U.S. Department of Education
Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2018–22

Message from the Secretary

When confronted with any decision at the Department, my first question is always the same: what will most benefit students? Improving education for every student is the entirety of the Department's mission, and this administration remains laser-focused on keeping students at the center of all we do.

In order to better serve students and prepare them for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century, we can no longer afford to simply tinker around the edges. The U.S. Department of Education's *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018–22* provides a bold framework for implementing President Trump's education agenda to help our students succeed and strengthen America's global competitiveness.

We can take significant strides toward addressing the shortcomings in American education by returning decision-making power to those closest to students: parents, educators, states and local communities.

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA)–signed into law in 2015 and currently in its first year of implementation–does just that. No two states are the same–each has its own unique education challenges and opportunities. And, as in any other sector, the best solutions in education will come from the bottom up, not mandated from the top down. ESSA's organizing principle reflects this reality: states, not the federal government, must lead the way in improving education for every student in America. It is our hope that, in turn, the states will do the right thing and empower parents and local communities.

Implementing ESSA is just the first step in making education more student-centric to serve the inherent unique needs of each child. Every student has different abilities and learns in different ways. Students should have access to a wide range of educational options, and their families should be able to choose the learning environment that best meets the needs of their child. It is imperative all students gain that access, regardless of where they live or how much money their family earns.

But a student's education should not end after graduating from high school. There are many pathways students can choose in their quest for lifelong learning and employment, and the number of students seeking alternatives to a traditional 4-year college degree is expected to grow in the coming years. We are committed to supporting the expansion of available postsecondary education opportunities to better meet students' needs and give them the skills to succeed.

We have started by making Pell Grants available year-round. This gives low-income students the flexibility to complete their education at a faster pace if they so choose, thereby potentially reducing their debt and allowing them to pursue the next chapter of their lives.

Access to federal student aid has allowed millions of students to further their education, yet the customer experience for acquiring and paying off these loans has been subpar at best. Complex applications, confusing notifications and multiple platforms have all led to a lack of clarity and created an onerous process for borrowers. This reality has prompted us to begin transforming Federal Student Aid's service delivery by implementing the Next Generation Processing and Servicing Environment. There is no reason a student should not be able to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on their phone in one sitting. Our goal is to put in place an environment that will greatly enhance the user experience while protecting taxpayer dollars.

Finally, it is important for the Department not only to look for avenues where we can help, but also to examine whether we are creating unnecessary burdens on educators, administrators and, most importantly, families. We want to foster a culture of innovation in education, and that begins by reviewing and removing those regulations that make it harder for educators to do what they do best: educate.

Per the President's executive order on regulatory reform, the Department is conducting a thorough review of all regulations and guidance documents currently on the books to ensure they are helping, not hindering, students. After an initial review, we rescinded over 600 outdated subregulatory documents, making it easier for families, educators and administrators to find relevant resources the Department provides.
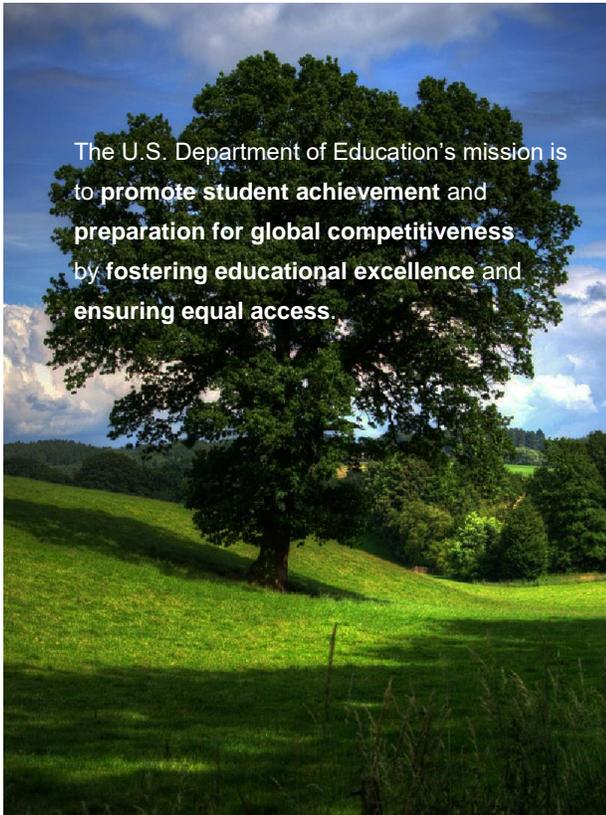
It is incumbent upon us to bring education up to speed to meet the ever-evolving demands of the 21st century. Thanks to the support of the President, and with the efforts of our entire staff, the Department of Education is poised to do just that.

Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education

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Department's Mission

The U.S. Department of Education's mission is to **promote student achievement** and **preparation for global competitiveness** by **fostering educational excellence** and **ensuring equal access**.

The U.S. Department of Education (the Department) executes the laws passed by Congress to promote student academic achievement and preparation for global competitiveness. The Department works with parents, students, educational institutions, school districts and states to foster educational excellence and to ensure equal access to education for all students.

The Department pursues its mission by administering programs that provide services throughout an individual's entire lifespan–from early intervention services to employment programs. Many of these programs provide grants to state or local educational agencies and support students and families from vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These programs also provide grants and loans to postsecondary students and facilitate research that examines ways that schools, districts, states and postsecondary institutions can improve America's education system. In addition, the Department fulfills its mission through the enforcement of civil rights laws that ensure equal access.

While recognizing the primary role of states and school districts in providing high-quality education, the Department is committed to helping ensure students throughout the nation develop skills to succeed in school, pursue postsecondary opportunities and transition to the workforce. Through its *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018–22*, the Department's vision is to support educational institutions, parents, families and communities in developing their capacity to improve outcomes for all students. The Department's Strategic Goals and associated Strategic Objectives are shown in Figure 1.

In addition to establishing the Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives that will guide the Department's policy, budget and human resource decisions during the next four years, this *Strategic Plan* aligns with the Agency Reform Plan. Specifically, the implementation strategies that support this *Strategic Plan* leverage opportunities to manage programs and to deliver services more effectively to the students, parents and communities the Department serves, as well as to create a more productive and rewarding place to work for its employees.

