

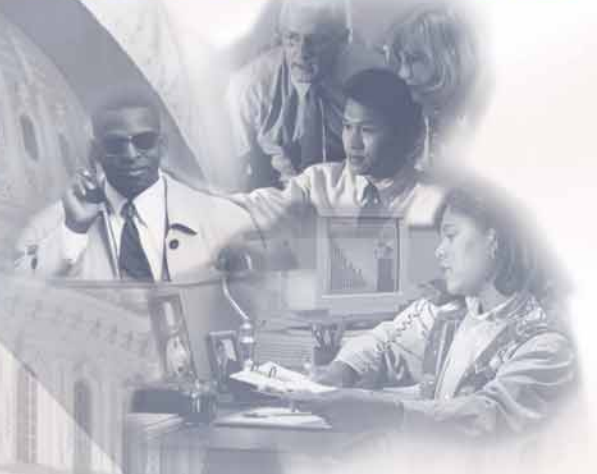


Parts of this plan have been revised.  
Clicking within this box will allow you  
to scroll through the revisions.

# EDUCATION/WORKFORCE ISSUES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE PLAN

2000-2002





# GAO'S MISSION

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its Constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

## CORE VALUES

### ACCOUNTABILITY

describes the nature of GAO's work. GAO helps the Congress oversee federal programs and operations to ensure accountability to the American people. GAO's evaluators, auditors, lawyers, economists, public policy analysts, information technology specialists, and other multidisciplinary professionals seek to enhance the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and credibility of the federal government both in fact and in the eyes of the American people. GAO accomplishes its mission through a variety of activities, including financial audits, program reviews, investigations, legal support, and program analyses.

### INTEGRITY

describes the high standards that GAO sets for itself in the conduct of its work. GAO takes a professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced approach to all of its activities. Integrity is the foundation of reputation, and GAO's approach to its work ensures both.

### RELIABILITY

describes GAO's goal for how its work is viewed by the Congress and the American public. GAO produces high-quality reports, testimony, briefings, legal opinions, and other products and services that are timely, accurate, useful, clear, and candid.

## FOREWARD

In fulfilling its mission, GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and activities; and provides analyses, options, recommendations, and other assistance to help the Congress make effective oversight, policy, and funding decisions. In this context, GAO works to continuously improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the federal government through the conduct of financial audits, program reviews and evaluations, analyses, legal opinions, investigations, and other services. Most of this work is based upon original data collection and analysis.

To ensure that GAO, in serving the Congress, targets the right issues, provides balanced perspectives, and develops practical recommendations, GAO regularly consults with the Congress and maintains relationships with a variety of federal, state, academic, and professional organizations. GAO also obtains the perspectives of applicable trade groups and associations and attends professional conferences. Moreover, GAO regularly coordinates its work with CRS, CBO, and agency Inspector General offices. Throughout, GAO's core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability are guiding principles.

In keeping with its mission and responsibilities, GAO has developed a strategic plan that includes four strategic goals and 21 related strategic objectives. To ensure that GAO's resources are directed to achieving its goals, a separate strategic plan underlies each objective. In support of GAO's goal of providing timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to address current and emerging challenges to the well-being and financial security of the American people, this strategic plan describes the performance goals GAO will use in supporting congressional and federal decisionmaking on an educated citizenry and a productive workforce.

This plan covers a 3-year period; however, because unanticipated events may significantly affect even the best of plans, GAO's planning process allows for updating this plan to respond quickly to emerging issues. If you have questions or desire information on additional or completed work related to this strategic objective, please call or e-mail me or Cynthia M. Fagnoni, who is cited on the following pages.

