FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION

Goal: To contribute to the achievement of the National Education Goals by supporting nationally significant and innovative projects for improving K-12 education.

Relationship of Program to Volume 1, Department-wide Objectives: The Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) supports all of the objectives under Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan by funding projects that help all students reach challenging academic standards and become prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment.

FY 2000—$243,864,000

FY 2001—$137,150,000 (Requested budget)

OBJECTIVE 1: SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS OF HIGH QUALITY.

Indicator 1.1 Nationally significant projects and supportive of strategic priorities: Ninety percent of all FIE-funded projects will support the Department's strategic priorities in elementary and secondary education, and 90 percent of the peer-reviewed projects will receive at least an 80 percent rating for national significance.

Targets and Performance Data					Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
	Alignment With Strategic Priorities		**National Significance**		**Status:** Target met for alignment with strategic priorities; negative trend away from the target for national significance.	**Source:** Review by Assistant Secretary's Office, 1999; peer-reviewer ratings of applications, 1999. *Frequency:* Annually. *Next Update:* 2000.
Year	**Actual Performance**	**Performance Targets**	**Actual Performance**	**Performance Targets**	**Explanation:** 100 percent of all FIE projects in both FY 1998 and FY 1999 supported the Department's priorities. Earmarked projects were not included in the analysis of national significance because their applications are not peer reviewed. Of peer-reviewed projects, 83 percent of FY 1998 projects scored at least 80 percent for national significance, while only 72 percent of FY 1999 projects scored at least 80 percent for national significance. The average rating for national significance decreased from 88 percent in FY 1998 to 84 percent in FY 1999. 100 percent of the competitively awarded character education projects scored 80 percent or above for national significance, but only 60 percent of report directives and 75 percent of unsolicited projects met the target. The average score for national significance for character education projects was 92 percent, for report directives 78 percent, and for unsolicited projects 89 percent. Non-competitive projects are often locally focused and their significance cannot easily be assessed from their original applications. However, overall, the projects meet high standards and are expected to produce nationally significant results by the end of the project period.	**Validation Procedure:** Data collected from peer-review instruments. **Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements:** Available data assess only the potential of projects based on their original applications for funding. The program office is developing plans to conduct external review of selected key projects at the end of their grant period and will drop this indicator when improved data on project outcomes and impacts become available in 2001.
1999:	**100%**	**100%**	**72%**	**90%**		
2000:		100%		90%		
2001:		100%		90%		
2002:	Indicator to be replaced with improved data on project outcomes and impacts.					

Indicator 1.2 High quality: Ninety percent of peer-reviewed projects will receive at least an 80 percent rating for quality of project design.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Criteria: project design			**Status:** Negative trend away from the target. **Explanation:** Earmarked projects were not included in the analysis of project design because their applications are not peer reviewed. Of peer-reviewed projects, 66 percent of FY 1998 projects scored at least 80 percent for project design while only 46 percent of FY 1999 projects achieved the target. The average rating for project design also decreased from 82 percent in FY 1998 to 79 percent in FY 1999. Competitively selected projects scored noticeably higher than non-competitively awarded projects. Eighty-nine percent of the character education projects scored 80 percent or above for project design, but only 36 percent of report directives and 38 percent of the unsolicited projects met the target. However, the average score for project design for character education projects was 92 percent, for report directives 75 percent, and for unsolicited projects 77 percent. Although noncompetitive applicants appear to have little incentive to strive for high standards in writing applications, more data are needed to draw firm conclusions about the quality of the design of FIE projects.	**Source:** Peer-reviewer ratings of applications, 1999. *Frequency:* Annually. *Next Update:* 2000. **Validation Procedure:** Data collected from peer-review instruments. **Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements:** Available data assess only the potential of projects based on their original applications for funding. The program office is developing plans to conduct external review of selected key projects at the end of their grant period and will drop this indicator when improved data on project outcomes and impact become available in 2001.
Year	**Actual Performance**	**Performance Targets**		
1999:	**48%**	**90%**		
2000:		90%		
2001:		90%		
2002:	Indicator to be replaced with improved data on project outcomes and impacts.			