The Department engaged stakeholders during the development of this *Strategic Plan* and its Agency Reform Plan. Specifically, in July 2017, the Department invited feedback from education stakeholders on how the Department could best serve the needs of America's students, families and educators and implement its mission. The Department also shared the initial draft of the *Strategic Plan* framework with Congress at that time. This early consultation informed the development of both plans. In November 2017, the Department shared a draft of its *Strategic Plan* on its website and invited feedback again. This *Strategic Plan* establishes goals and objectives that aim to improve services to the public by increasing the flexibility and support the Department provides to states, districts and postsecondary institutions in their efforts to provide a high-quality education to all students.

FY 2018–22 Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Support state and local efforts to improve learning outcomes for all P-12 students in every community.	
Strategic Objective 1.1	Increase high-quality educational options and empower students and parents to choose an education that meets their needs.
Strategic Objective 1.2	Provide all P-12 students with equal access to high-quality educational opportunities.
Strategic Objective 1.3	Prepare all students for successful transitions to college and careers by supporting access to dual enrollment, job skills development and high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
Strategic Objective 1.4	Support agencies and institutions in the implementation of evidence-based strategies and practices that build the capacity of school staff and families to support students' academic performance.
Strategic Goal 2: Expand postsecondary educational opportunities, improve outcomes to foster economic opportunity and promote an informed, thoughtful and productive citizenry.	
Strategic Objective 2.1	Support educational institutions, students, parents and communities to increase access and completion of college, lifelong learning and career, technical and adult education.
Strategic Objective 2.2	Support agencies and educational institutions in identifying and using evidence-based strategies or other promising practices to improve educational opportunities and successfully prepare individuals to compete in the global economy.
Strategic Objective 2.3	Support agencies and educational institutions as they create or expand innovative and affordable paths to relevant careers by providing postsecondary credentials or job-ready skills.
Strategic Objective 2.4	Improve quality of service for customers across the entire student aid life cycle.
Strategic Objective 2.5	Enhance students' and parents' ability to repay their federal student loans by providing accurate and timely information, relevant tools and manageable repayment options.
Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen the quality, accessibility and use of education data through better management, increased privacy protections and transparency.	
Strategic Objective 3.1	Improve the Department's data governance, data life cycle management and the capacity to support education data.
Strategic Objective 3.2	Improve privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data both at the Department and in the education community.
Strategic Objective 3.3	Increase access to, and use of, education data to make informed decisions both at the Department and in the education community.
Strategic Goal 4: Reform the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the Department.	
Strategic Objective 4.1	Provide regulatory relief to educational institutions and reduce burden by identifying time-consuming regulations, processes and policies and working to improve or eliminate them, while continuing to protect taxpayers from waste and abuse.
Strategic Objective 4.2	Identify, assess, monitor and manage enterprise risks.
Strategic Objective 4.3	Strengthen the Department's cybersecurity by enhancing protections for its information technology infrastructure, systems and data.
Strategic Objective 4.4	Improve the engagement and preparation of the Department's workforce using professional development and accountability measures.

Figure 1. FY 2018–22 Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives

In collaboration with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department establishes four Agency Priority Goals (APGs) for FY 2018–19 that align with this *Strategic Plan* and the Agency Reform Plan. These APGs and the related Strategic Objectives are shown in Figure 2 below.

FY 2018–19 Agency Priority Goals

APG	Related Strategic Objective
Improve the access to, and the quality and transparency of, school choice options for K-12 students. By September 30, 2019, the Charter School Program (CSP) will support the creation and expansion of 300 new charter schools nationally. The CSP will also support the enrollment of 50,000 students in new charter schools. Additionally, by September 30, 2019, the Department will disseminate eight resources, at least one per quarter, on evidence-based and promising practices related to school choice.	**Strategic Objective 1.1:** Increase high-quality educational options and empower students and parents to choose an education that meets their needs.
Improve borrowers' access to quality customer service. By September 30, 2019, Federal Student Aid will improve customers' access to and availability of quality customer service by decreasing the overall average speed of answer to 60 seconds or less, decreasing abandoned rates to three percent or less and requiring all non-default federal student loan servicers to expand and standardize call center hours.	**Strategic Objective 2.4:** Improve quality of service for customers across the entire student aid life cycle.
Improve student privacy and data security at Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) through outreach and compliance efforts. By September 30, 2019, the Department will increase information security program outreach activities to IHEs by 40% in order to help protect IT systems and data privacy and commence audits of IHEs subject to A-133 and Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA), resulting in 36 IHEs (from a baseline of zero) completing an audit of GLBA-related information security safeguards with no significant findings.	**Strategic Objective 3.2:** Improve privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data both at the Department and in the education community.
Provide regulatory relief to education stakeholders. By September 30, 2019, the Department will reduce the regulatory burden on education stakeholders by submitting to OMB no less than 25 deregulatory actions (against a baseline of zero (0) for FYs 2015 and 2016).	**Strategic Objective 4.1:** Provide regulatory relief to educational institutions and reduce burden by identifying time-consuming regulations, processes and policies and working to improve or eliminate them, while continuing to protect taxpayers from waste and abuse.

Figure 2. FY 2018–19 Agency Priority Goals

Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals

In addition to the APGs, the Department contributes to CAP Goals established by the Administration. These CAP Goals are used by leadership to accelerate progress on a limited number of Presidential priority areas where implementation requires active collaboration among multiple agencies. The Department will contribute to the CAP goals, as appropriate and will include information on its contributions in the *FY 2018 Annual Performance Report and FY 2020 Annual Performance Plan*.

The Department supports educational institutions, parents and state and local communities in developing their capacity to improve outcomes for all students. As such, the success of this *Strategic Plan* relies on the resources available for the Department to support these education stakeholders.

Details on annual performance and program evaluations are available in the Department's Annual Performance Reports, available online at https://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/index.html.

Strategic Goal 1

Support state and local efforts to improve learning outcomes for all P-12 students in every community.

Outcomes

Strategic Goal 1 and Strategic Objectives 1.1-1.4 focus on outcomes related to the transition from the *No Child Left Behind Act* to implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* in December 2015.

***Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) Highlights**

- Solidifies high expectations for all students.
- Provides for a balanced approach to testing.
- Provides opportunities for children to access high-quality preschool.
- Invests in evidence-based and innovative local programs.
- Provides intervention and support for schools and students that need the most help.

The hallmark of the ESSA is the flexibility it provides for states. The ESSA maintains important transparency and accountability provisions for all students. Additionally, grants and programs authorized by law help ensure that all students receive a well-rounded education. The ESSA provides the flexibility for states to do what is best for children while preserving important protections for economically disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English language learners and other vulnerable students. The law requires that states take steps to ensure all students have access to excellent teachers and positive, safe learning environments that equip them for college and career success.

