



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Inspector General

Five-Year Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2018–2022

Office of Inspector General
Kathleen S. Tighe
Inspector General

March 2018

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U.S. Department of Education Office of Inspector General
Five-Year Strategic Plan
Fiscal Years 2018–2022

Please Note:

The Office of Inspector General's Five-Year Strategic Plan is available at <https://www.ed.gov/oig/reports.html>.

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Message from the Inspector General

In accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2013, I am pleased to provide the U.S. Department of Education (Department) Office of Inspector General (OIG) Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2018 through 2022. This plan describes the focus and direction of OIG's operations over the next five years, establishes our organizational goals, and outlines the strategies we will employ to reach those goals and the measures we will use to evaluate our performance.

Our mission is to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the Department's programs and operations. To achieve this mission, we conduct audits and investigations and provide other assistance to help ensure integrity in the Department's operations and programs and identify opportunities for improvement. The information we provide to Department managers and the U.S. Congress can result in changes to legislation, regulations, policies, and practices. These changes are designed to continually improve the operations of the Department and its programs so they best serve America's taxpayers and students.

The experience and expertise of our employees is critical to the successful achievement of our mission. We have consistently delivered results by identifying and responding to emerging threats to Federal education programs and operations. This requires a highly skilled workforce, and we will continue to focus on enhancing and expanding the skills and expertise of our staff so we can effectively address the challenges that lie ahead.

In developing this plan, we considered the Department's mission, strategic plan, and management challenges; major educational program development and initiatives; and the OIG's statutory responsibilities. While our Strategic Plan provides the roadmap to accomplish our mission over the next five years, we will periodically consult with the Department, Congress, and other stakeholders during our annual work planning and its implementation and use the feedback that we receive to revise our approach as necessary. This will allow us to consistently improve our products and services. We will also continue to assess the impact of our work in order to maximize the effectiveness of our efforts and resources. In closing, I would like to thank the OIG staff for their tireless efforts on behalf of America's taxpayers and students, as well as the Department, Congress, and all of our stakeholders for their support. I look forward to continuing to work with you in meeting our goals and fulfilling our mission.

Kathleen S. Tighe
Inspector General

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Office of Inspector General Roles and Responsibilities

The Inspector General Act established Offices of Inspectors General (OIG) as independent and objective organizations within Federal departments and agencies. The Inspector General Act authorizes each OIG to

- conduct and supervise audits and investigations relating to its agency's programs and operations;
- provide leadership, coordinate, and recommend policies for activities designed to promote effectiveness and to prevent and detect fraud and abuse in the agency's programs and operations; and
- keep its agency head and the U.S. Congress fully and currently informed of problems and inefficiencies in the agency's programs and operations and on the status of corrective actions.

When the Inspector General Act was passed in 1978, OIGs were established in 12 agencies. At that time, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was responsible for administering Federal education programs. In 1979, the Department of Education Act created an independent U.S. Department of Education (Department), which began operation in 1980.

The Department of Education Act also established the Education OIG. This year, 2018, marks our 39th year of service to the Department, Congress, and the American people. Throughout our existence, we have successfully promoted the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the Department's programs and operations. We have consistently conducted independent and objective audits and investigations and provided other value-added services such as outreach and fraud deterrence efforts.

We provide oversight of the Department's performance and report to Congress and to the Secretary on opportunities for improvement and recommendations to address any problems or deficiencies we find. Our work consistently identifies methods to use Federal education funds more effectively, and we have worked with the Department to prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. We also investigate fraud, leading to the prosecution of those who try to obtain Federal education funds illegally.

Our Strategic Plan provides a roadmap to continue our history of providing effective and objective oversight of the Department's programs and operations. This Strategic Plan sets forth our vision, mission, and goals for the next five years and assists in ensuring that our efforts are responsive to needs and interests of our customers and stakeholders.



Overview of Office of Inspector General Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2018–2022





VISION

Our vision is to inspire positive change in Department programs and in the lives of the people served by these programs.

