

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**Office of Elementary and Secondary Education—Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities National Programs—Federal Activities-Effective Alternative Strategies: Grant Competition to Reduce Student Suspensions and Expulsions and Ensure Educational Progress of Students Who Are Suspended or Expelled**

AGENCY: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priority and selection criteria.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces a final priority and selection criteria for Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 under Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities National Programs—Federal Activities—Effective Alternative Strategies: Grant Competition to Reduce Student Suspensions and Expulsions and Ensure Educational Progress of Students Who Are Suspended or Expelled. The Secretary may use this priority and selection criteria for competitions in FY 2001 and later years. The Secretary takes this action to focus Federal financial assistance on an identified national need to reduce student suspensions and expulsions and ensure educational progress of suspended and expelled students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority and selection criteria are effective May 8, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Ann Weinheimer, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW—Room 3E330, Washington, Dc 20202—6123. Telephone: (202) 708—5939. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at (800) 877—8339.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (*e.g.*, Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

Note: This notice of final priority does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition is published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register. The notice inviting applications will specify the date and time by which applications for this competition must be received by the Department. Applications received after that time will not be eligible for funding. Postmarked dates will not be accepted.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Secretary published a notice of

proposed priority and selection criteria for this competition in the Federal Register on February 14, 2000, (Volume 65, Number 30, pages 7420—7421). Except for minor editorial revisions, there are no differences between the notice of proposed priority and selection criteria and this notice of final priority and selection criteria.

Public Comment

In the notice of proposed priority and selection criteria, the Secretary invited comments on the proposed priority and selection criteria. The only substantive comment we received suggested a change the law does not authorize the Secretary to make under the applicable statutory authority.

General

In making awards under this grant program, the Secretary may take into consideration the geographic distribution of the projects in addition to the rank order of applicants.

Contingent upon the availability of funds, the Secretary may make additional awards in Fiscal Year 2001 from the rank-ordered list of nonfunded applications from this competition.

Priority: Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994, the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds under this competition *only* those applications that meet this absolute priority:

Absolute Priority—Enhance, Implement, and Evaluate Strategies to Reduce the Number and Duration of Student Suspensions and Expulsions and Ensure Continued Educational Progress for Students Who Are Suspended or Expelled From School

Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants under this competition are public and private non-profit organizations and individuals.

Selection Criteria: The Secretary uses the following selection criteria to evaluate applications for new grants under this competition. The maximum score for all of these criteria is 100 points. The maximum score for each criterion or factor under that criterion is indicated in parentheses.

(1) Need for Project (10 Points)

In determining the need for the proposed project the following factor is considered: The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the

nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.

(2) Quality of the Project Design (30 Points)

In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the following factors are considered:

(A) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (6 points)

(B) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement. (6 points)

(C) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (6 points)

(D) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority. (6 points)

(E) The extent to which the proposed project will be coordinated with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, State and Federal resources. (6 points)

(3) Quality of Project Services (30 Points)

In determining the quality of the proposed project services, the following factors are considered:

(A) The extent to which the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability. (6 points)

(B) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services. (8 points)

(C) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will lead to improvements in the achievement of students as measured against rigorous academic standards. (8 points)

(D) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate community partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services. (8 points)

(4) Quality of Project Personnel (15 Points)

In determining the quality of project personnel, the following factors are considered:

(A) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been

underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (5 points)

(B) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)

(5) Quality of the Project Evaluation (15 Points)

In determining the quality of the evaluation, the following factors are considered:

(A) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project. (10 points)

(B) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Intergovernmental Review: This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. One of the objectives of the

Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism. The Executive order relies on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

This document provides early notification of our specific plans and actions for this program.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 7131.

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Dated: March 31, 2000.

Michael Cohen,

Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education.

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