. We aim to lower these barriers through the adoption of a streamlined approach to content management, using a unified, open-source Web publishing technology, and more flexible templates for Web pages. It will be easier for offices, initiatives, and programs to post Web content quickly and display it more flexibly to meet their needs and their stakeholders' needs. As a result, we expect to see more effective use of the Web spread throughout our agency. As this system is implemented, we expect to see offices, initiatives, and programs posting news, information about upcoming competitions and workshops, slideshows from technical assistance workshops, schedules of upcoming events, and more. They will be able to engage with the public and stakeholders. To optimize execution of this significant change, the Department will take a phased approach, piloting the program in a limited number of offices, then phasing it in gradually, integrating learning with each successive implementation.

Our timeline is as follows.

- May–August 2010—pilot program Web publishing technology transition
- September–December 2010—phased transition to offices and initiatives
- May–Jun 2011—unified Web publishing technology available to all offices and initiatives



- September–December 2011—unified Web publishing technology (or alternatives as required) available to all programs

d. *Rationalize program content sources.*

Aligned to goal:

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

The Department currently supports both an annual paper published source of program information (the *Guide to Education Programs*) and a real-time, Web-based source of program information. This dual system is inefficient and increases the risk of outdated information, threatening transparency. Assuming resources are approved to fund this project, the Department will integrate these two programs in 2011.

- July–September 2010—integration funding requested
- October–March 2011—integration project under way

e. *Address regulatory and statutory challenges affecting open government*

Aligned to goals:

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.

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

Data governance, including security, privacy policy, and IT investment management, is guided by a complex combination of laws, regulations, and directives that affect multiple levels of government, institutions, and organizations. The Department takes these requirements seriously and has mature, operating governance structures that place controls over all technology used to implement these initiatives. We will augment existing governance structures to address new challenges resulting from inconsistencies between the many regulations affecting rule-making and the realities of social networking and 21st-century technology. The Department will convene a working group, including OGC, OCIO, and core program offices to work with OMB-OIRA to develop a consistent approach to these issues at both the agency and federal levels.



- July–September 2011—working group membership and charter defined
- September–December 2010—preliminary solutions identified
- January–June 2011—final recommendation and implementation

2. Ensure Strategic Alignment:

Aligned to goal:

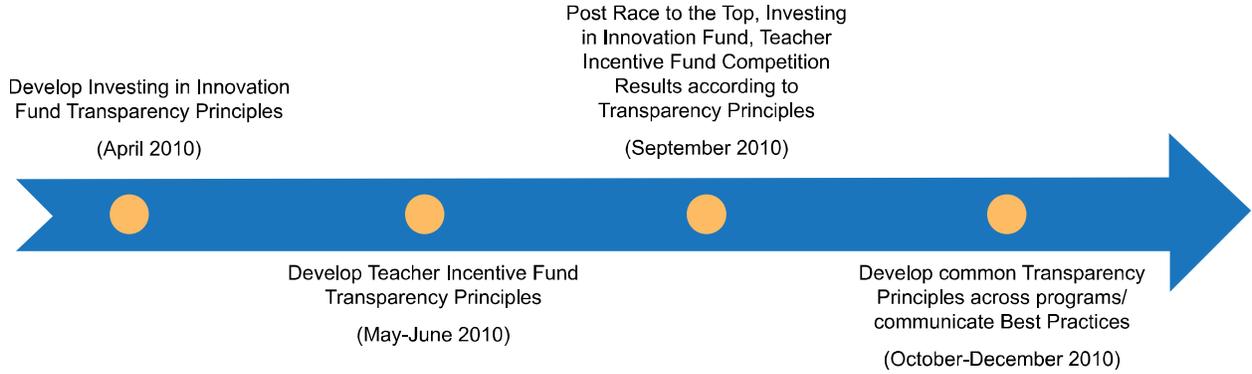
4.1: Encourage openness and communication about effectiveness within the Department.

