DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

[Docket Number: 950124024–6045–03; CFDA: 11.552]

RIN 0660–AA04

Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program

AGENCY: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of solicitation of grant applications.

SUMMARY: Subject to the availability of fiscal year 1996 funds, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) issues this Notice describing the conditions under which applications will be accepted under the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP) and how NTIA will determine which applications it will fund. TIIAP assists eligible organizations by promoting the widespread use of advanced telecommunications and information technologies in the public and non-profit sectors. By providing matching grants for Demonstration, Access, and Planning projects, this program will help develop a nationwide, interactive, multimedia information infrastructure that is accessible to all citizens, in rural as well as urban areas.

DATES: Complete applications for the fiscal year 1996 TIIAP grant program must be mailed or hand-carried to the address indicated below and received by NTIA by 5 P.M. EST, April 4, 1996. Applications received after that time and date will not be accepted. Applications will not be accepted via facsimile machine transmission or e-mail. NTIA anticipates that it will take between 4 and 6 months to process applications and make final funding determinations.

ADDRESSES: Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW., HCHB, Room 4090, Washington, DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Stephen J. Downs, Acting Director of the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program, Telephone: 202/482–2048. Fax: 202/501–5136. E-mail: tiiap@ntia.doc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Program Purposes

NTIA announces the third annual round of a competitive matching grant* program, TIIAP. TIIAP was created to promote the development and widespread availability of advanced telecommunications and information technologies to serve the public interest.

To accomplish this objective, TIIAP will provide matching grants to state and local governments, non-profit health care and public health providers, school districts, libraries, colleges, universities, public safety providers, non-profit community-based organizations, and other non-profit entities, for projects that will improve the quality of, and the public's access to, education and lifelong learning; reduce the cost, improve the quality, and/or increase the accessibility of health care and public health services; promote responsive public services; and foster communication and resource-sharing within communities, both rural and urban.

Authority

The Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1994, P.L. No. 103–317, 108 Stat. 1724, 1747 (1994) and P.L. No. 104–99 "Balanced Budget Downpayment Act, I."

Funding Availability

NTIA issues this Notice subject to the appropriations made available under the continuing resolution (P.L. No. 104–99). NTIA anticipates making grant awards provided that funding for TIIAP is continued beyond March 15, 1996, the expiration date of the current continuing resolution. This continuing resolution includes $21.5 million for TIIAP. Issuance of grants, however, is subject to the future availability of FY 1996 funds. Further notice will be made in the Federal Register of the final status of funding for this program at the appropriate time.

Based on past experience, NTIA expects that the level of competition will be extremely strong. In fiscal year 1995, NTIA received more than 1,800 applications, collectively requesting more than $680 million in grant funds. From these 1,800 applications, the Department of Commerce announced 117 TIIAP awards totaling $35.7 million in Federal funds.

*Terms marked with an asterisk (*) are defined at the end of this Notice.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Organizations. All state and local governments, all colleges and universities, and all non-profit entities are eligible to apply. However, individuals and for-profit organizations are not eligible.

Matching Funds Requirements. Grant recipients under this program will be required to provide matching funds toward the total project cost. A project will not be considered eligible for funding unless the applicant documents the capacity to supply matching funds. Matching funds may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. Grant funds under this program will be released in direct proportion to local matching funds raised and/or documented. NTIA will supply up to 50% of the total project cost, unless extraordinary circumstances warrant a grant of up to 75%. Federal funds (such as grants) generally may not be used as matching monies, except as provided by Federal statute. For information about whether particular Federal funds may be used as matching funds, the applicant should contact the Federal agency that administers the funds in question.

