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**Project and Program Measures
for Government Performance
and Results Act (GPRA)**

Reporting Period: 2023–24

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Introduction

The Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program aims to provide counseling and information on college admissions to qualified adults; students participating in high-risk behaviors; and high school dropouts aged 19 or older¹ who want to enter or continue a program of postsecondary education. To evaluate the success of the EOC program, the U.S. Department of Education's annual *Government Performance and Results Act* (GPRA) report includes two indicators of EOC program success and one measure of EOC program efficiency.

Measures of EOC program success and efficiency are calculated using *Annual Performance Report* (APR) data. The 2023–24 reporting year was the third year of the 2021–26 funding cycle,² and the calculation rules for participant outcomes and program efficiency in 2023–24 are the same as those used in previous reporting years (see the Appendix).

Program Outcome Measures for EOC Grantees

The two EOC program outcome measures are postsecondary enrollment (PSE) rates and the percentage of participants classified as both low-income and potential first-generation college students.

Postsecondary enrollees are college-ready participants who enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the school year or by the next academic term. Participants are classified as college ready if they received a high school diploma during the reporting year or already had a high school diploma (but were not enrolled in college) when they first received program services.

The second outcome measure for the EOC program is the percentage of participants classified as both low-income and potential first-generation college students. The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires that at least two-thirds of the participants in an EOC project must be low-income and potential first-generation college students.³

¹ EOC grantees may serve individuals younger than 19 years old if the participants cannot be served by the Talent Search program.

² All of the 181 projects funded in 2023–24 were also funded in 2022–23. One project (Eastern Gateway Community College [P066A210050]) did not submit APR due to the college's closure and was excluded from the analysis.

³ Low-income individual means an individual whose family's taxable income did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount in the calendar year preceding the year in which the individual initially participated in the project. The poverty level amount is determined using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Potential first-generation college student means: (1) an individual, neither of whose natural or adoptive parents received a bachelor's degree; (2) an individual who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one parent and whose supporting parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree; or (3) an individual who, prior to the age of 18, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or adoptive parent.

Selected Findings for Program Outcome Measures

The percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions and the percentage of participants who were low-income and potential first-generation college students are provided in Table 1 (see Excel workbook). The total number of participants are also provided in Table 1.

Postsecondary Education Enrollment

- In 2023–24, the EOC program-level PSE rate was 57.2 percent for all college-ready participants and did not meet the Department’s 2023–24 program-level goal of 62.0 percent. The 2023–24 rate was 1.8 percentage points higher than the 2022–23 program-level PSE rate of 55.4 percent (Table 1).
- Among the 180 grantees that submitted APR and were funded in both 2022–23 and 2023–24, 28 grantees (or 16 percent) experienced a decline of at least 10 percentage points in their PSE rates between the two reporting years, compared to 31 grantees out of 168 (or 18 percent) that did between 2021–22 and 2022–23.

Participant Eligibility

- In 2023–24, 72.7 percent of EOC participants were classified as low-income and potential first-generation students, which was about the same as the percent of EOC participants who were classified as low-income and potential first-generation students in 2022–23 (72.8 percent, Table 1).
- Sixteen grantees (out of 180) in 2023–24 did not meet the Higher Education Opportunity Act requirement that two-thirds of participants are classified as both low-income and potential first-generation college students.

Postsecondary Enrollment by Level of Postsecondary Institution

The percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in two-year, four-year, “other” (vocational or proprietary), or unknown postsecondary institutions—along with the overall PSE rate—are provided in Table 2 (see Excel workbook). Percentages are presented at both the program level and the project level, and they are also aggregated by the sector of grantee.

- Overall, the largest percentage of postsecondary enrollees enrolled in two-year institutions (60.5 percent), followed by four-year institutions (32.1 percent) and “other” institutions (6.1 percent).
- Between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 reporting years, the percentage of participants enrolling in four-year institutions increased by 1 percentage point (31.1 percent versus 32.1 percent); the percentage of participants enrolling in two-year institutions decreased by 2.2 percentage points (62.7 percent versus 60.5 percent); and the percentage of participants enrolling in “other” institutions increased by 0.6 percentage points (5.5 percent versus 6.1 percent).

- In 2023–24, the percentage of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in four-year postsecondary institutions was larger among participants served by four-year grantees (47.3 percent) than among participants served by nonprofit and “other” institutions (27.2 percent) or two-year grantees (20.4 percent). In the 2022–23 reporting year, the enrollment rate was 47.1 percent, 25.8 percent, and 18.3 percent, respectively.

