DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education—Open Textbooks Pilot Program

AGENCY: Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education (Department) is issuing a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2020 for the Open Textbooks Pilot program conducted under the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 84.116T. This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1894–0006.


ADDRESSES: For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the Federal Register on February 12, 2018 (83 FR 6003) and available at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-02-12/pdf/2018-02558.pdf.


You use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1–800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The Open Textbooks Pilot program supports projects at eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) that create new open textbooks (as defined in this notice) and/or develop materials that support the interoperability for any open textbooks created or adapted that support the development of any open textbooks created or adapted through the project, or adapting open standard protocols and processes that support the interoperability for any digital assets created; (e) include professional development to build capacity of faculty, instructors, and other staff to adapt and use open textbooks; and (f) describe the courses for which open textbooks and ancillary materials are being developed.

Absolute Priority 3—Promoting Student Success.

To meet this priority, an applicant must propose to build upon existing open textbook materials and/or develop new open textbooks for high-enrollment courses or high-enrollment programs in order to achieve the highest level of savings for students.

Additionally, this priority requires the applicant to include plans for: (a) Planning and tracking the use of open textbooks in postsecondary courses across participating members of the
Definitions: The following definitions are from the NFP and apply to this competition for FY 2020 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition.

High-enrollment courses means courses that are required for a degree granting program offered by an eligible IHE that either have total student enrollments within the top third of courses: (a) At the lead institution, if applicable, or at one or more of the consortia partner institutions; (b) in the State; or (c) nationally as compared to other academic or career and technical education courses.

High-enrollment program means a program that yields a postsecondary degree that either has total student enrollments within the top third of programs: (a) At the lead institution, if applicable, or at one or more of the consortia partner institutions; (b) in the State; or (c) nationally as compared to other academic or career and technical education courses.

In-demand industry sector means an industry sector that has a substantial current or potential impact (including through jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) on the State, regional, or local economy, as appropriate, and that contributes to the growth or stability of other supporting businesses, or the growth of other industry sectors.

In-demand occupation means an occupation that currently has or is projected to have a number of positions (including positions that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) in an industry sector so as to have a significant impact on the State, regional, or local economy, as appropriate.

Open textbook means a textbook that is licensed under a worldwide, nonexclusive, royalty-free, perpetual, and irrevocable license to the public to exercise any of the rights under copyright conditioned only on the requirement that attribution be given as directed by the copyright owner. An open textbook may also include a variety of open educational resources or materials used by instructors in the development of a course and those
learning activities necessary for successful completion of a course by students. These include any learning exercises, technology-enabled experiences (e.g., simulations), and adaptive support and assessment tools.

Sector partner means a member of a workforce collaborative, convened by or acting in partnership with a State board or local board, that organizes key stakeholders interconnected by labor markets, technologies, and worker skill needs into a working group that focuses on shared goals and resource needs.

Trade or professional association means a membership organization that inspects employers or practitioners, or leads credentialing programs, in a specific industry or sector.

Workforce stakeholder means an individual or organization with an interest in the employability of others either for self-interest or the interest of other employers.


Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The Office of Management and Budget Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. (c) The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3474. (d) The NFP.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to IHEs only.

Note: Projects must be awarded and operated in a manner consistent with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and the Federal civil rights laws.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: $6,029,425.

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in subsequent years from the list of unfunded applications for this competition.

Estimated Range of Awards: $500,000–$2,000,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: $1,000,000.

Maximum Award: We will not make an award exceeding $2,000,000 for a single budget period of 36 months.

Estimated Number of Awards: 3–12.

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

Project Period: Up to 36 months.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: Eligible applicants are IHEs as defined in section 101 of the HEA (20 U.S.C. 1001), or State higher education agencies that:

   (a) Lead the activities of a consortium that is comprised of at least:
   (i) Three IHEs as defined in section 101 of the HEA;
   (ii) An educational technology or electronic curriculum design expert (which may include such experts that are employed by one or more of the consortium institutions); and
   (iii) An advisory group of at least three employers, workforce organizations, or sector partners; and

   (b) Have demonstrated experience in the development and implementation of open educational resources.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching: This program does not require cost sharing or matching.

