

learner or learners in homogenous groups, via a series of diagnostically based questions toward the area or areas needing to be stimulated. Instruction is customized and relies heavily on appropriate assessments from the most basic linguistic units all the way through the higher level cognitive and linguistic functions including metacognition, critical thinking, language processing, and inferential thinking. Further information may be found on the Internet at the following Web site: <http://www.lblp.com>.

An independent evaluator, selected after awards are made, will work with grantees to ensure that their projects are designed and implemented in a manner that will allow for rigorous evaluation, including the assignment of project participants into literacy intervention and control groups.

#### **Proposed Priority—Model Demonstrations To Improve the Literacy Skills and Employment Outcomes of Individuals With Disabilities**

This priority supports projects that demonstrate the effect literacy services and instruction have on improving literacy skills of targeted groups of VR consumers and the effect on their employment and earnings outcomes. Projects must demonstrate how VR offices can effectively integrate literacy services into their service delivery systems and can best provide literacy services and instruction to a targeted group of VR consumers.

#### **Evaluation**

Projects must assure cooperation with RSA and RSA's outside evaluator in meeting the evaluation needs of the project and RSA. Project cooperation with RSA's outside evaluator must include the following:

1. The assessment of all entering VR consumers in the designated project service area using brief methodologically acceptable screening instruments for learning disabilities and literacy levels to determine their eligibility for the project. The assessment does not include VR consumers with evidence of mental retardation in their case files.

2. The assignment of approximately one-half of the eligible project participants into a literacy intervention group who would receive the additional services and benefits of the project and approximately one-half of the project participants into a control group who would not receive projects services. However, no individual in the control group can be denied literacy services if his or her Individualized Plan for

Employment (IPE) requires those services. Furthermore, those services may not be provided or paid for under these demonstration grants.

3. The use of diagnostic tests and effective assessments of reading proficiency consistent with the procedures of RSA's outside evaluator.

4. The administration of a pre- and post-test to project participants as directed by RSA's outside evaluator.

#### **Interventions**

An applicant for this competition must choose either the LBLP or the WRS for its curriculum and provide a rationale for its choice (e.g., the local adult literacy provider already uses WRS). However, an applicant may also choose to describe its capacity to use the other curriculum if it would be willing to substitute the alternative curriculum as its curriculum in order to enhance its ability to compete. RSA will select grantees in a manner to ensure that each curriculum intervention is adequately represented in the applications selected for funding.

#### **Project Participants**

The following participant research criteria must be met:

1. Projects must have a sufficient number of individuals in the control and experimental groups so that the effects of the literacy intervention can be adequately measured.

2. Project participants must be eligible to receive VR services by the State VR agency and have, or be in the process of developing, an IPE.

3. All project participants (control and experimental groups) must be given an informed choice with respect to participation in the demonstration project consistent with the human subjects provisions as included in the application package.

4. Project participants for the experimental and control groups must be selected using the requisite instrument. RSA requires use of the *Learning Needs Screening Tool*, a validated and public domain screener, which can be incorporated into the VR intake process. Copies of the screener as well as further information may be found on the Internet at the following Web site: <http://www.seekingwdc.org/ld/WaScreenTool.htm>.

#### **Use of Funds**

Funds may be used only for project costs and related activities and may not be used to supplant the cost of services ordinarily provided by the VR program. Related activities may include, but are not limited to—(1) counselor training or orientation, including counselor

training on administration of literacy assessment instruments, (2) educational assessment and evaluation, (3) research expenses, (4) support services such as consumer transportation, childcare, and facilitation for attendance and retention, (5) instructional materials, (6) curriculum and instruction, (7) professional development for instructors and administrators, (8) assistive technology devices and services, (9) instructional technology, and (10) consultants.

#### **Invitational Priority**

Within the priority for this competition, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the following invitational priority:

Establishing partnerships with other organizations that can assist in carrying out their respective projects related to improving literacy and employability skills of adults with disabilities.

These organizations might include Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) programs, institutions of higher education, volunteer-based literacy programs, community rehabilitation programs, nonprofit or for-profit vendors of literacy services, and other workforce agencies. Applicants under this invitational priority must meet the requirements in 34 CFR 75.127 through 75.129, which governs how partnerships and other groups of eligible parties may submit applications and conduct funded projects.

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1) we do not give an application that meets the invitational priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

#### **Executive Order 12866**

This notice of proposed priorities has been reviewed in accordance with Executive Order 12866. Under the terms of the order, we have assessed the potential costs and benefits of this regulatory action.

The potential costs associated with the notice of proposed priorities are those resulting from statutory requirements and those we have determined as necessary for administering this program effectively and efficiently.

In assessing the potential costs and benefits—both quantitative and qualitative—of this notice of proposed priorities, we have determined that the benefits of the proposed priorities justify the costs.

We have also determined that this regulatory action does not unduly interfere with State, local, and tribal governments in the exercise of their governmental functions.