

not acknowledged in the formal appropriation process. The commenter also suggested that the word "synthesizes" in paragraph (d) has a technical meaning that may not be appropriate in the context of post-award requirements, and suggests using "document" instead, as well as adding "actual impact" instead of "potential impact."

Discussion: The Secretary does not believe that a 5 percent set-aside for the described activities is unreasonable or an attempt to circumvent the appropriations process. The five percent set-aside will be used by the centers for activities which enable them to work more closely with each other. The Secretary agrees that synthesis has a technical meaning and believes that it is an appropriate activity for the centers. The Secretary also believes that it is appropriate for centers to describe potential impact as well as observable impact to date.

Changes: None.

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[CFDA Nos.: 84.305 A and B, 84.306A, 84.307A, 84.308A, and 84.309 A and B]

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)—Education Research and Development Centers Program; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1996

Purpose of Program: To support seven national research and development centers that would carry out sustained research and development to address nationally significant problems and issues in education.

Eligible Applicants: The following are eligible for a new award under this program: institutions of higher education, institutions of higher education in consort with public agencies or private nonprofit organizations, and interstate agencies

established by compact that operate subsidiary bodies established to conduct postsecondary educational research and development.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: December 15, 1995.

Applications Available: September 29, 1995.

Estimated Available Funds: The seven centers will be awarded as cooperative agreements. In fiscal year 1996, \$21,350,000 is expected to be available for the first year of funding for the seven national research and development centers. The following table indicates the estimated funding levels over the five-year project period. The funding levels for years 1 through 5 are estimates. Actual funding will depend upon the availability of funds and needs as reflected in the approved application.

Priority area	Fiscal year				
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Enhancing young children's development and learning	2,750,000	2,750,000	2,750,000	2,750,000	2,750,000
Improving student learning and achievement ¹	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,000,000
Improving student assessment and educational accountability	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000
Meeting the educational needs of a diverse student population	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	4,000,000
Increasing the effectiveness of state and local education reform efforts	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	2,800,000
Improving postsecondary education	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000
Improving adult learning and literacy	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000

¹ Multiple awards may be made.

Estimated Number of Awards: 7.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR Part 700, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Priority

The absolute priorities in the notice of final priorities and post-award requirements for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register** apply to this competition.

Selection Criteria

In evaluating applications for grants under this program, the Secretary uses the selection criteria in 20 U.S.C. 6031(c)(3)(E) and 34 CFR 700.30.

In accordance with 34 CFR 700.30 (b) and (c), the Secretary has selected evaluation criteria from among those

established in 34 CFR 700.30(e) and has assigned weights to each selected criterion.

In addition, the legislation authorizing the Research and Development Centers program requires all applications for grants to be evaluated according to criteria specified in 20 U.S.C. 6031(c)(3)(E) (i)-(vi). The Secretary has incorporated the statutory selection criteria into the criteria established under 34 CFR 700.30. The statutory criteria are: (3)(B)(iii), (4)(B)(iv), (4)(B)(v), (5)(B)(iv), (5)(B)(v), and (5)(B)(vi).

The Secretary announces the following evaluation criteria and assigned weights for this competition:

(1) *National Significance* (30 points)

(A) The Secretary considers the national significance of the proposed project.

(B) In determining the national significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The importance of the problem or issue to be addressed.

(ii) The potential contribution of the project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective practice.

(iii) The potential contribution of the project to the development and advancement of theory and knowledge in the field of study.

(iv) The nature of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) likely to result from the project and the potential for their effective use in a variety of other settings.

(2) *Quality of the Project Design* (30 points)

(A) The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project.

(B) In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) Whether there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed activities and the quality of that framework.

(ii) Whether the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program

of research and development in the field, including a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

(iii) The extent to which the research design includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for research activities, and use of appropriate theoretical and methodological tools, including those of a variety of disciplines, where appropriate.

(iv) The quality of the plan for evaluating the functioning and impact of the project, including the objectivity of the evaluation and the extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the project.

(3) *Quality and Potential*

Contributions of Personnel (20 points)

(A) The Secretary considers the quality and potential contributions of personnel for the proposed project.

(B) In determining the quality and potential contributions of personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The qualifications, including training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.

(ii) The qualifications, including training and experience, of key project personnel.

(iii) Whether the applicant has assembled a group of high quality researchers sufficient to achieve the mission of the center.

(4) *Adequacy of Resources* (10 points)

(A) The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project.

(B) In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The adequacy of support from the lead applicant organization.

(ii) The relevance and commitment of each partner in the project to the

implementation and success of the project.

(iii) Whether the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the project.

(iv) Whether the proposed organizational structure and arrangements will facilitate achievement of the mission of the center.

(v) Whether the directors and support staff will devote a majority of their time to the activities of the center.

(5) *Quality of the Management Plan* (10 points)

(A) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan of the proposed project.

(B) In determining the quality of the management plan of a proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the project, including the specifications of staff responsibility, timelines, and benchmarks for accomplishing project tasks.

(ii) The adequacy of plans for ensuring high-quality products and services.

(iii) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the project, including those of parents and teachers, where appropriate.

(iv) Whether there is a substantial staff commitment to the work of the center.

(v) The contributions of primary researchers (other than researchers at the proposed center) and the appropriateness of such researcher's experiences and expertise in the context of the proposed center activities, and the adequacy of such primary researcher's time and commitment to achievement of the mission of the center.

(vi) The manner in which the results of education research will be disseminated for further use, including how the center will work with the Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination.

For Applications or Information Contact: Either—

1. Jacqueline Jenkins, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Room 510G, Washington, DC 20208-5573. Telephone: (202) 219-2232. Internet: Jackie__Jenkins@ed.gov or;

2. Judith Anderson, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Room 611B, Washington, DC 20208-5573. Telephone: (202) 219-2086. Internet: Judith__Anderson@ed.gov.

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of application notices or discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; or on the Internet Gopher Servers at GOPHER.ED.GOV (under Announcements, Bulletins, and Press Releases). However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: Pub. L. 103-227, Title IX.

Dated: August 31, 1995.

Sharon Porter Robinson,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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