

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No. 84.303A]

Technology Innovation Challenge Grants; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997

Purpose of Program: The Technology Innovation Challenge Grants 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 must 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: May 30, 1997.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: July 30, 1997.

Applications Available: March 31, 1997.

Estimated Available Funds: \$18,000,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$500,000 to \$1,500,000 per year.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$900,000 per year.

Estimated Number of Awards: 20.

Project Period: 5 years.

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

Maximum Award: The Secretary does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding \$1,500,000 for one or more 12-month budget periods.

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: It is the policy of the Department of Education not to solicit applications before the publication of a final rule. However, in this case it is essential to solicit applications at this time in order to give applicants sufficient time to prepare applications and subsequently to

provide sufficient time to review applications and select grantees. A notice of proposed selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures was published in the **Federal Register** on February 26, 1997 (62 FR 8687). At this time the Department of Education has received only one nonsubstantive comment in response to that notice. If any substantive changes are made in the final notice, applicants will be given an opportunity to revise or resubmit their applications.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Technology Innovation Challenge Grants 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 1997 competition supports the third round of grants under this program.

As catalysts for change, grants under this program support communities of educators, parents, industry partners, and others who are working to transform their schools into information-age learning centers. The Technology Innovation Challenge Grants support the development and innovative use of technology and new learning content in specific communities. Each effort clearly focuses 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. Technology Innovation Challenge Grant communities can 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 must 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, in the final selection of applications for funding the Secretary may 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.

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 that agency to ensure that students in schools will have meaningful access on a regular basis to those 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.

Note: Section 14503 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 8893), is applicable to the Technology Innovation Challenge Grant Program. Section 14503 requires that an LEA, SEA, or educational service agency receiving financial assistance under this program must provide private 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 Technology Innovation Challenge Grant projects. Each application must 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 has proposed using the following unweighted selection criteria, as described in the notice of proposed selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures for this program that will be published in final in a later issue of the **Federal Register**:

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

(1) Offers a clear vision for the use of technology to help all students learn to challenging standards;

(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 improve teaching and student achievement;

(4) Will ensure continuous professional development for teachers, administrators, and other individuals to further the use of technology in the classroom, library, or learning settings in the community;

(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 among teachers, students, parents, and others, which contribute to State or local education goals for school improvement, and expand markets for high-quality educational technology or content;

(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, 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 4:00 p.m. (Eastern 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.

Note: All applications must be received on or before the deadline date. This requirement takes exception to EDGAR, 34 CFR 75.102. In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553), it is the practice of the Secretary to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed regulations. However, this amendment makes procedural changes only and does not establish new substantive policy. Therefore, under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(A), proposed rulemaking is not required.

FOR APPLICATIONS OR INFORMATION

CONTACT: Telephone 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) for applications. For information contact Technology Innovation Challenge Grants, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-5544. Telephone (202) 208-3882. Individuals may fax requests for applications to: (202) 208-4042. 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 application notices for discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; on the Internet Gopher Server (at gopher://gcs.ed.gov); or on the World Wide Web (at <http://gcs.ed.gov>). 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 24, 1997.

Marshall Smith,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

[FR Doc. 97-7905 Filed 3-27-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P