

OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

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2012 Open Government Plan Update

In April of 2010, our Open Government Task Force assembled the Department's first comprehensive Open Government Plan. Two years later, we've met many of our objectives and started new initiatives since the first 2010 release. This is our April 2012 update to our Open Government Plan.

Below you will find the original 2010 plan in an entirety. You may notice that the original text may list activities in the future tense. This release provides 2012 updates to the original plan in two sections. New initiatives are listed with "NEW for 2012" headings. Each of the original initiatives has a "2012 Update" box below each listing. We've chosen this format to make clear distinctions for the 2012 additions as well as 2012 updates to our original initiatives.

In summary for 2012, we are pleased to announce our three new flagship initiatives:

- Transparency: Federal Student Integrated Student View
- Participation: Public Challenges and Contests
- Collaboration: Connected Communities of Practice

As well as the following additional initiatives:

- Technical Assistance on Publishing and Sharing Data While Preserving Confidentiality
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education Programs
- Civil Rights Data Collection
- The Learning Registry
- RSA Management Information System
- Empowering Students and Families as Stakeholders and Collaborators
- Data Strategy Team
- .Gov Web Reform

Commitment to open government is essential to our operations and we are pleased to offer this 2012 update. We would like to hear your feedback on how we can be a better interface to the public. Please email us at opengov@ed.gov with your suggestions and comments.



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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, including from students, families, educators, and community partners, into Department operations and programs.
- 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 provides support to develop path-breaking new ideas, validate approaches that have demonstrated promise, and expand our nation's most successful and proven education innovations. As part of these efforts, the Office of Innovation and Improvement has launched a range of tools, notably including



data.ed.gov that provides user-friendly access to unprecedented levels of information about all applicants to the i3 program.

- **College.gov**

College.gov 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.

2012 Update:

College.gov will be retired in 2012. This is part of the Integrated Student View effort to consolidate Federal Student Aid web sites in order to provide a consistent, unified experience for future and current students. See more about this effort in the section below.

- **Flagship Initiatives**

NEW FOR 2012

Federal Student Aid Integrated Student View

This is the Department's signature initiative per Executive Order 13571 on Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service. The Integrated Student View (ISV) initiative supports this vision by providing students and parents with a necessary enhanced customer experience across the student aid lifecycle, eventually increasing financial aid awareness and attendance and simplifying the application and servicing process. The consolidation effort will focus on transitioning the presentation of content, functionality and tools of FSA's 14+ separate student-facing websites into one user experience. ISV will deliver holistic, high-quality information about the financial aid process resulting in improved rates of customer self service and establishing clear mechanisms for customer feedback. Social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter) will also be integrated into ISV for a more enhanced customer experience. ISV results:

- Students can access and easily digest FSA static content.
- Federal Student Aid has less than 14 websites.
- Customers gain improved financial literacy and decision making skills.



- Students have better accessibility to information.
- Federal Student Aid will comply with the Plain Writing Act.
- Customers experience higher levels of self service.

2010-2011 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.

2012 Update:

Since the original publication of the Open Government Plan, we've launched a revised 2.0 version of ED Data Express. The new version provides the public with more dynamic tools interact with the data such as:

- A mapping feature that allows users to view the data displayed on a map of the United States;
- A trend line tool, which displays a data element graphed across multiple school years;
- A conditional analysis tool, which allows users to view one data element based on conditions set by another data element.

In addition, the site has improved documentation and added the ability to share information from the site using social networking tools, such as Facebook or Twitter.

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, located at <http://innovation.ed.gov>, to serve as a catalyst and broker of innovation.

2012 Update:

Recent changes have improved the Open Innovation Portal (OIP) experience. This page provides readers an opportunity to catch up with past winners and receive updates on the winning ideas. Several technical improvements have been made as well. The internal messaging system has been upgraded, allowing users to message each other with greater ease. Site administrators can more easily contact users to alert them of upcoming challenges and deadlines. Please read more on the improvements to the Open Innovation Portal by reading Section III.B - Flagship Initiative, Collaboration: Open Innovation Web Portal below.

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.



2012 Update:

Since the design of this original plan, we have formed an Open Government Steering Committee (OGSC) as a working group of our larger Department-wide Data Strategy Team. Our OGSC has representation from all main offices and meets on a regular basis to discuss utilizing transparency, participation and collaboration in our processes. From our working group, each team member works with each office to keep open government awareness as part of office activity strategies. The Open Government Steering Committee reports progress to the Data Strategy Team on a monthly basis.

- **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.

2012 Update:

From these experiences, the Department is continuing to use online tools such as the ED.gov blog (<http://www.ed.gov/blog>) and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to gather comments and opinions from the public.

- **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.

2012 Update:

The Department's focus for its website for 2012 is a major redesign of how the public accesses information from the Department's various Program Offices. All of the information associated with each of the Department's Offices will be centralized into a single database repository, with corresponding enhancements to the ED.gov website to leverage this new database repository. These two functionalities will allow the ED.gov website to present users with a subject-based view of the Department (as opposed to an Office centric view), allowing them to find the information they are looking for without knowledge of the Department's Organizational structure. Additional benefits would include a program finder interface that will allow an end user to more easily find programs they are looking for based on eligibility and other factors; and other usability enhancements.

- **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.

2012 Update:

Building on the successes of the OpenED portal, the Department redesigned OpenED and released Idea Engine on January 31, 2011. Idea Engine is an in-house space to generate ideas and solutions, where ED staff is encouraged to identify creative ways to get results; moving ED from problem-oriented to solution-oriented.

All ED employees can present their innovative ideas for changes that can be made at ED. Other employees can weigh in, present their reactions and views, and help evolve the idea. Employees can vote on ideas that have been put forward by colleagues. As ideas are proposed to ED's senior leaders, employees are able to track the progress of their ideas and check their status. Individual offices, working groups, and interdisciplinary teams can have their own online space for targeted discussions. Employees can participate in groups that apply to their areas of



concern and contribute to focused conversations germane to their interests. Finally, senior staff can pose a question to the ED community, and challenge all staff to present their best ideas and solutions.

Approximately 25% of employees are registered users of Idea Engine. Employees have submitted 192 ideas through Idea Engine and cast over 2200 votes for various ideas. At this time, five ideas have been fully implemented and ten ideas are in the process of being implemented with another 70 under review for possible implementation.

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, including students, families, educators, and community partners, in decision-making.



Objective 2.4: Empower students, families, educators, and community partners to have a voice in the development and implementation of Department-funded education projects at the state and local level.

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. *NEW for 2012: Technical Assistance on Publishing and Sharing Data While Preserving Confidentiality*

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.

1.6 Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

The Department is committed to evidence-based decision-making, a goal that cannot be achieved without publication of information about how schools are performing, about what works and what does not. State and local educational entities are required by law to publish significant amounts of data, but also to preserve the privacy of their individual students.

State and local educational entities, as well as postsecondary institutions and community groups and research organizations, have legitimate questions about data sharing and publishing data. The Department is committed to providing additional assistance to these stakeholders so that the public can be informed about local schools. The Department established a Chief Privacy Officer (CPO) and a Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) to help answer these questions for the public. It has become evident, however, that we need to publish additional guidance for our state and local partners to help them answer important questions on subject such as:

- How to publish data in tabular form, while still protecting student privacy;*
- How to share data within and outside the education community, while still protecting student privacy and without violating confidentiality statutes; and*
- Best practices for managing confidential data.*

The CPO, working with PTAC and internal offices will focus on providing technical assistance to state and local educational entities on these topics, providing training, and issuing additional guidance.



B. *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 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

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>

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>



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>.

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.

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

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.



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

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia applied for Phase 2 of Race to the Top. On August 24, 2010, the Department announced the following 10 winners of Phase 2: the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

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

2012 Update:

In 2011, the Department awarded grants in a third Phase of the Race to the Top program. Race to the Top Phase 3 focuses on supporting efforts to leverage comprehensive statewide reform, while also improving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The seven winning applications include commitments to enhance data systems, raise academic standards, improve principal and teacher support and evaluation systems and implement school interventions in underperforming schools. In this Phase, eligible applicants were states that were finalists but did not receive funding under the Race to the Top Fund Phase 2 competition held in 2010. On December 23, 2011, the Department announced that seven states -Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania- will each receive a share of the \$200 million in the Race to the Top Phase 3 fund to advance targeted K-12 reforms aimed at improving student achievement.

Congress recently passed an omnibus spending bill for fiscal year 2012 that includes an additional \$550 million for Race to the Top. The bill includes language that will allow the Department to create a district-level competition and continue the investment in the Early Learning Challenge.

To promote transparency in this program, The Race to the Top Annual Performance



Report (APR) is a valuable tool that permits the Department, grantees, and the public to follow grantees' progress in implementing comprehensive education reform plans and meeting ambitious goals for student outcomes, including increasing student achievement and closing achievement gaps. The Race to the Top APR documents grantees' progress toward the annual or four year targets set forth by the grantees in their [Race to the Top applications](#). The annual performance measures States included in their applications are leading indicators of their success towards increasing student outcomes. Additionally, the APR includes State-reported updates on the laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines that affect key elements of their Race to the Top plans, and progress in meeting the absolute priority (a comprehensive and coherent approach to education reform), and competitive preference priority (an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Finally, the APR includes State-reported updates on progress in meeting the invitational priority areas in their approved plans, which may include innovations for improving early learning outcomes; expansion and adaptation of statewide longitudinal data systems; pre-school through graduate school coordination, vertical and horizontal alignment; and school-level conditions for reform, innovation, and learning. The APR tool provides this information online at <http://www.rtt-apr.us>. Year One Annual Performance Reports are also available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance.html>.

