

school children and teachers, on an equitable basis, special educational services or other program benefits under this program. The section further requires SEAs, LEAs, and educational service agencies to consult with private school officials during the design and development of the Challenge Grant projects. Each application should describe the ways in which the proposed project will address the needs of private school children and teachers.

Selection Criteria

In evaluating applications for grants under this program competition, the Secretary uses the following unweighted selection criteria, as described in the notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures for this program published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register and repeated below:

(a) *Significance.* The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its significance by determining the extent to which the project—

(1) Offers a creative, new vision for using technology to help all students learn to challenging standards or to promote efficiency and effectiveness in education; and contributes to the advancement of State and local systemic educational reform;

(2) Will achieve far-reaching impact through results, products, or benefits that are easily exportable to other settings and communities;

(3) Will directly benefit students by integrating acquired technologies into the curriculum to enhance teaching, training, and student achievement or by other means;

(4) Will ensure ongoing, intensive professional development for teachers and other personnel to further the use of technology in the classroom, library, or other learning center;

(5) Is designed to serve areas with a high number or percentage of disadvantaged students or other areas with the greatest need for educational technology; and

(6) Is designed to create new learning communities, and expanded markets for high-quality educational technology applications and services.

(b) *Feasibility.* The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its feasibility by determining the extent to which—

(1) The project will ensure successful, effective, and efficient uses of technologies for educational reform that will be sustainable beyond the period of the grant;

(2) The members of the consortia or other appropriate entities will contribute substantial financial and other resources to achieve the goals of the project; and

(3) The applicant is capable of carrying out the project, as evidenced by

the extent to which the project will meet the problems identified; the quality of the project design, including objectives, approaches, evaluation plan, and dissemination plan; the adequacy of resources, including money, personnel, facilities, equipment, and supplies; the qualifications of key personnel who would conduct the project; and the applicant's prior experience relevant to the objectives of the project.

Application Deadline

In order to ensure timely receipt and processing of applications, the Secretary requires that an application must be received on or before the deadline date announced in this application notice. The Secretary will not consider an application for funding if it is not received by the deadline date unless the applicant can show proof that the application was (1) sent by registered or certified mail not later than five days before the deadline date; or (2) sent by commercial carrier not later than two days before the deadline date. An applicant must show proof of mailing in accordance with 34 CFR 75.102(d) and (e). Applications delivered by hand must be received by 2:00 p.m. (Washington, D.C. time) on the deadline date. For the purposes of this program competition, the Secretary does not apply 34 CFR 75.102(b) which requires an application to be mailed, rather than received, by the deadline date.

Additional Information

Prospective applicants may access a summary of questions and answers about the competition from the Department of Education's On-Line Library by using the Department's WWW Server at URL <http://www.ed.gov/> or by using the Internet Gopher Server at GOPHER.ED.GOV (under Announcements, Bulletins, and Press Releases). For additional help accessing the On-Line Library, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327). To receive a hard copy of the summary, fax requests to (202) 708-6003 or call (202) 708-6001.

For Applications or Information Contact: Telephone 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) for applications. For information contact Challenge Grants for Technology in Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-5544. Telephone (202) 708-6001. Individuals may fax requests for applications. Fax (202) 708-6003. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.,

Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of the application notices for discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; or on the Internet Gopher Server at GOPHER.ED.GOV (under Announcements, Bulletins, and Press Releases). However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the Federal Register.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6846.

Dated: April 5, 1996.

Sharon P. Robinson,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Challenge Grants for Technology in Education; Notice

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures.

SUMMARY: The Secretary establishes selection criteria, procedures for evaluating applications, and procedures for submission of applications under the Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program. The program provides grants to consortia comprised of one or more local educational agencies and other appropriate entities for the purpose of improving and expanding new applications of technology to strengthen the school reform effort, improve student achievement, and provide sustained professional development of teachers, administrators, and school library media personnel. The Secretary establishes selection criteria and related procedures to make informed funding decisions on applications for technology projects having great promise for improving elementary and secondary education.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The provisions of this notice take effect May 13, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Challenge Grants for Technology in Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202-5544. Telephone (202) 708-6001. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339

between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program is authorized in Title III, section 3136, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6846).

Under this program the Secretary makes grants to consortia. Each consortium must include at least one local educational agency (LEA) with a high percentage or number of children living below the poverty line, and may include other LEAs, State educational agencies, institutions of higher education, businesses, academic content experts, software designers, museums, libraries, or other appropriate entities.

The Secretary announces in this notice selection criteria for the FY 1996 competition. The program statute (20 U.S.C. 6846(c)) requires the Secretary to give priority in awarding grants to consortia that demonstrate certain factors in their applications. The Secretary carries out this mandate by incorporating the priority factors into the selection criteria. In addition, the Secretary believes that substantive selection criteria specifically framed for this program competition are necessary to enable the Secretary to evaluate how well the applicants address the purpose of the Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program. The Secretary uses the following selection criteria instead of the selection criteria in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations, 34 CFR 75.200(b)(3) and 75.210.

Selection Criteria

The Secretary uses the following unweighted selection criteria to evaluate applications:

(a) *Significance.* The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its significance by determining the extent to which the project—

(1) Offers a creative, new vision for using technology to help all students to learn challenging standards or to promote efficiency and effectiveness in education; and contributes to the advancement of State and local systemic educational reform;

(2) Will achieve far-reaching impact through results, products, or benefits that are easily exportable to other settings and communities;

(3) Will directly benefit students by integrating acquired technologies into the curriculum to enhance teaching, training, and student achievement or by other means;

(4) Will ensure ongoing, intensive professional development for teachers and other personnel to further the use

of technology in the classroom, library, or other learning center;

(5) Is designed to serve areas with a high number or percentage of disadvantaged students or other areas with the greatest need for educational technology; and

(6) Is designed to create new learning communities, and expanded markets for high-quality educational technology applications and services.

