

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No. 84.283A]

Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers Program

Notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 1995.

Purpose of Program: The purpose of this program is to establish a networked system of 15 comprehensive regional assistance centers to provide comprehensive training and technical assistance related to the administration and implementation of programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of funds under the Act.

This new approach will replace the Department's current method of developing technical assistance that involves more than 40 entities providing categorical and often fragmented technical assistance. A new national technical assistance system will aid in: implementing school reform programs in a manner that improves teaching and learning for all students; coordinating reform programs with other Federal, State, and local education plans and activities, so that all students, particularly students at risk of educational failure, are provided opportunities to meet challenging State content standards and challenging State student performance standards; and adopting, adapting, and implementing promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning.

Eligible Applicants: (1) For regions (I-V, VIII, XI, XII, XIV and XV), public or private nonprofit entities or consortia of these entities are eligible to apply. (2) For regions that serve a significant population of Indian or Alaska Native students (Regions VI, VII, IX, X, and XIII), eligible applicants are consortia of public or private entities that include a tribally controlled community college or other Indian organization.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: August 4, 1995.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: September 29, 1995.

Applications Available: June 21, 1995.
Available Funds: The amount available for the first year is \$55 million. Since amounts for succeeding years depend on appropriations by Congress, budget estimates should assume level funding for 5 years.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$2.5 million–\$4.5 million per year.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$3.67 million.

Estimated Number of Awards: 15 Cooperative Agreements (see Definitions section).

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

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Applicable Regulations: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86.

Definitions

(a) "Grant" means an award of financial assistance in the form of money, or property in lieu of money, made by the Federal Government to an eligible recipient. The term includes a cooperative agreement except where otherwise provided by statute or regulation (see § 74.3 or § 80.3 of EDGAR).

(b) "Cooperative agreement" means a type of grant awarded by the Department when it anticipates having substantial involvement with the recipient during the performance of a funded project.

Selection Criteria

The Secretary will use the following criteria to evaluate applications for this competition. The maximum total score is 100. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses with the criterion.

1. *Meeting the purposes of the authorizing statute* (30 Points). The Secretary reviews each application to determine how well the project will meet the purposes of Title XIII of the ESEA, including consideration of—

(a) The objectives of the proposed Center;

(b) How the objectives of the proposed Center further the purposes of Title XIII of the ESEA.

Under section 13002 of ESEA, the purpose of Title XIII is to create a national technical assistance and dissemination system to make available to States, local educational agencies, tribes, schools, and other recipients of funds under ESEA technical assistance in—

(1) Administering and implementing programs under the ESEA;

(2) Implementing school reform programs in a manner that improves teaching and learning for all students;

(3) Coordinating reform programs with other Federal, State, and local education plans and activities, so that all students, particularly students at risk of educational failure, are provided opportunities to meet challenging State content standards and challenging State student performance standards; and

(4) Adopting, adapting, and implementing promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning.

Under section 13101, the specific purpose of Part A—Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers is to establish a networked system of 15 comprehensive regional assistance centers to provide comprehensive training and technical assistance, related to administration and implementation of programs under ESEA, to States, local educational agencies, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of ESEA funds.

Section 13001 of ESEA further specifies that technical assistance efforts under Title XIII are intended to—

(1) Help schools and school systems focus on improving opportunities for all children to meet challenging State content standards and challenging State student performance standards, as those schools and systems implement programs under ESEA;

(2) Help States, LEAs, tribes, participating colleges and universities, and schools integrate Federal, State, and local education programs in ways that contribute to improving schools and entire school systems; and

(3) Coordinate technical assistance in support of ESEA programs with the Department's regional offices, the regional educational laboratories, the State Literacy Resource Centers, vocational resource centers, and other technical assistance efforts supported by the Department.

2. *Extent of Need for the Center* (20 Points). The Secretary reviews each application to determine the extent to which the project meets specific needs recognized in Title XIII of ESEA, including consideration of—

(a) The needs addressed by the proposed Center;

(b) How the applicant identified those needs;

(c) How those needs will be met by the proposed Center;

(d) The benefits to be gained by meeting those needs.