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# SERVING THE CONGRESS

## GAO'S STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK



### MISSION

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its Constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

### GOALS

PROVIDE TIMELY, QUALITY SERVICE TO THE CONGRESS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



TO ADDRESS CURRENT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES TO THE WELL-BEING AND FINANCIAL SECURITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUPPORT THE TRANSITION



TO RESPOND TO CHANGING SECURITY THREATS AND THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE

MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF GAO



BY BEING A MODEL ORGANIZATION FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



TO A MORE RESULTS-ORIENTED AND ACCOUNTABLE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### THEMES

**Demographics**      **Globalization**      **Quality of Life**      **Security**      **Technology**  
**Government Performance and Accountability**

### OBJECTIVES

Health care needs and financing  
 Retirement income security  
 Social safety net  
**EDUCATION/WORKFORCE ISSUES**  
 Effective system of justice  
 Community investment  
 Natural resources use and environmental protection  
 Physical infrastructure

Diffuse security threats  
 Military capabilities and readiness  
 Advancement of U.S. interests  
 Global market forces

Fiscal position of the government  
 Government financing and accountability  
 Governmentwide management reforms  
 Economy, efficiency, and effectiveness improvements in federal agencies

Client relations  
 Strategic and annual planning  
 Human capital  
 Core business and supporting processes  
 Information technology services

### CORE VALUES

**Accountability**      **Integrity**      **Reliability**

PROVIDE TIMELY,  
QUALITY SERVICE TO THE  
CONGRESS AND THE  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



TO ADDRESS  
CURRENT AND EMERGING  
CHALLENGES TO THE  
WELL-BEING AND  
FINANCIAL SECURITY  
OF THE  
AMERICAN PEOPLE

Health care needs and  
financing  
Retirement income security  
Social safety net  
**EDUCATION/WORKFORCE  
ISSUES**  
Effective system of justice  
Community investment  
Natural resources use and  
environmental protection  
Physical infrastructure

## AN EDUCATED CITIZENRY AND A PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE

An educated citizenry and a productive workforce are keys to the continued vitality of our democratic society and the vigor of our community. To this end, the government spends billions on programs aimed at fostering the development and education of our children. For example, the federal government invests about \$14 billion in early childhood development and child care programs, such as Head Start, but little is known about some of the services provided or the programs' impact. Another \$20 billion of federal funds is spent educating students at the elementary and secondary levels, but increasing concerns are being voiced about teaching approaches, support services, and the adequacy of infrastructure and technology, given the increasing size and diversity of school populations. Finally, policymakers have concerns about the government's investment in student financial aid, which now results in over \$40 billion of grants and loans annually, because of operational and financial integrity challenges.

Beyond basic educational needs, a productive economy also depends on effectively preparing workers to compete in the labor force, efficiently helping employers locate qualified candidates, and promoting safe and healthful workplaces for workers. The federal government invests more than \$50 billion on these activities. However, these systems are facing increasing challenges with demographic and workplace changes and new legislation such as welfare reform and the Workforce Investment Act.

GAO's strategic plan identifies six multiyear performance goals to support congressional and federal decisionmaking on an educated citizenry and a productive workforce. The following pages discuss the significance of the performance goals, the key efforts that will be undertaken, and the potential outcomes.

### *Performance Goals*

- Analyze the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Early Childhood Care and Education Programs in Serving Their Target Populations
- Assess Options for Federal, State, and Local Programs to Effectively Address Demographic Changes and the Infrastructure Needs of the Education System
- Assess Opportunities to Better Manage Education Program Costs and Better Target Federal Aid to the Neediest Students
- Analyze the Impact of the Recently Enacted Workforce Investment Act on the Delivery of Employment and Training Services
- Analyze Programs Designed to Raise Worker Skills and Ensure Employers Have the Skilled Workers They Need
- Assess the Success of Various Enforcement Strategies to Protect Workers While Minimizing Employers' Burden in the Changing Environment of Work



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## *Analyze the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Early Childhood Care and Education Programs in Serving Their Target Populations*

### *Significance*

The federal government invests \$14 billion annually in programs geared toward children from infancy to age 5—a developmental period where early investment may lead to a child’s long-term intellectual and language growth—with most of this spending focused on children from low-income or at-risk families. Child care is viewed as both a vital support to working families for achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency and a vehicle for helping prepare young children for school. However, the impact the programs are having on helping children prepare to enter school is still being debated. GAO’s recent work has led to a mandated study of Head Start, which, funded at over \$4 billion annually, is the largest federal early childhood education program. In addition, early childhood education services are provided through other programs, such as Title I, whose primary focus is not necessarily early childhood. The types (and extent) of services funded through programs with broader missions than early childhood education are unknown. Given that states and localities play the primary role ensuring that a basic level of quality of child care exists and individual states approach this task differently, concerns have also arisen about the quality of services being bought with federal money.