The Department is currently at a pivotal point in its history. With unprecedented sources of funding through *ARRA* we are executing groundbreaking competitions, including Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants, Investing in Innovation Fund, and Teacher Incentive Fund. We have proposed significant changes to *ESEA*, our largest appropriation driving many of our core programs. The Department's strategies will be fine-tuned as we gain experience with these new programs, and the final structure of *ESEA* will have significant implications for our Ed Data Express Flagship Initiative. The Department intends this Open Government Plan to function as a living document, continually subject to change as we gain experience with the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration, and as the agency's core principles evolve with continued strategic planning and *ESEA* reauthorization.

- July–September 2010—preview 2011 strategic alignment budget to ensure consistency with Open Government Plan
- September 2010—review current Open Government Plan to align with final Department Strategic Plan and *ESEA* reauthorization status
- October–December 2010—finalize objectives of the Flagship Initiative



Institutionalize Grant Award Transparency

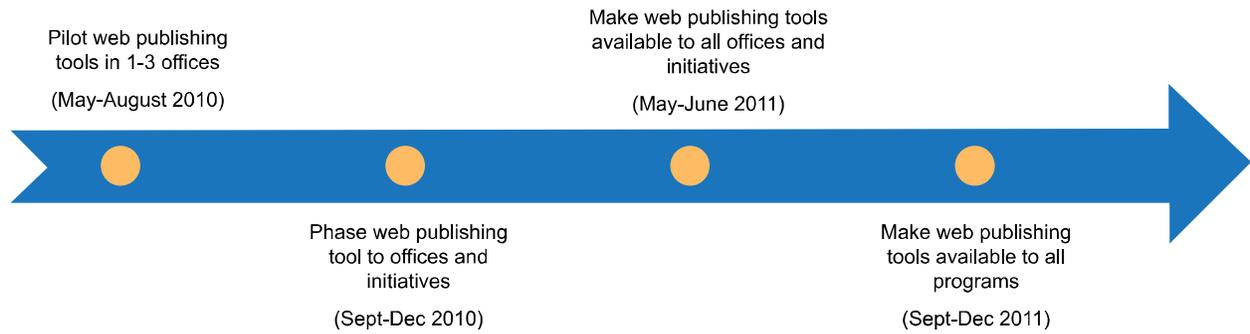


Institutionalize Financial Transparency

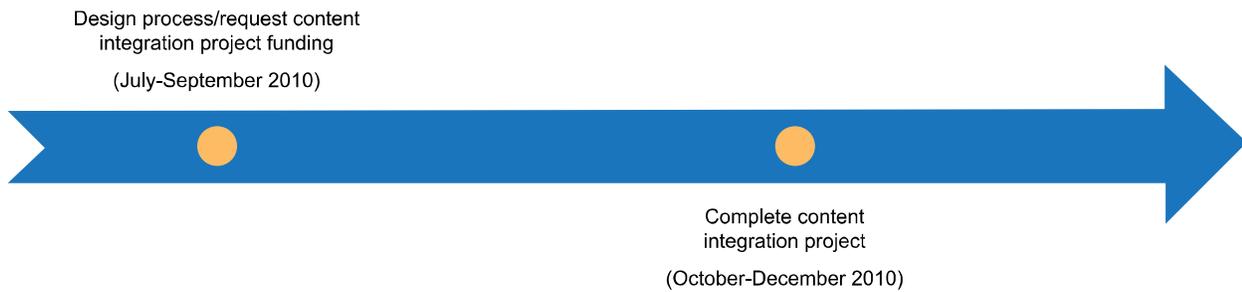




Simplify Web Content Update Procedures

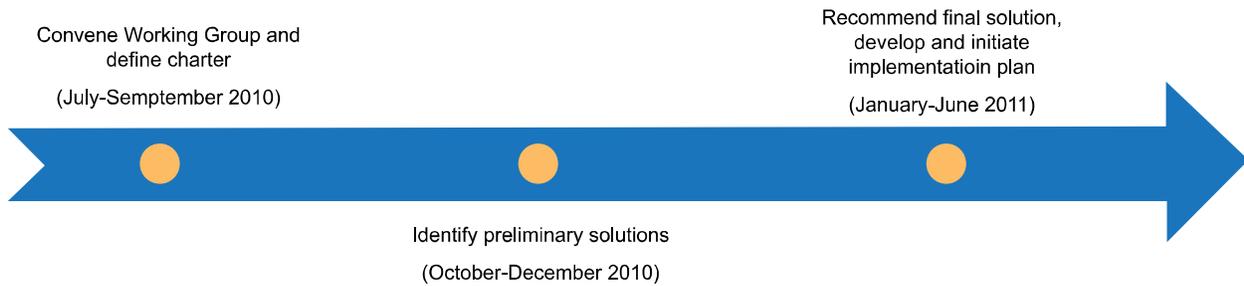


Rationalize Program Content Sources

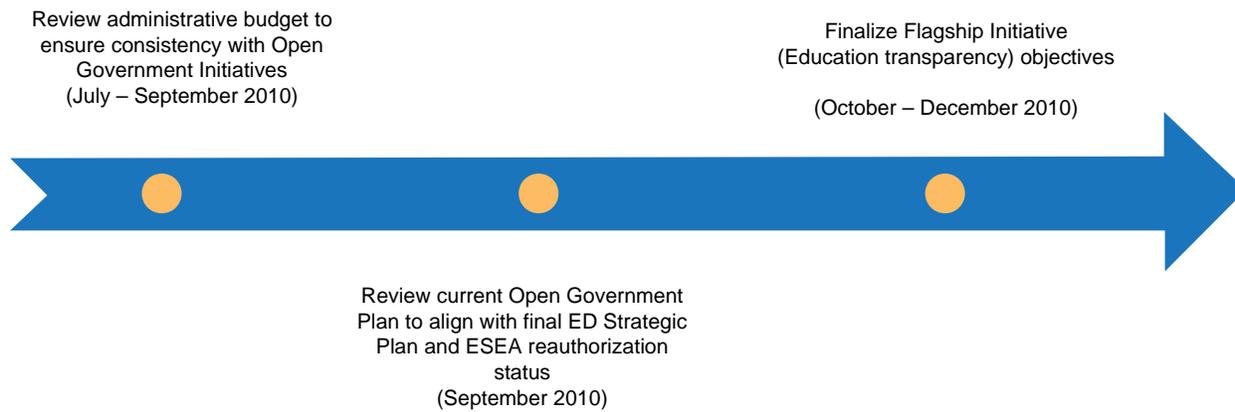




Address Data Governance Regulatory / Statutory Issues



Ensure Strategic Alignment





V. Conclusion

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

In writing this plan, we have addressed the requirements of the President and his staff for developing the Department's Open Government Plan. While doing this, we have uncovered limitations to our 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 we at the Department are 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 we can continuously serve the public better. Applying them as values to our business of supporting the education community will enable the Department to institutionalize transparency, participation, and collaboration; in effect, we will write these values on the "DNA" of our institutional culture, memory, and knowledge. By doing this, we believe we will be laying the groundwork for transforming the Department to meet the requirements of the President and the needs of the people.

We look forward to the public's feedback on how to improve our Open Government Plan. The plan is still developing, and it will be improved significantly by the public's suggestions. To provide comments, please visit our open government initiative website at www.ed.gov/open or send us an e-mail at opengov@ed.gov. We also welcome specific questions, and we will do our best to respond as quickly and thoughtfully as possible. Please understand that this plan is just the first step in enhancing transparency, participation, and collaboration at the U.S. Department of



Education. We look forward to taking additional steps with public input and support, and we intend to take the public's comments into account when updating this plan.



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