

transfer. Applicants are allowed to submit more than one proposal as long as each proposal addresses only one RERC topic area.

Letters of Intent

Due to the open nature of this competition, NIDRR is requiring all potential applicants to submit a letter of intent (LOI). Each LOI must be limited to a maximum of four pages and must include the following information: (1) The title of the proposed RERC, the name of the host institution, the name of the Principal Investigator (PI), and the names of partner institutions and entities; (2) a brief statement of the vision, goals and objectives of the proposed RERC and a description of its research and development activities at a sufficient level of detail to allow potential peer reviewers to be selected; (3) a list of proposed RERC staff including the center Director and key personnel; and (4) a list of individuals whose selection as a peer reviewer might constitute a conflict of interest due to involvement in proposal development, selection as an advisory board member, co-PI relationships, etc.

The signed, original LOI must be received by NIDRR no later than four weeks after the notice of final funding priorities for this competition is published in the **Federal Register**. Submission of a LOI is a prerequisite for eligibility to submit an application. With prior approval, an email or facsimile copy of a LOI will be accepted, but the signed original must be sent to: William Peterson, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3425, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. For further information regarding the LOI requirement, contact William Peterson at (202) 205-9192 or by email at: william.peterson@ed.gov.

Proposed Priorities

The Assistant Secretary proposes to fund up to nine RERCs that will focus on innovative technological solutions, new knowledge, and concepts to promote the health, safety, independence, employment, active engagement in daily activities, and quality of life of persons with disabilities. Each RERC must:

- (1) Contribute substantially to the technical and scientific knowledge-base relevant to its respective subject area;
- (2) Research, develop, and evaluate innovative technologies, products, environments, performance guidelines, and monitoring and assessment tools as applicable to its respective subject area;
- (3) Identify, implement, and evaluate, in collaboration with the relevant

industry, professional associations, and institutions of higher education, innovative approaches to expand research capacity in its respective field of study;

(4) Monitor trends and evolving product concepts that represent and signify future directions for technologies in its respective area of research; and

(5) Provide technical assistance to public and private organizations responsible for developing policies, guidelines, and standards that affect its respective area of research.

(6) Each RERC must focus on one of the following priority topic areas:

(a) *Hearing Enhancement*: This center must research and develop methods, systems, and technologies that will assist hearing professionals with the process of matching hearing technology to individuals with hearing loss and associated conditions such as tinnitus. This includes improving the compatibility of hearing enhancement technologies with various environments such as school, work, recreation, and social settings;

(b) *Prosthetics and Orthotics*: This center must increase understanding of the scientific and engineering principles pertaining to human locomotion, reaching, grasping, and manipulation, and incorporate those principles into the design and fitting of prosthetic and orthotic devices;

(c) *Communication Enhancement*: This center must research and develop augmentative and alternative communication technologies and strategies that will enhance the communicative capacity of individuals of all ages with significant communication disorders across environments (*i.e.*, education, employment, recreation, social);

(d) *Measurement and Monitoring of Functional Performance*: This center must research and develop technologies and methods that effectively assess the outcomes of rehabilitation therapies by combining measurements of physiological performance with measures of functional performance;

(e) *Technology Access for Land Mine Survivors*: This center must address the unique rehabilitation needs of land mine survivors of all ages and develop low-cost replacement limbs, orthotics, and assistive technologies using indigenous materials and expertise from respective countries that will benefit the quality of life for individuals who have been severely injured due to land mine explosions;

(f) *Universal Interface and Information Technologies*: This center must research and develop innovative technological solutions for, and promote

universal access to, current and emerging information technologies and technology interfaces that promote a seamless integration of the multiple technologies used by individuals with disabilities in the home, the community, and the workplace. This center must work collaboratively with the RERC on Telecommunication Access, the RERC on Mobile Wireless Technologies, and the NIDRR-funded Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center;

(g) *Telerehabilitation*: This center must research and develop methods, systems, and technologies that support remote delivery of rehabilitation and home health care services for individuals who have limited local access to comprehensive medical and rehabilitation outpatient services;

(h) *Accessible Public Transportation*: This center must research and develop methods, systems, and devices that will promote and enhance the ability of people with disabilities to safely, comfortably, and efficiently identify destination information, embark/disembark, and use restroom facilities on various types of public transportation systems such as passenger trains and airplanes;

(i) *Wheeled Mobility*: This center must research and develop innovative technologies and strategies that will improve the current state of the science, design standards, and usability of wheeled mobility devices and wheelchair seating systems;

(j) *Cognitive Technologies*: This center must research, develop, and evaluate innovative technologies and approaches that will have a positive impact on the way in which individuals with significant cognitive disabilities function independently within their communities and workplace; and

(k) *Technology Transfer*: This center must research and develop innovative ways to facilitate and improve the process of moving new, useful, and more effective assistive technology inventions and applications from the prototype phase to the marketplace. This center will be expected to provide technical assistance to all RERCs on issues pertaining to technology transfer, including the development of long-range technology transfer plans.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

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