(b) *Feasibility.* The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its feasibility by determining the extent to which—

(1) The project will ensure successful, effective, and efficient uses of technologies for educational reform that will be sustainable beyond the period of the grant;

(2) The members of the consortium or other appropriate entities will contribute substantial financial and other resources to achieve the goals of the project; and

(3) The applicant is capable of carrying out the project, as evidenced by the extent to which the project will meet the problems identified; the quality of the project design, including objectives, approaches, evaluation plan, and dissemination plan; the adequacy of resources, including money, personnel, facilities, equipment, and supplies; the qualifications of key personnel who would conduct the project; and the applicant's prior experience relevant to the objectives of the project.

Selection Procedures

The Secretary intends to evaluate applications using unweighted selection criteria. The Secretary believes that the use of unweighted criteria is most appropriate because they will allow the reviewers maximum flexibility to apply their professional judgments in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in individual applications. Therefore, the Secretary will not apply the selection procedures in EDGAR, 34 CFR 75.217, which require a rank order to be established based on weighted selection criteria.

The Secretary also believes that due to the highly technical nature of the applications, it will be necessary to obtain clarifications and additional information from applicants during the selection process. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.109(b), an applicant may make changes to an application on or before the deadline date for submission of applications. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.231, the Secretary may request an applicant to submit additional information after the application has been selected for funding. For the purposes of the Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program, the

Secretary also permits an applicant to submit additional information, in response to a request from the Secretary, during the application selection process.

The Secretary will use the following selection procedures for the FY 1996 competition.

In applying the selection criteria, one or more peer review panels of experts will first analyze each application in terms of individual selection criteria. The reviewers assign to each application two separate qualitative ratings based on the extent to which the application has met the two individual selection criteria. The two ratings taken together yield a composite rating, representing each reviewer's total rating of each application. These reviewer ratings for each application are then combined to yield an overall rating for each application. The panels will also identify inconsistencies, points in need of clarification, and other concerns, if any, pertaining to each application.

The Secretary assigns each application to one of several groups based on the application's overall level of quality. Starting with the highest quality group and moving down in unbroken order, the Secretary then identifies the groups of applications of sufficiently high quality to be considered for funding. The Secretary may request each applicant whose application was identified as being in a group of sufficiently high quality applications to submit additional information or materials to address the concerns and questions, if any, identified by the peer review panels. Such requests are strictly limited to clarifications of a conceptual or technical nature, and are not meant to fill major gaps in information that reviewers identify in applications.

A second peer review panel then reevaluates each application in a group identified as being of sufficiently high quality, taking into account any additional information or materials, to determine the extent to which each application addresses the selection criteria. The Secretary then reassigns each reevaluated application to one of several groups based on the application's overall level of quality.

In the final stage of the selection process, the Secretary selects for funding those applications of highest quality based on the results of the second review panel. The Secretary may also consider the extent to which each application demonstrates an effective response to the learning technology needs of areas with a high number or percentage of disadvantaged students or the greatest need for educational technology.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

In order to ensure timely receipt and processing of applications, the Secretary takes exception to 34 CFR 75.102(b) by requiring that for an application to be considered for funding it must be received on or before the deadline date announced in the application notice published in this issue of the Federal Register. The Secretary will not consider an application for funding if it is not received by the deadline date unless the applicant can show proof that the application was (1) sent by registered or certified mail not later than five days before the deadline date; or (2) sent by commercial carrier not later than two days before the deadline date. An applicant must show proof of mailing in accordance with 34 CFR 75.102(d) and (e). Applications delivered by hand must be received by 2:00 p.m. (Washington, D.C. time) on the deadline date. For the purposes of this competition, the Secretary does not apply 34 CFR 75.102(b) which requires an application to be mailed, rather than received, by the deadline date.

Waiver of Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553), it is the practice of the Department to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed rules. Ordinarily, this practice would have applied to the selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures in this notice. However, the

Secretary waives rulemaking on these rules under section 553(b)(B) of the Administrative Procedure Act. This section provides that rulemaking is not required when the agency for good cause finds that notice and public procedure are impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest. The Secretary believes that, in order to make timely grant awards using Fiscal Year (FY) 1996 funds, public comment on these rules is impracticable. As of April 5, 1996, Congress had not authorized the final FY 1996 appropriations for the Challenge Grant Program. Final Congressional action regarding the FY 1996 appropriation is not expected to occur until after April 24, 1996. The Secretary anticipates that Congress will appropriate sufficient funds to enable the Department to fund new awards in FY 1996. However, if FY 1996 awards are to be made in a timely manner, the Department must proceed with the FY 1996 competition prior to a determination of the amount of funds available for this program. The Secretary believes that it is essential to make new awards no later than October 1, 1996. The Challenge Grant Program statute focuses on projects that apply technology in ways which will directly benefit students. To realize this statutory purpose, each funded project must be in the position to begin to implement project activities in classrooms at the beginning of the 1996–1997 school year. Due to the prolonged uncertainty regarding FY 1996 funds, it is now impracticable to receive public

comments and still allow FY 1996 awards to be made by October 1, 1996.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number assigned to the collection of information in this notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures is 1810–0569.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12373 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6846.

Dated: April 5, 1996.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.303A, Challenge Grants for Technology in Education)

Sharon P. Robinson,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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