

# Archived Information

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## **Objective 4.7: All levels of the agency are fully performance-driven.**

### **National Need**

**National Concerns.** In concert with the Government Results and Performance Act, ED has established a functional strategic planning system for the agency, has moved to integrate its employee performance rating and reward systems with the accomplishment of strategic goals, and is improving the quality and availability of data for its performance indicators. These activities will remain key strategies for FY 2000.

**Our Role.** The first responsibility of a government agency is accountability. We must have rigorous performance information and evaluation systems that allow us to assess how well our programs are administered and the degree to which the programs achieve the goals of the authorizing legislation. ED's strategic planning and information systems increase accountability within ED and to outside audiences for our results and our stewardship of Federal funds.

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### **Our Performance**

**How We Measure.** Performance indicators in Objective 4.7 identify the extent to which sound performance data are effectively used throughout the agency. These indicators address employee understanding of their contribution to ED's goals and objectives and managers' use of performance data for improvement, as well as the quality of that performance data.

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### **Indicator 4.7.a. External customers such as Congress, OMB, or national associations will rate the Department's Strategic and Annual Plans high on quality and usefulness.**

**Assessment of Progress.** Positive trend toward target. In meetings with customers and stakeholders, ED has received very positive feedback about our processes and interim products.

#### **Ratings of ED Plans and Reports**

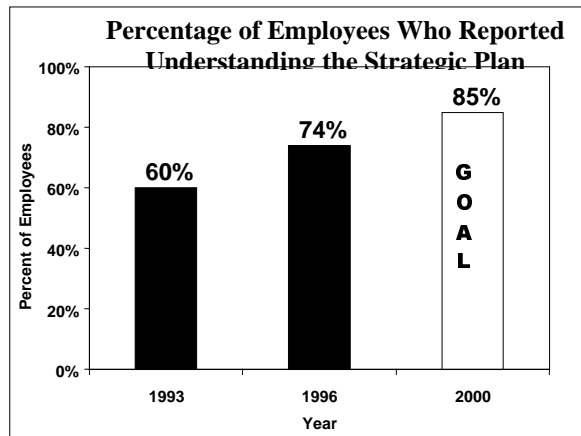
- House staff rated ED's Strategic Plan 1998-02 as second-highest among Federal agencies in terms of overall quality and responsiveness to Results Act requirements.
- House staff rated ED's FY 1999 Annual Plan (submitted in 1998) as third-highest among Federal agencies.

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### **Indicator 4.7.b. Employees will recognize the Strategic Plan as meaningful and understand how their work supports achieving the plan's goals and objectives.**

**Assessment of Progress.** No 1999 data are available, so we are unable to judge progress. Critical to agency performance on this objective is the extent to which employees understand, support, and actively work toward achieving the agency’s goals and objectives. From 1993 to 1996, there was an increase of 15 percentage points in reported employee understanding of how the goals and strategies support the mission of the Department. In part this increase may have been due to the development and release of the Department’s first Strategic Plan in 1994. Distribution of ED’s 1998-02 Strategic Plan kicked off implementation efforts that for the 4-year period from 1996 to 2000 should produce at least a similar increase.

Figure 4.7.b.1



**Source:** U.S. Department of Education Employee Survey, 1993 and 1996. **Frequency:** Annual. **Next Update:** 2000. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by internal review procedures of an experienced data collection agency. **Limitations of data and planned improvements.** Opinion data are subjective and often subject to outside influences.

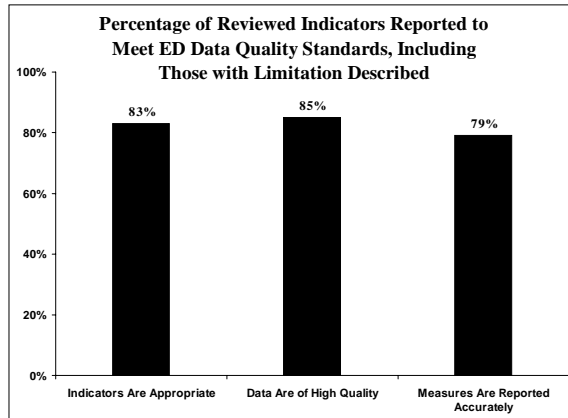
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**Indicator 4.7.c. By 2000, all ED program managers will assert that the data used for their program’s performance measurement are reliable, valid, and timely, or will have plans for improvement.**

**Assessment of Progress.** Progress toward target. In FY 1999, ED implemented the first phase of our data attestation process for the 122 indicators for our largest programs, which account for about 90 percent of our budget. Each of the programs reviewed its FY 2000 budget indicators to evaluate each indicator on whether or not it met ED’s data quality standards. These reviews were discussed by division directors and assistant secretaries. The assistant secretaries then signed statements attesting that their indicators met ED’s data quality standards or that they had plans for their improvement. (For more information of the data quality process, please see the *Verification and Validation* section of this volume.)