C. Race to the Top Assessment Program

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 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 \$360 million grant competition designed to fill an urgent need in the nation's educational system. It supports consortia of States developing 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.

In September 2010, the Department awarded grants to two consortia of states, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced). Together, these consortia represent 45 states and the District of Columbia. These grants will support the development and implementation of high-quality assessments aligned with college- and career-ready K–12 standards. The use of common assessments across States in the consortium based on common standards will promote a culture of higher expectations as well as enable collaboration on best practices. States will use these assessment systems to expand instructional practice and to support continuous improvement of school and educator effectiveness.

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.

As part of their grants, the consortia of States are required to make any work developed with the funds freely available to others. This includes the assessment instruments and items that are developed (unless the work is otherwise protected by law or agreement as proprietary information). In addition, the consortia of States are required to develop assessment items and produce student data in a manner that is consistent with standards for interoperability. The purpose of these requirements is to make sure the information and content developed by the consortia of States are widely available to further develop and extend the products to further spur innovation in assessment technology.

2012 Update:

The Department made these awards on September 27, 2010.

Technical Assistance Public Meetings

With support from the Hewlett Foundation, the Department hosted three public information and technical assistance meetings in 2011 for the consortia of States. The three meetings – addressing state and local technology infrastructure; automated scoring; and creating valid, reliable, and fair assessments for students with disabilities and English learners – provided an opportunity for the consortia and the public to hear from experts, discuss approaches to addressing the issue, and suggest solutions together.

Program Review and Year One Annual Reports

The Implementation and Support Unit conducted program review with grantees and prepared reports on their progress. When final, these reports will be available on the program website.



D. *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.

2012 Update

The Department has built upon the listening and learning model by continuing to engage the public in conversations about education reform. The Department has an open door policy through its regular stakeholder forums held at headquarters. In addition, Outreach to students is conducted through the “Student Voices” sessions for the Secretary and other Department officials with students and through a series of College Costs sessions at university and community college campuses; the RESPECT project of conversations with teachers across the country on what a transformed teaching profession would look like will fold the teachers’ vision into Department policy; family forums have revitalized interest and involvement of Title I parents; and the Department continues to reach out to the press, state officials, and



stakeholder associations through conference calls and regular email notifications. Interagency partnerships have helped to amplify communications and avoid duplication and waste.

E. 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.

For 2012, applicants must address one of six areas of reform critical to the Obama administration's school improvement agenda:

- Supporting effective teachers and principals;
- Promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education;
- Complementing the implementation of standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and careers;
- Parent and family engagement;
- Turning around persistently low-performing schools; and
- Improving achievement in rural schools.

Unlike many other federal grant programs where evidence is either not a factor or just a selection criterion, in the i3 program, evidence is an eligibility requirement. The i3 regulations include specific definitions for what constitutes strong evidence and moderate evidence and awards three different types of grants, with greater funding available for projects that demonstrate more rigorous evidence of effectiveness. *Validation grants*



require moderate evidence and are aimed at validating and spreading promising programs on a State or regional scale, and *Scale Up grants* require strong evidence and are aimed at bringing proven programs to national, regional or State scale. *Development grants* require a reasonable hypothesis and support development of high-potential and relatively untested practices, strategies, or programs. The Department expects to make Development grants of up to \$3 million each; Validation grants of up to \$15 million each; and Scale Up grants of up to \$25 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. In advance of the initial i3 competition, 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 also 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.

2012 Update

The Department has expanded beyond these initial commitments to transparency. In each of its first two years, the Department published the full application narrative and peer reviewer scores and comments for all of the winning applications. In addition, program staff have worked with the Institute of Education Sciences to increase understanding in the field of evidence and evaluation, notably conducting



webinars about the role of evidence and evaluation in the i3 program and publishing the template for What Works Clearinghouse review (which forms the basis of the i3 evidence review).

The i3 program was the first program the Department highlighted on data.ed.gov, a new website that provides user-friendly access to expansive information about some of the Department's highest-profile grant programs. The Office of Innovation and Improvement provided information about each of the nearly 1,700 applications received in year 1 and nearly 600 applications received in year 2 on this website.

F. 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](#).

2012 Update:

In November 2010, the National Education Technology Plan (NETP), available at <http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010>, was released, incorporating many ideas and comments submitted from the public via ED.gov. For example, a call came from the public to release the plan in numerous accessible formats. As a result, NETP is available as NIMAS, DAISY and Braille Ready File (BRF) formats in addition to PDF and web versions. The Education Technology Plan continues to be a centerpiece in the discussion of the future of learning and teaching and a continual collaboration between teachers, administrators, researchers, content vendors, education solution providers and open technology communities.

G. *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.

H. **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.

2012 Update:

College.gov is now retired. This is part of the Integrated Student View effort to consolidate Federal Student Aid web sites in order to provide a consistent, unified experience for future and current students. See more about this effort in the section below.

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. NEW for 2012: Flagship Initiative, Transparency: Federal Student Integrated Student View

Aligned to goals:

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

1.6: Foster more transparency in the larger educational community.

This is the Department's signature initiative per Executive Order 13571 on Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service. The Integrated Student View (ISV) initiative supports this vision by providing students and parents with a necessary enhanced customer experience across the student aid lifecycle, eventually increasing financial aid awareness and attendance and simplifying the application and servicing process. The consolidation effort will focus on transitioning the presentation of content, functionality and tools of FSA's 14+ separate student-facing websites into one user experience. ISV will deliver holistic, high-quality information about the financial aid process resulting in improved rates of customer self service and establishing clear mechanisms for customer feedback. Social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter) will also be integrated into ISV for a more enhanced customer experience. ISV results:

- Students can access and easily digest FSA static content.
- Federal Student Aid has less than 14 websites.
- Customers gain improved financial literacy and decision-making skills.
- Students have better accessibility to information.
- Federal Student Aid will comply with the Plain Writing Act.
- Customers experience higher levels of self-service.

Customer Listening Initiative

This is an initiative underway geared toward understanding the current state of customer interactions with FSA, guide decisions about what FSA needs to start /stop doing/do differently, prioritize customer-facing initiatives, overcome disconnected service delivery and practices, and prep FSA to serve customers across touch points. It will aggregate customer feedback from all channels and disseminate insights across the organization to address issues and improve the experience. This will include establishing routine engagement around customer feedback. Currently, the FSA New Media Team



has a robust customer listening process that is used to inform content development and uncover customer issues. @FAFSA Twitter Office Hours are held monthly in collaboration with key stakeholders.

FAFSA Simplification/IRS Data Retrieval Tools

The new FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) has reduced the number of questions and uses skip logic so families don't have to answer questions that don't matter for them. Additionally, in collaboration with the IRS, students can now transfer their family's financial records directly from the IRS once they've completed their tax returns, dramatically decreasing the time it takes to complete a FAFSA.

FAFSA Completion Data

Aggregate FAFSA Completion Data for states and individual schools and school districts within each state will now be available on the FSA Data Center.

B. *NEW for 2012: Flagship Initiative, Participation: Public Challenges and Contests*

Aligned to goals:

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

In his September 2009 [Strategy for American Innovation](#), President Obama called on agencies to increase their ability to promote innovation by using tools such as prizes and challenges to solve tough problems. On March 2010, the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a [Memorandum](#) on the use of challenges/contests and prizes to improve government and encourage innovation. From this, the Department has begun a trend of offering challenges and contests to inspire new ideas and innovation from the public. The Challenge.gov platform offered by the General Services Administration (GSA) has been a key vehicle for the Department to offer contests online in a consistent manner along with agencies.

We are planning a series of challenges and contests for the future and below are some of our challenges from the past year:



- [Challenge to Innovate \(C2i\)](#) - Together, in a powerful new partnership, the NEA Foundation and the US Department of Education are inviting all public school educators to identify and solve education’s most pressing classroom problems. The best will receive awards and may be selected for further development. The NEA Foundation recognizes educators as adopters, adapters, and creators of both educational processes and products, and as agents who must organize, manage, and assume risks in solving problems. Educators engage in—and lead—this creative process in their classrooms, schools, and communities.
- [Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge](#) – The Race to the Top Commencement Challenge invites public high schools across the country to demonstrate how their school best prepares them for college and a career, helping America win the future by out-educating our competitors and achieving President Obama’s goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. The application includes essay questions and statistical information that illustrate how schools are promoting college and career readiness for all students while establishing a culture of student success and academic excellence.
- [College Net Price Calculator Student Video Challenge](#) - The U.S. Department of Education (Department) challenges high school and college students to help get information to their peers about how much it costs to go to college. This challenge asks students to create short videos that will inform students and families of a new resource that makes it easier to calculate how much it might cost to go to a particular college. On October 29, 2011, all colleges and universities were required by law to provide a “net price calculator” on their websites. This is one of several Department initiatives to make the price of college more transparent and help students and families make informed decisions about investing in postsecondary education. “Net price” is a new and important piece of information about college costs; it helps students and families estimate what it would likely cost to attend a college after accounting for grants and scholarships that don’t need to be repaid. Unfortunately, too few people know what “net price” means, and where to find a college’s net price calculator on its website, or how to use net price – along with other information – when comparison shopping for higher education.