3. Subgrantees: Under 34 CFR 75.708(b) and (c) a grantee under this competition may award subgrants—to directly carry out project activities described in its application—to entities listed in the grant application.

IV. Application and Submission Information


2. Submission of Proprietary Information: Given the types of projects that may be proposed in applications for the Open Textbook Pilot, your application may include business information that you consider proprietary. In 34 CFR 5.11 we define “business information” and describe the process we use in determining whether any of that information is proprietary and, thus, protected from disclosure under Exemption 4 of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended). Because we plan to make successful applications available to the public, you may wish to request confidentiality of business information.

Consistent with Executive Order 12600, please designate in your application any information that you believe is exempt from disclosure under Exemption 4. In the appropriate Appendix section of your application, under “Other Attachments Form,” please list the page number or numbers on which we can find this information. For additional information please see 34 CFR 5.11(c).

3. Intergovernmental Review: This competition is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. However, under 34 CFR 79.8(a), we waive intergovernmental review in order to make awards by the end of FY 2020.

4. Funding Restrictions: We reference regulations outlining funding restrictions in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

5. Recommended Page Limit: The application narrative is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. We recommend that you (1) limit the application narrative to no more than 60 pages and (2) use the following standards:

   • A “page” is 8.5” x 11”, on one side only, with 1” margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

   • Double space all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions.

   • Use a readable 12-point font such as Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

   The recommended 60 page limit applies only to the application narrative and does not apply to Part I, the cover sheet; Part II, the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; Part IV, the assurances and certifications; or the one-page abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, or the letters of support.

6. Program Profile: Applicants must indicate in the recommended one-page abstract and on the FY 2020 Open Textbook Pilot program Profile Form in the application package all of the IHEs that comprise the consortium, and whether they addressed the competitive preference priority and the invitational priority.

V. Application Review Information

1. Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 75.210. The maximum score for all of the selection criteria is 100 points. The maximum score for each criterion is included in parentheses following the title of the specific selection criterion. Each criterion also includes the factors that reviewers will consider in
determining the extent to which an applicant meets the criterion.

Points awarded under the competitive preference priority are in addition to any points an applicant earns for all of the selection criteria in this notice. The maximum score that an application may receive under the competitive preference priority and the selection criteria is 105. The selection criteria are as follows:

a. **Significance (up to 20 points).** The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population (up to 10 points).
2. The potential replicability of the proposed project or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation in a variety of settings (up to 10 points).

b. **Quality of the Project Design (up to 16 points).** The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (up to 4 points).
2. 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 (up to 4 points).
3. The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance (up to 4 points).
4. The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition (up to 4 points).

c. **Quality of Project Services (up to 15 points).** The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project. In determining the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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. In addition, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The likelihood that the services will lead to improvements in the achievement of students as measured against rigorous academic standards (up to 5 points).
2. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services (up to 5 points).
3. The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services (up to 5 points).

d. **Quality of Project Personnel (up to 9 points).** The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers 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. In addition, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator (up to 5 points).
2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 4 points).

**e. Adequacy of Resources (up to 20 points).** The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project (up to 10 points).
2. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project (up to 10 points).

g. **Quality of the Management Plan (up to 10 points).** The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (up to 5 points).
2. The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project (up to 5 points).

2. **Review and Selection Process:**

**We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant’s use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality. In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary requires various assurances, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 106.8, and 110.23).**

For this competition, a panel of external reviewers will read, prepare a written evaluation of, and score all eligible applications using the selection criteria and the competitive preference priority, if applicable, provided in this notice. The individual scores of the reviewers will be added and the sum divided by the number of reviewers to determine the peer review score. The Department may use more than one tier of reviews in evaluating grantees. The Department will prepare a rank order of applications based solely on the evaluation of their quality according to
the selection criteria and competitive preference priority points.

In the event there are two or more applications with the same final score in the rank order listing, and there are insufficient funds to fully support each of these applications, the Department will apply the following procedure to determine which application or applications will receive an award:

First Tiebreaker: The first tiebreaker will be the highest average score for the selection criterion “Quality of the Project Design.” If a tie remains, the second tiebreaker will be utilized.

Second Tiebreaker: The second tiebreaker will be the highest average score for the selection criterion “Significance.” If a tie remains, the third tiebreaker will be utilized.