The ESSA requires states to develop program plans with ambitious targets to close student achievement and graduation rate gaps among student groups to meet established goals that require progress for all students.

The Department will annually work with states to ensure that all required public data elements related to student and school performance are being reported in the required timeframe. Increased transparency will empower parents and students and will provide an opportunity for states and other education and community stakeholders to identify areas for targeted technical assistance that the Department can support.

> The ESSA ensures that all students have access to excellent teachers and a positive and safe learning environment to equip them for college and career success.

The Department's work on this Strategic Goal and related objectives also supports children with disabilities. Pursuant to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), the Department works to ensure that all eligible children with disabilities have a free appropriate public education designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.

To meet this responsibility, the Department works to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents, to promote systemic improvement in the delivery of special education services and related services and of supplementary aids and services and to support the development and implementation of personnel preparation. The Department also provides states and localities with the technical assistance and other support necessary to improve educational results for children with disabilities.

The Department will provide technical assistance through a variety of modes, by:

- Providing tools, resources and technical support related to understanding the requirements of the laws.
- Engaging in performance reviews to ensure implementation of the laws.
- Providing individual assistance as needed, as well as opportunities for peer-to-peer learning through communities of practice and learning collaboratives to expose educators to subject matter experts and promising practices in other states.

Technical Assistance to Support Strategic Goal 1

- Tools, resources and technical support.
- Performance reviews.
- Individual assistance and peer-to-peer learning through communities of practice.

This technical assistance aims to support states that implement evidence-based practices, continuous improvement, data reporting, engagement of stakeholders, effective allocation of resources and management of performance to maximize opportunity and the impact of federal programs.

Strategic Objective 1.1

Increase high-quality educational options and empower students and parents to choose an education that meets their needs.

The Department will support greater state and local flexibility in elementary and secondary education and encourage state and local educational agencies to increase the number and quality of educational opportunities to provide for meaningful school choice. This Strategic Objective aims to improve access to high-quality K-12 educational options by supporting school choice and providing families, especially families from historically underserved communities, with the information and tools needed to select the option that best meets their children's needs. Regardless of ZIP code or family income, parents and students should have access to high-quality educational options.

Implementation Strategies

To implement this Strategic Objective, the Department will encourage state and local educational agencies to expand school choice by administering programs that increase educational options (e.g., the Charter Schools Program and the Magnet Schools Assistance Program). The Department will also promote the adoption of student-centered funding formulas combined with open enrollment systems. Additionally, the Department will support state and local efforts by providing technical assistance that:

Expanded Educational Options to Support School Choice

- Charter Schools Program.
- Student-centered funding formulas.
- Open enrollment systems.

- Encourages collaboration with external organizations and subject matter experts.
- Supports the implementation of innovative practices.
- Highlights and benchmarks best practices.
- Supports states in the implementation of their ESSA plans.
- Ensures federal funding is dispersed to all schools, including charter schools, both equitably and in accordance with the law.
- Strengthens chartering and charter school quality.

- Empowers parents and students by disseminating information about school choice options.
- Protects the rights of economically disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English language learners and other vulnerable learners.

Through this Strategic Objective, the Department will seek to create new opportunities to support school choice, including support for new investments in public and private school choice.

Strategic Objective 1.2

Provide all P-12 students with equal access to high-quality educational opportunities.

This Strategic Objective considers characteristics that are necessary to ensure both access to opportunities and the quality of such opportunities. The ESSA provides a framework to characterize high-quality educational opportunities, including:

- High academic standards and high-quality assessments.
- A well-rounded education that includes a safe and healthy environment and integrated technology.
- Access to effective teachers and strong systems of collaboration among education stakeholders.
- Proper support and interventions for struggling students and opportunities for enrichment experiences before, after and during the school day.

> The ESSA provides a framework that characterizes high-quality educational opportunities.

Access to such educational opportunities for all students, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability, is critical for students to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Implementation Strategies

School quality, climate and safety are essential components of a high-quality educational opportunity. The primary implementation strategy for this Strategic Objective is to support educational institutions, parents and communities in developing their capacity to improve outcomes for all students. In this support role, the Department will:

- Provide technical assistance and tools to support states and increase their capacity to implement their ESSA state plans.
- Support state and local educational agencies in improving school conditions, thereby increasing access to instructional time and learning.
- Ensure students with disabilities have access to special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that meet their unique educational needs, including appropriately ambitious individualized education program goals and the chance to meet challenging objectives.
- Leverage Department accountability systems, such as the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services' Results Driven Accountability, to support states in improving outcomes for students.
- Support educational agencies as they improve and increase their technology infrastructure, connectivity and professional development to effectively integrate educational technology.
- Support increased access to transformative learning experiences through the use of high-quality digital resources, including openly-licensed resources, particularly for rural students.
- Ensure equal access to education and promote educational excellence across the nation through vigorous enforcement of civil rights and the provision of technical assistance to help

schools achieve compliance with the civil rights laws enforced by the [Office for Civil Rights](#) (OCR).

- Monitor and share data from ESSA state plans, including data specific to conditions of learning and educator effectiveness, so that the public is aware of state educational agencies' goals and activities.
- Support the implementation of evidence-based strategies in instructional language programs for English learners through technical assistance and dissemination of new research and information on English Language Learner pedagogy.
- Monitor and share data and information from IDEA State Performance Plans, including the State Systemic Improvement Plan, so that the public is aware of the extent to which each state is meeting the requirements of IDEA and improving results for children with disabilities.
- Support state agencies and local providers in improving results for young children with disabilities by providing technical assistance and support.
- Provide evidence-based resources and technical assistance through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and OSEP-funded technical assistance centers to states, schools, early childhood programs and families to support the smooth transitions of preschoolers with disabilities from early intervention to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten.

Strategic Objective 1.3

Prepare all students for successful transitions to college and careers by supporting access to dual enrollment, job skills development and high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

This Strategic Objective will help the Department support state and local educational agencies in the implementation of well-rounded education programs that prepare students for college and careers. All students, including students with disabilities and educationally disadvantaged students, have the right to reach their full potential. Students should have opportunities that prepare them for the transition to college and meaningful careers.

Implementation Strategies

Access to accelerated coursework to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and dual or concurrent enrollment programs, is critical for students as they prepare for the transition to college and career. Pursuant to the Student Support and Academic Enrichment program authorized under Title IV, Part A, and the ESSA state report card requirements, the Department will support state and local educational agencies in their plans to provide all students a well-rounded education.