MISSION

Our mission is to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the Department's programs and operations through our independent and objective audits, investigations, inspections, and other activities.

CORE VALUES

Our core values are excellence, accountability, integrity, independence, communication, collaboration, valuing employees, and continuous improvement.

GOALS

Our first goal is to deliver high-quality, timely, and impactful products and services that promote efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in the Department's operations and programs.

Our second goal is to cultivate a diverse, highly skilled, and inspired workforce with sufficient resources to carry out the OIG's mission.

Our third goal is to implement internal processes that promote organizational effectiveness, stewardship of resources, and accountability.

STRATEGIES

To achieve Goal 1, we will maximize value through risk-based resource allocation; provide value-added audit, investigative, and other services; deliver relevant and timely results; effectively and efficiently use technology to identify threats to the Department's programs and operations; promote data protection and information technology security; and conduct effective outreach to promote programmatic and operational integrity.

To achieve Goal 2, we will cultivate workforce excellence, provide necessary resources, promote an inclusive workplace environment, and recognize achievement.

To achieve Goal 3, we will promote effective financial operations, deliver superior operational support, provide effective quality assurance, and apply an effective enterprise risk management framework.

Our core values guide our professional actions and decisions.
They answer the question, “What do we stand for?”



EXCELLENCE

We deliver quality and timely products and services that meet the needs of our stakeholders.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We accept responsibility for our actions.

INTEGRITY

We adhere to the highest ethical principles and perform our work in an honest and trustworthy manner.

INDEPENDENCE

We are objective, impartial, and free of conflicts of interest.

COMMUNICATION

We communicate openly, honestly, and constructively with associates and stakeholders.

COLLABORATION

We share knowledge and expertise to develop effective solutions that add value.

VALUING EMPLOYEES

We appreciate our employees, meaningfully recognize their outstanding efforts, and consider their perspective when making decisions that affect them.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We are committed to finding new ways to accomplish our work, achieve excellence, identify top risks and challenges, and develop our employees.



Strategies and Performance Measures

Our strategies provide a framework for the activities that we perform to achieve our goals and deliver value. Our performance measures are quantifiable indicators used to assess how well we are achieving our desired objectives. They include the type or level of activities conducted, products and services delivered, and results of those products and services.

Strategies and Performance Measures for Goal 1

Strategy 1: Maximize Value through Risk-Based Resource Allocation. We assess risk to concentrate OIG resources and efforts on issues that have the greatest impact and usefulness to the stakeholders.

Strategy 1 Performance Measure:

- Audits and investigations are initiated in accordance with policy and focused on areas of high risk or significant importance.

Strategy 2: Provide Value-Added Audit, Investigative, and Other Services. We seek to enhance performance and improve efficiency, integrity, and accountability across the Department's activities by conducting audits, investigations, and other work that provide stakeholders with accurate, impactful, and actionable information. Where our activities identify problems, deficiencies, or opportunities for improvement, we communicate the results to the people who need the information and who will monitor corrective actions to ensure issues are addressed.

Strategy 2 Performance Measures:

- Report recommendations are accepted by the Department and corrective action plans are agreed to by OIG management.
- Preliminary inquiries converted to full investigations by OIG management result in a criminal, civil, or administrative action or monetary result.
- Substantive comments provided by the OIG result in changes in legislation, regulations, and policies.

Strategy 3: Deliver Timely Results. We strive to refine and implement processes that help us deliver high-quality internal and external products that meet the anticipated objectives on time and cost effectively. We work to clearly define each project's purpose, deliverables, and milestones while continually evaluating overall progress and success against our performance standards.

Strategy 3 Performance Measures:

- Initial audit and alternative project results are evaluated and determined to be sufficient by OIG management by the agreed-on date.