Figure 4.7.c.1 shows programs’ ratings of their indicators, which resulted from the data attestation process. Ratings are broken out in three areas of the standards for the 103 indicators for which the data attestation process was completed. A majority of the indicators met the standard or met it with limitations clearly identified. Where the indicator did not meet the standard, programs provided plans to improve the indicator, data, or reporting. Even where the indicators met the standard, many programs cited plans for further improvement. Overall, more than half of the indicators were submitted with some form of plans for the improvement of the data quality, and 40 percent included plans specifically for improving the verification and validation of data.

Figure 4.7.c.1



**Source:** ED Attestation Forms for 122 indicators. *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 2000. **Validation procedure:** Review by Inspector General's office planned. **Limitations of data and planned improvements.** Preliminary data subject to review. Percentages include attestations with limitations described. The attestation process was undertaken for 122 indicators, about 10 percent of the total number of ED indicators. This analysis is based on those attestation forms that were returned. Attestation forms for 19 indicators (16 percent of the total) were not returned.

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## How We Plan to Achieve Our

### Objective

**How ED's Activities Support the Achievement of This Objective.** ED's efforts to help all levels of the agency become fully performance-driven fall into four categories:

- **Sound implementation of the Strategic Plan.** The Strategic Plan is the foundation for all programmatic activities in the Department. To ensure increasing success in our programmatic activities, the Department will continue to
  - track progress on performance indicators and strategies as well as to simplify our reporting of progress, we will develop a new electronic reporting system.
  - align performance appraisals and rewards for assistant secretaries, senior managers, and employees with Strategic Plan objectives and to expand tracking and reporting requirements instituted within our personnel systems.
  - recognize performance improvements and strengthen areas needing assistance, monetary awards and recognition programs are being revised.
  - communicate plan priorities and to work collaboratively to identify challenges and improvement strategies, we are implementing new internal communication strategies, including expanded use of the Department's Intranet as a resource for strategic planning efforts.
  - request an independent assessment of means to improve the implementation of the Strategic Plan within ED.
  - increasingly align grantee performance reports with our strategic goals to ensure a unified and strategic focus in our activities.
  
- **Strong budget support for planning and performance measurement.** The structure of ED's FY 2001 budget request reflects the Strategic Plan and includes funding for evaluations, performance measurement, statistics, and assessments needed to comply with the Results Act. Funds for salaries and expenses are distributed among the "management" objectives, showing where we are placing priorities for resource use. In FY 2000, the Department will continue to
  - present an integrated budget by linking performance reporting, budget goals, and strategic objectives.
  - provide effective financial resources for evaluations, performance measurement, and statistics and assessments by aligning resource allocations with agency priorities and performance.
  - implement performance measurement and align training resources to support development of skills needed by Department employees for implementation of performance measurement by conducting an assessment of training needs.

- **Ensuring assessment of the quality of data systems.** The quality of a performance measurement process is no better than the quality of the data collected. By FY 2000 all managers will have attested to the quality of their performance data or have improvement plans in place. During FY 2000, ED will undertake the following actions:
  - Ensure credible and reliable data, we will implement data quality standards for the Department's largest programs, which account for 90 percent of ED's budget.
  - Ensure the use of timely and accurate information, we will monitor program managers' improvement plans for key performance data systems.
  - Make decisions based on recent and accurate data, we will update guidance for ED managers on developing and monitoring quality data systems and the use of data to manage program performance.
  - Assess the quality of information systems critical for obtaining the data needed to meet the Results Act, we are working with the Office of Inspector General and using program evaluations and reviews. Specific priorities are to evaluate data quality for state-grant programs and student aid data systems.
  
- **Strengthen ED's Annual Plan.** We have substantially strengthened and expanded our annual performance reporting and our annual planning process. We have:
  - Included baseline information for most indicators for objectives in the Annual Plan and Report compared with 44 indicators with baselines in the 1999 Plan.
  - Included at least one outcome indicator with baseline data for 59 program plans compared with 38 program plans in the FY 1999 plan.
  
- **Performance Agreements**
  - To hold ED's senior staff accountable for achieving the goals of the strategic plan by strengthening performance agreements and reporting.

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## **How We Coordinate With Other Federal Agencies**

ED staff are actively involved with other agencies in the exchange of Strategic Planning and Data Quality issues. ED staff have presented at the Office of Personnel Management and the Departments of Agriculture and Treasury. The Office of Management and Budget and the General Accounting Office have also provided ED with advice.

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## **Challenges to Achieving Our Objective**

ED faces two challenges in successfully becoming a performance-driven organization. It is difficult to change an organization's culture to become more focused on performance measures and to increase accountability for results. Although change is certain, it is a process that requires continuous reinforcement throughout the organization. Overcoming organizational inertia is a daunting challenge.

Much of the work ED undertakes is in concert with our partners. We work with states, schools, institutions of higher education, and many other partners. Until we are able to fully coordinate our partners—with a high degree of alignment of our goals and performance measures with their goals and performance measures—we cannot be as fully performance-driven as we hope to become. Working with our partners on developing integrated performance systems and strategic goals is quite challenging. Our successes will allow us, with our partners, to become increasingly effective in achieving our mission: to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.