The Department's implementation of the [Presidential Executive Order on Expanding Apprenticeships in America](#) will also support this Strategic Objective by providing incentives to state and local educational agencies to expand the earn-and-learn models available to secondary students. These models combine a career-oriented academic curriculum, relevant work experience and student financial assistance. Under this Strategic Objective, the Department will encourage grantees to enhance students' access to opportunities that will

Support for Successful Student Transitions to College and Careers

- Accelerated high school coursework to earn postsecondary credit.
- Dual or concurrent enrollment programs.
- Incentives to state and local educational agencies.
- Expansion of earn-and-learn models available to secondary students.

challenge and prepare them for college and careers.

Additionally, the Department will:

- Provide technical assistance to state and local educational agencies in supporting vulnerable populations, such as students in rural communities, to transition successfully to college and careers.
- Promote the importance of STEM skills (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking) and financial literacy related to career readiness.
- Provide technical assistance designed to support state vocational rehabilitation agencies and third-party apprenticeship entities, employers and training providers that will focus on strategies and related activities to support the participation of individuals with disabilities in both new and existing apprenticeships.
- Provide technical assistance to state and local agencies to support career, technical and adult education.
- Provide technical assistance to states in implementing pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities to ensure a smooth and effective transition to post-secondary education and/or employment.

Strategic Objective 1.4

> Support agencies and institutions in the implementation of evidence-based strategies and practices that build the capacity of school staff and families to support students' academic performance.

This Strategic Objective focuses on public investments in education that result in positive academic outcomes for students. The Department generates, collects and distributes evidence through valid and reliable data, strong research and rigorous evaluations that can help states and school districts identify what works, for which students and under what conditions. Through this Strategic Objective, the Department is also expanding its work to support states as they implement provisions in the ESSA that require the use of evidence when determining what education interventions to implement.

Implementation Strategies

The ESSA recognizes that the primary responsibility for creating, improving and sustaining public education systems lies with state and local educational agencies. Consequently, the implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on providing resources and support to state and local educational agencies to assist them in identifying, implementing and expanding evidence-based strategies. As such, the Department will provide to grantees existing resources supported by evidence and collaborate with external partners to help disseminate resources supported by evidence to their constituents.

To date, the Department has released non-regulatory guidance to serve as a framework for technical assistance related to the implementation of ESSA's evidence provision. The guidance, *Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments*, recommends a five-step decision-making process to promote continuous improvement and support better outcomes for students. This guidance serves as a framework for the Department's technical assistance related to implementation of ESSA's evidence provisions. The Department will continue its outreach to stakeholders. A key principle across these strategies is sustained technical assistance that continuously builds capacity and targets specific state and local needs. The Department will also continue to support efforts to build evidence on effective strategies to improve teaching and learning and to disseminate the results to states, school districts and the public.

The Department's efforts on this Strategic Objective extend to families by bolstering their ability to assist in their children's academic development. For children with disabilities, the Department will continue to support its nationwide network of Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers. These centers provide parents with information and training about disabilities, protections under IDEA and rights under other relevant laws and local,

> There are nearly 100 Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers in the U.S. and Territories. These centers provide free information to parents of children with disabilities.

state and national resources to support children with disabilities. Community Parent Resource Centers focus on reaching isolated and underserved parents of children with disabilities, such as those with low incomes or with limited English proficiency, in a specific community.

Contributing Programs and External Partners for Goal 1

The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education is a primary contributor to this goal, particularly with its management of Title I, Title IV Part A, and the Weighted Student Funding Formula pilot under ESSA. OSERS supports the implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, which includes the parent centers, and the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. The Office of Innovation and Improvement implements discretionary grant programs that contribute to this Strategic Objective, including the Charter School Program and the Education and Innovation Research program. Finally, the Institute of Education Sciences, OCR, the Office of English Language Acquisition and the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education also contribute to this Strategic Goal.

Human Capital Strategies for Goal 1

ESSA promotes local innovation and the use of evidence to ensure that all students in America are prepared to succeed in college and careers. As such, human capital strategies that support this Strategic Goal focus on building the internal capacity of program officers to support states and local educational agencies as they implement state plans under ESSA. To build on this capacity, the Department will conduct needs assessments and provide on-the-job training, classroom training and developmental opportunities to close identified knowledge, skill and competency gaps and improve staff ability to deliver technical assistance and support related to the transition to and implementation of ESSA.

This human capital strategy supports the Department's commitment to ensure human resources are aligned with agency mission, goals and objectives through analysis, planning and investment.

Strategic Goal 2

Expand postsecondary educational opportunities, improve outcomes to foster economic opportunity and promote an informed, thoughtful and productive citizenry.

Outcomes

Strategic Goal 2 and Strategic Objectives 2.1–2.5 focus on expanding the Department's efforts to support innovative, accessible and affordable paths to postsecondary credentials and job-ready skills.

In addition to supporting expanded postsecondary opportunities, the Department has a number of initiatives focused on affordability. These initiatives ensure borrowers have the best information available to make postsecondary program selection and associated borrowing decisions. The Department also continues to help students understand their financial aid options and repayment obligations. It is important that the Department expand its outreach efforts and support states and institutions in developing alternative pathways to postsecondary credentials that lead to employment, particularly for populations with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities. Specifically, the Department will:

Support for Paths to Postsecondary Credentials and Job-Ready Skills

- Fostering higher completion rates in programs.
- Working in conjunction with employers and industries.
- Minimizing barriers to implementation and access.

- Support innovative and affordable paths to postsecondary credentials for all segments of the population, including vulnerable populations by:
  - Fostering higher completion rate programs.
  - Working in conjunction with employers and industries.
  - Minimizing barriers to access.
- Expand the Department's outreach efforts, including:
  - Improving affordability for all families and students by improving public understanding of the federal financial aid process.
  - Communicating with education providers about funding options and providers' responsibilities.
  - Streamlining internal efficiencies to provide the appropriate materials to facilitate student loan repayment.
- Encourage positive and safe environments by:
  - Providing school personnel with effective strategies.
  - Promoting best practices that prevent bullying, violence and disruptive actions in schools.
- Develop tools and resources within the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) designed to enhance customer service by:
  - Identifying new mechanisms to provide customer service.
  - Providing superior customer service within the Federal Student Aid Feedback System by delivering more timely and accurate responses.