Scope of Proposed Project. Funded projects must fall into the program categories and priorities described in this Notice. Projects must involve the delivery of useful, practical services in real-world environments within the grant award period. In fiscal year 1996, TIIAP will not fund the following kinds of projects:

One-Way Networks. TIIAP will not support the construction or augmentation of one-way networks; all services and networks proposed under the program must be interactive.*

Content Development* Projects. TIIAP will not support projects whose primary focus is to develop or produce information content, rather than to apply information infrastructure* to practical problems. For example, TIIAP will not consider projects whose primary purpose is the creation of databases or other information resources by converting paper-based information. Similarly, TIIAP will not consider projects that create new information resources, such as World Wide Web sites, unless these projects also include specific measures to ensure access to and use of those resources. Examples of such measures include, but are not limited to, placement of public access workstations and provision of training programs.

Hardware or Software Development Projects. While some hardware or software development may be required

to integrate existing systems or components, it may not be a major emphasis of any TIIAP project.

Single-Organization Projects. TIIAP will not support projects whose primary emphasis is on the internal communications needs of a single organization. Projects must include appropriate partnerships, with plans for inter-organizational communications among the partners.

Replacement or Upgrade of Existing Facilities. TIIAP will not support any projects whose primary emphasis is the upgrade or replacement of existing facilities.

Policy on Sectarian Activities. Applicants are advised that on December 22, 1995, NTIA issued a notice in the Federal Register on its policy with regard to sectarian activities. Under NTIA's prior policy, NTIA funds could not be used for any sectarian purposes. While religious activities cannot be the essential thrust of a grant, an application will not be ineligible where sectarian activities are only incidental or attenuated to the overall project purpose for which funding is requested. Applicants for whom this policy may be relevant should read the policy that was published at 60 FR 66491, Dec. 22, 1995.

Completeness of Application. TIIAP will initially review all proposals to determine whether all required elements are present and clearly identifiable. The required elements are listed and described in the Guidelines for Preparing Applications—Fiscal Year 1996 (Guidelines). Each of the required elements must be present and clearly identified for the proposal to be reviewed. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

Past Performance. Unsatisfactory performance of an applicant under prior Federal financial assistance awards may result in that applicant's proposal not being considered for funding.

Delinquent Federal Debts. No award of Federal funds shall be made to an applicant who has an outstanding delinquent Federal debt until:

1. The delinquent account is paid in full;

2. A negotiated repayment schedule is established and at least one payment is received; or

3. Other arrangements satisfactory to the Department of Commerce are made.

Program Categories

Introduction. The fiscal year 1996 TIIAP grant program is divided into three categories: Demonstration projects, Access projects, and Planning projects. NTIA will award approximately 65% of

the funds in this program to support Demonstration projects, approximately 30% of the funds to support Access projects, and approximately 5% of the funds to support Planning projects, unless the quality and/or number of submissions in any of these categories does not, in NTIA's judgment, merit the proposed allocation of funds. Proposals will be evaluated and selected according to specific criteria (see the "Evaluation Criteria" section in this Notice).

Demonstration Projects. The primary goal of Demonstration projects is to demonstrate new, high-impact, useful applications of information infrastructure which hold significant potential for replication in other communities. The projects must deploy, use, and evaluate innovative applications of information infrastructure to address a particular problem or set of problems in real-world environments. Projects selected in this category will have a high potential to serve as models* for other communities and to demonstrate results within the grant period.

Demonstration projects must focus on the application of information technology to specific needs or problems, rather than on the technology itself. Every application for a Demonstration project must clearly describe how using information infrastructure is expected to result in measurably improved outcomes, such as lowering the cost of health care or improving student performance.

Successful Demonstration applicants must complete their projects within 12–24 months.

Information on Demonstration projects previously funded by TIIAP can be retrieved electronically (see the "Electronic Information" sub-section in this Notice) or by contacting the TIIAP office. Applicants are reminded that evaluation criteria for Demonstration projects change from year to year.

Note: No award in the Demonstration projects category will exceed $750,000.

Access Projects. The primary goal of Access projects is to provide underserved* communities, populations, or geographic areas with greater access to the benefits of the National Information Infrastructure (NII).* Access projects emphasize serving groups of people who have not been adequately served in the past and increasing their access to services and information. Access projects place greater emphasis on reducing disparities than on innovation. Hence, an Access project may build on or emulate a successful model which has gained widespread acceptance in the field.

