

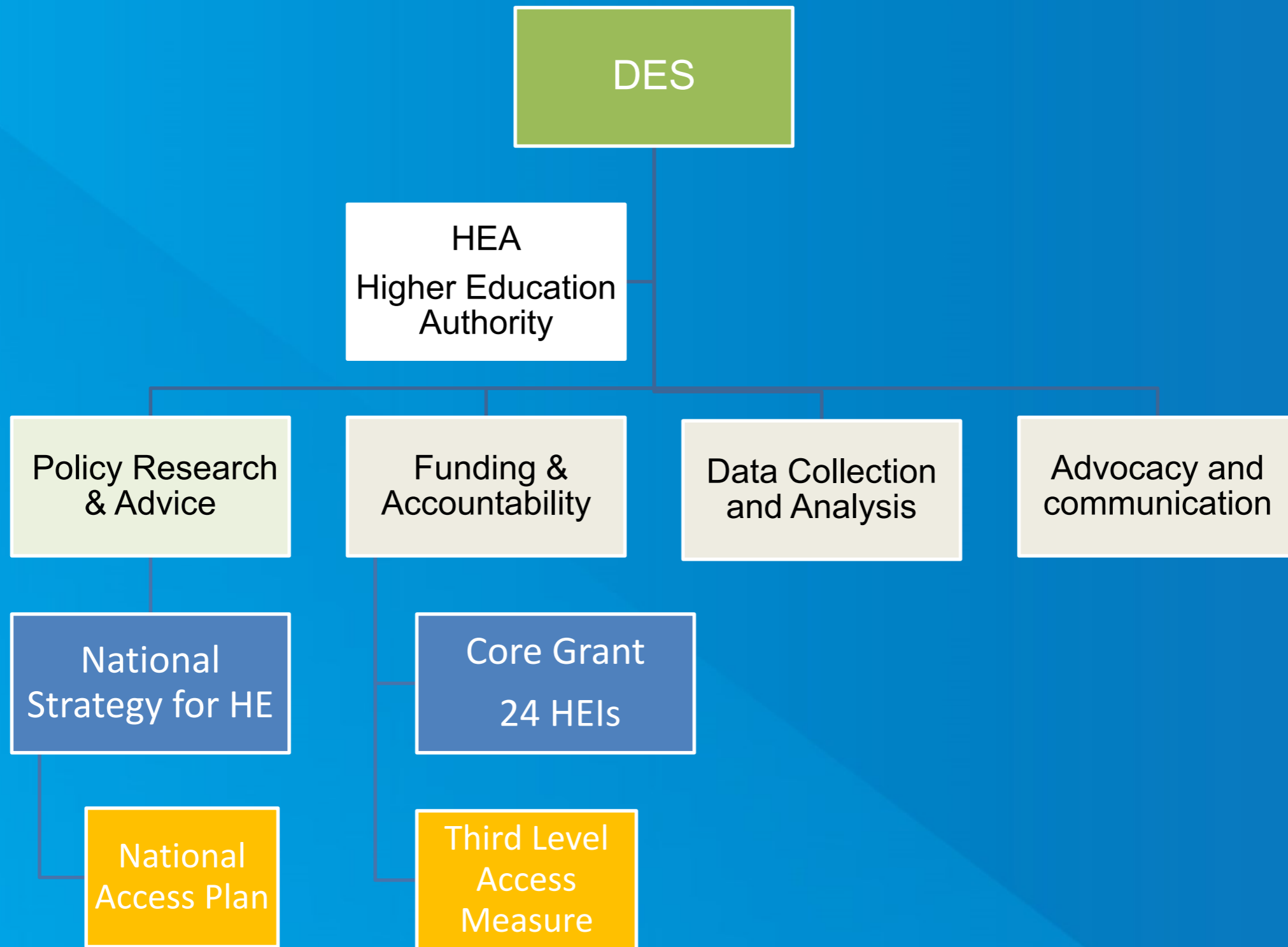
Higher Education Authority,

Access Policy Section

www.heai.ie

@HEA_irl

@HEAaccess





NATIONAL ACCESS PLAN 2015-2019

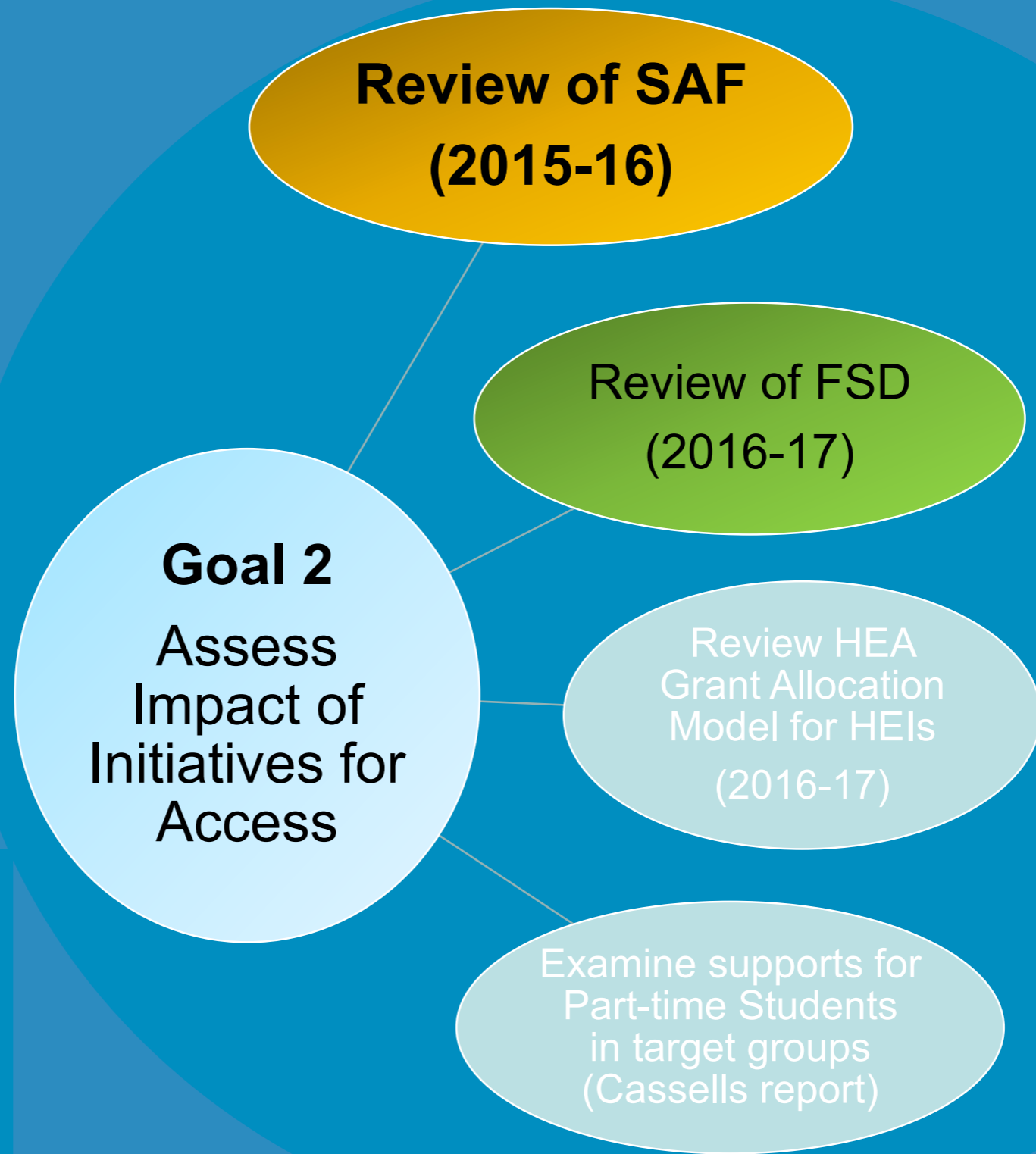
Third Level Access Measure

- Student Assistance Fund (SAF)
- Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)

	2008	2015
SAF		
Students	7,800	14,000
€m	€5m	€8m
FSD		
Students	3,800	10,000
€m	€11.7m	€10m



NATIONAL ACCESS PLAN 2015-2019



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your future
European Social Fund



Minister for Education and Skills
2011-2016
Department of Education and Skills



HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN GÚDARAS um AID-ÓIDEACHAS

Student Assistance Fund (SAF)

- SAF operating since 1994 (“hardship fund”)
- Supported by State and ESF funding
- Managed by the HEA since 2003
- Funding administered at local level by each HEI subject to HEA guidelines
- Students in long or short-term financial difficulty
- Full-time students, undergrad or postgrad

Review of SAF 2015-2016

- Terms of Reference, HEA board
- Tendering process
- Crowe Horwath appointed
- Review process, Aug – Dec 2015

Purpose of the review

- Review the adequacy and impact of the fund
- Analysis of financial and student data
- Review HEA allocation model
- Report on different systems/practices in HEIs
- Recommendations on guidelines

Key questions

- How can the SAF better support national equity of access strategy?
- Impact of the SAF on student retention?
- Best practice in administration and allocation?
- How can data be used to inform policy and make a funding case?

Methodology

- Data Gathering & Analysis
- Survey of HEIs
- Site Visits
- Consultation meetings and event
- Steering Committee (HEIs, USI, DES, HEA)

Key Findings : Impact of SAF 2009-2015



77,000
third-level **students supported**



€43m
allocated



34%