Strategic Objective 2.1

Support educational institutions, students, parents and communities to increase access and completion of college, lifelong learning and career, technical and adult education.

This Strategic Objective will support students' ability to access a range of postsecondary opportunities as well as improve the students' ability to complete the postsecondary option of their choosing. The Department recognizes there are multiple, diverse routes to postsecondary education and employment and, under this Strategic Objective, seeks to support access to these educational opportunities and their completion for students at all stages of life.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on providing support to education stakeholders in their efforts to increase access to and completion of postsecondary educational opportunities. Some key strategies include:

- Providing information, both digitally and in print, to parents and students about the potential costs and outcomes of the variety of postsecondary opportunities available to them.
- Strengthening grant programs to enhance opportunities for success past high school.
- Removing undue barriers to accessing innovative educational pathways to success past high school.
- Completing, with the help of diverse negotiators, quality regulation packages reflective of administration priorities.

Increase Access to and Completion of Postsecondary Educational Opportunities

- Information about the potential costs and outcomes of available postsecondary opportunities.
- Stronger grant programs.
- Removal of access barriers.
- Quality regulation packages.
- Enhanced stakeholder relationships.

- Enhancing stakeholder relationships by, for example:
  - Identifying and engaging national, regional and local partners who have access and the ability to influence students, parents or borrowers.
  - Leveraging opportunities to enhance the dissemination of critical program information to partners through various communication channels, including in-person and digital.
  - Identifying opportunities through focus groups and training to work collaboratively with partners to improve institutional oversight and the capability to process federal financial aid.
  - Implementing a plan that allows partners to collectively contribute to the advancement of web-based technology.
  - Holding quarterly events that encourage partners' participation in focus groups to collaboratively share best practices across the federal financial aid community.
  - Developing a creative and engaging national awareness campaign—in conjunction with partners—aimed at students, parents and borrowers to enable them to be better informed about the financial aid process and, as a result, make better borrowing decisions.

- Supporting the cultivation of safe environments conducive to lifelong learning by conducting outreach, ensuring Title IX protections and investigating civil rights and *Clery Act* violations.
- Providing technical assistance to help institutions achieve compliance with the civil rights laws that OCR enforces.

Strategic Objective 2.2

Support agencies and educational institutions in identifying and using evidence-based strategies or other promising practices to improve educational opportunities and successfully prepare individuals to compete in the global economy.

This Strategic Objective aims to improve educational opportunities for the existing and future workforce. It is essential for educational institutions to work with a variety of industries to ensure postsecondary education adequately prepares students to be successful in the job market. It is also essential that the Department

The Department is committed to improving educational opportunities for the existing and future workforce.

fulfills its commitment to individuals with disabilities by working with state and local agencies to provide job-driven training and support services, consistent with the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on improving educational opportunities, training and support services for the workforce. Some key strategies include:

- Providing grant funding and technical assistance to states and local education and vocational rehabilitation service providers to expand and strengthen career pathways programs (including STEM programs), transition planning, career guidance and other supportive services.
- Building and disseminating evidence on effective career and technical education and postsecondary education strategies.
- Partnering with other federal agencies, states, employers and non-governmental organizations to support strategies that blend education, job skills development and supportive services to provide seamless pathways to competitive integrated employment in high-demand industries, including STEM fields.
- Providing technical assistance to employers in efforts to employ individuals with disabilities in competitive integrated employment.
- Encouraging more collaboration among employers, state and local educational agencies and institutions of higher education to expand and improve the quality of and access to work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeships.
- Supporting the development, evaluation and replication of cost-effective delivery models that improve postsecondary and employment outcomes, including the use of Pay for Success and collective impact models.
- Encouraging public and private partnerships where appropriate.

Strategic Objective 2.3

> Support agencies and educational institutions as they create or expand innovative and affordable paths to relevant careers by providing postsecondary credentials or job-ready skills.

This Strategic Objective focuses on education paths that are innovative and affordable and lead to educated citizens with quality careers. It is vital for students to collaborate with agencies and educational institutions to improve students' ability to compete in the continually changing modern global economy by creating new programs or expanding existing ones that provide postsecondary credentials or mastery of job-ready skills.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on partnering with education stakeholders to create or expand innovative and affordable paths that will lead to quality careers. Some key strategies include:

- Providing grant funding and technical assistance resources to develop, evaluate and replicate practices and programs that expand access to viable educational and career pathways.
- Providing technical assistance through the _Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act_ and the _Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act_ to support career, technical and adult education.
- Promoting policies and programs that reduce cost and accelerate the time it takes to earn quality credentials and develop marketable skills (e.g., career and academic guidance, competency-based education, dual enrollment, statewide and institutional transfer agreements, work-based learning, apprenticeship and remediation reform). This may be achieved by:
    - Encouraging state and local educational agencies to promote better postsecondary planning and supporting the expansion of quality dual enrollment options to reduce costs and accelerate completion of a credential.
    - Utilizing the Department's communications outlets to showcase promising practices at the district, state and institution levels for all pertinent audiences in the publishing formats they need.
- Exploring methods for removing regulatory barriers through the negotiated rulemaking process laid out in the _Higher Education Act_ (HEA) and _Administrative Procedures Act._
- Partnering with other federal agencies, employers and non-governmental organizations to increase access to, and participation in, education and job skills development that lead to marketable skills and quality postsecondary credentials.

> **Example Strategies to Support Innovative and Affordable Paths to Quality Careers**
>
> - Grant funding and technical assistance.
>   - _Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act._
>   - _Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act._
>   - Federal Work-Study Program.
> - Regulatory barrier removal.
> - Partnerships with other federal agencies, employers and non-governmental organizations.

- Exploring new or existing experimental sites by:
  - Using the current Experimental Sites Initiative authority to evaluate the effectiveness of statutory and regulatory flexibility for participating institutions disbursing Title IV student aid.
  - Evaluating the results of current experiments–such as Dual Enrollment, Prior Learning Assessment, Competency-Based Education, Limited Direct Assessment and Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships–to explore changes to regulations and statutes that have the potential to benefit all postsecondary institutions and the students they serve.

Strategic Objective 2.4

Improve quality of service for customers across the entire student aid life cycle.