As is the case with Demonstration projects, the focus of Access projects is on the application of technology to specific needs or problems, rather than on technology itself. Every Access application must clearly describe how using information infrastructure is expected to result in measurably improved outcomes, such as lowering the cost of health care or improving student performance.

Successful Access applicants must complete their projects within 12–18 months.

Examples of Access projects that have received funding in the past are the creation of wide-area networks within school systems or districts and the provision of Internet access to an isolated group or population. Information on current Access projects can be retrieved electronically (see the "Electronic Information" sub-section in this Notice) or by contacting the TIIAP office. Applicants are reminded that evaluation criteria for Access projects change from year to year.

Note: No award in the Access projects category will exceed $250,000.

Planning Projects. The primary goal of Planning projects is to enable organizations, or groups of organizations, to develop strategies for the enhanced application of information infrastructure. Planning projects provide opportunities to bring coalitions together to form firm foundations on which to implement information infrastructure equitably, to examine the opportunities that investment in information infrastructure creates, to aggregate demand for telecommunications services among multiple organizations, and to understand the needs of potential end users. Planning projects are encouraged for rural or underserved populations where an enhanced telecommunications infrastructure could provide greater economic opportunity.

The end result of a Planning project should be a credible plan for deploying and using information infrastructure and sufficient support from the community to implement the plan. Proposals in this category must include clear descriptions of (1) the planning process or methodology to be employed and (2) the expected outcomes of the process.

Successful Planning applicants must complete their projects within 9–12 months.

One example of a Planning project that has received funding in the past is the design, testing, and documentation of a scalable planning model for a city-wide advanced information

infrastructure. Another example of a funded Planning project is the development of a statewide strategic plan for networking state agencies, educational organizations, industry, health care, and other public service providers so that opportunities for equitably providing services to a state's widely dispersed population can be shared. Information on current Planning projects can be retrieved electronically (see the ''Electronic Information'' subsection in this Notice) or by contacting the TIIAP office. Applicants are reminded that evaluation criteria for Planning projects change from year to year.

Note: No award in the Planning projects category will exceed $100,000.

Project Funding Priorities

In fiscal year 1996, TIIAP will support projects in four broad application groups*: Community-wide Networking, Health, Lifelong Learning, and Public Services. In all of these groups, TIIAP is committed to supporting projects that will use the NII to promote services to, and/or to encourage greater participation in the NII by, traditionally underserved populations.

Community-wide Networking. These are multi-purpose projects that allow members of a community to share information resources and improve communication. Community-wide networking projects must link services or provide information resources across multiple application groups or subgroups. Examples include, but would not be limited to, connecting local schools with public libraries, connecting local businesses with job retraining programs, and/or connecting citizens to a variety of social service programs or information resources.

Health. Projects involving the use of telecommunications in the delivery of health and mental health services, public health, home health care, provision of health information to the public, or the education and training of health professionals. Examples of projects could include, but would not be limited to: community health information networks for sharing clinical, financial, and administrative information among hospitals, clinics, public health departments, and other organizations; telemedicine systems that extend medical expertise to underserved areas and/or into the home; and networks or information services aimed at disease prevention, health promotion, and health education.

Lifelong Learning. Projects in this group are divided into three subgroups.

Pre-School and K–12 Education. Projects that bring educational materials

or instruction to pre-school and K–12 students or that permit those students to participate in educational activities via telecommunications. Related activities such as professional development of pre-school and K–12 teachers and administrators also fall within this subgroup, as do projects that intend to improve the administration of preschool and K–12 education.

Higher Education. Projects involving the delivery of college-level courses (including graduate courses); provision of continuing or adult education; or activities such as professional development for community college or university professors or administrators.

Library and Lifelong Learning Services. Projects that bring information, education, and enrichment services on-line through public libraries, museums, cultural centers, literacy organizations, or other non-profit organizations. This sub-group also includes teaching adults basic literacy and job skills.

