



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

## **DC Tuition Assistance Grant 2019 Annual Performance Report**

### **Introduction**

The District of Columbia Tuition Assistance Grant (DCTAG) is a federally funded program that provides DC residents with up to \$10,000 per year toward the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities nationwide. The program also provides up to \$2,500 toward tuition at private nonprofit colleges and universities in the Washington, DC area and private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) nationwide. The DCTAG program is operated by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

A 2018 audit by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended that the DCTAG program release an annual report using a performance management framework that relates program performance to DCTAG's established program goals and objectives, in addition to the Annual Data Report that provides descriptive statistics about the students served. As such, DCTAG created the Annual Performance report in 2018 to outline DCTAG's goal and objectives and provide baseline metrics tied to these objectives. The 2019 report provides 2018 and 2019 performance metrics, building to an annual report that provides three-year trends over time. This report should be viewed in conjunction with the DCTAG Annual Data Report, available [here](#).

### **Goal and Objectives**

As established by DCTAG's authorizing legislation, the goal of DCTAG is to be a program that "enables college-bound residents of the District of Columbia to have greater choices among institutions of higher education." To achieve this goal, DCTAG has four key objectives:

1. Ensure DC residents are aware of DCTAG.<sup>1</sup>
2. Enable DC residents to apply to the program with minimum burden.
3. Ensure that the program meets its financial obligations through a payment process with sufficient checks and balances.
4. Help students make smarter college choices.

Acknowledging that the program has changed over time, in 2020, the program staff will review the program objectives with consideration given to areas that may support the program's goal and build upon recent improvements and areas of growth. The remainder of this report dives deeper into DCTAG's work to meet each of the current objectives,

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This objective was originally, "Ensure residents are aware of and apply to DCTAG." To clarify the distinction between Objectives 1 and 2 for stakeholders, it has been slightly modified.

including 2018 and 2019 performance metrics. Unless otherwise noted, performance data and targets reflect the calendar year (January – December).

**Objective 1: Ensure DC residents are aware of DCTAG**

Each year, DCTAG staff conduct extensive outreach to students and families in order to meet this objective. This includes presentations, tables at college fairs, workshops, and interviews as well as a separate Spring Blitz where staff members provide on-site support to applicants at high schools. DCTAG events were held in all eight Wards of DC.

In 2019, DCTAG renewed the contract with Campbell and Company DC to run a media campaign with a smaller scope and a focus on improving DCTAG’s social media metrics. In the 2019 campaign, there were 650,506 total media impressions across four targeted media outlets in June 2019. Other methods of outreach included displaying posters in every District public high school, conducting social media outreach, distributing giveaway materials such as pens and flash drives, distributing brochures, and conducting email outreach.

Table 1 provides information on metrics related to Objective 1.

*Table 1: 2018 and 2019 Performance for Objective 1*

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2018 Performance</b>	<b>2019 Performance</b>
General outreach sessions	67	68
Students/parents reached at general outreach sessions	5,383	6,497
Spring Blitz events (public and public charter schools)	30	28
Students assisted at Spring Blitz	310	406
Private school counselors webinar	N/A	1
TAG Talk newsletter/notifications issues sent to students, guardians, and parents	3	3

## **Objective 2: Enable DC residents to apply to the program with minimum burden**

This objective speaks to ensuring that the application process is straightforward for students and families, since complicated applications can discourage students from applying for financial aid. In 2019, OSSE continued to build on the improvements that the new, streamlined DC OneApp, provided when launched in 2016.

During the 2019-20 academic year OSSE staff spent six month planning an enhanced feature that will allow students, parents and guardians to upload documents into the online application for the 2020-21 application, and all other DC OneApp application updates were completed prior to the application opening publically. DCTAG applicants came from all eight Wards. Staff continue to work to improve the application, related to payment and college transfer. DCTAG staff aim to increase the overall number of applicants, as well as the number and percentage of applicants deemed eligible, while limiting the number of incomplete applications.

Table 2 provides information on metrics related to Objective 2.

*Table 2:2018 and 2019 Performance for Objective 2*

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2018 Performance</b>	<b>2019 Performance</b>
Applications submitted	6,961	6,367
Applicants deemed eligible <sup>2</sup>	5,378	5,033
Applicants deemed eligible (percent of applications submitted)	77.2%	79%
Incomplete applications	1,302	1,334

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<sup>2</sup> Includes applicants with a status of Eligible or Eligible – Ineligible Institution

**Objective 3: Ensure that the program meets its financial obligations through a payment process with sufficient checks and balances**

Table 3 provides information on metrics related to Objective 3. The performance in 2018 reflects the 2017-18 academic year, and the performance in 2019 reflects the 2018-19 academic year.

*Table 3: 2018 and 2019 Performance for Objective 3*

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2018 Performance</b>	<b>2019 Performance</b>
Total funds disbursed	\$32,524,066	\$31,402,075
DCTAG/Accounting reconciliation meetings	14	12
Students receiving DCTAG awards	4,571	4,315
DC OneApp training and email reminders	100% Complete	100% Complete

Note: Funds disbursed are a point-in-time metric, and may be updated if requested at a later date.

**Objective 4: Help students make smarter college choices**

The DCTAG program works with both internal and external stakeholders to help students make smarter college choices. If a student selects an institution that is a good fit, he or she is more likely to persist and complete college. DCTAG supports these choices both before students begin college and during students’ college careers. Since DCTAG staff do not necessarily have pre-existing relationships with students and therefore do not know the full breadth of students’ academic experience, DCTAG has focused on using professional development to help train those who are advising students throughout their college decision-making process.

In 2019, the DCTAG staff offered six “smarter college choices” workshops and panel presentations and published two smarter college choices” articles through the National Association for *College Admission Counseling* (NACAC) titled *Building Your College Class Schedule* and *Seven Considerations to Make When Transferring School*. Additionally, on April 12, 2019, DCTAG staff hosted a workshop for high school counselors and college access program staff focused on student success and retention.

DCTAG continued to offer the Transfer Portal in the DC OneApp, so that students transferring mid-year (or those who attend a different university than the one listed in the DCTAG application) may update the institution in the DC OneApp system.