

that involve the location of a secondary school on the site of a community college, a business as a member of the consortium, and the voluntary participation of secondary school students. We intend to fund projects that, following an initial recruitment period, will enroll a new student cohort in each year of the project, in addition to continuing support for each previous TPDP student cohort.

We published a notice of proposed requirements, proposed priorities and proposed selection criteria in the **Federal Register** on Friday, January 24, 2003 (68 FR 3517). In that notice, we discussed (on pages 3517 through 3519) the proposed requirements, priorities, and selection criteria for this year's TPDP competition and subsequent competitions.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to our invitation in the notice of proposed requirements, proposed priorities, and proposed selection criteria, six parties submitted comments. An analysis of the comments, and of any changes made as a result of comments submitted, follows.

We have grouped major issues by subject. Generally, we do not address technical or other minor, non-substantive changes, or suggested changes, which the applicable statutory authority does not authorize us to make. Specifically, we have made technical changes to Priority 3 to clarify when we will award points for this priority.

Project Period

Comment: Three commenters were concerned with the proposal to extend the TPDP project period from three to five years. They expressed concern that this extension of the project period, coupled with the plan to fund the entire grant award from FY 2002 funds, would reduce the amount of funds available per year and reduce the number of grants to be funded.

Discussion: The decision to extend the project period from three to five years is based on a number of factors. By statutory definition, under section 202(a)(3) of Perkins III, tech-prep programs combine at least two years of secondary education with a minimum of two years of postsecondary education in a nonuplicative, sequential course of study. Federal funding of three-year projects under the first TPDP competition was not intended to support entire four-year tech-prep projects. With an expanded five-year project period, grantees will have both a lengthy tech-prep recruitment phase, and sufficient time for the first cohort of students to complete the entire four-year

tech-prep program. Furthermore, five-year funding will allow the grantees funded under this year's competition and the Department to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the funded projects. The Department believes the estimated average size of awards accurately reflects what are likely to be relatively low costs of the first year's recruitment efforts, as well as costs associated with the four-year instructional program. While the expanded project period may serve to reduce the number of grants to be awarded, the Department believes that funding fewer projects to implement complete tech-prep programs serving significant numbers of students is preferable to funding a greater number of projects that would implement only partial tech-prep programs. However, regarding the estimated amount of funds available per year, the Department has also decided to use both the FY 2002 and the FY 2003 TPDP appropriations for this year's competition, which will serve to almost double the estimated amount of TPDP funds available for grant awards. See the "Estimated Available Funds" section in the notice inviting applications published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Changes: None.

Assurance Regarding Start of Classes

Comment: Three commenters were concerned with the proposed grant schedule. If TPDP grants were to be awarded in August of 2003, the commenters were concerned that grantees would have insufficient time to launch their projects by September of 2003.

Discussion: Requirement 3 states that successful applicants must enroll the first student cohort and must begin classes "no later than September of the calendar year after the year in which the grant award is made." For this year's competition, this would mean September of 2004. This proposed time frame will allow funded projects a full year's time to recruit their first cohort of students and begin classes by September of 2004. Indeed, as is discussed in response to an earlier comment, providing sufficient recruitment time was one of the reasons we proposed to expand the project period.

Changes: None.

Full-Time Enrollment Requirement

Comment: Three commenters were concerned about the requirement that eligible applicants enroll students full time in the program. They argued that this "guideline" would eliminate applicants with part-time programs from the applicant pool as well as

significantly expand the scope of the currently funded TPDP projects.

Discussion: The requirement for full-time enrollment is based on the statutory language in section 207 of Perkins III, which specifically requires that funds be used to "enable eligible consortia to carry out tech-prep education projects that involve the location of a secondary school on the site of a community college." For purposes of the TPDP program, the Department does not consider part-time programs to be "secondary schools" and has concluded that the full-time enrollment requirement is necessary in order to fund programs under this competition that meet fully the intent of section 207. This will not, however, alter the scope of currently funded TPDP projects. Rather, it applies only to new projects funded under this year's competition and perhaps in future competitions.

Changes: None.

Evaluation Requirement

Comment: One commenter recommended enhancing the program evaluation and outcomes assessment.

Discussion: The Department believes that the TPDP evaluation requirement, which is now more rigorous than that in the first TPDP competition, is sufficient for the program. The evaluation requirement now provides that a funded TPDP project must use an experimental or quasi-experimental design in the evaluation of the project. It further stipulates that funded TPDP projects also must carry out an evaluation to determine the impact of the project on a comprehensive set of student outcomes, including academic and technical skills achievement, high school graduation, enrollment and completion of postsecondary education, postsecondary remedial coursework, and labor market entry.

Change: None.

Comment: Three commenters were concerned about the proposed data reporting requirements regarding postsecondary persistence and completion, and labor market entry. They felt that greater resources should be allocated to support this data collection effort.

Discussion: The Department recognizes that by undertaking this data collection and reporting effort, some projects may incur additional costs. Consequently, the projected range of awards has been increased from the last competition.

Changes: None.