### *Key Efforts*

Catalogue the number of, and funding for, federal programs that support child care and early childhood education, and identify the range, accessibility, and effectiveness of programs available to low-income families

Assess the federal research agenda for Head Start and the entire early childhood education area and identify ways research results can be applied to improve the programs

Evaluate the management of the Head Start program

Analyze what early childhood services are provided through programs such as Title I, which funds early childhood education along with other education services

Determine whether states are enforcing the standards required by the Child Care and Development Block Grant

### *Potential Outcomes*

More effective use of federal funds aimed at improving child care and early childhood education

More effective services for low-income and at-risk children

Greater assurance that the federal investment in state and local child care programs is achieving positive results



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## *Assess Options for Federal, State, and Local Programs to Effectively Address Demographic Changes and the Infrastructure Needs of the Education System*

### *Significance*

Our country has placed a high priority on educating our children and will likely invest over \$14 billion in federal funds in elementary and secondary education in fiscal year 2000. Schools are faced with increasing challenges today as harder-to-serve populations, such as children from poor families, with disabilities, or with limited English proficiency, have been growing in size and require greater levels of educational and support services. In addition, there are concerns about whether existing educational facilities are adequate to meet the needs of 21st century students. There is also an increasing emphasis on assessing and improving student performance in key academic areas.



### *Key Efforts*

Analyze the effectiveness of Title I programs in addressing the needs of disadvantaged students

Assess how the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act affects the ability of schools to maintain safe school environments conducive to learning

Identify key issues in financing new construction and renovation of school facilities and assess federal programs that finance technology in schools

Analyze federal efforts to improve math and science curricula

### *Potential Outcomes*

More effective services provided to disadvantaged students

Improved congressional understanding of the relationship between special education and school violence

Better congressional understanding of the infrastructure needed for a world class education system

More effective efforts to improve math and science curricula

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CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Cynthia M. Fagnoni, Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security Issues, (202) 512-7215, [fagnonic.hehs@gao.gov](mailto:fagnonic.hehs@gao.gov)



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## *Assess Opportunities to Better Manage Education Program Costs and Better Target Federal Aid to the Neediest Students*

### *Significance*

The federal government annually provides over \$7 billion in Pell grants to college students from needy families in addition to billions in loan subsidies, with the goal of increasing access to higher education. Student financial aid programs are undergoing significant changes. During the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, intense debate arose over the yields lenders realize from participation in the Federal Family Education Loan Program, as the Congress looked for ways to lower program costs. College demographics and attendance patterns have changed in recent years, with increasing numbers of adult learners, nonnative English speakers, and part-time students, which may require an adjustment in how, and to whom, financial aid is disbursed. The Department of Education now administers its student financial assistance programs through a Performance-Based Organization, the first in the federal government, that was designed to improve service delivery and program management. The federal government also assists those who do not attend college through a number of programs, including ones aiding the transition from high school to the workplace, vocational education in and after high school, and adult basic education for those who never completed high school. Finally, through existing TRIO programs and the new Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs—establishing partnerships between colleges and middle schools—the government tries to identify young students with potential who might not otherwise attend college, to encourage and prepare them and their families for future college attendance.