Limitations of Program Outcome Findings

The program-level and grantee-level results in Table 1 and Table 2 should be interpreted with caution. First, these results were created using project-level data, which provides little information about why grantees may experience more or less success in terms of postsecondary enrollment. Data are not collected at the participant level, so which factors or experiences may be related to higher probabilities of enrollment in postsecondary education cannot be determined. Similarly, differences between individual projects that may account for differences in PSE rates across grantees cannot be measured. For example, grantees may have lower-than-average PSE rates because they serve more students with a high risk of academic failure and low educational aspirations. In addition, one must consider that the performance measure refers exclusively to the outcomes of college-ready program participants, who accounted for only a bit more than half (55.4 percent) of all program participants in 2023–24 (see Table 1 and Table 2). Although the PSE measure is unquestionably the most important performance measure for the EOC program, the program also is presumably providing a variety of services to the remaining program participants. For example, EOC programs provide services to students who are not yet college-ready to boost their progress toward postsecondary education enrollment. In addition, in 2023–24, 20.4 percent of EOC participants were already postsecondary students when they first received program services during the reporting year. Because the APR does not collect information about subsequent college enrollment for these EOC participants, they are not included in GPRA calculations.

Efficiency Measure for EOC Grantees

The efficiency measure for the EOC program is defined as the annual cost per participant with a successful outcome. In the 2023–24 reporting year, participants were classified as experiencing successful outcomes if they enrolled in postsecondary education during the reporting year (including the subsequent spring term) or persisted in secondary education or an alternative education program during the reporting year.

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

In the 2023–24 reporting year, persistence in secondary education was measured among all participants who did not have a high school diploma or credential at the time of first service during the reporting year. Participants who were enrolled in high school or in an alternative education program in the fall of the next academic year were considered to have persisted in secondary education. Persistence in secondary education is considered a successful participant outcome because these students are making progress toward achieving the ultimate goal of enrolling in postsecondary education.

The cost per successful participant outcome across all grantees was calculated by summing the amount of funding across grantees and dividing by the aggregated number of successful participant outcomes across grantees.

The cost per successful participant outcome and the percentage of all participants who experienced a successful outcome are provided in Table 3 (see Excel workbook).

Selected Findings

The efficiency measure at the program level and aggregated by the sector of grantee is provided in Table 3. In general, a lower annual cost per successful outcome tends to indicate higher efficiency.

- The program-level efficiency measure shows that each successful participant outcome cost \$679, on average.
- Overall, the average annual cost per successful participant outcome decreased from \$732 in 2022–23 to \$679 in 2023–24. A slight decrease in EOC funding (i.e., there was a 0.1 percent decrease in total funding across all grantees)—combined with about 8 percent more participants experiencing a successful outcome—explains this decrease in the annual cost per successful participant between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 reporting years.
- At the program level, 44.7 percent of 2023–24 EOC participants experienced a successful outcome, which was 1 percentage point higher than the 2022–23 rate (43.7 percent).
- Grantees that were not institutions of higher education experienced a lower success rate (43.2 percent) than grantees that were two-year institutions (45.4 percent) or four-year institutions (45.1 percent).
- Four- and two-year grantee institutions spent less money per successful outcome (\$686 and \$651, respectively) compared to grantees that were not higher-education institutions (\$709).

Limitations of Efficiency Findings

The cost per successful participant outcome ranged widely across projects, with little as \$27 for a grantee, while 15 grantees spent over \$2,000. When examining grantee-level efficiency measures, we should consider the percentage of participants who experienced a successful outcome. If grantees served more participants than they were funded to serve, then the program may appear more efficient, even if the percentage of participants experiencing successful outcomes was low. In addition, we should consider the educational status of the participants

served by certain grantees who may specialize in serving students for whom a successful outcome cannot be reported. For example, the successful outcomes that are used to calculate program efficiency—postsecondary enrollment and persistence in secondary education—do not apply to EOC participants who were already postsecondary students or to participants whose education status was “other” (e.g., participants at correctional facilities) when they first received program services during the reporting year. Because the APR does not collect outcome data for EOC participants who fall within these educational statuses, program efficiency measures may not reflect all EOC participants served. In other words, while these students cannot contribute to the numerator of an efficiency rate, they are added to the denominator of an efficiency rate. Some of these participants may have both benefitted from EOC and achieved successful outcomes that are not measured; therefore, adding them in the denominator but not the numerator lowers the measured efficiency rate. For these reasons, the efficiency measure should not be used to compare individual projects in the absence of knowledge about project goals and target populations because doing so may lead to flawed conclusions.

