

**Discussion:** The published priority does not preclude applicants from investigating, evaluating, and demonstrating strategies that are consistent with the suggestions of the commenter. The peer review process will enable the merits of strategies proposed in an application to be evaluated.

**Change:** None.

The background for the priority was published in the NPP.

**Note:** This notice does not solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use this priority, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate the priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational. The effect of each type of priority follows:

**Absolute priority:** Under an absolute priority, we consider only applications that meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(3)).

**Competitive preference priority:** Under a competitive preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by either (1) awarding additional points, depending on how well or the extent to which the application meets the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(ii)).

**Invitational priority:** Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the invitational priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

### Priority

This priority is intended to improve the quality and utility of research related to individuals with disabilities from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations and to enhance knowledge and awareness of issues related to these populations. The priority will achieve this goal by (1) building the capacity of researchers, especially individuals from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations, and (2) conducting disability research that examines the unique needs and factors that influence rehabilitation outcomes for individuals with disabilities from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations.

Applicants must choose a minimum of three and up to a maximum of five research areas below. Due to the need to focus research and capacity-building activities on specific groups or topics,

applicants may target those populations appropriate to the activities that they propose.

The DRRP research and capacity-building areas are:

(1) To investigate and evaluate disability and rehabilitation outcomes for individuals with disabilities from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations in State vocational rehabilitation systems (VR), and assess between State and within State differences in outcomes.

(2) To investigate and evaluate access to and acceptance rates for VR services, types of services provided, and costs of rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations compared to non-minority individuals.

(3) To investigate, evaluate, and develop, as needed, indices and measures to assess the capacity of the disability and VR personnel workforce to provide quality services to individuals with disabilities from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations.

(4) To investigate, evaluate, and report activities that strengthen disability-related research collaboration between minority entities and non-minority entities, particularly collaboration to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations.

(5) To investigate, develop as needed, and evaluate strategies for strengthening resources and research capacity of minority entities and Indian tribes, particularly the expertise and infrastructure requirements that are needed to ensure the optimal participation of minority entities and Indian tribes in disability and rehabilitation research.

(6) To investigate, develop, and evaluate strategies, such as cultural competency training, targeted recruitment efforts, and incentives, to include and enhance retention of students and investigators from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations as rehabilitation researchers, administrators, and educators.

(7) To investigate and evaluate the effect of persons from traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations participating in disability and rehabilitation research activities, direct service delivery, and training programs, and determine to what extent participation assists to improve VR outcomes for underserved populations.

The DRRP project will provide information leading to better understanding of: (1) Factors that

contribute to different VR outcomes for traditionally underserved racial and ethnic populations compared to non-minorities, (2) training needs and effective training strategies, (3) effective approaches for improving collaboration between minority entities and Indian tribes and other institutions, and (4) strategies that strengthen the research infrastructure and capacity-building for minority entities and Indian tribes.

In carrying out the purposes of the priority, the DRRP must:

- Through consultation with the NIDRR project officer, coordinate and establish partnerships, as appropriate, with other academic institutions and organizations that are relevant to the project's proposed activities, including minority entities and Indian tribes;
- Demonstrate use of culturally appropriate data collection, evaluation, dissemination, training, and research methodologies and significant knowledge of the needs of individuals with disabilities from traditionally underserved populations;
- Develop, implement, and evaluate dissemination strategies for research and capacity-building products developed by the project;
- Demonstrate appropriate multidisciplinary linkages;
- Develop and regularly update an online information dissemination system and make materials readily available in alternate formats;
- Conduct an annual evaluation of all activities undertaken in support of capacity-building using formal measures and indicators;
- Provide expertise, consultation, and technical assistance on capacity-building and cultural competence to individuals and organizations seeking information; and
- Ensure an interdisciplinary outreach effort in conducting research and capacity-building activities.

### Intergovernmental Review

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79.

*Applicable Program Regulations:* 34 CFR part 350.

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