

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No.: 84.203F]

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), Star Schools Program; Notice Inviting Applications and Application Review Procedures for New Awards for Fiscal Year 1999

Purpose of Program: The purpose of the Star Schools program is to encourage improved instruction in mathematics, science, foreign languages, and other subjects, such as literacy skills and vocational education, and to serve underserved populations, including the disadvantaged, illiterate, limited-English proficient persons, and individuals with disabilities through the use of distance learning technologies.

Eligible Applicants: Only eligible applicants that include at least one local educational agency in the proposed project may apply under this competition. Eligible telecommunications partnerships must be organized on a statewide or multistate basis. Eligible entities include:

(1) A public agency or corporation established for the purpose of developing and operating telecommunications networks to enhance educational opportunities provided by educational institutions, teacher training centers, and other entities, except that any such agency or corporation shall represent the interests of elementary and secondary schools that are eligible to participate in the program under part A of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by Pub. L. 103-352 (ESEA); or

(2) A partnership that will provide telecommunications services and includes three or more of the following entities. At least one of the agencies must be a local educational agency, as described in paragraph (A) below, or a State educational agency:

(A) A local educational agency that serves a significant number of elementary and secondary schools that are eligible for assistance under part A of title I of the ESEA or elementary and secondary schools operated or funded for Indian children by the Department of the Interior eligible under section 1121(c) of the ESEA;

(B) A State educational agency;

(C) Adult and family education programs;

(D) An institution of higher education or a State higher education agency;

(E) A teacher training center or academy which provides teacher preservice and inservice training, and

receives Federal financial assistance or has been approved by a State agency;

(F) A public or private entity with experience and expertise in the planning and operation of a telecommunications network, including entities involved in telecommunications through satellite, cable, telephone, or computer; or a public broadcasting entity with experience of this type; or

(G) A public or private elementary or secondary school.

Application Available: January 26, 1999.

Deadline for Receipt of Applications: March 26, 1999.

Note: All applications must be received on or before this date. Applications not received by the deadline date will not be considered for funding unless the applicant can show proof that the application was (1) sent by registered or certified mail no later than five days before the deadline date; or (2) sent by commercial carrier not later than two days before the deadline date. The following are acceptable as proof of mailing: (1) a legible dated U.S. Postal Service postmark, (2) a legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service, (3) a dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier, or (4) any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary. This requirement takes exception to the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), 34 CFR 75.102.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: May 25, 1999.

Available Funds: \$9,850,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$1,000,000–\$2,000,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$2,000,000.

Maximum Award: The Secretary will not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding \$2 million per year or amounts exceeding \$10 million for five years.

Estimated Number of Awards: 4–5.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Please note that all applicants for multi-year awards are required to provide detailed budget information for the total grant period requested. The Department will negotiate at the time of the initial award the funding levels for each year of the grant award.

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

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75 (except 34 CFR 75.102(a) and (b)(1)), 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, and (b) 34 CFR 299.

Supplementary Information: The Star Schools program is authorized by the ESEA, Title III, Part B (20 U.S.C. 6891–6900). The Star Schools program provides quality, cost-effective

instruction through distance education technologies to more than 2,000,000 learners annually in 50 states and U.S. territories. Although the program began with small rural schools, it is now equally valuable to schools in large urban areas. To ensure that learners are prepared for the 21st century, it is imperative that the traditional instructional model is transformed to an active-learner, more collaborative-based model. Star Schools projects have harnessed the power of emerging technologies such as the Internet, CD-ROM, videoconferencing, virtual environments and interactive software to achieve this transformation.

Consequently, the Star Schools program reaches a diverse group of students to create an inclusive, effective learning experience for the 21st century learner.

Application Review Procedures

The Secretary will use a two-tier process for reviewing applications in this competition. In the first tier, all applications submitted will be reviewed. The ten applications with the highest scores in the first tier will be reviewed in the second tier. In the event of a tie for tenth in the rank order in the first tier, the top nine applications plus all those applications tied for tenth will be considered in the second tier. The same evaluation criteria will be used in each tier. The Secretary will select applications for funding on the basis of the rank ordering of applications in the second tier. In all other respects, the Secretary will follow the procedures set out in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), 34 CFR Part 75, in reviewing applications. This process takes exception, in part, to EDGAR, 34 CFR 75.217.

Waiver of Proposed Rulemaking

In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553), it is the practice of the Secretary to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed regulations. However, these modifications to EDGAR, concerning the deadline for receipt of applications and the application review process, make procedural changes only and do not establish new substantive policy. Therefore, under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(A), proposed rulemaking is not required. (The valid OMB control number for this collection of information is 1850–0623.)

For Further Information Contact: Joseph Wilkes or Tawanna Coles, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW.,

Washington, DC 20208-5544. Telephone 202-208-3882. 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.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request by contacting either contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of the application package in an alternate format, also, by contacting either contact person identified in this notice. However, the

Department is not able to reproduce in an alternate format the standard forms included in the application package.

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Note: The official version of a document is the document published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6891-6900.

Dated: January 19, 1999.

C. Kent McGuire,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

[FR Doc. 99-1618 Filed 1-22-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P