Public Services. Projects in this group are divided into two subgroups.

Human Services. Projects aimed at improving the delivery of services such as public and subsidized housing, food assistance, child welfare, day care, substance abuse prevention and counseling, job counseling and training, poverty relief, legal assistance, or shelter providing protection from domestic violence. Examples include, but would not be limited to, networks that facilitate coordination and collaboration among public and/or community-based organizations; projects that improve agency responsiveness by providing direct electronic access to information on available services; and projects that employ information technology creatively to promote self-sufficiency among individuals and families.

Public Safety. Projects aimed at increasing the effectiveness of police and fire departments or other entities involved in providing public safety services. Examples may include those that link public safety agencies located in a single geographic area to increase efficiency and share resources, or those that provide information in a timely manner to ''first-response officials,'' such as police officers, emergency medical technicians, and firefighters. Other projects might link agencies with information resources, or provide community outreach services, regarding safety issues and procedures.

TIIAP will also support projects that promote the accessibility and usability of the NII for persons with disabilities. Such projects are expected to fit into one of the four broad application groups described above.

The Guidelines booklet provides more information on selecting a group and/or subgroup for your application.

Evaluation Criteria

Demonstration projects will be evaluated against nine criteria. While each criterion is weighted equally, the following three criteria are qualifying criteria. Demonstration project applicants must fully meet each qualifying criterion. If an application is deemed inadequate on any one of these, it will be not be further evaluated.

1. Problem Definition
2. Technical Approach
3. Ability to Serve as a Model

Projects judged to be qualified will then be fully evaluated on all nine criteria, which include the following additional six criteria.

4. Applicant Qualifications
5. Partnerships and Community Support
6. Support for End Users
7. Evaluation and Dissemination
8. Reducing Disparities in Access to and Use of the NII
9. Budget

Access projects will also be evaluated against nine criteria. While each criterion is weighted equally, the following two criteria are qualifying criteria. Access project applicants must fully meet both qualifying criteria. If an application is deemed inadequate on either of them, it will not be further evaluated.

1. Problem Definition
2. Reducing Disparities in Access to and Use of the NII

Projects judged to be qualified will then be fully evaluated on all nine criteria, which include the following additional seven criteria.

3. Technical Approach
4. Applicant Qualifications
5. Partnerships and Community Support
6. Support for End Users
7. Evaluation and Dissemination
8. Sustainability
9. Budget

Planning projects will be evaluated against seven criteria. While each criterion is weighted equally, the following two criteria are qualifying criteria. Planning project applicants must fully meet both qualifying criteria. If an application is deemed inadequate on either of them, it will not be further evaluated.

1. Problem Definition
2. Partnerships and Community Support

Projects judged to be qualified will then be fully evaluated on all seven criteria, which include the following additional five criteria.

3. Reducing Disparities in Access to and Use of the NII

4. Applicant Qualifications
5. Support for End Users
6. Evaluation and Dissemination
7. Budget

Explanations of Evaluation Criteria

1. Problem Definition. Applicants must clearly link the proposed project to a specific problem or problems in one or more of the application groups or sub-groups described in the ''Project Funding Priorities'' section in this Notice.

The need(s) or problem(s) to be addressed should be thoroughly documented, including end-user demographics and target audiences to be served. Applicants must explain how the use of advanced telecommunications and information technology will contribute to the solution of the problem(s) and identify the clear and measurable results expected as an outcome of the project. The scope of the project must meet TIIAP eligibility criteria (see the ''Eligibility'' section in this Notice).

For example, health care providers in rural areas may be required to spend a disproportionate amount of time in travel to visit homebound patients, when the time could be better spent interacting with patients or upgrading their skills. Using an interactive video system to meet with patients and to take continuing medical education courses could reduce the travel time burden, improving the efficiency of health care delivery and making it possible for nurses to develop new skills cost-effectively.