- [C2i: Gaming Challenge](#) - The NEA Foundation and Microsoft – US Partners in Learning want to know the best ideas for how interactive technology and game-based learning can improve teaching and learning. According to *Kids and Gaming 2011*, the latest report from The NPD Group, 91 percent of kids ages 2-17 (approximately 64 million) play electronic games in the U.S., nearly a 10 per cent increase from 2009. The challenge for educators is how to harness this powerful tool.
- C2i: Mobile Project - This challenge is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Education, the NEA Foundation and the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN). The Challenge to Innovate (C2i) initiative is for the Open Innovation Portal community. Students are captivated by the personalization options of new media. They build large social networks and communicate on impulse. This generation of digital natives only knows a world where communication is instant and the push of a button can take you anywhere at any time. The use of mobile phone technologies provides an incredible opportunity for educators and students to learn in new and different ways. Existing cell phone policies often prevent students from using one of the best resources available to them. The cell phone's usefulness and utility includes everything from data collection to student engagement. Smart phones are powerful handheld computers and once they become widely affordable students will have 24/7 access. Can you say “game changer”?
- [National Education Startup Challenge](#) - As President Obama said in his State of the Union Address, when we act together, in common purpose and common effort, there is nothing the United States of America cannot achieve. If we are going to tackle tough education challenges to once again be the best-educated country in the world, we need all hands on deck. That includes students themselves. Not only as responsible, engaged learners, but also as education problem-solvers, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Toward this end, students from across the country are invited to submit a business plan and a video pitch for a for-profit or non-profit startup that includes an innovative strategy, product or service designed to address one of these four challenge topics:
 1. Middle Grades Matter;
 2. Skills, Skills, Skills;



3. Education Pays; and
 4. Finish Faster.
- **Why Open Education Matters** - The Department of Education, Creative Commons, and the Open Society Institute launched the Why Open Education Matters Video Competition in March 2012. The competition will award cash prizes, provided by the Open Society Institute, of up to \$25,000 for the best short videos that explain the use and promise of free, high-quality open educational resources and describe the benefits and opportunities these materials create for teachers, students and schools. The Why Open Education Matters Video Competition coincides with the first annual Open Education Week, a global event that seeks to raise awareness about the benefits of free and open sharing in education. Secretary Duncan introduced the competition with a video posted on the competition website.

C. NEW for 2012: Flagship Initiative, Collaboration: Connected Communities of Practice

Aligned to goals:

- 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 [2010 National Education Technology Plan](#) demonstrates the importance of educators becoming more connected to resources, tools, colleagues, experts, and learning activities, both within and beyond schools. Participation in online communities of practice is a key way educators connect. Robust online participation contributes both to individual excellence and to the vitality of the profession as a whole. The Connected Online Communities of Practice project will steward a scalable, sustainable ecology of online communities in education to improve teacher and leader effectiveness, enhance student learning and increase productivity.

In collaboration with a wide range of educational organizations, the Connected Online Communities of Practice project is increasing the quality, accessibility, and connectedness of existing and emerging online communities of practice through four types of activities:



- Launching and leading **new online communities of practice** that address pressing needs in education and help us learn more about how such communities work best
- Conducting **design experiments** within “testbeds,” online communities of practice run by collaborating organizations in which project staff will develop, facilitate, and evaluate selected content and activities that help address pressing questions
- Undertaking **case studies** of both interesting communities of practice and of individual educational professionals’ use of online communities and other forms of social media to connect
- Developing ideas about new designs and **infrastructure** that could better support educators in making productive connections

What the project learns from all of these activities will be reflected in a **report** on online communities of practice in education. A [draft version](#) of the report is now available, and revised versions will be published in October 2011 and October 2012.

D. *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 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 multiple years of data on student performance, demographics, accountability, and some statistical components. Data can be viewed via three sections: the State Snapshot page, the Data Element Explorer, and the Build-a-State Table page. The State Snapshot pages include charts and tables with key data for each State. The Data Element



Explorer allows users to view data elements using graphs, maps, trend lines, and a conditional analysis tool. The Build-a-State 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 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 Snapshot 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-State Table tool. The three tools incorporate graphs and charts to help users visualize the data. Version 3.0 is under development, and will include an overhaul of the State Snapshot page focused on mapping data about school districts, and enhancements to the Data Element Explorer. 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 version 3.0 during the summer of 2012, 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 *EDFacts* and NCES conferences, and will continue to use those opportunities to discuss the site and solicit suggestions from attendees. OESE has also met with the *EDFacts* team's Standing Task Force, which is a group of approximately 10 SEA representatives (some of whom are *EDFacts* coordinators). *EDFacts* uses this task force as a sounding board for major new initiatives that they have proposed.



2012 Update:

Since the original publication of the Open Government Plan, we've launched a revised 2.0 version of ED Data Express. The new version provides the public with more dynamic tools interact with the data such as:

- A mapping feature that allows users to view the data displayed on a map of the United States;
- A trend line tool, which displays a data element graphed across multiple school years;
- A conditional analysis tool, which allows users to view one data element based on conditions set by another data element.

In addition, the site has improved documentation and added the ability to share information from the site using social networking tools, such as Facebook or Twitter.

The Department is currently developing version 3.0 of ED Data Express, which will include an overhaul of the State Snapshot page focused on mapping school district data, and enhancements to the Data Element Explorer.

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

2012 Update:

Site Updates

Recent changes have improved the Open Innovation Portal (OIP) experience. In March 2011, STCI handed the management and infrastructure of the portal back over to the U. S. Department of Education. It is currently run through the Office of Innovation and Improvement. This has streamlined customer service by having inquiries go directly to the challenge sponsors, rather than through a contractor. The Portal has created a new page featuring past challenge winners and their innovative ideas. This page provides readers an opportunity to catch up with past winners and receive updates on the winning ideas.

Several technical improvements have been made as well. The internal messaging system has been upgraded, allowing users to message each other with greater ease. Site administrators can more easily contact users to alert them of upcoming challenges and deadlines. This has dramatically increased traffic to the site.



Hosted Challenges

The Open Innovation Portal has hosted 14 challenges to date. These include seven Department of Education challenges, which provide an ongoing platform for collaborative innovations and remain open for idea submissions, and seven sponsored challenges, which offer monetary prizes for innovative ideas and have a set submission and voting period. Of the sponsored challenges, two were from IBM and five from the NEA Foundation.

The sponsored challenges typically focus on a specific area of interest of the sponsoring organization. Examples of topics include: incorporating mobile phone technology into teaching and learning, utilizing interactive gaming to improve student learning, and improving methods for teaching fractions and ratios. The sponsor organization offers cash prizes to the winning ideas, providing an incentive for participants to submit thoughtful responses to the topic.

The NEA Foundation has been the most active partner organization thus far. In the fall of 2010, the OIP hosted a challenge sponsored by the NEA Foundation which asked educators to identify their most pressing classroom-based problems. Four of those problems were selected as the basis for a follow-up challenge in the spring of 2011 which asked innovators for solutions to these problems. The follow-up challenge received 172 responses, out of which 4 winners were announced. Based on the winning ideas 181 projects were submitted on Donorschoose.org, which raised \$47,618 for classroom projects.

In 2011, the OIP hosted a challenge sponsored by a partnership of the NEA Foundation and the Consortium of School Networking (COSN) about using mobile devices to improve teaching and learning. Through a combination of member voting and a formal review panel the NEA Foundation awarded 5 winners out of 127 ideas. COSN used their network of school district technology leaders to disseminate the winning ideas for use in the field.

The most recent challenge hosted by the OIP featured a partnership with the NEA Foundation and Microsoft – US Partners in Learning. OIP members posted ideas about how to best utilize interactive gaming in the classroom. The challenge closed on March 5, 2012 with 160 idea submissions. After a review of the ideas and the community voting, up to ten innovators will receive \$1,000 awards for their ideas.

Future Goals

Driven mainly by the sponsored challenges, membership on the OIP has grown significantly and is approaching 10,000 members. Additionally the number of ideas



has increased with each new challenge with over 1,200 currently on the site. The OIP has grown into a community of educational innovators where members provide feedback to others' ideas. As with all social media websites, the OIP has evolved over time to reflect the needs of its community. The evolution of the OIP and the success of the sponsored challenges reflect a clear desire for a more robust marketplace for education related ideas.

In order to continue to meet the need of the OIP community, the Department's goals for the OIP are:

- To create additional partnerships with organizations willing to sponsor challenges so that the OIP is hosting challenges more frequently in a broader range of topics;
- To improve the dissemination of the most promising ideas on the OIP;
- To expand our existing community of practice where innovators are proposing ideas and other users are actively commenting on and discussing those ideas to improve the quality of the ideas posted; and
- To become an important resource, recognized by educators as a place to find innovative ideas to solve classroom problems.

F. *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).

2012 Update: The Department is publishing videos of meetings and events each week at <http://www.youtube.com/usedgov>. Secretary Arne Duncan publishes a monthly response to social media questions from the public on YouTube. This has led to greater awareness to Department operations and expands our practices of direct communication with the public.

G. *Timely Publishing of Electronic Data*

1. NEW for 2012: Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education Programs

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.*
- 2.1: 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.*
- 3.1: Enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public and non-profit and private entities.*



Public Access to Data and Resources

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) collects and releases data for two federally funded programs—Adult education and literacy programs authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and career and technical education authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins Act). OVAE provides public access to data on the performance of students in these programs through the [National Reporting System \(NRS\)](#) website for adult education data and the [Perkins Collaborative Resource Network \(PCRN\)](#) website for data on career and technical education.