### *Key Efforts*

Evaluate various market-based alternatives for determining FFELP lender yields and participation

Assess the equity of formulas or regulations determining financial aid distribution, needs analysis, and program eligibility

Evaluate the success of the PBO in solving long-standing financial and information management problems in grant and loan programs

Review spending on vocational education and other programs to determine what types of services are offered and how more meaningful education could be delivered

Analyze TRIO programs to determine who receives services and how widespread their impact is, and determine how well GEAR-UP partnerships work to improve both academic and financial preparation for the students served

### *Potential Outcomes*

Budgetary savings if the government can reduce the cost of subsidies to lenders

Improved equity in targeting scarce federal resources and increased higher education participation for students in low-income families

Informed congressional and agency decisions on ways to improve the management of student financial assistance programs

A better understanding of the system of programs offered to those who do not continue on to postsecondary education

Improvements in the TRIO programs and coordinated efforts as GEAR-UP begins operations

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## *Analyze the Impact of the Recently Enacted Workforce Investment Act on the Delivery of Employment and Training Services*

### *Significance*

A competitive national economy depends on effectively preparing workers to compete in the labor force and efficiently helping employers locate qualified job candidates. As a result, the federal government's investment in employment and training programs must ensure that the right services are provided in an efficient manner, while avoiding costly duplication of effort. Achieving these goals was enhanced when the Congress recently passed sweeping new legislation, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which consolidates a portion of the job training programs for adults and youth and establishes a coherent nationwide service delivery system—the one-stop career center system. While many states were already establishing one-stop career centers, WIA expands their reach, taking them into all local areas and involving more agencies than ever before. This new system may fundamentally change the way many federally funded training programs operate at all levels—federal, state, and local.



### *Key Efforts*

Evaluate the implementation of the WIA at the federal level

Evaluate the extent to which states are ready to implement the requirements of the WIA, including the establishment of statewide one-stop career center systems

Assess the effectiveness of job training programs under the WIA in preparing youth to become self-sufficient

Assess accountability structures in a decentralized workforce development system

### *Potential Outcomes*

Enhanced congressional and agency understanding of the extent to which the WIA's goals of developing a more efficient and flexible workforce development system are being realized

Job training programs that are more effective in increasing the labor market participation and self-sufficiency of youth

Enhanced ability of job training programs to provide training that matches employers' needs



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## *Analyze Programs Designed to Raise Worker Skills and Ensure Employers Have the Skilled Workers They Need*

### *Significance*

The current economic boom has led to unprecedented job growth. Much of the growth, however, is in sectors that require higher skill levels than many job seekers possess leaving employers struggling to find qualified workers. New technologies and increased marketplace competition have prompted some employers to cut costs or downsize. Although the overall unemployment rate continues to be low, their employees—often with outdated skills—are being displaced at rates that rival those of the 1980s. Incumbent worker training—continued training after employment—could raise the skill level of the workforce and reduce the likelihood of worker dislocation. The federal government has historically played a very small role in incumbent worker training, but employers are becoming increasingly reluctant in a booming economy to invest in costly training that enhances the competitiveness of their workers and are calling for more publicly funded incumbent worker training. The federal government currently invests about \$1.6 billion a year on dislocated worker training. There is no federal funding specifically for incumbent worker training. In addition, some specialized jobs are being filled by foreign workers through the H-1B program, and the Congress has established a fund to train U.S. workers for these jobs, especially in information technology.



### *Key Efforts*

Evaluate training programs for dislocated workers and analyze the impact of changes resulting from the Workforce Investment Act

Assess the use of incumbent worker training to raise skills and adapt to changing technologies

Analyze programs designed to bring foreign workers to fill specialized jobs and to train U.S. workers to fill such jobs

### *Potential Outcomes*

Programs of job training that are more effective in increasing the labor market participation of dislocated workers

Improved congressional and agency understanding of ways to better match job training programs to the needs of employers



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## *Assess the Success of Various Enforcement Strategies to Protect Workers While Minimizing Employers' Burden in the Changing Environment of Work*

### *Significance*

For workers to think creatively and perform in their greatest capacity, they must not only have the technical skills needed to perform the work, but they also must have workplaces that are, to the greatest extent possible, free from conditions that could mentally or physically impair their productivity. The delicate balance between ensuring the safety and health of workers and maintaining reasonable associated burdens for employers has always been difficult to achieve, but in the last decade it has become even more difficult given the drastic changes in the definition and composition of the workforce, employers' demand for greater flexibility for protecting workers, and the increased expectations for enforcement agencies' performance in ensuring safe and healthful workplaces. It is clear that regulations protecting workplace safety and health, as well as efforts to enforce those regulations, must be revised to accurately reflect today's workplaces and health hazards. However, little is known about or agreed upon as to what revisions would result in the most efficient way to protect workers and minimize employers' burden in the 21st century and beyond.