2. Technical Approach. TIIAP defines technical quality as the application of appropriate information technology consistent with the vision of a nationwide, seamless, interactive network of networks, not as innovation for its own sake. Therefore, a project proposed to TIIAP must demonstrate a knowledge of, and a realistic approach to, issues of interoperability* and scalability.* It is essential that the proposal be specific about how the proposed system would work, how the proposed system would operate with other systems, and how the system would be maintained and/or upgraded as needed.

NTIA expects applicants to consider carefully safeguards to protect the privacy of the end users and beneficiaries* of the project. It is essential that the proposal address the privacy and confidentiality of user data if this is relevant. For example, an applicant proposing a project dealing with individually identifiable information (student grades, medical records, etc.) will be required to describe the mechanism(s) to be used for protecting the confidentiality of such information and the privacy of the individuals involved.

3. Applicant Qualifications. Applicants must present evidence of qualifications and experience essential to the successful completion of the project. The applicant should clearly describe the experience of its key project personnel in addressing information- and technology-related issues. The applicant should also describe the qualifications of project partners.

4. Partnerships and Community Support. Proposals must provide evidence of public and/or private sector support and involvement. The extent to which applicants have included diverse sectors of the community in project design and development will be considered an integral part of the proposal. Applicants are also expected to coordinate with other entities in their states. A proposal should present a clear discussion of who the partners will be, what their respective roles in the project will be, what benefits each expects to receive, and what each partner will contribute to the project in the form of financial support, personnel, or other resources. In addition, applicants must provide documentation of the partners' commitment to the project, including letters of commitment from the partners to the applicant describing their roles and contributions.

5. Support for End Users. Projects supported by TIIAP must demonstrate a high degree of attention to the needs, skills, working conditions, and living environments of the targeted end users. Applicants must clearly define the end users, including demographic or other statistical information. Plans for training end users and/or upgrading their skills must be clearly delineated. Applicants should explain clearly how the project will provide end users with easily accessible, useful information, and how end users will benefit from the services offered. Proposals should include evidence of a significant degree of end-user involvement in the design and planning of projects.

6. Evaluation and Dissemination. Every project proposed to TIIAP must present a clearly defined evaluation plan with specific criteria for measuring the effectiveness of the project in reaching its intended audience and in improving outcomes. The applicant must identify specific evaluation instruments to be employed for this purpose. The proposed budget should include sufficient funds to perform a thorough and useful evaluation. In conjunction with the evaluation strategy, TIIAP will review the applicant's plan for disseminating the knowledge gained as a result of implementing the project. Applicants should demonstrate a willingness to share information about their projects with interested parties, to host site visits, and to participate in technology demonstrations.

7. Reducing Disparities in Access to and Use of the NII. The applicant must identify existing disparities, supported by specific quantitative data, and must clearly describe a plan to redress these disparities. The applicant must be sensitive to and take into consideration the local environment of a traditionally underserved population in developing a targeted strategy to overcoming existing barriers. For example, unique sharing arrangements or innovative strategies may be proposed to redress disparities in access. Additionally, the applicant must clearly define the project's beneficiaries; in so doing, the applicant should include demographic and other data as appropriate.

8. Budget. The applicant must fully explain each budget item, including both the Federal and the non-Federal shares of the total project cost, in the manner outlined in the Guidelines. Reviewers will closely examine the degree to which the proposed budget is reasonable in relation to the scope of the project. The budget must be reasonable for the tasks proposed, and the relationship of items in the budget to the project narrative must be clearly drawn.