[National Reporting System \(NRS\)](#). The NRS is an outcome-based reporting system established to meet the accountability requirements of AEFLA, which authorizes the State grant program for the delivery of Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English Language Learner (ELL) instruction. The NRS defines outcome, participation, and student descriptive measures; specifies the methodologies through which local providers are to collect these measures; and establishes reporting requirements for States. States began implementing the NRS in July 2000. The results of our investments in the NRS to date have included: (1) Training State and local staff on the use of data for decision making related to program improvement; (2) development of on-line training courses designed to assist State staff responsible for managing their State-wide accountability system under the NRS; (3) development of data quality standards and certification as part of the annual report submission required of each State and outlying area; and (4) establishment of an annual assessment review process to determine tests appropriate to measure adult learner outcomes for use in the NRS. During 2011, OVAE worked to continue to promote, support, and enhance the NRS and our accountability and program quality efforts with States and local programs and make data more readily accessible. Data also are made available to public users through the NRS website. Public users have access to each state's statistical data, financial data, and narrative report. During 2012, we will be working to make the data even more accessible and understandable to the public user, as well as more useful in program risk assessments.

[Perkins Collaborative Resource Network \(PCRN\)](#). The PCRN website is the primary source of information on current career and technical education (CTE) legislation, grants, and accountability data, as well as resources for developing and implementing rigorous, state-of-the-art career and technical education programs. Over the past few years, OVAE has worked to make the



PCRN a one-stop resource for the public and stakeholders by consolidating all relevant CTE information and data to the website. The website provides the public with access to states' Consolidated Annual Report (CAR) data which includes annual enrollment and performance data on states' progress in achieving their levels of performance on the core indicators of performance. The website also houses policy guidance, information regarding national activities, discretionary grant information, a learning center with links to CTE related resources, and information on OVAE sponsored meetings and conferences. During 2012, OVAE will make significant changes to its Perkins data submission portal and update the PCRN website to reflect those changes.

Stakeholder Involvement in CTE Reform Efforts

In 2010, the Department's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) established a department-wide career and technical education strategy group with the mission of seeking solutions to ensure that all youth and adult students graduate prepared for further education, training, and employment on a pathway to a meaningful career. The results of this year-long effort helped inform the Department's direction as it begins gearing up for the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins Act), which is the primary source of federal funding for career and technical education (CTE). To develop its reform strategies and reauthorization principles, Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier held a series of 30 CTE [Community Conversations](#) with CTE stakeholders across the country during 2011. These sessions were designed to gather input from stakeholders on critical questions regarding CTE implementation and accountability. The input gathered through these Community Conversations provided the Department with valuable information and feedback for consideration in developing the Department's Blueprint for a reauthorized Perkins Act. As part of our effort to collect and use input from CTE stakeholders to inform Perkins reauthorization, during 2011 we also initiated a State Perkins Accountability Congress (SPAC). The SPAC provides an opportunity for the Department and states' accountability staff to engage in dialogue, through a series of webinars and face-to-face meetings, around approaches for measuring the performance of CTE programs. During 2012, the Department will continue its dialogue through the SPAC and develop its



proposal for a reauthorized Perkins Act that addresses the complex challenges of transforming CTE in America. It would usher in a new era of CTE shaped by three core principles: (1) CTE should provide programs that are rigorous and prepare students for postsecondary education and careers in alignment with labor market needs; (2) Funds to support CTE should be distributed more effectively and the accountability system to measure effectiveness should be strengthened; and (3) Innovation and system-wide reform should be encouraged so as to ensure enduring change and continuous improvement. The Department will disseminate the final Blueprint to the public during 2012. Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier and staff also will engage the public and stakeholders directly in discussions regarding the proposal and how CTE will address the educational and economic needs of youths and adults preparing to participate in the knowledge-based, global marketplace of the 21st century.

2. NEW for 2012: Civil Rights Data Collection

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.*
- 2.1: 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.*

U.S. Department of Education now offers a new web site to provide Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data. The CRDC collects data from a sample of school districts on key education and civil rights issues in our nation's public schools, including student enrollment and educational programs and services, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, limited English proficiency and disability. The CRDC is a valuable source of information about access to educational opportunities in our Nation's public schools that is used by the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and other Department offices, as well as policymakers, researchers and many others in the education community.

The enhanced CRDC website provides several ways to access data through new reports and tools.



- **2009 District or School Reports**
 - Search for individual schools or districts included in the 2009 CRDC sample
 - Find school- or district-level summaries of CRDC data in user-friendly charts through the “Summary of Select Facts”
 - Drill down into detailed disaggregated data displays for all the civil rights data from the 2009-10 school year (SY) for a school or districts.
- **Detailed Data Tables**
 - View and compare data across multiple years and schools
 - Access and customize detailed data tables through the Detailed Data Tables site to analyze CRDC data.
- **View Longitudinal Data (Coming Soon)**
 - Explore trends over time for selected schools or districts
- **State and National Estimations (2009-10 Estimations Coming Soon)**
 - Download 2000, 2004, and 2006 state and national estimations (formerly called “projections”).
 - View statistically estimated state and national data

3. **NEW for 2012: The Learning Registry**

Aligned to goals:

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

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 Learning Registry is a new approach to capturing, sharing, and analyzing learning resource data to broaden the usefulness of digital content to benefit educators and learners. Not a website or repository... not a search engine... and not a replacement for the excellent sources of online learning content that already exist. The Learning Registry is an open source technical system designed to facilitate the exchange of data behind the scenes, and an open community of resource creators, publishers, curators, and consumers who are collaborating to broadly share resources, as well as information about how those resources are used by educators in diverse learning environments across the Web.

The Learning Registry is an open effort, depending on a number of collaborations to build the platform and implement its usage:

- Cross-agency partnership: US Department of Education and Defense co-funded the convening of educational partners for research, establishment of usage patterns and development of open technology infrastructure.
- Cross-government participation: Along with the resources that the US Department of Education (Doing What Works and FREE) and Defense (Advanced Distributed Learning) bring, other government and education agencies have made a commitment to share resources in the Learning Registry including National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Archives and Records Administration, Library of Congress and Smithsonian.
- State agency participation: The platform for sharing data has solved some key issues in sharing valuable resource classifications and effectiveness ratings from teachers for online classroom content. The Common Core of Standards (developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association) defines a standard in which content can be classified and shared across teachers in any state. The Learning Registry provides a technology platform in which both the classifications under the Common Core of Standards and the effectiveness/quality ratings of online resources can be shared freely between web sites, learning products between schools, districts and states.
- Industry participation: The work with the Learning Registry has inspiring partners from the education sector, both profit and non-



profit based, to collaborate on sharing content and usage data in order to create better products for better instruction in the classroom. Some examples of these partners are Benetech, ISKME, PBS and JES & Co from the non-profit sector as well as for-profit companies such as Agilix and BetterLesson.

- Open source contributions and collaborations: The technology behind the Learning Registry is built upon open source products such as CouchDB. The Learning Registry extensions have been shared to the open-source community and available for any interested partner to download, use and modify without licensing cost or restriction. This has inspired many derivative contributions from open-source communities to build connectors to the Learning Registry in popular languages such as Java, .NET, PHP and Python, which accelerates new adopters of the technology with proven usable code and a set of practices.

4. **NEW for 2012: RSA Management Information System**

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 Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) provides public access and user-friendly access to data and documents about individuals with disabilities served under the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, as amended, the *Randolph-Sheppard Act*, the *Assistive Technology Act* via the RSA Management Information System (RSA MIS) at <http://rsa.ed.gov>. The RSA-MIS has been operational since FY 2002. From 2002 until 2006, the RSA MIS was hosted by a contractor. Development was brought in-house in 2006. It has resided on the ed.gov servers since July 2006 and is continually undergoing minor modifications and enhancements to support RSA's on-going data collection needs.



The RSA-MIS collects data from RSA grantees under a variety of programs and provides the capability to disseminate the data to the public. The RSA-MIS collects quarterly and annual reports from approved OMB forms for many of RSA's programs. It allows RSA to publish and present the collected data in a variety of ways to the public. Finally, the RSA-MIS supports RSA's mission to support state vocational rehabilitation programs.

The RSA-MIS currently contains:

- program data on many of RSA's programs;
- state agency vocational rehabilitation and independent living monitoring reports;
- annual review reports of the state vocational rehabilitation agencies;
- emerging practices for any RSA program including vocational rehabilitation;
- RSA scholarship information available through rehabilitation training grants;
- quick tables and ad hoc queries of vocational rehabilitation agency performance data;
- downloadable databases;
- program improvement plans;
- state plans for VR, AT and IL;
- corrective action plans;
- GPRA performance measure information, where available; and
- a number of other materials.