- Audits and alternative projects meet the agreed-on dates for field work completed and draft reports submitted for review in accordance with policy.
- Draft and final audit and alternative project reports are issued in accordance with policy by the agreed-on date.
- Draft audit and alternative project reports are accepted by OIG management and issued within one year of entrance conference.
- Case closing reports of investigation are submitted in accordance with policy and accepted by OIG management within established deadlines.
- Preliminary inquiries of fraud, waste, and abuse are processed in accordance with policy and within established deadlines.
- Hotline complaints are processed in accordance with policy and within established deadlines.
- Freedom of Information Act responses are processed in accordance with statutory requirements and delivered to requestors within required deadlines.
- Requests for forensic or analytical assistance are completed in accordance with policy and within established timeframes.
- Computer-assisted assessment technology products are completed in accordance with policy within required or agreed-on dates.
- Counsel work products are completed with minimal corrections by the supervisor and delivered within required or agreed-on deadlines.

Strategy 4: Effectively and Efficiently Use Technology to Identify Threats to the Department’s Programs and Operations. We develop and use analytical and other tools that help us proactively identify vulnerabilities, propose protective actions, and measure the effectiveness of such actions.

Strategy 4 Performance Measure:

- Proactive analytical projects are developed in accordance with policy within projected timeframes as measured from start to completion.

Strategy 5: Promote Data Protection and Information Technology Security. We perform work that assesses information technology controls, policies and procedures, and current processes. This includes assessments on the extent to which controls were implemented correctly, operating as intended, and producing the desired outcomes.

Strategy 5 Performance Measures:

- Information technology audits are issued in accordance with policy and accepted by OIG management by the agreed-on date.
- OIG Data Analytics System Open Plan of Actions and Milestones are closed and accepted by OIG management and the Department within established timeframes.

Strategy 6: Conduct Effective Outreach to Promote Programmatic and Operational Integrity.

We provide outreach to increase awareness of the role of the OIG and to educate both Department employees and external customers on how to recognize fraud, waste, and abuse, and the mechanisms available for reporting concerns.

Strategy 6 Performance Measure:

- Activities that provide information to raise stakeholder awareness of fraud, waste, and abuse indicators and prevention techniques are tracked, targets are achieved, and opportunities to improve results are identified and implemented.

Strategies and Performance Measures for Goal 2

Strategy 1: Cultivate Workforce Excellence. We recruit, retain, and engage a highly qualified, diverse workforce with the skills to meet current and emerging mission requirements.

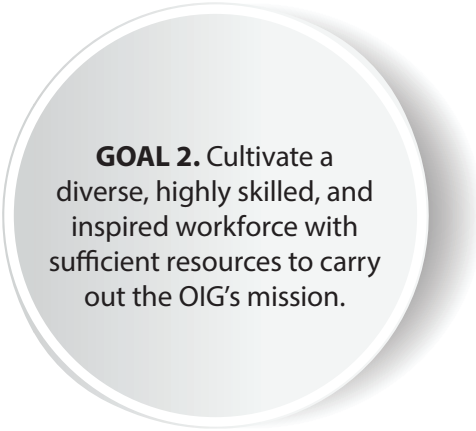
Strategy 2: Provide Necessary Resources. We provide employees with the physical work space, technology, equipment, and other resources necessary to support accomplishment of the goals of the OIG.

Strategy 3: Promote an Inclusive Workplace Environment. We foster an environment of open communication, respect for ideas, and understanding of the value of each person's contribution to promote employee satisfaction and motivation.

Strategy 4: Recognize Achievement. We maintain a culture of accountability and excellence through performance management and awards systems that meaningfully and objectively differentiate between levels of performance.

Strategies 1 through 4 Performance Measures:

- Results reported through employee satisfaction feedback mechanisms are tracked, methods to identify areas where enhancement is needed are developed, and activities to improve results are implemented.
- Customer satisfaction on operational performance is assessed through surveys or other methods, strategies to identify areas where performance improvement is needed are developed, and activities to improve performance are implemented.
- A performance management system is maintained, resulting in timely development of performance plans, timely and meaningful performance feedback, and awards to employees for their contributions to products and services that help accomplish the OIG's mission.