9. Ability to Serve as a Model. (Applicable only to Demonstration projects.) Demonstration projects must show a strong potential to serve as a model for others to follow. These projects should be innovative, not necessarily in terms of the technology to be used, but in the application of technology in a particular setting, to serve a particular population, or to solve a particular problem. Demonstration applicants must explain the degree to which the projects can be replicated, or can serve as catalysts for activities, in other settings or for other populations. Because of this requirement that a Demonstration project show the potential for applicability in other contexts, reviewers will also examine the economic viability of the proposed model. Demonstration applicants must also explain how the impact of their projects can extend beyond the scope of the original activity funded by TIIAP. For example, the project's innovative application of a particular technology may stimulate the creation of a market for products and services based on that technology. In addition, the program

will examine whether a subsequent evaluation of the project can contribute significantly to our understanding of how the NII can be used to improve the delivery of a wide range of social services and promote economic development.

10. Sustainability. (Applicable only to Access projects.) The applicant must clearly describe a credible plan for sustaining the project beyond the period of Federal funding. Such a plan should include discussion of anticipated ongoing expenses and potential sources or mechanisms for securing needed funds. In evaluating the plan, reviewers will consider the economic circumstances of the community or communities to be served by the proposed project.

Selection Process

NTIA will publish a notice in the Federal Register listing all applications received by TIIAP. Listing an application in such a notice merely acknowledges receipt of an application that will compete for funding with other applications. Publication does not preclude subsequent return or disapproval of the application, nor does it ensure that the application will be funded.

Each eligible application will first be reviewed by a panel of outside readers, who have demonstrated expertise in both the programmatic and technological aspects of the application. The review panels will evaluate applications according to the evaluation criteria provided in this Notice and make non-binding recommendations to the program staff. Working with the staff, the TIIAP Director prepares a slate of recommended grant awards for the Selection Official, who is the NTIA Administrator.

In making recommendations, the Director will consider the following selection factors:

1. The evaluations of the outside reviewers;

2. The geographic distribution of the proposed grant awards;

3. The variety of technologies employed by the proposed grant awards;

4. The extent to which the proposed grant awards represent a reasonable distribution of funds across application groups and sub-groups;

5. The promotion of access to and use of the information infrastructure for underserved groups;

6. Avoidance of redundancy and conflicts with the initiatives of other Federal agencies; and

7. The availability of funds.

The NTIA Administrator selects the applications to be negotiated for possible grant award taking into consideration the Director's recommendations and the degree to which the slate of applications, taken as a whole, satisfies the program's stated purposes as set forth in the section entitled ''Program Purposes.'' After applications have been selected in this manner, negotiations will take place between TIIAP staff and the applicant. These negotiations are intended to resolve any differences that exist between the applicant's original request and what TIIAP proposes to fund. Not all applicants who are contacted for negotiation will necessarily receive a TIIAP award. Final selections made by the Administrator will be based upon the Director's recommendations and the degree to which the slate of applications, taken as a whole, satisfies the program's stated purposes upon the conclusion of negotiations.

Eligible Costs

Eligible Costs. Allowable costs incurred under approved projects shall be determined in accordance with applicable Federal cost principles, i.e., OMB Circular A–21, A–87, A–122, or Appendix E of 45 CFR Part 74. If included in the approved project budget, TIIAP will allow costs for personnel, fringe benefits, computer hardware and software, other end-user equipment, telecommunication services and related equipment, consultants and other contractual services, travel, rental of office equipment, furniture and space, supplies, etc. that are reasonable and directly related to the project. Construction costs are not eligible.

Note that costs that are ineligible for TIIAP support may not be included as part of the applicant's matching fund contribution.

Indirect Costs. The total dollar amount of the indirect costs proposed in an application under this program must not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by a cognizant Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award or 100 percent of the total proposed direct costs dollar amount in the application, whichever is less.

Award Period

Successful applicants for Demonstration grants will have between 12 and 24 months to complete their projects. Successful applicants for Access grants will have between 12 and 18 months to complete their projects. Successful applicants for Planning grants will have between 9 and 12 months to complete their projects. The completion time will vary depending on the complexity of the project.

Other Information

Electronic Information. Information about NTIA and TIIAP, including this document and the Guidelines, can be retrieved electronically via the Internet through ftp, gopher and the World Wide Web.