At present, the following program data can be downloaded and/or queried:

- 1.) Basic Vocational Rehabilitation Program (84.126A)
 - i. RSA-2 Annual Vocational Rehabilitation Program/Cost Report
 - ii. RSA-113 Quarterly Cumulative Caseload Report
 - iii. RSA-722 Annual Report on Appeals Process
 - iv. ARR, RSA Annual Review Report (ARR)
 - v. Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan
 - vi. Aggregated RSA-911 Data



- vii. RSA-692 Re-allotment form
- viii. SF-269 for the Basic Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Quarterly)
- ix. SF-425 for the Basic Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Quarterly)
- x. VR State Plan
- xi. Corrective Action Plan
- xii. Program Improvement Plan
- xiii. Standards and Indicators
- xiv. Federal Fiscal Reports
- 2.) Training (84.129)
 - i. Payback Annual Report
 - ii. Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Needs Assessments
 - iii. TACE Center Work Plans
 - iv. TACE SF-269s
 - v. TACE SF-425s
- 3.) State Independent Living Services Program (84.169A)
 - i. RSA-704 Part 1 for Designated State Units and Statewide Independent Living Councils
 - ii. SF-269 for the State Independent Living Services Program
 - iii. SF-425 for State Independent Living Services Program
 - iv. State Plan for Independent Living
- 4.) Centers for Independent Living (84.132A)
 - i. RSA-704 Part 2 for Centers for Independent Living
- 5.) Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) (84.177)
 - i. RSA-7-OB Annual Report for the OIB Program
 - ii. SF-269 for the OIB Program
 - iii. SF-425 for the OIB Program
- 6.) Supported Employment Program (84.187)
 - i. SF-269 for the Supported Employment Program
 - ii. SF-425 for the Supported Employment Program
- 7.) Client Assistance Program (CAP) (84.161)
 - i. RSA-227 Annual CAP Report



- ii. SF-269 for CAP
 - iii. SF-425 for CAP
- 8.) Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR) Program (84.240)
 - i. RSA-509, Annual PAIR Program Performance Report
 - ii. SF-269 for the PAIR Program
 - iii. SF-425 for the PAIR Program
- 9.) Projects with Industry (PWI) (84.234)
 - i. RSA-631 PWI Annual Reporting Form
- 10.) Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) Program (84.343)
 - i. RSA-661, Annual PAAT Program Performance Report
 - ii. SF-269 for the PAAT Program
 - iii. SF-425 for the PAAT Program
- 11.) State Grants for Assistive Technology (84.224A)
 - i. RSA-572 Annual Report for State Grants for
 - ii. RSA-664 State Plan for Assistive Technology
 - iii. SF-269 for State Grants for Assistive Technology
 - iv. SF-425 for State Grants for Assistive Technology
- 12.) Alternative Financing Program (AFP) (84.224C)
 - i. RSA-662 Annual Report for AFP
- 13.) Telework (84.235T)
 - i. Annual Report for the Telework Program
- 14.) American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) Program (84.250)
 - i. Annual Report for the AIVRS Program
- 15.) Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Program
 - i. RSA-15 Report of Vending Facility Program
- 16.) Centers for Independent Living ARRA (84.400A)
 - i. RSA-704 Part 2 for Centers for Independent Living

In addition, RSA has developed a tool that provides easy access to all RSA program directives, policy guidance, and other documents to the general public and to vocational rehabilitation program agencies and partners. Current plans include adding the SF-425 for the two Centers for Independent Living programs (84.132A and 84.400A) by the end



of fiscal year 2012, and a reporting tool for the Helen Keller National Center.

Additional data, available in a variety of formats, 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*.

5. **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 and Data.gov.

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.



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 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 National NAEP, State NAEP, and Long-term Trend NAEP.

- **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]

2012 Update: Since the initial datasets published on Data.Gov, ED has continued to be active in releasing datasets on Data.Gov. As of April 2012, ED has released a total of 88 datasets, including 27 raw datasets and 61 data toolsets. Additionally, ED is a major contributor to the new Education community hosted at <http://education.data.gov> which contains education-related datasets from ED, USDA, State, NASA and beyond.

ED has leveraged DATA.GOV's capabilities to create interactive datasets, including JSON, XML and API formats, using the Socrata platform. An index of these Data.Gov



datasets may be found at <http://data.ed.gov/developers>



6. **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.



1. 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.

2012 Update:

Data.ED.gov has continued to offer additional grant programs and special initiatives visualizations in an initiative manner. Data.ED.gov added a developer section to connect entrepreneurs and software developers to our high-value, interactive datasets. Also, we've shared the open-source code and best practices of Data.ED.gov to the Housing and Urban Development agency to construct their own data portal at Partner.HUD.gov. In the future, we will contribute the open-source that drives Data.ED.gov visualizations back into the Drupal community so that other federal agencies and the public at large can leverage this work to build data portals quickly and offer greater transparency in the process.



7. 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.



8. 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.

9. **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/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.



10. 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 \(FFATA\)](#).

11. **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.

2012 Update:

ED continues to make these and other state-level data available to the public. The *EDFacts* initiative also provides source data for many of the ED public-facing data websites focused on K-12 education, including ED Data Express, the Race to the Top Annual Performance Report (RTT-APR), IDEAData.org, and the Civil Rights Data Collection.

EDFacts is working with other ED programs and offices to make district and school level data products available to the public. ED's new Chief Privacy Officer is working with an internal team to develop a comprehensive privacy protection policy; these data products will be released when this policy has been finalized and approved.



In 2012, ED Facts will continue to work with NCES on Common Education Data Standards (CEDDS), Version 2.0 of which was recently released to cover data elements needed for federal reporting requirements. Currently, state education agencies are voluntarily mapping their data systems to CEDDS elements and definitions, and the ED Facts team is aligning its aggregate count data groups with the specific CEDDS elements which are needed to generate the specific data group. All of this joint work is continuing with the goal of making federal reporting to ED Facts easier, more consistent and more transparent.

12. 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 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*.

2012 Update

State-level IDEA data submitted to the Department to meet IDEA reporting requirements are posted on ideadata.org within one year of data submission. The website hosts resources for data collectors, submitters, and consumers to improve both access to data and appropriate use of data. Individualized technical assistance is available to data users by calling DAC's toll-free number. Fiscal data are posted, as well as links to data reports such as the IDEA Annual Report to Congress.

13. 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.



14. **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.

2012 Update:

The Office of Management, Human Capital and Client Services (HCCS) hosted a veterans workshop "*Fostering an Inclusive and Productive Workforce*," which informed veterans and other employees on the Federal Government's Best Practices in veteran recruitment and employment. The Department will continue to provide on-going information and data and make it available to the public in support of Executive Order 13518.

The Office of Management, HCCS will have career counselors that will assist with the hiring practices of veterans and disabled veterans. These career counselors will assist with resume writing skills, interviewing skills, workshops, and employment applications. This is scheduled to begin in the 3rd quarter.

ED's hiring goals for Fiscal Year 2012 are: 14% for total new veteran hires and 5% for total disabled veteran new hires. ED continues to collect data and track the progress of hiring veterans and disabled veterans. The Office of Management, HCCS has fully implemented ED's Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) that outlines goals of hiring and retention strategies for veterans and disabled veterans. The DVAAP can be found on the Department's website at



<http://www.ed.gov/jobs>. The Office of Management, HCCS will continue to maintain and update information on veterans hiring and employment on the Department's website to improve public access to veterans hiring data and progress.

15. 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 IES 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.

2012 Update

On Goal 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:

1.1.a In 2011, NCES was responsible for the Privacy Technical Assistance Center that NCES initiated to support the protection of student privacy and of the confidentiality of data included in Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS). See <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/index.html>.

1.1.b. NCES published four privacy-related technical briefs in 2010 and 2011: "Basic Concepts and Definitions for Privacy and Confidentiality in Student Education Records" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011601>), "Data Stewardship: Managing Personally Identifiable Information in Student Education Records" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011602>), "Statistical Methods for Protecting Personally Identifiable Information in Aggregate Reporting" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011603>), and "Statistical Methods for Protecting Personally Identifiable Information in the Disclosure of Graduation Rates of First-Time, Full-Time Degree- or Certificate-Seeking Undergraduate Students by 2-Year Degree-Granting Institutions of Higher Education" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012151>).

1.1.c. The NCES Commissioner and Chief Statistician are active participants in the department wide Privacy Advisory Committee and in the Data Release working



group that is focusing on data protection and data access.

1.1.d. The NCES/IES data security team provides technical assistance to CORs and external licensed data users; including briefings for newly awarded contracts on the security clearance process required for contractor staff with access to personally identifiable information and/or students in classrooms.

1.1.e. The NCES data licensing program developed and implemented privacy and data confidentiality training for restricted use data licensees.

1.1.f. The NCES Chief Statistician chairs the OMB Interagency Council on Statistical Policy's Privacy Committee. That Committee provides a forum for data stewards from the individual statistical agencies to come together to discuss privacy and data protection concerns in a confidential setting.

On Goal 1.2, make more data and information available to the public:

1.2a. The NCES/IES restricted use data licensing program makes de-identified detailed information on survey/study respondents available to qualified external researchers through a legally binding agreement that commits the licensees to upholding the protections afforded these data in the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), with violations subject to the penalties specified in ESRA. NCES is currently supporting approximately 800 restricted use data licenses; with 1 to 7 authorized users per license a conservative estimate of the estimated number of authorized external users is on the order of 3,200 to 4,000. See <http://nces.ed.gov/statprog/instruct.asp>.

1.2.b. NCES has developed and made available on the NCES website data tools that allow users to easily analyze NCES data and to locate and view information about U.S. schools and institutions:

- The International Data Explorer (IDE) allows users to create tables, charts, and maps using data from international assessments (TIMSS, PISA, and PIRLS) and to export reports to various formats, making these data more accessible. <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/ide/>.
- The NAEP Data Explorer (NDE) allows users to create tables, charts, and maps using data from the U.S. national assessments of reading, mathematics, science, civics, and other subjects at grades 4, 8, and 12, and to export reports to various formats, making these data more accessible. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>.



