

regular Upward Bound Program projects that:

1. Were selected for funding under the FY 2003 Upward Bound Program competition.

2. Serve a target high school in which at least 50 percent of the students were eligible to receive free lunch under the National School Lunch Act during the 2001–2002 or 2002–2003 school year.

3. Received supplemental funds in FY 2000 under the Notice of Final Priority dated July 24, 2000, 65 FR 45698–45699.

4. (a) Agree to select and serve at least 20 students who are eligible for Upward Bound services, attend a target high school in which at least 50 percent of the students were eligible to receive free lunch under the National School Lunch Act during the 2001–2002 or 2002–2003 school year and have the greatest need for project services, if requesting \$100,000.

(b) Agree to select and serve at least 15 students who are eligible for Upward Bound services, attend a target high school in which at least 50 percent of the students were eligible to receive free lunch under the National School Lunch Act during the 2001–2002 or 2002–2003 school year and have the greatest need for project services, if requesting \$75,000.

(c) Agree to select and serve at least 10 students who are eligible for Upward Bound services, attend a target high school in which at least 50 percent of the students were eligible to receive free lunch under the National School Lunch Act during the 2001–2002 or 2002–2003 school year and have the greatest need for project services, if requesting \$50,000.

Students who have the greatest need for project services are those students who:

(i) Have not met the state academic achievement standard for grade eight in reading/language arts;

(ii) Have not met the state academic achievement standard for grade eight in math; or

(iii) Have a grade point average of 2.5 or less (on a 4.0 scale) for the most recent school year for which grade point averages are available.

Veterans Upward Bound projects and Upward Bound Math-Science projects are not eligible to participate in this initiative.

The Secretary will fund applications in the following order:

1. Applications that meet the absolute priority.

2. All other applications that meet criteria 1, 2, and 4 above.

If funds are available after funding all applications that meet the absolute

priority, the Secretary will select from among the remaining applicants that meet criteria 1, 2, and 4 based upon the highest scores received (including prior experience points) in the FY 2003 Upward Bound grant competition. If there are insufficient funds for all applications with the same score, the Secretary will select for funding those applicants with the lowest average cost per Upward Bound participant (Federal funds only) for the 2001–2002 program year.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priority, thirty-four parties submitted comments. An analysis of the comments and of changes in the priority since publication of the notice of proposed priority follows. We group major issues by subject. Generally, we do not address technical or other minor changes—and suggested changes the law does not authorize us to make under the applicable statutory authority.

Target School Eligibility

Comments: Nine commenters responded. Two recommended that eligibility be student-centered, that is, that students with the academic profile outlined in the notice of proposed priority be eligible to participate in the initiative, regardless of whether they were enrolled in a target school. Target schools were defined in the notice of proposed priority as those “in which at least 50 percent of the students were eligible for free lunch under the National School Lunch Act during the 2001–2002 school year and who have the greatest need for Upward Bound services.” One commenter posited that it was unfair to exclude low income, high risk students from the initiative simply because they were not enrolled in a school with 50 percent or more students participating in the Free Lunch program. A third commenter suggested that student eligibility should be determined by the project.

Four commenters questioned the reliability of the Free Lunch program data as the criterion for eligibility to qualify for funding under the initiative. Two remarked that there are more high-poverty areas in the country than those indicated by the Free Lunch program statistics. According to one commenter, some regions of the country, such as Appalachia, have a tradition of low registration in Federal programs, such as the Free Lunch program. All four commenters referred to a significant drop in Free Lunch program participation from the early grades to middle and high school. Two pointed

out that teenagers are more averse than younger children to register in “poverty” programs. One suggested that we use data on both the number of participants in the Free Lunch program and the number of students who qualify for reduced lunch for target school eligibility.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees with many of the points made by the commenters. However, for purposes of this initiative, the Secretary believes that the Free Lunch program criterion is a fair, valid, and objective measure of low-income and need for Upward Bound services.

Changes: None.

Date of Eligibility Data

Comments: Two commenters indicated that Free Lunch program data for the 2002–2003 school year was actually easier to obtain and was more current than data for the 2001–2002 school year.

Discussion: The Secretary proposed using data for the 2001–2002 year in the notice of proposed priority because the Secretary was uncertain whether more recent data would be available. If that data is available, the Secretary believes that such data may be used.

Changes: The Secretary will accept Free Lunch program data for *either* the 2001–2002 or the 2002–2003 school year.

Priority for Currently Funded Programs

Comments: Six commenters addressed this issue. Four supported the priority in favor of currently funded projects that participated in the FY 2000 expansion initiative, citing their experience, proven commitment, and record of success. Two pointed out the existence of other experienced and well qualified projects, and suggested that others be given the opportunity to serve students from other needy areas.

Discussion: The Secretary understands that there are usually more qualified applicants than available funds, and that forces hard choices. In order to increase the chance that this initiative will succeed, the Secretary has chosen to give an absolute priority to experienced Upward Bound projects that have been successful in the past working with eligible target schools and that have the staff capacity to serve additional students. Nonetheless, the Secretary expects that there will be sufficient funds for this initiative to award supplemental grants to a few new projects.

Changes: None.