Indicator 1.3 Progress: Eighty percent of projects will be judged to have successfully implemented strategies or yielded results that can contribute to improving education.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
Year	**Actual Performance**	**Performance Targets**	**Status:** Unable to judge at this time. **Explanation:** The indicator was modified to ensure that information is available on the extent to which projects are likely to contribute to improving education. Data will be reported by types of activities. The modification ensures a more rigorous review of project outcomes. The prior indicator was that "90 percent of all FIE projects will show evidence in their continuation and final reports of progress on measures of their project-specific indicators."	**Source:** Final reports, which will be externally reviewed. *Frequency:* Annually. *Next Update:* 2000. **Validation Procedure:** No data to validate. **Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements:** N/A.
1999:	**Not available***	**N/A**		
2000:	Baseline to be set	80%		
2001:		80%		
2002:		80%		
*In 1999, 99 percent of projects made substantial progress on their project-specific indicators, a less rigorous measure. Information on the extent to which projects have successfully implemented strategies or yielded results that can contribute to improving education will be obtained for a sample of projects in 2000.				

KEY STRATEGIES

Strategies Continued from 1999

- To assist the projects in using data to improve practice, the program will closely monitor the formative evaluations of funded projects and improve the documentation of outcomes and impacts.

New or Strengthened Strategies

- To assess the impact of projects, the program will develop and implement a strategy for conducting external review of selected key projects.
- To provide technical assistance on improving project evaluation, to facilitate networking and collaboration among similar projects, and to capture lessons learned by projects, the program will convene all Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) grantees annually.
- To leverage the results of Fund for the Improvement of Education projects and contribute to the body of knowledge about educational reform, the program will develop and disseminate a summary of the findings from this annual meeting and will work with ED-Pubs to produce and disseminate significant lessons learned from Fund for the Improvement of Education projects.

HOW THIS PROGRAM COORDINATES WITH OTHER FEDERAL ACTIVITIES

- To study the effects of testing and assessment on policies for educational and human resources, Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) collaborates with the Departments of Defense and Labor, with the National Research Center's Board on Testing and Assessment, and with various offices within the Department.
- To increase knowledge about the effects of early growth and development on later educational success, Fund for the Improvement of Education collaborates on early childhood research with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Science Foundation (NSF).
- To improve mathematics and science teaching and learning, Fund for the Improvement of Education collaborates with the National Academy of Sciences on studies to examine teacher-training practices and to compare advanced placement U.S. students with those from other nations in their performance in mathematics and science.
- To improve literacy, Fund for the Improvement of Education is working with the National Center for Learning Disabilities to study the role of reading ability in successful lifelong learning.

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING PROGRAM GOAL

- It is difficult to build coherence across such a diverse set of activities as those supported by FIE.
- It is difficult to develop standard measures to assess the quality and impact of such diverse activities.

INDICATOR CHANGES

From FY 1999 Annual Plan (two years old)

Adjusted

- Indicator 1.1, High Quality, was divided into three more-specific indicators in the FY 2000 plan.
- A new objective and two indicators for dissemination were added to the FY 2000 plan.

Dropped

- Indicator 2.1, National tests, and 3.1, Support effective schools and teachers, were dropped from the FY 2000 plan because they were not focused on outcomes.

From FY 2000Annual Plan (last year)

Adjusted

- Indicator 1.3, Progress, has been adjusted to ensure that data are available on how well the projects address key authorized purposes of the FIE funds. The revised indicator measures the extent to which completed projects are of high quality and address nationally significant issues, and also the extent to which the projects improve the quality of education (for example, by improving the quality of instruction, improving the curriculum, or improving the likelihood that students will meet challenging state student performance standards). Data will be reported by types of activities.

Dropped

- Objective 2 and Indicators 2.1 and 2.2 for dissemination have been dropped from the FY 2001 performance plan as an objective and indicators because they have been incorporated into strategies. They will be tracked for program management purposes.

New—None.