

Department of Education Announces Six New Interagency Partnerships Aimed at “Breaking Up the Federal Education Bureaucracy”

November 25, 2025

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On November 18, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education (“ED”) announced six new interagency agreements (“IAAs”) designed to reassign responsibilities traditionally vested with ED to four other federal agencies. Higher education institutions regulated by ED, as well as ED contractors and state localities funded by ED, will be most affected by these significant changes to programs. Clients affected should assess the potential impact of these changes to programs and, importantly, payments and revenue streams.

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ED Interagency Agreements Overview

While ED has not yet released the full content of the IAAs, each IAA shifts administrative responsibilities to partner agencies while ED will “maintain statutory responsibilities” and “proper oversight” of the programs, though it is unclear how. The IAAs between ED and the Departments of Labor (“DOL”), Interior (“DOI”), Health and Human Services (“HHS”), and State (“State”), represent a dramatic restructure of federal education program administration responsibilities. According to ED, these agreements are intended to “break up the federal education bureaucracy,” reduce administrative burdens on states and institutions, and move closer to the administration’s stated goal of “return[ing] education to the states.”

The six IAAs are:

1. *ED–DOL: Elementary and Secondary Education Partnership*^[1]

Under this IAA, DOL will “take a growing role in administering select elementary and secondary education programs funded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” including programs that administer grants to states and local education agencies for educating migratory children, rural communities, English language learners, and children experiencing homelessness.

2. *ED–DOL: Postsecondary Education Partnership*^[2]

This IAA provides that DOL will administer “most postsecondary education grant programs” authorized under the Higher Education Act, including grants that support

historically Black colleges and universities, TRIO, Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, and the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. [3]

3. *ED–DOI: Indian Education Partnership***[4]**

Under this IAA, DOI will have a greater role administering several Native American education programs, including K-12, postsecondary, and Career and Technical Education. The IAA factsheet also notes that the Department (though it does not specify which department) “is currently winding down several grant programs that allocate resources based upon the racial or ethnic composition of an institution’s student body, with preferences for students who are Native Alaskan or Native Hawaiian.” The factsheet also provides that the IAA includes several of these programs, and that DOI will assist ED with their wind down.

4. *ED–HHS: Foreign Medical Accreditation Partnership***[5]**

HHS will advise the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation by offering medical education subject matter expertise during reviews of foreign accreditation standards for schools where U.S. citizens are enrolled.

5. *ED–HHS: Child Care Access Means Parents in School Partnership***[6]**

HHS will have increased responsibility for administering childcare support grants to colleges and universities funded under Section 419N of the Higher Education Act, known as the Child Care Access Means Parents in School program. HHS will manage competition for the grants, provide technical assistance, and integrate the higher education program within HHS’s existing programs.

6. *ED–State: International Education and Foreign Language Studies Partnership***[7]**

The State Department will take a larger, unspecified role in administering the Fulbright-Hays and other international education programs, including American Overseas Research Centers, the Business and International Education program, Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships, and the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language program.

What These Changes Mean

With these IAAs, non-education agencies will now have expanded roles in education—another step toward reducing ED’s role in national education. This shrinking of ED, by parceling out programs to other agencies, may undermine ED’s mission, as these other agencies may not have the same experience or commitment to education. These changes could also further distance federal education grants and programming from education-related subject matter expertise.

Although ED provides it will maintain “proper oversight,” the practical extent of ED’s supervisory role is unclear. As a result, Federal Fund Recipients could encounter:

- Unclear sources of authority as programs traditionally administered and regulated by ED are shifted to agencies without a statutory or regulatory oversight role;
- New cross-agency compliance protocols or sub-regulatory guidance;
- Additional reporting streams;
- Changes in eligibility, monitoring, and audit practices; and

- Revised application and competition designs.

Because ED announced the IAAs as immediate administrative shifts, states and institutions may face transitional friction and uncertainty as programs are reorganized. Payments and responses from ED may be slowed as the programs transition to new agencies and offices. The press release does not specify rollout timelines, and ED has not yet issued implementing guidance. Many details—such as staffing, funding transfers, and regulatory interpretations—remain unanswered.

The Department of Education's six newly announced interagency partnerships represent a major restructuring of how federal education programs are administered. By transferring significant program authority to DOL, DOI, HHS, and State, the second Trump administration furthers its aims to realign federal education activities with broader economic, social, and national-security priorities. While the long-term implications remain to be seen, institutions and grantees should begin preparing for shifts in program administration, compliance expectations, and grant management processes in the months ahead.

[1] Dept. of Ed., Department of Education (ED) and Department of Labor (DOL) Elementary and Secondary Education Partnership, Fact Sheet (Nov. 18, 2025).

[2] Dept. of Ed., Department of Education (ED) and Department of Labor (DOL) Postsecondary Education Partnership, Fact Sheet (Nov. 18, 2025).

[3] Jessica Blake, *McMahon Breaks Up More of the Education Department*, Inside Higher Ed. (Nov. 18, 2025), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/student-aid-policy/2025/11/18/mcmahon-breaks-more-education-department>.

[4] Dept. of Ed., Department of Education (ED) and Department of Interior (DOI) Partnership, Fact Sheet (Nov. 18, 2025).

[5] Dept. of Ed., Department of Education (ED) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Foreign Medical Accreditation Partnership, Fact Sheet (Nov. 18, 2025).

[6] Dept. of Ed., Department of Education (ED) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Child Care Means Parents in School Partnership, Fact Sheet (Nov. 18, 2025).

[7] Dept. of Ed., Department of Education (ED) and Department of State (State) International Education and Foreign Language Studies Partnership, Fact Sheet (Nov. 18, 2025).