Third Tiebreaker: The third tiebreaker will be the highest average score for the competitive preference priority. If a tie remains, the fourth tiebreaker will be utilized.

Fourth Tiebreaker: The applicant that proposes the highest estimate of projected savings that will be achieved for students in response to Absolute Priority 3.

3. Risk Assessment and Specific Conditions: Consistent with 2 CFR 200.205, before awarding grants under this competition the Department conducts a review of the risks posed by applicants. Under 2 CFR 3474.10, the Secretary may impose specific conditions and, in appropriate circumstances, high-risk conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable; has a history of unsatisfactory performance; has a financial or other management system that does not meet the standards in 2 CFR part 200, subpart D; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant; or is otherwise not responsible.

4. Integrity and Performance System: If you are selected under this competition to receive an award that over the course of the project period may exceed the simplified acquisition threshold ($250,000), under 2 CFR 200.205(a)(2) we must make a judgment about your integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards—that is, the risk posed by you as an applicant—before we make an award. In doing so, we must consider any information about you that is in the integrity and performance system (currently referred to as the Federal Awarded Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)), accessible through the System for Award Management. You may review and comment on any information about yourself that a Federal agency previously entered and that is currently in FAPIIS.

Please note that, if the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from the Federal Government exceeds $10,000,000, the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, require you to report certain integrity information to FAPIIS semiannually. Please review the requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, if this grant plus all the other Federal funds you receive exceed $10,000,000.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices: If your application is successful, we will notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN); or we may send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN. We may notify you informally, also. If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we will notify you.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements: We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. Open Licensing Requirements: Unless an exception applies, if you are awarded a grant under this competition, you will be required to openly license to the public grant deliverables created in whole, or in part, with Department grant funds. When the deliverable consists of modifications to pre-existing works, the license extends only to those modifications that can be separately identified and only to the extent that open licensing is permitted under the terms of any licenses or other legal restrictions on the use of pre-existing works. Additionally, a grantee or subgrantee that is awarded competitive grant funds must have a plan to disseminate these public grant deliverables. This dissemination plan can be developed and submitted after your application has been reviewed and selected for funding. For additional information on the open licensing requirements please refer to 2 CFR 3474.20.

4. Reporting: (a) If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition. This does not apply if you have an exception under 2 CFR 170.110(b).

(b) At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multiyear award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html.

5. Performance Measures: The Department will use the following performance measures in assessing the performance of the Open Textbooks Pilot program grants:

a. The number of students who enrolled in courses that use open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant;

b. The number of students who completed courses that used open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant;

c. The failure rate or withdrawal rate in courses that use open textbooks and/or ancillary materials compared with equivalent courses that used commercial textbooks;

d. The number of faculty/instructors that use open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant;

e. The number of institutions within the consortium, and the number of institutions outside of the consortium, that adopted the use of open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant;

f. The number of courses among consortium members that adopted the use of open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant, compared to those that continued to use commercial textbooks;

g. The number of faculty/instructors or institutions that use tools for revising and remixing open educational resources content to facilitate adoption of open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant;

h. The average grade of students who completed a course that used open textbooks and/or ancillary materials developed through the grant compared with the equivalent average grade of students that used commercial textbooks;
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request

AGENCY: Department of Education (ED).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, ED is proposing an extension without change of a currently approved collection.

DATES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before November 16, 2020.

ADDRESSES: To access and review all the documents related to the information collection listed in this notice, please use http://www.regulations.gov by searching the Docket ID number ED–2020–SCC–0148. Comments submitted in response to this notice should be submitted electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at http://www.regulations.gov by selecting the Docket ID number or via postal mail, commercial delivery, or hand delivery. If the regulations.gov site is not available to the public for any reason, ED will temporarily accept comments at ICDocketMgr@ed.gov. Please include the docket ID number and the title of the information collection request when requesting documents or submitting comments. Please note that comments submitted by fax or email and those submitted after the comment period will not be accepted. Written requests for information or comments submitted by postal mail or delivery should be addressed to the Director, Office of the Strategic Collections and Clearance Governance and Strategy Division, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave. SW,