GOAL 2. Cultivate a diverse, highly skilled, and inspired workforce with sufficient resources to carry out the OIG's mission.



GOAL 3. Implement internal processes that promote organizational effectiveness, stewardship of resources, and accountability.

Strategies and Performance Measures for Goal 3

Strategy 1: Promote Effective Financial Operations. We implement a budgeting process that reflects operational needs and priorities to achieve the OIG’s mission.

Strategy 1 Performance Measures:

- Products related to OIG budget are developed and executed in accordance with applicable guidance and delivered to our stakeholders within agreed-on timeframes.
- Beginning of year budgeted OIG reserve fund resources are executed against OIG critical operations and business requirements.

Strategy 2: Deliver Superior Operational Support. We enhance the OIG’s overall performance through timely and effective support operations.

Strategy 2 Performance Measure:

- Products related to OIG administrative operations (e.g., human resources, information technology, facilities) are developed and executed in accordance with applicable guidance and delivered to our stakeholders within agreed-on timeframes.

Strategy 3: Provide Effective Quality Assurance. We support the integrity of OIG operations by maintaining an effective quality assurance and internal review program.

Strategy 3 Performance Measure:

- Quality assurance review and internal control review recommendations are reviewed and accepted by OIG management.

Strategy 4: Apply an Effective Enterprise Risk Management Framework. We develop and implement an enterprise risk management process to identify, analyze, evaluate, and respond to risks and opportunities.

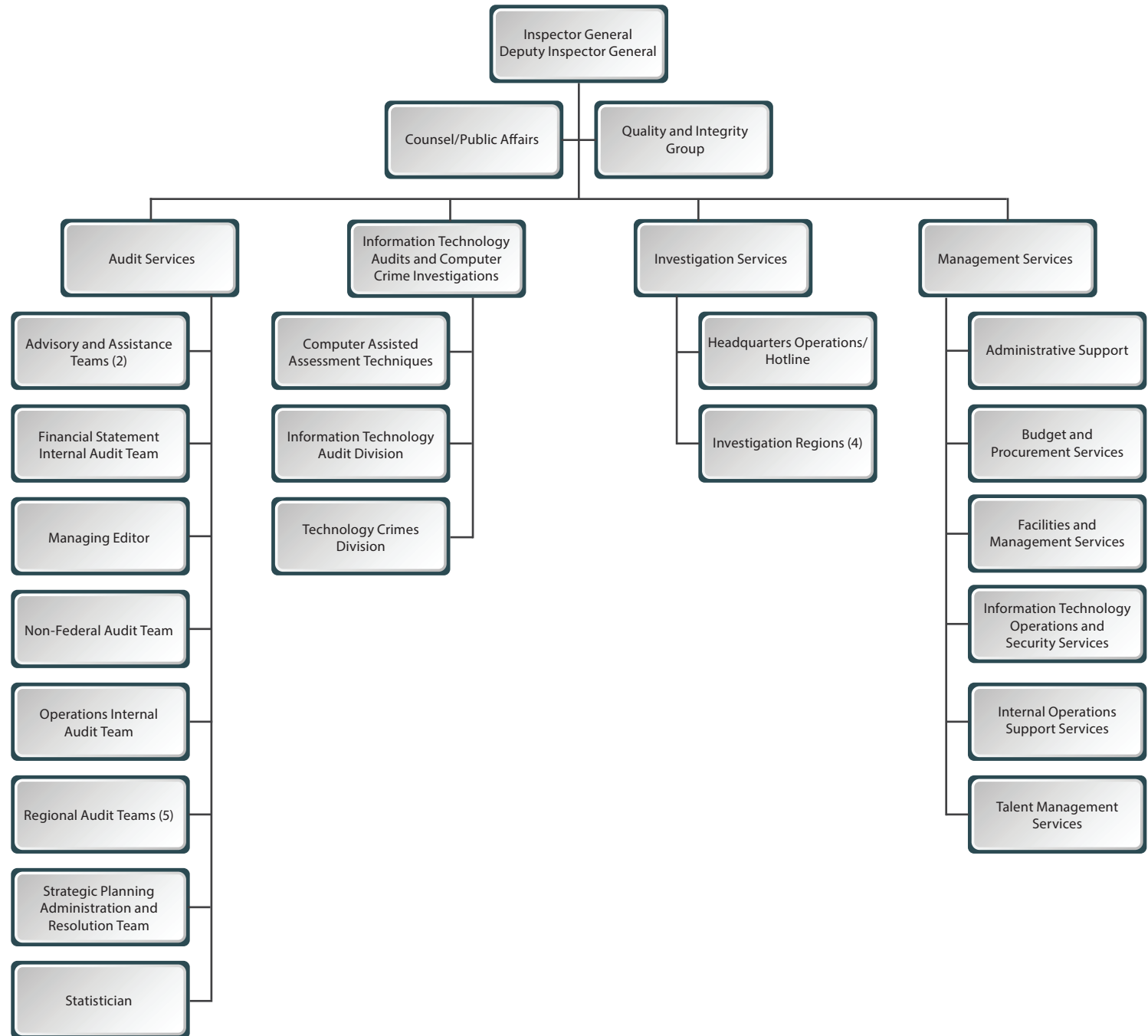
Strategy 4 Performance Measure:

- The enterprise risk management process ensures that component- and enterprise-level risks are identified and updated, strategies to manage risks are developed, and appropriate corrective actions are implemented and integrated into the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act process to mitigate risks as required by applicable guidance.

Office of Inspector General Areas of Responsibility



Education OIG is headed by an Inspector General, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. We operate with a staff of about 225 employees that include auditors, investigators, financial analysts, program analysts, and attorneys, as well as specialists in information technology, budget, personnel, statistics, and writing. The OIG comprises multiple components that collectively work to fulfill our statutory requirements and achieve our mission. The OIG is headquartered in Washington, DC, and maintains several offices for audit services and investigation services across the United States.





Audit Services

Audit Services is responsible for conducting or overseeing audits and other independent reviews of the Department's programs and operations. These activities generally report on the performance of the Department, or its grantees and contractors, in meeting their responsibilities based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against criteria. Audit Services routinely makes recommendations to improve economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Department's programs and operations. Audit Services also formulates, recommends, and executes audit policy consistent with the overall policy guidance of the Inspector General and ensures that all audits of Departmental organizations, programs, activities, and functions are conducted in accordance with the standards established by the Comptroller General of the United States.



Investigation Services

Investigation Services is responsible for all criminal and civil investigative activities relating to the Department's programs and operations. Investigation Services operates with full law enforcement authority to make arrests and seek and execute search warrants. Investigation Services conducts criminal investigations of suspected fraud and corruption related to the Department's programs and operations to include schools and their employees that participate in Department programs; Federal, State, or local education employees or contractors; grant and subgrant recipients; and loan recipients. Investigation Services also conducts fraud awareness training and outreach activities with entities and organizations that receive Department funding, represent the education community, or have oversight responsibilities for education programs. Investigation Services operates the OIG Hotline, which allows anyone suspecting fraud, waste, or abuse involving Department funds or programs to provide their concerns.



Information Technology Audits and Computer Crime Investigations

Information Technology Audits and Computer Crime Investigations (ITACCI) uses advanced techniques, along with traditional audit and investigative skills, to carry out the OIG's mission in the area of the Department's information technology systems and efforts. The ITACCI team produces information technology audit reports, security reviews, and other products to assist the Department in identifying risks and offering recommendations to improve management of its systems. The team also conducts investigations of criminal information technology activity, such as network intrusions, identity theft, fraud, and virtually every other type of criminal activity associated with computers. The ITACCI team operates a computer laboratory enabling OIG staff to conduct and coordinate a myriad of forensic analyses and related activities. ITACCI staff provides data analysis in support of ongoing audits and investigations and develops analytical and risk model systems to identify adverse trends and possible fraud, waste, and abuse in the Department's programs and operations.



