

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 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 regulations that are not taken directly from statute. Ordinarily, this practice would have applied to the selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures in this notice. However, in order to make timely grant awards in fiscal year (FY) 1995, the Assistant Secretary, in accordance with section 437(d)(1) of the General Education Provisions Act, has decided to issue this notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures, which will apply only to the FY 1995 grant competition.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980

These selection criteria contain information collection requirements. As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, the Department will submit a copy of these selection criteria to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for its review. (44 U.S.C. 3504(h))

The Department uses the information to make informed evaluations of grant applications. Annual public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to be as follows:

(1) Selection criteria—average 24 hours per response for 500 respondents.

These estimates include time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

Organizations and individuals desiring to submit comments on the information collection requirements should direct them to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, OMB, Room 3002, New Executive Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20503; Attention: Daniel J. Chenok.

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

Dated: March 3, 1995.

Sharon P. Robinson,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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[CFDA No. 84.303]

Challenge Grants for Technology in Education; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1995

Purpose of Program: The Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program provides grants to consortia that are working to improve and expand 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.

Eligible Applicants: Only consortia may receive grants under this program. Consortia shall include at least one local educational agency (LEA) with a high percentage or number of children living below the poverty line. They may also include other local educational agencies, State educational agencies, institutions of higher education, businesses, academic content experts, software designers, museums, libraries, and other appropriate entities.

Note: In each consortium a participating LEA shall submit the application on behalf of the consortium and serve as the fiscal agent for the grant.

Deadline for Receipt of Applications:
June 2, 1995

Requested Deadline for Receipt of Letters of Intent to Apply: April 4, 1995

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:
August 1, 1995

Applications Available: March 13, 1995

Available Funds: \$27,000,000

Estimated Range of Awards: \$500,000 to \$3,000,000 per year

Estimated Average Size of Awards:

\$1,000,000 per year

Estimated Number of Awards: 14-18

Project Period: 5 years

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Applicable Regulations: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75 (except 34 CFR 75.102(b), 75.200(b)(3), 75.210, and 75.217), 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, and 85.

Other Requirements: The requirements in the notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures published in this issue of the Federal Register.

Supplementary Information: The Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program is authorized under Title III, section 3136, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6846). This FY 1995 competition supports the first grants under the new program.

As catalysts for change, grants under this program will support communities of educators, parents, industry partners, and others who are working to transform their schools into information-age learning centers. These challenge grants will support the development and innovative use of technology and new learning content in specific communities. Each effort should clearly focus on integrating innovative learning technologies into the curriculum to improve learning productivity in the community.

The Secretary believes that the information superhighway is creating new possibilities for extending the time, the place, and the resources for learning. Challenge grant communities can use it to develop first-class learning environments that provide affordable access to quality education and training. Especially promising possibilities are anticipated from a creative synthesis of ideas generated by educators and software developers, telecommunications firms and hardware manufacturers, entertainment producers, and others who are extending the possibilities for creating new learning communities.

Challenge grant communities need not be limited by geography. The information superhighway can be used to create virtual learning communities linking schools, colleges, libraries, museums, and businesses across the country or around the world. Students of all ages, no matter where they live, could tap vast electronic libraries and museums containing text and video images, music, art, and language instruction. They could work with scientists and scholars around the globe who can help them use mapping tools, primary historical documents, or laboratory experiments to develop strong research and problem solving skills.

The Secretary encourages each community to view this competition as an opportunity to act on its most ambitious vision for education reform. It is essential, however, to guard against a future in which some communities have access to vast technological resources, while others do not. Low-income neighborhoods and other areas with the greatest need for technology should not be left behind in the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed for productive citizenship in the 21st century. A failure to include those communities will put their future, and the future of the country, at risk. For this reason, the Secretary gives special consideration to applications from consortia which are developing effective responses to the learning technology needs of areas with a high number or percentage of disadvantaged students or the greatest need for educational technology.

Note: The Secretary encourages, but does not require, prospective applicants to submit a letter of intent to apply, prior to submitting an application. The Secretary requests the information in this letter in order to help the Secretary identify at the earliest possible stage of the competition the project characteristics for which peer reviewers with appropriate qualifications will need to be enlisted. The Secretary requests that prospective applicants limit their letters to three double-spaced pages. The letter should outline key elements of the proposed effort, including the educational needs and opportunities to be addressed, the concept for responding to those needs, the proposed technologies and applications to be used, and a general estimate of budget purposes. An applicant that does not submit a letter of intent to apply is in no way at a competitive disadvantage with respect to applicants submitting the requested letter. The Secretary requests that letters of intent to apply be submitted for receipt by April 4, 1995.

Project Activities

The statute authorizes the use of funds for activities similar to the following activities:

- (a) Developing, adapting, or expanding existing and new applications of technology to support the school reform effort.
- (b) Funding projects of sufficient size and scope to improve student learning and, as appropriate, support professional development, and provide administrative support.
- (c) Acquiring connectivity linkages, resources, and services, including the acquisition of hardware and software, for use by teachers, students, and school library media personnel in the classroom or in school library media centers, in order to improve student learning by supporting the instructional program offered by such agency to

ensure that students in schools will have meaningful access on a regular basis to such linkages, resources, and services.

(d) Providing ongoing professional development in the integration of quality educational technologies into school curriculum and long-term planning for implementing educational technologies.

(e) Acquiring connectivity with wide area networks for purposes of accessing information and educational programming sources, particularly with institutions of higher education and public libraries.

(f) Providing educational services for adults and families.

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, DC 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.

Briefing for Prospective Applicants

A briefing for prospective applicants is scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Friday, March 17, 1995, at the Crystal City Marriott Hotel, 1999 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA 22202-3564 (near National Airport in metropolitan Washington, DC). Telephone (703) 413-5500. No preregistration is required. Prospective applicants unable to attend this briefing 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. To receive a hard copy of the summary call (202) 708-6001.

For Applications or Information Contact: Telephone 1-800-USA-

LEARN (1-800-872-5327). Individuals may also contact the Interagency Technology Task Force, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW., 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 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: March 3, 1995.

Sharon P. Robinson,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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