Appendix

In this appendix, the calculation rules are provided for the following: postsecondary enrollment (PSE) rate and the percentage of participants who were classified as low-income and potential first-generation college students (Table 1); the percentage of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in specific levels of postsecondary institutions (Table 2); and the efficiency measure (Table 3).

PSE Rate

The PSE rate is the percentage of college-ready participants who enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the school year or by the next academic term. For the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program, college-ready participants were identified as students who received a high school diploma during the reporting year or students who already had a diploma (but were not enrolled in college) at the time of first service received during the reporting year.

Postsecondary enrollment is only measured among these college-ready participants in the Annual Performance Report (APR) data. The APR data fields used to calculate the number of college-ready participants include the following:

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

Postsecondary enrollees (i.e., the numerator for the PSE rate) are college-ready participants who enrolled in a postsecondary institution during the school year or by the next academic term.

Postsecondary enrollees were identified using the following APR fields:

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

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

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

Participant Eligibility Rate

The participant eligibility rate is the percentage of participants classified as low-income and potential first-generation college students. The APR data field II.B.1 (LowFirstPNO) was used to identify the number of participants who were in this category. The percentage of participants in this category was calculated by dividing the number of low-income, potential first-generation college students by the total number of participants (APR data field II.A.3 [TotPNO]). The calculation of the second GPRA measure is as follows:

- Participant eligibility rate = II.B.1 / II.A.3

Postsecondary Enrollment by Level of Postsecondary Institution

Section IV.E of the EOC APR asks grantees to report the number of postsecondary enrollees who enrolled in different levels of postsecondary institutions.

- To calculate the number of participants enrolling in two-year institutions, the data fields IV.E.1 (Pub2yrInstNo, public two-year institutions) and IV.E.2 (Pvt2yrInstNo, private or nonprofit two-year institutions) were summed.
- To calculate the number of participants enrolling in four-year institutions, the data fields IV.E.3 (Pub4yrInstNo, public four-year institutions) and IV.E.4 (Pvt4yrInstNo, private or nonprofit four-year institutions) were summed.
- To calculate the number of participants attending other levels of institutions, the data fields IV.E.5 (PubVocOrTechInstNo, public or nonprofit vocational and technical institution) and IV.E.6 (PropSchNO, proprietary school) were summed. Data field IV.E.7 (Part4EUnknownNO) provided the number of participants who enrolled in postsecondary education in an unknown institution level.

To calculate the distribution of enrollees across the different levels of institutions, the number of participants in each group was divided by the total number of college-ready participants who enrolled in postsecondary education (the sum of IV.D.1 and IV.D.2, or IV.E.8 – Part4ETotalNO). These percentages were aggregated (1) to the program level and (2) by grantee sector (i.e., four-year institutions, two-year institutions, and other organizations).

Calculation of the Efficiency Measure: The Cost per Successful Participant Outcome

The cost per participant with a successful outcome was calculated by dividing the amount of EOC funding by the number of participants who experienced a successful outcome. This efficiency measure was calculated at the program level and by grantee sector. Participants were considered to have experienced a successful outcome if they did the following:

- **Persisted in Secondary Education.** This includes participants who lacked a secondary school credential at the time of first service and were enrolled in an alternative education program at the end of the reporting year but did not complete the program (IV.A.2,

AltEdEnrldNo), as well as participants who were enrolled in high school but did not complete a diploma (IV.A.3, HSEnrldNotComplNo).

- **Enrolled in Postsecondary Education.** This includes participants who received a secondary school diploma or the equivalent during the reporting year and enrolled in a postsecondary education program (IV.D.1), as well as participants who had a secondary school diploma or credential at the time of first service in the reporting year and enrolled in a postsecondary education program (IV.D.2).

To measure program efficiency in the 2023–24 reporting year, the number of successful participant outcomes was summed across grantees. The total amount of EOC funding is the amount of funding received by grantees that submitted complete APR data. The cost per successful participant outcome was calculated by summing the amount of funding across grantees and dividing by the aggregated number of successful participant outcomes across grantees:

- $\text{Efficiency measure} = 2023\text{--}24 \text{ funding} / (\text{IV.A.2} + \text{IV.A.3} + \text{IV.D.1} + \text{IV.D.2})$

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