This Strategic Objective focuses on the customer service provided by the Department to students, parents, borrowers and institutions. To improve the way the Department serves its customers, the Department will modernize the loan-servicing environment by taking the best ideas and capabilities available and putting them to work for Americans with federal student loans. The focus will be on improving customer service, such as access and speed, through modern technology and communication channels. The Department will deliver a best-in-class processing and servicing environment capable of sustaining the management of the growing federal student loan portfolio.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on improving overall awareness of FSA programs and helping aid recipients understand their obligations. Some key strategies include:

- Enhance outreach, training and tools to help postsecondary institutions better understand responsibilities and requirements under the HEA.
- Conduct targeted outreach campaigns aimed at increasing access to minority serving institutions and at underrepresented students to increase their awareness of the federal aid programs.

> As student and borrower demographics become more diverse, there will be a growing need to use tailored approaches to interact with customers.

- Enhance and refine FSA's messaging to customers by making improvements to our public-facing, flagship website, StudentAid.gov, that are informed and guided by both customer analytics and stakeholder input.
- Partner with FSA stakeholders, including but not limited to high school guidance counselors, community groups, states, governmental entities and non-profit groups, to improve the conception, design and delivery of FSA information and tools.

Strategic Objective 2.5

Enhance students' and parents' ability to repay their federal student loans by providing accurate and timely information, relevant tools and manageable repayment options.

This Strategic Objective seeks to improve how the Department interacts with stakeholders through FSA. The Department will develop materials that clearly communicate students' and parents' options to repay federal student loans before and during the course of pursuing a postsecondary credential.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on providing the tools and information necessary to enhance the students' and parents' ability to repay their federal student loans. Some key strategies include:

- Developing a comprehensive framework for default prevention that allows students to understand and access information about potential college options and associated costs and outcomes, loan counseling and guidance, support for retention, loan repayment options and borrower benefits.
- Supporting policies to increase access to postsecondary education and promote responsible borrowing.

Strategies to Support Federal Student Loan Repayment

- Develop default prevention framework to support informed choices.
- Develop a modern, mobile-first servicing environment.

- Developing a robust modern and mobile-first servicing environment that enables customers to access accurate and timely information on Free Application for Federal Student Aid completion, loan servicing and multiple customer service options.
- Implementing a low-cost methodology for both broad communications and targeted outreach in order to expand FSA's reach and improve penetration of messaging to students and customers.

Contributing Programs and External Partners for Goal 2

This Strategic Goal involves both internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders include the:

- Office of the Under Secretary.
- Office of Postsecondary Education.
- Office of Federal Student Aid.
- Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education.
- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.
- National Center for Educational Statistics.
- Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development.
- Office for Civil Rights.

Some of the external education stakeholders include:

- College associations.
- Apprenticeship associations.

- University systems.
- Trade associations.
- Student organizations.
- State vocational rehabilitation agencies.
- State higher education executive organizations.

Human Capital Strategies for Goal 2

The human capital strategies that support this Strategic Goal focus on building a highly skilled team of education professionals working in unison to ensure economic opportunity for all individuals. To build on this capacity, the Department will:

- Engage, develop and inspire a diverse, high-performing workforce by creating, implementing and maintaining effective performance management strategies, practices and activities that support mission objectives.
- Communicate in an open and transparent manner to facilitate cross-agency collaboration to achieve mission objectives.

These human capital strategies support the Department's commitment to fostering a culture of engagement and collaboration as well as developing a diverse, results-oriented and high-performing workforce.

Strategic Goal 3

Strengthen the quality, accessibility and use of education data through better management, increased privacy protections and transparency.

Outcomes

Strategic Goal 3 and Strategic Objectives 3.1-3.3 focus on strengthening data-driven decision-making in education by focusing on the ways we manage and make available education data, while protecting student privacy. The Department is committed to improving how staff and stakeholders access, use and share meaningful data on education while protecting privacy. These improvements enable the Department and other stakeholders in the education community to better provide the public with the information necessary to make informed decisions on behalf of their communities, states and local districts. Strengthening the Department's data life cycle management, governance and quality framework will help ensure data being used within the Department for decision-making are accurate and reliable.

> Strengthening the Department's data life cycle management, governance and quality framework will help ensure data being used for decision-making are accurate and reliable.

Strategic Objective 3.1

Improve the Department's data governance, data life cycle management and the capacity to support education data.

This Strategic Objective focuses on data the Department collects and builds, the data management framework and internal capacity. Data management is the development, execution and supervision of plans, policies, programs and practices that control and enhance the value of data and information assets within the enterprise. The main goal of improving data management is to clarify the roles and procedures used to optimize data integrity and quality. The strategies behind this objective guide the Department's activities to develop and support the highly skilled workforce capacity necessary to execute these improvements. As a result, parents, communities and the Department's state and local partners will be more inclined to use data to make more informed decisions on behalf of their children and communities.

Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategies to support improving the Department's data management, quality and governance to support education data include the following with associated short-term and long-term milestones:

- Build a highly skilled workforce of data professionals throughout the Department to facilitate the accurate and appropriate use of data.
    - Develop role-based training curricula for data professionals.
    - Increase the percentage of the Department's program offices consistently participating in the new curricula.
- Improve the Department's data life cycle management by evaluating its quality, timeliness, objectivity, utility and integrity.
    - Explore improvements in the Department's organizational structure that would facilitate better data practices, including potential benefits from more centralized data management functions.

- o Improve internal messaging and guidance on Data Management at the Department from the Data Strategy Team.
- o Leverage data management best practices and resources to strengthen the Department's data releases.
- o Create feedback loops and tools to better understand education data quality issues and document, track and help mitigate identified issues.
- o Increase the number of program office releases that use recognized best practices for data management.

Strategies to Support Improved Education Data Management, Quality and Governance

- Build a workforce of skilled data professionals and accompanying training curricula.
- Improve data life cycle management in terms of quality, timeliness, accuracy, precision and interoperability.

Strategic Objective 3.2

Improve privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data both at the Department and in the education community.

This Strategic Objective focuses on ensuring that increased use of data for program evaluation and policymaking is accompanied by improved privacy protections and better transparency of data both within the Department and throughout the education community.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies in support of improving the privacy protections for, and transparency of, education data include the following associated short-term and long-term milestones:

- Support external partners in improving the privacy and security of education data and the transparency of data practices.
    - o Improve student privacy and data security at IHEs through ramped up outreach and compliance efforts.
    - o Review a representative sample of Local Educational Agency websites for the transparency of their data practices and compliance with federal privacy laws when contracting with third party vendors.

Strategies to Support Privacy Protection and Transparency of Education Data

- External partner support, including outreach and compliance efforts.
- Efficient administration, enforcement and technical assistance, including timely FERPA policy determinations and enforcement.