- PowerStats is a web-based data tool that permits user-created tables and charts, and regression analysis for a wide range of postsecondary surveys. The user-friendly interface permits analyses to be exported in various formats. Data newly available (in January 2012) include transcripts for a nationally representative sample of Beginning Postsecondary Students (2003/09), and this spring, transcript-based data for a nationally representative sample of bachelor degree graduates (Baccalaureate and Beyond). <http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/>.
- The Education Data Analysis Tool (EDAT) is a tool for downloading NCES public use data sets, as well as syntax files, to facilitate data analysis by researchers. Data files currently available for download from the EDAT include the elementary and secondary longitudinal studies (ECLS:K, NELS:88, ELS:2002, HSLs:2009) as well as the household, teacher and school crime surveys (NHES, SASS, SSOCS). To make data easily accessible for all users, data and syntax files are available in multiple formats for use with various statistical packages (e.g., SAS, SPSS, Stata, R, and more). <http://nces.ed.gov/edat/index.aspx?agrmnt=1>.
- Bibliography Search Tool: Several NCES longitudinal studies have been extensively used and cited by policy makers and researchers. The Bibliography Search Tool allows for easy search of the extensive citation lists of NELS:88 and ELS:2002, as well as the ability to print full citations and abstracts. <http://nces.ed.gov/bibliography>.
- NCES is developing the IPEDS Trends Generator which will permit simpler, user-friendly graphs and tables of trends in higher education using IPEDS data. It will be launched in 2012.
- The School District Demographics System (SDDS) is going to the Amazon Cloud System. The SDDS (through map viewer) provides access to school district demographic and related geographic data. This project enables users to directly access school district geographic and demographic data. <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/SDDS/index.aspx>.
- College Navigator allows users to search for and find information about nearly 7,000 colleges and universities in the United States. <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>.
- NCES's Common Core of Data (CCD) program and Private School Universe Survey (PPS) have on-line tools that allow users to search for and find information about public schools and districts and private schools in the



United States. <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>;
<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>;
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/>.

- NAEP's State Profiles tool presents key data about each state's performance in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in mathematics, reading, writing, and science for grades 4 and 8. Users can quickly see how a state performed over time, view a state's demographics, download snapshot reports, and compare each state's overall performance to the nation and each other. NAEP's State Comparisons and TUDA Comparisons tools provides tables and maps that compare states and jurisdictions based on the average scale scores for selected groups of public school students within a single assessment year, or compare the change in performance between two assessment years. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>;
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/>.
- NAEP already provides access to all released assessment items on the NCES website and is now developing a new tool ("Try NAEP") that will make it easier for people to access and use NAEP items, including creating item sets for use in classrooms.

1.2.c. The NAEP Primer was developed to guide educational researchers through the intricacies of the NAEP database and make its technologies more user-friendly. The NAEP Primer makes use of its publicly accessible NAEP mini-sample or the NAEP Primer data that is included on the CD. The mini-sample contains real data from the 2005 mathematics assessment that have been approved for public use. Only public schools are included in this subsample that contains selected variables for about 10 percent of the schools and students in this assessment. All students who participated in NAEP in the selected public schools are included. This subsample is not sufficient to make state comparisons.

[http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011463](http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011463;);
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011464>.

1.2.d. School Service Area Boundaries Project. NCES is currently working with the College of William & Mary to develop and produce accurate public school service areas for the largest 350 school districts in the U.S. This work includes the processing and digitizing of school attendance areas to accommodate the linking of school attendance areas with Census Bureau blocks to create a block equivalent file for these boundaries. These files will be reviewed for accuracy and integrated with school-level information from the 2009–10 Common Core of Data (CCD).

1.2.e. NCES is using new ways to share education data and information with the



public. For example, NAEP uses Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to share information about NAEP activities and events. NAEP is also developing a mobile application that will enable users to try NAEP questions and in turn increase awareness about what NAEP is and what the assessment is like. As another example, NCES has recently issues two publications as e-books for the iPad, Kindle, and non-Kindle devices (2011 Condition of Education and Comparative Indicators of Education in the United States and Other G-8 Countries: 2011).

1.2.f. NCES holds "Ask NAEP" web sessions as part of NAEP releases to enhance immediate accessibility of Report Card findings to the general public.

On Goal 1.5, maintain up-to-date information on the Department's website about Department offices and key programs:

1.5.a. NCES regularly updates on-line information about NCES programs, publications and other releases, staff, and events. The "What's New" section of the home page highlights recent publications and activities and NewsFlashes (emails) to registered users announce releases and events. Individual programs and studies also alert users to news and highlights on their respective home pages. Usage statistics are collected and reviewed monthly to determine how people use the NCES website and how frequently they access NCES products.

1.5.b. The NCES Statistical Standards Program produced and supports an online version of the "*NCES Handbook of Survey Methods*." The Handbook presents explanations of how each survey program in NCES obtains and prepares the data it publishes. The Handbook aims to provide users of NCES data with the information necessary to evaluate the suitability of the statistics for their needs, with a focus on the methodologies for survey design, data collection, and data processing. Thus, the Handbook provides a one-stop source of key information about each of the NCES data collections. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011609>.

1.5.c. NCES supports a website for K-12 education Forum members from state, local and federal governments. The Forum's goal is to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. The Forum deals with issues in education data policy, sponsors innovations in data collection and reporting, and provides technical assistance to improve state and local data systems. <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/>.

1.5.d. The NCES-sponsored State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) website makes grant related information available to states to aid them in the design and



implementation of statewide longitudinal data systems that support data-driven decision making. In addition to the grants, the SLDS website offers many services and resources to assist education agencies with SLDS-related work. Best practices, lessons learned, and non-proprietary products/solutions developed by recipients of these grants and other states are disseminated through the website to aid state and local education agencies. <http://nces.ed.gov/Programs/SLDS/>.

1.5.e. The NCES-sponsored Common Education Data Standards (CEDs) website reports on the activities and includes the outcomes of this national collaborative effort to develop voluntary, common data standards for a key set of education data elements to streamline the exchange and comparison of data across institutions and sectors. Standard data definitions will help ensure that data shared across institutions are consistent and comparable, and will make it easier for states to learn how students fare as they move across institutions, state lines, and school levels. The CEDs Alignment Tool allows users to compare their education data systems to one another, and to ED Common Education Data Standards. <http://ceds.ed.gov/whatIsCEDs.aspx>.

On goal 3.1, enhance collaboration with other federal and non-federal agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities:

3.1.a. The Forum and the SLDS program both involve collaborations with state and local education agencies, with other programs in the department of Education and with other relevant Federal agencies (see entries under 1.5).

3.2.b. The CEDs program represents the NCES response to the Congressional authority (per ESRA) to determine voluntary standards and guidelines to assist state educational agencies in developing statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs). To this end, NCES is working with key stakeholders in federal and state agencies and in non-profit and private entities to develop standards for a core set of data elements to ensure that states create P-20 data systems. <http://ceds.ed.gov/>.

3.2.c. NCES supports and participates in the collaborative efforts undertaken by the Statistical Community of Practice and Engagement (SCOPE). For example SCOPE currently has active working groups on Best Practices for handling and sharing Confidential Unclassified Statistical Information, on displaying statistical data in compliance with Section 508 requirements, and on experimenting with the use of the cloud to exchange and share public use data and data display and analysis software applications.

3.2.d. NCES has convened a federal interagency working group to develop better survey measures of the prevalence of industry-recognized certifications and licenses



and educational certificates in the US adult population. The group includes staff from Education, Labor, the Census Bureau, the National Science Foundation, the Council of Economic Advisors, and the Office of Management and Budget. To date, the group has completed a pilot study to evaluate the validity of proposed survey items, has prepared a technical report on the study scheduled for release in March 2012, and is planning follow up efforts to evaluate the use of the new survey items in federal household studies.

3.2.e. NCES's Common Core of Data program collaborates with ED's ED Facts and Census to improve data timeliness and data quality.

3.2.f. NCES is collaborating with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to measure STEM, through NCES's High School Longitudinal Study (HSLs), a nationally representative study of ninth-graders who are being followed through their secondary and postsecondary years. HSLs focuses on high school course taking, college preparation and planning, college access and attendance, generally and specifically in regards to STEM. NSF sponsored ten state representative data sets within HSLs to facilitate state and national comparisons on the algebra assessment students take and the survey responses of students, their parents, math and science teachers, school counselor, and school administrator. NSF also targeted funds to support pioneering efforts to merge the HSLs survey data with state administrative record data.

3.2.g. NCES collaborates with the Office of Indian Education to increase the amount of information available for the American Indian school age population and to facilitate participation in NAEP. Conducted in 2005, 2007 and 2009, the National Indian Education Study (NIES) provides data, including NAEP performance data, on a nationally-representative sample of American Indian and Alaska Native students in public, private, Department of Defense, and Bureau of Indian Education funded schools. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nies/>

3.2.h. Through its Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), NCES is working with the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) to update the 1999 arts education report, per a Congressional mandate. NCES surveyed over 3,000 schools and over 6,000 teachers in 2009-2010. NCES worked closely with OII on survey development, selecting key indicators for the final report and designing the layout of the final report. The report is scheduled to be released April 2, 2012. In addition, OII has played a key role in gaining input from arts education stakeholder organizations.