Section 13001 of ESEA enumerates several needs for technical assistance, including—

(1) The need of States, LEAs, tribes, and schools serving students with special needs, such as students with limited-English proficiency and students with disabilities, for comprehensive technical assistance in order to use funds under ESEA to provide those students with opportunities to learn to challenging State content standards and challenging

State student performance standards; and

(2) The need of States, LEAs, schools, and tribes for help in integrating into a coherent strategy for improving teaching and learning the various programs under ESEA with State and local programs and other education reform efforts;

Section 13101 further refers to—

(1) The special needs of students living in urban and rural areas;

(2) The special needs of States and Outlying Areas in geographic isolation; and

(3) The need in regions serving significant populations of Indians or Alaska Natives for assistance in the development and implementation of instructional strategies, methods, and materials that address the specific cultural and other needs of Indian or Alaska Native students.

3. *Plan of Operation* (30 Points). The Secretary reviews each application to determine the quality of the plan of operation for the Center, including—

(a) The quality of the design of the Center;

(b) The extent to which the plan of management is effective and ensures proper and efficient administration of the Center;

(c) How well the objectives of the Center relate to the purposes of Title XIII of ESEA and to the identified needs of the region;

(d) The quality of the applicant plan to use its resources and personnel to achieve each objective; and

(e) How the applicant will ensure that Center participants who are otherwise eligible to participate are selected without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or handicapping condition.

Section 13102 specifies that each Center will be required to—

(1) Coordinate services, work cooperatively, and regularly share information with the Regional Educational Laboratories, the Eisenhower Regional Consortia, research and development centers, State literacy centers authorized under the National Literacy Act of 1991, and other entities engaged in research, development, dissemination, and technical assistance activities that are supported by the Department as part of a Federal technical assistance system, to provide a broad range of support services to schools in the region while minimizing the duplication of those services;

(2) Consult with representatives of SEAs, LEAs, and populations served through the ESEA;

(3) Provide services to States, LEAs, tribes, and schools, in coordination with the National Diffusion Network State Facilitators activities under section 13201, in order to provide the support and assistance diffusion agents need to carry out their mission effectively; and

(4) Provide professional development services to SEAs, LEAs, and the National Diffusion Network State Facilitators to increase the capacity of those entities to provide high-quality technical assistance in support of ESEA programs.

Section 13102 of ESEA specifies that each Center must provide support, training, and assistance to SEAs, tribal divisions of education, LEAs, schools, and other ESEA grant recipients, in—

(1) Improving the quality of instruction, curricula, assessments, and other aspects of school reform, supported with funds under Title I of ESEA;

(2) Implementing effective schoolwide programs under Section 1114 of ESEA;

(3) Meeting the needs of children served under ESEA, including children in high-poverty areas, migratory children, immigrant children, children with limited-English proficiency, neglected or delinquent children, homeless children and youth, Indian children, children with disabilities, and, where applicable, Alaska Native children and Native Hawaiian children;

(4) Implementing high-quality professional development activities for teachers, and where appropriate, administrators, pupil services personnel, and other staff;

(5) Improving the quality of bilingual education, including programs that emphasize English and native language proficiency and promote multicultural understanding;

(6) Creating safe and drug-free environments, especially in areas experiencing high levels of drug use and violence in the community and school;

(7) Implementing educational applications of technology;

(8) Coordinating services and programs to meet the needs of students so that students can fully participate in the educational program of the school;

(9) Expanding the involvement and participation of parents in the education of their children;

(10) Reforming schools, school systems, and the governance and management of schools;

(11) Evaluating programs;

(12) Meeting the special needs of students living in urban and rural areas and the special needs of LEAs serving urban and rural areas;

(13) Integrating and coordinating programs under ESEA with each other,

as well as with other Federal, State, and local programs and reforms; and

(14) Giving priority to servicing schoolwide programs under section 1114 of IASA and LEAs and Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools with the highest percentages or numbers of children in poverty.