- Improve the efficiency of the Department's administration, enforcement and technical assistance relating to student privacy.
    - o Ensure timeliness of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) enforcement.
    - o Ensure timeliness of FERPA policy determinations.
    - o Ensure timeliness of student privacy technical assistance.

Strategic Objective 3.3

Increase access to, and use of, education data to make informed decisions both at the Department and in the education community.

This Strategic Objective focuses on increasing access to education data at all levels and improving the methods and access to tools necessary to support the appropriate use of education data for decision-making by the Department and education stakeholders.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies in support of maximizing access to, and the appropriate use of, education data with associated short-term and long-term milestones include the following:

- Develop and implement methods to access, analyze, visualize, interpret and represent education data in order to support informed decisions.
    - o Improve the technical and procedural infrastructure of the Department to increase data accessibility and usability for Department staff.
    - o Identify and provide access to the tools needed to enable data-driven decision-making within the Department, including the use of data to evaluate data quality, improve program management and inform monitoring and technical assistance decisions.
    - o Identify, develop and provide training on policies, procedures and practices that emphasize data-driven decision-making within the Department.

> **Strategies to Support Data-Driven Decision Making by the Department and Education Stakeholders**
>
> - Enhanced data analysis methods.
> - Tools and training.
> - Improved data visualization and reporting techniques.
> - Support for external stakeholders' data use.
> - Established standards for Department data releases.
> - Increased data accessibility and usability for Department staff.

- Establish best practices for the Department's data releases to make data and documentation accessible in user-friendly, audience appropriate and 508 compliant formats while reducing burden, to include:
    - o Refine the Department's two-way communication with the public to streamline discussions of data access and usability.
    - o Improve technical assistance to increase the accessibility of education data for external partners.
    - o Identify open data opportunities to increase data accessibility to a wider audience.
    - o Establish requirements for and deploy a centralized data-hosting environment.
- Support external partners in increasing the accessibility, quality and use of education data.
    - o Support external stakeholders in using the Department's data.
    - o Identify and offer the sessions and information external stakeholders need to use education data to increase data-driven decision-making.

Contributing Programs and External Partners for Goal 3

This is a cross-cutting goal that touches all offices and programs across the Department as well as its grantees, state and local partners and education stakeholders.

Human Capital Strategies for Goal 3

Human capital strategies supporting this Strategic Goal focus on building a highly skilled workforce of data professionals equipped with the knowledge, technical ability and expertise necessary to meet the Department's growing data needs and opportunities. The development and implementation of a training curriculum with applicable policies, procedures and tools are necessary to successfully implement this Strategic Goal. To build on this capacity, the Department will:

- Invest in education, training and other developmental opportunities to build mission-critical competencies throughout the Department to facilitate the accurate and appropriate use of data.
- Identify a training curriculum for data professionals at varied levels of data maturity and staff expertise.
- Identify, create, represent, distribute and enable the effective sharing of insights and experiences, institutional knowledge and innovative ideas across the organization.
- Identify accountability mechanisms to strengthen the relationship between data professionals and the data being collected, generated and shared.
- Increase the number or percentage of the Department's data professionals participating in the new curriculum.
- Increase the number or percentage of data professionals with accountability measures linked to their performance plans.

Strategic Goal 4

Reform the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the Department.

Outcomes

The Department's organizational capacity relies not only on our human capital but also on other resources, including physical, material, financial and informational resources. Strategic Goal 4 and Strategic Objectives 4.1–4.4 focus on improving the Department's processes, such as reviewing regulations, and where appropriate,

> The Department will seek to eliminate outdated, unnecessary or ineffective regulations.

on repealing, replacing or modifying regulations. Achievement of this goal will eliminate outdated, unnecessary or ineffective regulations; will repeal, replace or modify those regulations that eliminate jobs or inhibit job creation, impose costs that exceed benefits, or otherwise impose undue burdens on regulated parties; and will establish a high-functioning Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) process while also improving Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey scores.

Strategic Objective 4.1

Provide regulatory relief to educational institutions and reduce burden by identifying time-consuming regulations, processes and policies and working to improve or eliminate them, while continuing to protect taxpayers from waste and abuse.

This Strategic Objective will help the Department better serve the public by providing regulatory relief and improving its decision-making processes, including those that impact grant and contract awards and the reporting burden on recipients. This burden reduction and relief effort will both streamline and improve internal processes for a more efficient workplace, which will allow the Department to better serve the public.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies that focus on streamlining and processes that reduce the reporting burden of recipients include:

- Reducing internal transaction costs by reviewing internal processes and identifying opportunities to increase efficiency.
- Identifying opportunities to collaborate with other federal agencies to improve common processes, such as the federal hiring process.
- Using the Regulatory Reform Task Force to identify and, as appropriate, repeal, replace or modify outdated, inconsistent, unnecessary or ineffective regulations that (i) eliminate jobs or inhibit job creation, (ii) impose costs that exceed benefits, or otherwise impose undue burdens on regulated parties, or (iii) continue to rely on executive orders or other Presidential Directives that have been rescinded or substantially modified or are no longer in effect.

Strategic Objective 4.2

Identify, assess, monitor and manage enterprise risks.

This Strategic Objective focuses on the Department functioning more effectively by establishing strong ERM practices. The Department will strengthen its implementation of ERM by integrating existing risk management processes and including risk as a central element in all critical day-to-day and strategic decision-making activities. The Department will also develop a more risk-aware culture that facilitates increased focus on the range of risks the Department faces and fosters open discussions about how those risks might impact the accomplishment of the Department's mission and whether resources are aligned to mitigate risks to an acceptable level.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on implementing strong ERM practices across the Department. Short-term and long-term milestones follow:

- Implement a suitable ERM framework within the Department that leverages existing risk management activities, processes and governance bodies.
    - Regularly update the risk profile.
    - Assign risk owners.
    - Develop risk-mitigation plans.
- Create a risk-aware culture where risks and risk responses are openly discussed.
    - Develop communication strategies (top-down/bottom-up).
    - Integrate ERM with the Department's Internal Control Program.
- Manage enterprise risks in a coordinated and integrated manner aligned with the achievement of the *Strategic Plan*.
    - Integrate actions to address key management challenges (including those identified by the Office of Inspector General) with risk-mitigation plans.
    - Consider enterprise risks in resource allocation decisions.
    - Establish clear links between the risks associated with Strategic Goals 1–4 and the implementation strategies aligned with the core functions performed by the Department.