3.2.i. NCES collaborates with international partners to collect and improve comparative education data. On behalf of the United States, NCES participates in the International Indicators of Education Systems (INES), an Organization for Economic



Cooperation and Development (OECD) program. The main product of this work is the OECD *Education at a Glance*, an annual education indicator report, which includes indicators of participation, achievement, contexts, resources, expenditures, and economic and social outcomes of education. NCES staff work with colleagues from other participating countries in working groups centered on education topics of mutual interest and work to develop measures, collect data, and produce indicators. NCES staff also work with the OECD and other countries to guide and implement the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). NCES staff also work with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and colleagues from other countries to develop and implement IEA's international education studies, include the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The NCES Commissioner is the official U.S. representative to the IEA's General Assembly and on the IEA Standing Committee.

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/index.asp>.

3.2.k. NCES is holding a series of summits, the *Future of NAEP Summits for States and Districts*, with state and district partnerships, the assessment community, and experts in technology, regarding the future of the Nation's Report Card.

3.2.l. NCES funds a NAEP State Coordinator in each state, which enables direct contact and coordination with a member of each state Department of Education. NCES also supports a team of NAEP Ambassadors (ex-chief state school officers) to meet with all state chief superintendents and district superintendents participating in NAEP.

3.2.m. NCES sponsored the Testing Integrity Symposium on February 28, 2012, to foster a national dialogue about the current issues of "cheating" on large-scale assessments.

H. *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. NEW for 2012: Twitter Townhalls

Aligned to goals:

- 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 for decision-making.*

In an unprecedented level of openness for a cabinet level official, during 2011, Secretary Duncan held five Twitter town halls with the public, where the Secretary asked the public to submit questions online and he answered them either live on video or via Twitter replies. Additionally, every few weeks, Secretary Duncan personally answered, via video, questions and comments that the public had posted to his Facebook page. The Department of Education and Secretary Duncan are committed to expanding open communication with the public through social media and other forms of digital communication.

The US Department of Education's Twitter accounts can be located at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/social-media.html> and at time of this update are:

- [@ArneDuncan](#)
- [@USEDGov](#)
- [@DoingWhatWorks](#)
- [@ED_Outreach](#)
- [@EDCivilRights](#)



- [@EDGovJobs](#)
- [@EDPartners](#)
- [@EDPressSec](#)
- [@ERICinfo](#)
- [@FAFSA](#)
- [@FreeResources](#)
- [@FSAconf](#)
- [@GovBoard](#)
- [@HispanicEd](#)
- [@NAEP NCES](#)
- [@OfficeofEdTech](#)
- [@RuralED](#)
- [@USMarthaKanter](#)
- [@White House AAPI](#)

2. NEW for 2012: Empowering Students and Families as Stakeholders and Collaborators

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.

2.4: Empower students, families, educators, and community partners to have a voice in the development and implementation of Department-funded education projects at the state and local level.

At a January 10, 2012, event at the White House titled “For Democracy’s Future: Education Reclaims Our Civic Mission,” Secretary



Arne Duncan remarked that we need to increase opportunities for students to have a voice in education decisions and to improve their communities and “not just be recipients of service.” At that same event, the Department released a report titled “Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action,” which included nine steps the Department committed to taking to advance a civic learning and engagement agenda. One of the action steps is to promote student and family participation in education programs and policies at the federal and local levels. The Department is currently conducting an internal audit of all education programs to identify opportunities for including students and families as stakeholders and collaborators, not just observers or recipients.

3. **Public Participation at ED.gov and through Outreach**

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/).

2012 Update:

In addition to Web-based collaboration tools, the Department realizes that to effectively communicate with the general public, students, parents, teachers, and all constituencies engaged in public education, the Department must develop collaborative relationships through personal, interactive Outreach to education



organizations and targeted stakeholders. To assess and meet the needs of families, for example, and to work toward closing the achievement gap, the Department has been holding ongoing family forums at headquarters and in key cities to reach Title I families, in particular. To better understand students, the Department has also established the “Student Voices” conversations for the Secretary and other senior officials to hear from students representing diverse interests, perspectives, and locales. These conversations reinforce the need for the U.S. to be No. 1 in the world in the percentage of the population with a college degree by 2020 with a focus on the importance of high school completion and college attendance and completion. The conversations have focused on identifying and overcoming barriers to college success and affordability.

With the goal of developing the best solutions for American’s students, the Department has focused on transforming the teaching profession for the 21st century by gathering input from teachers through the “Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence and Collaborative Teaching” (RESPECT) project. This project consists of conversations with teachers whose comments will inform grant priorities and budget expenditures related to teacher preparation, professional development and general education reform.

Aggressive outreach to rural communities is another example of targeted outreach to teachers, families, students and stakeholders. This Outreach blends both the use of Web-based tools and personal interaction. Contact with rural communities has resulted in the inclusion of rural priorities in grant programs and recognition of the need for rural communities to pool resources when applying for and implementing Department grants, for example.

4. 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.

2012 Update:

MyData Download

The MyData Download initiative was launched to accelerate interoperability of student data by providing students and their parents with access to machine-readable copies of their own educational records. Through this initiative, providers of systems that store student data will add a “MyData button” that permits students to download their data to create a personal learning profile that they can keep with them throughout their learning career. This will encourage developers to create tools for students to use in conjunction with their MyData files, such as a personal learning data repository or customized support services based on their data. Additional information available at <http://www.MyDataDownload.org>.

Next Generation Assessments

As part of the grants to two consortia of states to develop the next generation of assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards, the consortia are required to develop open, interoperable standards for sharing and accessing assessment items and producing student data.

Common Educational Data Standards

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) has been working closely with key stakeholders in federal and state agencies and in non-profit and private entities to develop voluntary standards and guidelines to assist state educational agencies in developing statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs). Additional information is available at <http://ceds.ed.gov>



5. 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.

2012 Update:

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:

1) Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) – Effective January 3, 2012 the Department promulgated new FERPA regulations which are designed to both protect privacy and to help us ensure that all State or federally funded education programs are adequately preparing children for success in the next stage of life, whether that is in kindergarten or the workforce. They: (a) strengthen enforcement, (b) ensure the safety of students, and (c) ensure our taxpayer funds are invested wisely in effective programs. Information about the new FERPA regulations can be found at www.ed.gov/fpco.

2) Creation of the Privacy Technical Assistance Center -- The Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) was created in the fall of 2010, and is now in its second year of operations. PTAC presents at numerous conferences, offers highly attended webinar trainings, conducts site visits around the country, issues a wide array of best practice documents, and answers technical assistance questions through its help desk.

2) NCES Technical Briefs -- NCES published its Technical Briefs entitled “Basic Concepts and Definitions for Privacy and Confidentiality in Student Education Records,” “Data Stewardship: Managing Personally Identifiable Information in Electronic Student Education Records,” and “Statistical Methods for Protecting Personally Identifiable Information in Aggregate Reporting.” The technical briefs can be accessed online at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/technical-briefs.html>.

3) Non-regulatory guidance -- The Department of Education has issued a wide array of non-regulatory guidance, including "Guidance on Reasonable Methods and Written Agreements," data security and data governance checklists, best practice documents for sharing and protecting data under FERPA, and a number of webinars



on various aspects of the new FERPA regulations.

For more information, please see the links below on the web:

- PTAC Website: www.ed.gov/ptac/
- NCES Technical Briefs:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/technical-briefs.html>
- Issue Briefs and White Papers:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/issue-briefs.html>
- Checklists: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/checklist.html>
- Webinars and Presentations:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/webinars-presentations.html>
- FAQs: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/faqs.html>

6. 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.



2012 Update:

We've upgraded ED.gov with a new content management system to allow offices to publish information directly to the web site. With this new technology, The Office of Innovation and Improvement, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Educational Technology and Office of Secretary are contributing to directly ED.gov.

7. 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.



8. **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.

2012 Update:

From this experience in using IdeaScale, we've continued a practice of gathering feedback from the public. We've decided to take public feedback on our main ED.gov blog (www.ed.gov/blog) as we can engage our existing large membership and leverage the technology investments already in place there.

9. **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.



2012 Update: Building on the successes of the OpenED portal, the Department redesigned OpenED and released Idea Engine on January 31, 2011. Idea Engine is an in-house space to generate ideas and solutions, where ED staff is encouraged to identify creative ways to get results; moving ED from problem-oriented to solution-oriented.

All ED employees can present their innovative ideas for changes that can be made at ED. Other employees can weigh in, present their reactions and views, and help evolve the idea. Employees can vote on ideas that have been put forward by colleagues. As ideas are proposed to ED's senior leaders, employees are able to track the progress of their ideas and check their status. Individual offices, working groups, and interdisciplinary teams can have their own online space for targeted discussions. Employees can participate in groups that apply to their areas of concern and contribute to focused conversations germane to their interests. Finally, Senior staff can pose a question to the ED community, and challenge all staff to present their best ideas and solutions.

Approximately 25% of employees are registered users of Idea Engine. Employees have submitted 192 ideas through Idea Engine and cast over 2200 votes for various ideas. At this time, five ideas have been fully implemented and ten ideas are in the process of being implemented with another 70 under review for possible implementation.

I. *Improving Internal Processes*

1. **NEW for 2012: Data Strategy Team**

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 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.