To reach the ftp server, ftp to ftp.ntia.doc.gov. Use the login name of 'anonymous' and use your E-mail address as the password. Change to the /pub/grantinfo directory to find TIIAP files.

To reach the gopher server, point your gopher client at gopher.ntia.doc.gov and login as 'gopher'.

To reach the www server, use http:/ /www.ntia.doc.gov/tiiap/tiiap.html to reach the TIIAP Home Page.

TIIAP can also be reached via electronic mail at tiiap@ntia.doc.gov.

Application Forms. Standard Forms 424 (OMB Approval Number 0348–0044), Application for Federal Assistance; 424A (OMB Approval Number 0348–0043), Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs; and 424B (OMB Approval Number 0348–0040), Assurances—Non-Construction Programs, (Rev 4–92), and other Department of Commerce forms shall be used in applying for financial assistance. These forms are included in the Guidelines, which can be obtained by contacting NTIA by telephone, fax, or electronic mail, as described in the 'Address' section above. TIIAP requires one original and five copies of the application. Applicants for whom the submission of five copies presents financial hardship may submit one original and two copies of the application. In addition, all applicants are required to submit a copy of their application to their state Single Point of Contact (SPOC) offices, if they have one. (For information on contacting state SPOC offices, refer to page 39 of the Guidelines.)

Because of the high level of public interest in projects supported by TIIAP, the program anticipates receiving requests for copies of applications. Applicants are hereby notified that the applications they submit are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Applicants may identify sensitive information and label it ''confidential'' to assist NTIA in making disclosure determinations.

Type of Funding Instrument. The funding instrument for awards under this program shall be a grant.

Authority and Funding Availability. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Department of Commerce, serves as the President's principal adviser on

telecommunications and information policy. NTIA's functions were codified as part of the Telecommunications Authorization Act of 1992, Pub. L. No. 102–538, 106 Stat. 3533, 47 U.S.C. §§ 901–04 (1993).

Anticipated Funding. NTIA issues this Notice subject to the authority of the continuing resolution (P.L. 104–99). NTIA anticipates making grant awards provided that funding for TIIAP is continued beyond the March 15, 1996, expiration date of the continuing resolution. This continuing resolution includes $21.5 million for TIIAP. Issuance of grants is subject to the availability of FY 1996 funds. Further notice will be made in the Federal Register about the final status of funding for this program at the appropriate time.

Federal Policies and Procedures. Recipients and subrecipients are subject to all applicable Federal laws and Federal and Department of Commerce policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards.

Pre-Award Activities. If an applicant incurs any project costs prior to the project start date negotiated at the time the award is made, it does so solely at its own risk of not being reimbursed by the government. Applicants are hereby notified that, notwithstanding any oral or written assurance that they may have received, there is no obligation on the part of the Department of Commerce or NTIA to cover pre-award costs.

No Obligation For Future Funding. If an application is selected for funding, the Department of Commerce has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of Commerce.

Name Check Review. All non-profit applicants are subject to a name check review process. Name checks are intended to reveal if any key individuals associated with the applicant have been convicted of or are presently facing criminal charges such as fraud, theft, perjury, or other matters that significantly reflect on the applicant's management, honesty, or financial integrity.

Primary Applicant Certifications. All primary applicants must submit a completed Form CD–511, ''Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying,'' and the following explanations are hereby provided:

1. Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension—Prospective participants (as defined at 15 CFR Part 26, Section 105) are subject to 15 CFR Part 26, ''Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension'' and the related section of the certification form prescribed above applies;

2. Drug-Free Workplace—Grantees (as defined at 15 CFR Part 26, Section 605) are subject to 15 CFR Part 26, Subpart F, ''Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants)'' and the related section of the certification form prescribed above applies;

3. Anti-Lobbying—Persons (as defined at 15 CFR Part 28, Section 105) are subject to the lobbying provisions of 31 U.S.C. § 1352, ''Limitation on use of appropriated funds to influence certain Federal contracting and financial transactions,'' and the lobbying section of the certification form prescribed above applies to applications/bids for grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts for more than $100,000, and loans and loan guarantees for more than $150,000, or the single family maximum mortgage limit for affected programs, whichever is greater; and

4. Anti-Lobbying Disclosure—Any applicant that has paid or will pay for lobbying in connection with a covered Federal action, such as the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, or the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement using any funds must submit an SF–LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities'' (OMB Control Number 0348–0046), as required under 15 CFR part 28, Appendix B.