### *Key Efforts*

Analyze how technological and other workplace changes are affecting workplace conditions and hazards, identify emerging workplace hazards, and assess Labor's efforts to regulate them

Identify how such changes are affecting the type and level of protections currently offered to specific types of workers, such as those employed in alternative work arrangements

Highlight the results and lessons learned from efforts to enhance worker safety and health through alternative means, such as workplace safety and health programs or cooperative compliance programs

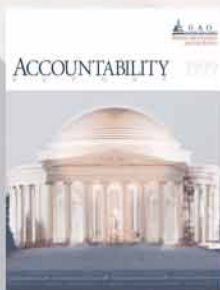
Review and evaluate the interrelation among the myriad entities and regulations covering workplace safety and health

### *Potential Outcomes*

Informed congressional and agency decisions on the regulations needed to address current work arrangements and conditions

Enforcement strategies that result in safer workplaces and healthier workers without overly burdening employers

*The full set of GAO's strategic planning, performance, and accountability documents are listed below. All of these documents, as well as other GAO reports and documents, may be obtained electronically on our website, [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov).*



**Accountability Report for fiscal year 1999**

**Strategic Plan, 2000-2005**

*Strategic Plan Executive Summary*

*Strategic Plan Framework*

**Strategic Objective Plans**

*Health Care Needs and Financing*

*Retirement Income Security*

*Social Safety Net*

*Education/Workforce Issues*

*Effective System of Justice*

*Community Investment*

*Natural Resources Use and Environmental Protection*

*Physical Infrastructure*

*Diffuse Security Threats*

*Military Capabilities and Readiness*

*Advancement of U.S. Interests*

*Global Market Forces*

*Fiscal Position of the Government*

*Government Financing and Accountability*

*Governmentwide Management Reforms*

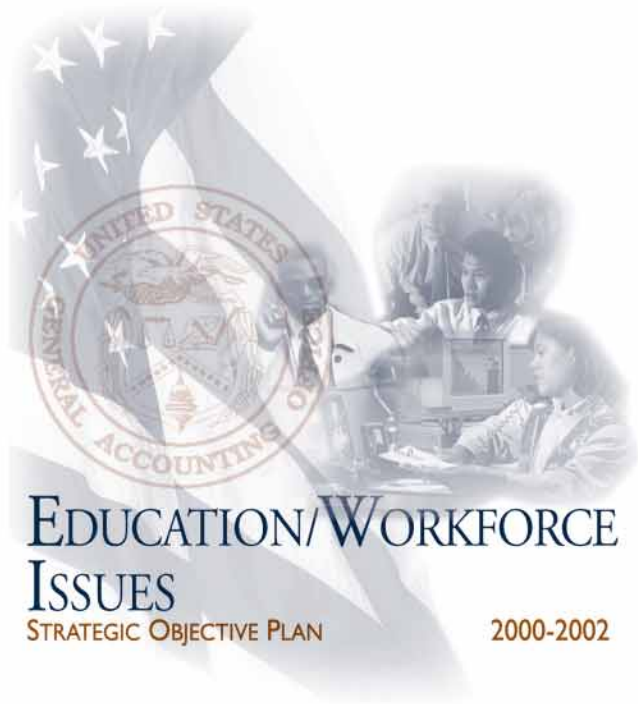
*Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness*

*Improvements in Federal Agencies*

*Maximize the Value of GAO*

**Performance Plan Fiscal Year 2001**





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2000-2002