Management Services

Management Services ensures the continuity and effectiveness of OIG business operations, including human resources, budget formulation and management, payroll and benefits, leave, accounting, procurement, information technology systems support, organizational records management, staff training and development, and asset and facilities management.



Counsel's Office

The Counsel's Office provides legal advice and assistance to our staff on a variety of subject areas, including Federal education law; administrative, criminal, and civil law and procedure; and the False Claims Act. Counsel staff reviews audit and other reports and related products and reviews and approves subpoenas. Together with other OIG units, Counsel's Office makes recommendations to existing and proposed legislation and regulations to clarify requirements, to improve program performance and operations, and to prevent and detect fraud and abuse in Federal education programs and operations. Counsel's Office also manages OIG's Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act programs. The OIG's congressional and media relations efforts are also coordinated through this office, which include responding to congressional inquiries, tracking legislation, producing our Semiannual Report to Congress, and responding to media inquiries. Counsel's Office also supports OIG operations by advising on personnel and ethics issues.



Quality and Integrity Group

The Quality and Integrity Group administers the internal quality assurance program in coordination with the individual OIG components. The Quality and Integrity Group provides independent and objective evaluations of our compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, professional standards, and the policies and procedures of the Department and the OIG. The program provides the OIG with constructive and timely evaluations of activities and creates opportunities to identify and share best practices. The Quality and Integrity Group also investigates allegations of misconduct by OIG employees.



Key External Factors that May Affect Achievement of Our Goals

In developing this plan, we considered external factors that are ultimately subject to change. Major changes to one or more of these factors could impact our resource allocation, ability to achieve the goals within this plan, and ultimately the goals and strategies themselves. These factors include, but are not limited to the following.

Strategic Direction of Education Legislation, Policy, and Programs

The Department makes funds available to individuals pursuing their education, colleges and universities, State educational agencies, school districts, and nonprofit organizations. Any significant changes in the Administration, Department, or congressional priorities could affect our goals and related strategies. Major programmatic changes were brought about by recent legislation that included the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

As we were preparing this document, several key elements of Federal legislation, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, Higher Education Act, and Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act were subject to reauthorization or revision. In the event of revisions to legislation, policy, or programs, we will need to assess related risks and adapt our activities accordingly.

Funding and Statutory Requirements

Our budget is limited considering the large amount of Federal funds that we oversee and the statutory requirements that we must fulfill. We devote significant resources to statutory work that includes annual audits relating to the Department's financial statements, the Federal Information Security Management Act, and the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act. We then use a risk-based approach to select the most important areas from multiple, diverse, and evolving programs on which to focus our remaining limited resources and provide results with the highest level of impact. Any significant reduction to our budget or additions to our statutory requirements could impact our ability to complete the work necessary to achieve the mission and goals of this plan.

Responsiveness to OIG Activities

Timely and meaningful responses to the results of OIG activities are vital to the successful achievement of our mission and goals. Our ability to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the Department's programs and operations is only as effective as management's willingness and ability to implement corrective action in response to our recommendations.

Unanticipated Resource Demands

We may undertake tasks from external sources such as congressional hearings, inquiries, and requests; Department requests; and Government-wide reviews. These tasks are usually nondiscretionary and unplanned but require resources to complete. Significant levels of such unplanned activities may impact our ability to fully address work planned to achieve the goals of this plan.

Human Capital

Our success depends on the ability to cultivate a work force of skilled and dedicated professionals. We must hire, train, and retain a skilled and diverse employee base and continually develop future leaders to achieve our goals. We must routinely compete with other organizations for highly qualified staff, and any inability to keep high-performing employees would negatively impact our effectiveness.

Relationship of OIG's Strategic Plan to Government-Wide and Department Goals and Objectives

Our strategic plan is intended to be responsive to far-reaching Government-wide areas of focus for performance improvement and Department goals and objectives. At the time this plan was developed, the current administration planned to publish its Cross-Agency Priority Goals as part of the President's FY 2019 Budget request to Congress. We will review those priority goals when they are finalized and revise this plan as necessary.