> **Strategies to Support Implementation of a Suitable ERM Framework**
> - Leverage existing risk management activities, processes and governance bodies.
> - Create a risk-aware culture.
> - Manage enterprise risks in a coordinated and integrated manner.

Strategic Objective 4.3

Strengthen the Department's cybersecurity by enhancing protections for its information technology infrastructure, systems and data.

This Strategic Objective focuses on strengthening protections for the Department's information technology infrastructure, systems and data to enhance the ability of employees to perform their duties. Improved cybersecurity will be a key contributor in ensuring the Department's systems and data are protected, which will help build a strong foundation for the Department's information technology infrastructure.

> Improved cybersecurity is key to help build a strong foundation for the Department's information technology infrastructure.

Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on strengthening the Department's cybersecurity, information technology infrastructure and data life cycle management. Associated short-term and long-term milestones follow:

- Implement proactive cybersecurity services to enhance the ability to securely deliver educational opportunities to our customers on the platforms and experience that they expect.
- Provide a fully-functional and highly-resilient cybersecurity capability with continuous monitoring capability to manage risk and to protect systems and information.
- Unify and expand outreach programs to improve the cybersecurity posture and delivery of Departmental services.

Features of the Department's Vision for a Stronger Information Technology Posture

- Proactive cybersecurity services.
- Continuous monitoring and threat intelligence capabilities.
- Improved cybersecurity workforce.
- Shared services and cloud capabilities.

- Address shortfalls in the cybersecurity workforce through an improved workforce program to acquire, retain, develop and enhance critical skills and expertise.
- Integrate and optimize opportunities to incorporate and consolidate shared services and cloud capabilities.
- Enhance cyber threat intelligence capabilities to ensure that Department systems can more effectively protect and rapidly identify, detect, respond and recover from complex cyber-attacks.
- Educate Department employees on their roles in promoting cybersecurity and keeping the Department more secure.

Strategic Objective 4.4

Improve the engagement and preparation of the Department's workforce using professional development and accountability measures.

This Strategic Objective focuses on maximizing employee effectiveness, thus improving workforce engagement and performance. The Department will provide employees with growth opportunities and will implement accountability measures to assist employees in being engaged members of the workforce.

Implementation Strategies

Implementation strategies for this Strategic Objective focus on developing a more engaged and accountable workforce. Short-term and long-term milestones follow:

- Develop an internal communication strategy to integrate employee engagement into day-to-day operations and reform activities.
- Provide professional development opportunities to build a highly engaged and prepared workforce with the skills necessary to enhance mission achievement.
- Enhance succession planning, including implementation of a phased Voluntary Early Retirement Authority/Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments offering to restructure positions to fit the needed skill sets.
- Ensure supervisors and managers have active Individual Development Plans.

- Ensure supervisor and manager performance plans include a measurable critical element related to employee engagement action planning and results to improve employee engagement.
- Create a targeted strategy to retain and leverage critical employee skill sets:
  - Develop cross-training and reassignment strategies in conjunction with the federal workforce reduction effort.
  - Conduct training needs assessments for all mission-critical and remaining job occupational series.
- Develop and implement an organizational health dashboard.

> **Strategies to Improve the Engagement and Preparation of the Department's Workforce**
>
> - Internal communication strategy focused on employee engagement.
> - Professional development opportunities to build a skilled workforce.
> - Enhanced succession planning.
> - Supervisor and manager accountability.

Contributing Programs and External Partners for Goal 4

This Strategic Goal impacts all the Department's offices and the following external partners: OMB, Office of Personnel Management and other federal agencies.

Human Capital Strategies for Goal 4

Human capital strategies that support this Strategic Goal focus on streamlining and improving Departmental processes for a more efficient workplace, developing a risk-aware culture, improving employee performance and creating a highly effective and engaged workforce. To build on this development plan, the Department will:

- Dedicate resources to enable staff to acquire and apply new and advanced knowledge, skills and abilities and continue to progress in the organization through learning and development activities.
- Share best practices, foster innovation and collaborate in the development and implementation of new processes and procedures to improve individual and organizational performance.
- Review, implement and communicate organizational enhancements and collectively inspire employees to achieve significant, sustained and measurable improvements in performance on an ongoing and regular basis.
- Collect, analyze, review and report performance data to drive performance and improvement.
- Implement a performance management system to differentiate levels of employee performance, provide regular feedback to employees and link individual performance to organizational goals.

The Path Forward

States, school districts and education institutions have the primary roles in providing high-quality education. As such, the Department is limited in its authority and cannot influence all education outcomes; however, the Department is committed to supporting states, school districts and education institutions in helping students develop skills to succeed in school, pursue postsecondary opportunities and transition to the workforce.

Another factor that impacts this *Strategic Plan* is the capacity of state and local educational agencies. With responsibility over program administration, these agencies will need to consider their workforce needs. Additionally, in the current economic climate, students' needs and education costs are growing while budgets are contracting. Expanding services and support to address students' academic needs and overall health will continue to be a challenge given fiscal constraints. Finally, the differences in availability of funding and resources at the state and local levels remain a challenge in serving all students, including vulnerable populations. Throughout the implementation of this *Strategic Plan* the Department will provide technical assistance and partner with institutions to address these external factors.

The Department will continue to use quarterly performance reviews, targeted strategic initiatives and outreach to leaders and education stakeholders to assess progress and garner engagement toward achieving strategic goals and outcomes. Continuous improvement rests on ongoing cycles of assessing performance, examining data and applying lessons learned to improve practices. Strengthening a culture of continuous improvement is at the heart of the Department's efforts to partner with and support educators, administrators and policymakers, with the intent of obtaining better outcomes for all students.

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Description
APG	Agency Priority Goal
CAP Goals	Cross-Agency Priority Goals
CSP	Charter School Program
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
ESEA	*Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*
ESSA	*Every Student Succeeds Act*
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FERPA	*Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*
FSA	Office of Federal Student Aid
FY	Fiscal Year
GLBA	*Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act*
HEA	*Higher Education Act of 1965*
IDEA	*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IES	Institute of Education Sciences
IHE	Institution of Higher Education
IT	Information Technology
LEA	Local Educational Agency
NCES	National Center for Educational Statistics
OCR	Office for Civil Rights
OCTAE	Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education
OELA	Office of English Language Acquisition
OESE	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
OII	Office of Innovation and Improvement
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPE	Office of Postsecondary Education
OPEPD	Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
SEA	State Educational Agency
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
U.S.	United States
WIOA	*Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*