4.2: Enhance Departmental internal collaboration capabilities.

The Data Strategy Team (DST) was organized in August 2010 to address the issue of inconsistent and uncoordinated data strategies among principal offices. The DST has increased coordination across the Department and begun to develop a vision for public data access. The mission of the DST is to share ideas to inform Department processes and policies related to data, coordinate Department data initiatives, and improve transparency in all matters surrounding the Department's collection and publication of data.

The DST is co-chaired by the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the Privacy, Information, and Records Management Services (PIRMS) and includes representatives from nearly all of the Department's principal offices.

Working groups are the primary conduit through which the work of the Data Strategy Team is accomplished. To date, the DST has created five workgroups to address the following topics: Data Dashboard, Data Inventory, Open Government, Data Release, and Technical Assistance.

- The Data Dashboard Workgroup is planning for the transition of the Dashboard.Ed.Gov website from its current version 1.0, launched in January 2011, to version 2.0 with significantly improved features.
- The Data Inventory Workgroup have begun the challenging task of defining what are "data" across the very diverse POCs of ED and also have made initial steps in cataloging our data holdings.
- Responding to initiatives from the White House and OMB, the Open Government Workgroup is helping ED navigate the requirements for transparency and openness mandated for all Federal agencies.
- The Data Release workgroup is taking on the task of designing a coordination process to improve the way that POCs release data and



data-based reporting to the public while still balancing the need to protect privacy and confidentiality.

- The newest DST workgroup – Technical Assistance – provides a forum for the various program officers providing technical assistance on data issues to convene and better coordinate their activities with SEAs and LEAs.

2. NEW for 2012: .Gov Web Reform

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 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.

The .gov reform effort is part of President Obama's Campaign to Cut Waste, identifying unnecessary websites that can be consolidated into other websites to reduce costs and improve the quality of service to the American public. The President signed Executive Order 13571, "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service," April 27, 2011, which requires federal agencies, including ED, to take specific steps to strengthen customer service, including how they deliver services and information on federal ".gov" websites. See <http://www.usa.gov/WebReform.shtml> for more details.

We have responded to this call to action. In July 2011, ED owned 34 .GOV domains. To date, ED is now consolidated into 9 primary .GOV domains (with 10 other domains consolidated as redirects) - representing more than a 73 percent (9 of 34 domains) reduction. The domains eliminated include: NOCHILDLEFTBEHIND.GOV, NCLB.GOV, EDU.GOV, NSLI.GOV, HURRICANEHELPFORSCHOOLS.GOV, YESICAN.GOV, YIC.GOV, YOSIPUEDO.GOV, YESICANKIDS.GOV, FINAID.GOV, DIRECTLOAN.GOV and STUDENTLOAN.GOV.



The majority of these sites are now consolidated with existing infrastructures and content management frameworks with the primary ED.GOV website or as part of the new Flagship Initiative, Transparency: Federal Student Aid Integrated Student View (ISV) program. All of ED's domains maintain [Domain Name System Security \(DNSSEC\)](#) compliance and we are on schedule to complete our IPv6 implementation by Sep 2012.

Similar plans on ongoing with sites (aka, subdomains) within our ED.GOV domain. To date, ED is the only known Federal agency that has published a list of all Federal Public Websites on Data.Gov; see the raw dataset titled, "[U.S. Department of Education \(ED\) Internet Domains](#)".

To learn more, please visit our Web Improvement Plan and Customer Service Plan documents available from <http://www.ed.gov/open>.

3. 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.

2012 Update:

An executive level Chief Privacy Officer was established and filled in April 2011. The newly reorganized PIRMS has provided clarity and guidance on privacy rules to improve transparency and make more data available to the public.

Revived and formally chartered the DST, resulting in increased coordination of data releases, and improved response to the Open Government Directive. Established a working group under the DST to develop a coordinated data release policy. Established a FERPA user's group, which has led to increased FERPA guidance, and a series of active listening sessions with external stakeholders. There has been increased coordination between PTAC and FPCO, issuing guidance on the use of FERPA in emergency situations, and re-instituting regular FPCO/OGC meetings. Established productive relationships with various internal and external groups that will further the Department's privacy agenda in the years to come. Privacy training within ED for FY 11 was successfully fielded, with 85% completion across the Department.

PIRMS has met the stated objectives, but considers this a topic of on-going focus. We will continue to improve clarity and guidance on our privacy rules and regulations, make more data available to the public, and will build on our 2011 successes.



4. 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.

5. 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](#).

2012 Update:

All records retention schedules are current and up-to-date. We are working with FSA to make revisions to its schedules.

Develops clear and consistent business rules (standards) for records management: We provide quarterly records management training to Principal Office Records Liaison Officers. We have recently issued records management guidance for social media records, and are working to develop records management guidance for cloud computing and teleworking.

Provides guidance and instruction to Department staff for the appropriate handling, maintenance, and disposition of records: Principal Offices have current and complete file plans identifying their records and retention requirements.

Develops and provides print and Web-based training to Department employees and contractors regarding records management responsibilities: Records Management briefings are provided to ED senior officials, and we are working to roll-out mandatory all-employee records management training.

Oversees the implementation and management of Department-wide systems and databases that support the successful and efficient handling of records: A Department-wide electronic recordkeeping initiative is underway to implement an electronic recordkeeping system across the organization.

6. 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

**Director, FSC
Gregory Smith**

**Elise Cook, FOIA
Public
Liaison/Privacy Act
Requests**

**Maria -Teresa
Cueva, FOIA Public
Liaison/Privacy Act
Requests**

**Linda Darby, FOIA
Public Liaison**

**James Hyler, FOIA
Public
Liaison/Appeals
Coordinator**

**Bennie Jessup,
FOIA Public Liaison**

**Chrisitie Swafford,
FOIA Public Liaison**

**Melvin Rogers,
FOIA Admin
Support**

**Robert Wehausen,
FOIA Public Liaison**



2012 Update:

The Open Government Directive issued by the President in late 2009, identifies transparency, participation, and collaboration as the three principles to form the cornerstone of an open government. Since that time, the Department of Education and the FOIA Service Center (FSC) have made significant efforts in response to the President's call for transparency and open government by carefully aligning the FSC's program agenda with the Department's Open Government initiatives. This agenda includes strongly voicing the Department's Open Government objectives for ensuring that the Department applies a presumption of openness for making decision involving FOIAs by increasing awareness through training, releasing records proactively and discretionarily, and increasing overall effectiveness and efficiency in handling requests.

1. Implemented a process for proactive (in advance of a FOIA request) and discretionary (using a no-foreseeable-harm determination threshold) release of records. Annually, the Department receives more than 700 requests for contracts, grant applications, and information about federally funded programs. The FSC staff is working with several program offices; such as the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) and the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) to identify and post these types of documents in the FOIA e-Reading Room.
2. Provided e-Reading Room visitors access to common FOIA requested documents and also hyperlinks directly to program offices to make it easier for the public to locate the most recent copy of the document they are seeking without needing to submit a FOIA request.
3. Developed a FOIA Training Curriculum with modules focused on the various groups of employees and their specific responsibility for administering the FOIA. The first module in the series provides basic information about the FOIA to new employees upon entry, and to all Department employees, electronically, on an annual basis.
4. Streamlined the Intake Process to quickly identify, process, and provide an initial response to requests within the first 20 workdays after receipt. This includes working with requesters to quickly help them perfect their request by providing additional information regarding the scope of their request as well as resolving fee issues and special handling, and then assigning their request to the appropriate program offices. The FSC also has implemented new procedures and emphasis to rapidly review and complete cases once they have been returned to the FSC by the program.
5. The Department's Business Transformation Team (BTT) conducted a study



of the agency's FOIA processes. The BTT conducted 3 workshops with 40 participants with the purpose of leveraging current "best practices" with recommendations for improvement in communication and technology. Participants agreed to 23 program improvements that have proven successful in better processing of cases and responsiveness to FOIA requesters.

6. The FSC staff conducted bi-monthly Quality Assurance (QA) meetings with the agency principal offices to share information, increase cooperation and to conduct training.
7. The FSC conducted desk-side training and marketed training and frequently asked information to FOIA coordinators throughout the agency.

7. 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 Finland—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 Toyne—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

8. 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 201—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

2012 Update:

Since the original publication of the Open Government Plan, we've applied transparency principals to our core mission and continuously improving the ways in which we do so. Since 2010, we've:

- a.) established procedures for publishing data on the grant application and award process on Data.Ed.Gov. On this web site, we are publishing application data, reviewers' scores of highly rated applications and awarded grantees of some grant programs. We will upgrade this functionality to Data.Ed.Gov in mid-2012 that will allow us to publish additional grant activities at a higher frequency to enable greater transparency across our programs.
- b.) upgraded Ed.Gov to allow direct publishing from our initiatives, offices and programs. A few of these upgraded office pages can be seen at: Office of Innovation and Improvement (<http://www.ed.gov/oii-news>), Office of Educational Technology (<http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/technology/>) and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (<http://www.ed.gov/oese-news>). We are continuing to roll out this capability to other offices and initiatives on a monthly basis.
- c.) successfully developed functional and technical requirements for an integrated program information catalog on Ed.Gov. We are now in the process of building a real-time catalog on Ed.Gov to provide the contents of the Guide to Education Programs in a searchable format on the web. This will be available on Ed.Gov by the end of 2012.



IV. 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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