We reviewed the Department's strategic plan for fiscal years 2018–2022 to ensure that our strategic plan was linked to the Department's proposed mission, goals, objectives, and strategies. Those items are intended to provide a framework that drives the Department's policy, budget, and human resource decisions. The mission of the Department is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. The OIG's support in the achievement of the Department's mission is fundamentally rooted in our mission to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the Department's programs and operations.

The Department's plan proposed a number of agency priority goals, strategic goals, strategic objectives, and implementation strategies in response to its mission. The following figure reflects the ways in which our strategic goals support the Department's planned areas of focus.

OIG Goal

GOAL 1.
Deliver high-quality, timely, and impactful products and services that promote efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in the Department's operations and programs.

GOAL 2.
Cultivate a diverse, highly skilled, and inspired workforce with sufficient resources to carry out the OIG's mission.

GOAL 3. Implement internal processes that promote organizational effectiveness, stewardship of resources, and accountability.

Department's Area of Focus

- Support State and local efforts to improve learning outcomes.
- Improve access, quality, and transparency of school choice options.
- Expand postsecondary education opportunities and improve outcomes.
- Improve borrowers' access to quality customer service.
- Strengthen the quality, accessibility, and use of education data.
- Improve student privacy and data security at institutions of higher education.

- Engage, develop, and inspire a diverse, high-performing workforce.
- Ensure human resources are aligned with mission, goals, and objectives.
- Improve the engagement and preparation of the Department's workforce using professional development and accountability measures.

- Reform the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the Department.

Program Evaluation

The OIG does not operate or oversee programs in the traditional sense. However, our audit and investigative components are subject to objective reviews that assess the manner and extent to which they adhere to applicable professional standards.

- Generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) require audit organizations performing activities in accordance with GAGAS to undergo an external peer review of their related practice at least once every three years by reviewers who are independent of the audit organization being reviewed. The external peer review determines whether the reviewed audit organization's internal quality control system was adequate and whether staff were complying with quality control policies and procedures to provide reasonable assurance of conformance with professional standards.

The most recent peer review of OIG's Audit Services and Information Technology Audit Division was performed by the Environmental Protection Agency OIG for the year that ended March 31, 2015. The peer review concluded that our audit organization's system of quality control was suitably designed and complied with to provide the OIG with reasonable assurance of performing and reporting in conformity with applicable professional standards in all material respects.

- The Inspector General Act and "Attorney General Guidelines for Offices of Inspector General with Statutory Law Enforcement Authority" require covered OIGs to undergo periodic review by another OIG or by a committee of OIGs. The purpose of this review is to ascertain whether adequate internal safeguards and management procedures exist to ensure that the law enforcement powers are properly exercised. Such reviews should occur no less often than once every three years.

The most recent peer review of OIG's Investigation Services and Technology Crimes Division was conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency OIG for the period ending October 2014. The Environmental Protection Agency OIG concluded that the OIG's system of internal safeguards and management procedures for the investigative function was in compliance with the Quality Standards for Investigations and the Quality Standards for Digital Forensics as established by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency and the Attorney General guidelines.

- The OIG's Quality and Integrity Group reviews internal operations to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, OIG policy, and applicable standards.



The OIG's mission, goals, and strategies work to improve U.S. Department of Education programs and operations on behalf of America's taxpayers and students.



Anyone knowing of fraud, waste, or abuse involving U.S. Department of Education funds or programs should contact the Office of Inspector General Hotline:

<http://oighotline.ed.gov>

We encourage you to use the automated complaint form on our website; however, you may call toll-free or write the Office of Inspector General.

Inspector General Hotline
1-800-MISUSED
(1-800-647-8733)

Inspector General Hotline
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Inspector General
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

You may make a report anonymously.

The mission of the Office of Inspector General is to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the U.S. Department of Education's programs and operations.

<http://www.ed.gov/oig>