4. *Quality of Key Personnel* (7 Points). The Secretary reviews each application to determine the quality of key personnel the applicant plans to use for the proposed Center, including—

(a) The qualifications of the project director (if one is to be used);

(b) The qualifications of each of the other key personnel to be used for the Center;

(c) The time that each person referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) will commit to the Center; and

(d) How the applicant, as part of its nondiscriminatory employment practices, will ensure that its personnel are selected for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or handicapping condition.

To determine personnel qualifications under paragraphs (a) and (b) the Secretary considers—

(1) Experience and training in fields related to the objectives of the Center; and

(2) Any other qualifications that pertain to the quality of the Center.

5. *Budget and Cost Effectiveness* (5 Points). The Secretary reviews each applicant to determine the extent to which—

(a) The budget is adequate to support the proposed Center;

(b) Costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives of the proposed Center.

Section 13102 of ESEA specifies that each Center must provide technical assistance using the highest quality and most cost-effective strategies possible.

6. *Evaluation Plan* (5 Points). The Secretary reviews each application to determine the quality of the evaluation plan for the Center, including the extent to which the applicant's methods of evaluation—

(a) Are appropriate to the project; and

(b) To the extent possible, are objective and produce data that are quantifiable.

(Cross-reference: See 34 CFR 75.590 Evaluation by the Grantee.)

7. *Adequacy of Resources* (3 Points). The Secretary reviews each application to determine the adequacy of the resources that the applicant plans to devote to the Center, including facilities, equipment, and supplies.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Centers will assist client organizations in furthering their systemic reform and

school restructuring efforts to improve educational services to students under the ESEA. The client organizations for these centers are: States, local educational agencies, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other recipients of funds under the ESEA.

The Department will enter into agreements with the centers for services that provide for cooperative working relationships with each other, with client organizations and with the Department. There will be a transition period of approximately six months in which existing technical assistance centers funded under previous authorities in ESEA will continue to offer services. It is expected that the new centers will be fully operational within six months of the funding date. During this six-month period, existing centers will be available to help the new centers identify needs, incorporate operational plans, and provide other services that will aid the transition for the new centers to offer a full complement of services by March 31, 1996. Activities to foster a smooth transition may include joint meetings, briefings, information sharing, and any other activities that will improve the ability of the newly funded centers to serve the recipients of funds under ESEA.

In accordance with section 13101(a)(2) of the ESEA, the Secretary has established the following regions for the comprehensive centers:

- *Region I*—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.
- *Region II*—New York.
- *Region III*—Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio and Pennsylvania.
- *Region IV*—Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

- *Region V*—Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi.
- *Region VI*—Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.
- *Region VII*—Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma.
- *Region VIII*—Texas.
- *Region IX*—Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah.
- *Region X*—Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.
- *Region XI*—Northern California (all counties not included in Region XII).
- *Region XII*—Southern California (counties: Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, Imperial, Mono, and Inyo).
- *Region XIII*—Alaska.
- *Region XIV*—Florida, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands.
- *Region XV*—Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

In accordance with section 13101(b)(1), the Secretary ensures that each comprehensive regional assistance center that serves a region with a significant population of Indian or Alaska Native students will be awarded to a consortium that includes a tribally controlled community college or other Indian organization. Regions VI, VII, IX, X and XIII have a significant population of Indian or Alaska Natives.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS: Each application must demonstrate the following:

- (a) How the proposed Center will provide expertise and services in the areas described in section 13102 of the ESEA.
- (b) How the proposed Center will work with the National Diffusion Network to conduct outreach to

schoolwide programs under Title I, section 1114 of the ESEA, and LEAs and BIA-funded schools with highest percentages or numbers of children in poverty.

(c) Support from States, LEAs, and tribes in the area to be served.

(d) How the proposed Center will ensure a fair distribution of services to urban and rural areas.

FOR APPLICATIONS PACKAGES OR INFORMATION CONTACT: Arthur Cole, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW., Portals Room 4500, Washington, D.C., 20202-6140. Telephone (202) 358-0324. Internet comp—centers@ed.gov.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of 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. 8621-8625.

Dated: May 9, 1995.

Thomas W. Payzant,

Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education.

Eugene E. Garcia,

Director, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs.

[FR Doc. 95-14918 Filed 6-16-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P