

Waiver of Rulemaking

It is the Secretary's practice, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553), to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed rules that are not taken directly from statute. Ordinarily, this practice would have applied to the priority and requirements of this notice. However, section 437(d)(2) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) exempts from this requirement rules that would cause extreme hardship to the intended beneficiaries of the program that would be affected by those rules. In accordance with section 437(d)(2) of GEPA, the Secretary has decided to forgo public comment with respect to the rules in this grant competition in order to ensure timely and high-quality awards. The rules established in this notice apply only to the FY 2003 grant competition.

Discussion of Priority

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

Absolute Priority

Each application must be submitted by an eligible novice applicant (see **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for definition of "novice applicant"). In addition, each proposed project must provide supplemental instruction in reading or language arts and mathematics to low-achieving secondary school (grades 9–12) students in high-poverty, low-performing secondary schools. Further, each applicant must demonstrate how their project's proposed academic approach is aligned with the secondary school curricula of the schools in which the students to be served by the grant are entering or enrolled. Finally, proposed projects must include an evaluation component that demonstrates in measurable ways how their program has improved the academic achievement in reading or language arts and mathematics of students receiving their services.

Scoring of Applications

Applications received under this notice will be screened for eligibility and scored according to the criteria that follow in this notice. Each application under this competition must meet the definition of a novice applicant and satisfy the Absolute Priority in order to be eligible for funding. An application that does not meet the definition of a novice applicant and does not satisfy

the Absolute Priority will not be considered for funding.

Selection Criteria

The following selection criteria will be used to evaluate applications submitted for grants. Please note:

- (1) The maximum score is 100 points.
- (2) The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses.

(a) *Need for the Project (10 points):*

In evaluating the need for the proposed project, we consider the extent to which the proposed project will:

- (1) Serve students from low-income families;
- (2) Serve students entering or enrolled in secondary schools that are among the secondary schools in the State that have the highest numbers or percentages of students who have not achieved proficiency on the State academic assessments required by Title I of ESEA, or who have academic skills in reading or language arts, or mathematics, that are significantly below grade level;
- (3) Serve students who have the greatest need for supplementary instruction, as indicated by their scores on State or local standardized assessments in reading or language arts, or mathematics, or some other local measure of performance in reading or language arts, or mathematics; and
- (4) Create or expand access to information technology and related training for disadvantaged residents of distressed urban or rural communities.

(b) *Quality of the Project Design (35 points):*

In evaluating the quality of the proposed project, we consider the extent to which the proposed project will:

- (1) Provide instructional services that will be of sufficient size, scope, and intensity to improve the academic performance of participating students;
- (2) Incorporate strategies that have proven effective for improving the academic performance of low-achieving students;
- (3) Implement strategies in recruiting and retaining students that are likely to prove effective;
- (4) Provide instruction that is aligned with the secondary school curricula of the schools in which the students to be served by the grant are entering or enrolled; and
- (5) Provide high-quality, sustained, and intensive professional development for personnel who provide instruction to students.

(c) *Quality of the Management Plan (15 points):*

In evaluating the quality of the management plan, we consider the extent to which the proposed project:

- (1) Outlines specific, measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project;
- (2) Assigns responsibility for the accomplishment of project tasks to specific project personnel, and provides timelines for the accomplishment of project tasks;

(3) Requires appropriate and adequate time commitments of the project director and other key personnel to achieve the objectives of the proposed project; and

(4) Includes key project personnel, including the project director and other staff, with appropriate qualifications and relevant training and experience.

(d) *Adequacy of Resources (20 points):*

In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, we consider the following factors:

(1) The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant;

(2) The extent to which a preponderance of project resources will be used for activities designed to improve the academic performance of low-achieving students in reading and/or mathematics;

(3) The extent to which the budget is adequate and costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the proposed project; and

(4) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

(e) *Quality of the Evaluation (20 points):*

In determining the quality of the evaluation, we consider the extent to which the proposed project:

(1) Includes a plan that utilizes evaluation methods that are feasible and appropriate to the goals and outcomes of the project;

(2) Will regularly examine the progress and outcomes of participating students on a range of appropriate performance measures;

(3) Will use an independent, external evaluator with the necessary background and technical expertise to assess the performance of the project; and

(4) Effectively demonstrates that the applicant has adopted a rigorous evaluation design.

Program Requirements

Project Period: 12 months.

Range of Awards: \$300,000–\$500,000. Applicants who request more than \$500,000 will be ineligible for funding.

Estimated Number of Awards: The Secretary anticipates making