increase in total expenditure
over six-year period, 2009-2015



94%
increase in numbers
of **students assisted**



80%
of students **who applied**
for funding were **supported**



€560
average **allocation**
per **student**



46%
of **funding** was to **help**
students with **costs of rent**

Average proportions of total funding allocated for other areas of support:

23%
Heating/
lighting/food



15%
Transport



8%
Childcare costs



4%
Books/materials



2%
Other living
expenses



1%
Medical
doctor/dental



Key Findings - Qualitative

- SAF is a worthwhile initiative
- Valued highly by students
- Bespoke nature: responds to individual student issues
- Assists those most in need
- High % repeat applicants
- Anecdotally, assists retention
- Over half of SAF paid out in the first quarter: peak demand early in college year
- Intensive administrative process
- Cost of administration (c.€1.5m)
- Fund does not cover this cost
- Diverse systems - inconsistency between HEIs/students
- Data needs to be improved to make a funding case

Recommendations

Data and funding

- Improve student data
- Track retention
- Review HEA allocation mechanism
- Earlier allocation
- Hold back % for emergencies

• Administration

- Develop standard, points based 'triage' system
- Standardise application form
- Streamline administration (changes in receipting a first step)
- Two options for change – incremental and radical

Guidelines

- Data collection requirements
- Sample application form
- Indicative award amounts
- Issue earlier
- Improve presentation
- Student friendly guidelines

Implementation

- Report of Review published September 2016
- Incremental change model approved
- Reports of progress to HEA Board and DES

Review of Fund for Students with Disabilities

PACEC Consultants (June 2016)

Review process in final stages

Report to HEA board and DES in 2017

www.hea.ie

@HEA_irl

@HEAaccess