Lower Tier Certifications. Recipients shall require applicants/bidders for subgrants, contracts, subcontracts, or other lower tier covered transactions at any tier under the award to submit, if applicable, a completed Form CD–512, ''Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions and Lobbying'' and disclosure form SF–LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.'' Form CD–512 is intended for the use of recipients and should not be transmitted to DOC. SF–LLL submitted by any tier recipient or subrecipient should be submitted to DOC in accordance with the instructions contained in the award document.

False Statements. A false statement on an application is grounds for denial or termination of funds and grounds for possible punishment by a fine or imprisonment as provided in 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

Intergovernmental Review. Applications under this program are subject to Executive Order 12372, ''Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.'' It has been determined that this notice is a not a significant rule under Executive Order 12866.

Definitions

Application group or sub-group. The specific sector whose problems or issues a proposed project addresses. The application groups and sub-groups are described in the section on ''Project Funding Priorities'' in this Notice.

Content development. The creation of information resources, such as databases or World Wide Web sites, for the purpose of dissemination through one or more on-line services.

End user. A person who customarily employs or seeks access to, rather than provides, information infrastructure. An end user may be a consumer of information (e.g., a member of the public employing a touch-screen public access terminal); may be involved in an interactive communication with other end users; or may use information infrastructure to provide services to the public.

Grant. Financial assistance award authorized by law to support autonomous projects or activities of state or local governments, or non-profit groups. This term does not include direct United States government cash assistance to an individual, a subsidy, a loan, a loan guarantee, or insurance.

Information infrastructure. The telecommunication networks, computers, other end-user devices, software, standards, and skills that collectively enable people to connect to each other and to a vast array of services and information resources.

Interactivity. The capacity of a communications system to allow end users to communicate directly with other users, either in real time (as in a video teleconference) or on a store-and-forward basis (as with electronic mail), or to seek and gain access to information on an on-demand basis, as opposed to a broadcast basis.

Interoperability. The condition achieved among information and communication systems when information (i.e., data, voice, image, audio, or video) can be easily and cost-effectively shared across acquisition, transmission, and presentation technologies, equipment, and services.

Model. A project that employs a novel, innovative, and replicable approach. The ultimate impact of a model project should extend far beyond

the community or communities to be served by the project itself.

National Information Infrastructure (NII). A Federal policy initiative to facilitate and accelerate the development and utilization of the nation's information infrastructure. The Administration envisions the NII as a seamless web of communications networks, computers, databases, and consumer electronics that will put vast amounts of information at users' fingertips. For more information on various aspects of the NII initiative, see The National Information Infrastructure: Agenda for Action, 58 Fed. Reg. 49,025 (September 21, 1993).

Project beneficiary. Individual or organization deriving benefits from a project's outcome(s). A project beneficiary may also, but not necessarily, be a project end user.

Scalability. The ability of a system to accommodate a significant growth in the size of the system (i.e., services provided, end users served) without the need for substantial redesign. A scalable approach that is demonstrated on a small scale can also be applied on a larger scale.

Underserved. End users who are subject to barriers that limit or prevent their access to either social services or information infrastructure. In terms of information infrastructure, these barriers may be geographic, economic, physical, linguistic, or cultural. For example, a rural community may be physically isolated from circuits adequate to allow for data access; inner city neighborhoods may contain large numbers of potential end users for whom ownership of computer hardware is unlikely; individuals with disabilities may have the need for different types of interfaces when manipulating hardware and software.

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