

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**[CFDA No.: 84.341]****Community Technology Centers Program**

AGENCY: Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priorities, program requirements, and selection criteria for Fiscal Year (FY) 2003.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education has established priorities, selection criteria, and program requirements under the Community Technology Centers (CTC) program. The Assistant Secretary will use these priorities, selection criteria, and program requirements for competitions in FY 2003. The Department takes this action to target Federal resources on improving the academic achievement of low-achieving students enrolled in, or entering, grades 9 through 12 at low-performing secondary schools. The Department intends the priorities, selection criteria, and program requirements to support the goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), that all students will attain, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and State academic assessments, particularly in the core academic subjects of reading or language arts, and mathematics.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These priorities, program requirements, and selection criteria are effective May 30, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions pertaining to the application, need further assistance, or need to speak with someone in the CTC program, you may contact Gisela Harkin, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Mary E. Switzer Building, Room 4324, Washington, DC 20202 7100, Telephone: (202) 205-4238 or via e-mail: commtech.center@ed.gov. Please type "CTC Notice Correspondence" as the subject line of your electronic message.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Note: This notice 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 specifies the deadline date by which applications for an award must be received or hand-delivered to the Department if a waiver to the electronic submission requirement is granted.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**General**

As authorized by Title V, Part D, Subpart 11, Section 5511-13 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the purpose of the CTC Program is to assist eligible applicants to create or expand community technology centers that will provide disadvantaged residents of economically distressed urban and rural communities with access to information technology and related training. Eligible applicants are community-based organizations (including faith-based organizations), State and local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, and other entities such as foundations, libraries, museums, public and private nonprofit organizations, and for-profit businesses, or consortia thereof. To be eligible, an applicant must also have the capacity to significantly expand access to computers and related services for disadvantaged residents of economically distressed urban and rural communities who would otherwise be denied such access.

The focus of the CTC program competition has changed to give absolute priority to those applicants who will focus on improving the academic achievement of low-achieving high school students while continuing to provide a community technology center for all members of their community. Thus, grant recipients must meet this priority as they use grant funds to create or expand community technology centers that expand access to information technology and related training for disadvantaged residents of distressed urban or rural communities and to evaluate the effectiveness of their projects. Funds may be used to provide services and activities that use technology to improve academic achievement, such as academic enrichment activities for children and youth, career development, adult education, and English language instruction for individuals with limited English proficiency. Other authorized activities include, among other things, support for personnel, equipment, networking capabilities, and other

infrastructure costs. No funds may be used for construction.

Improving the academic achievement of our nation's secondary school students has become an urgent need. Current National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data indicate that, despite some slow and steady progress in secondary student achievement over the past few decades, many of our nation's secondary students are still not attaining the academic skills and knowledge required for graduation, postsecondary education, or careers. This is particularly true among students who are entering secondary school, with two in ten scoring below basic levels in reading, over three in ten scoring below basic levels in math, and four in ten scoring below basic levels in science. Moreover, as students move through secondary school, their academic progress wanes. Except in the area of science, students actually make greater academic gains between grades 4 and 8 than between grades 8 and 12.

To support the goal of the NCLB that all students attain proficiency in challenging State academic achievement standards, the Assistant Secretary has established priorities, selection criteria, and program requirements for the CTC program that will focus program resources on providing effective supplemental instruction to low-achieving students who are entering or enrolled in grades 9 through 12 at high-poverty, low-performing secondary schools.

Application Procedures

The Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) of 1998 (Public Law 105-277) and the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-107) encourage us to undertake initiatives to improve our grant processes. Enhancing the ability of individuals and entities to conduct business with us electronically is a major part of our response to these Acts. Therefore, the Department is taking steps to adopt the Internet as our chief means of conducting transactions in order to improve services to our customers and to simplify and expedite our processes.

The Department is requiring that applications for the FY 2003 Community Technology Centers program competition be submitted electronically using e-Application through the U.S. Department of Education's e-GRANTS system. The e-GRANTS system is accessible through its portal page at <http://e-grants.ed.gov>.

Applicants who are unable to submit an application through the e-GRANTS systems may apply for a waiver to the