Applicable Regulations: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75 (except 34 CFR 75.102(b) 75.200(b)(3), 75.210, and 75.217), 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, and 85,

Other Requirements: The requirements in the notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures published in this issue of the Federal Register.

Supplementary Information: The Challenge Grants for Technology in Education Program is authorized under Title III, section 3136, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. as amended (20 U.S.C. 6846). This FY 1995 competition supports the first grants under the new program.

As catalysts for change, grants under this program will support communities of educators, parents, industry partners, and others who are working to transform their schools into information-age learning centers. These challenge grants will support the development and innovative use of technology and new learning content in specific communities. Each effort should clearly focus on integrating innovative learning technologies into the curriculum to improve learning productivity in the community.

The Secretary believes that the information superhighway is creating new possibilities for extending the time, the place, and the resources for learning. Challenge grant communities can use it to develop first-class learning environments that provide affordable access to quality education and training. Especially promising possibilities are anticipated from a creative synthesis of ideas generated by educators and software developers,

telecommunications firms and hardware manufacturers, entertainment producers, and others who are extending the possibilities for creating new learning communities.

Challenge grant communities need not be limited by geography. The information superhighway can be used to create virtual learning communities linking schools, colleges, libraries, museums, and businesses across the country or around the world. Students of all ages, no matter where they live, could tap vast electronic libraries and museums containing text and video images, music, art, and language instruction. They could work with scientists and scholars around the globe who can help them use mapping tools, primary historical documents, or laboratory experiments to develop strong research and problem solving skills.

The Secretary encourages each community to view this competition as an opportunity to act on its most ambitious vision for education reform. It is essential, however, to guard against a future in which some communities have access to vast technological resources, while others do not. Low-income neighborhoods and other areas with the greatest need for technology should not be left behind in the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed for productive citizenship in the 21st century. A failure to include those communities will put their future, and the future of the country, at risk. For this reason, the Secretary gives special consideration to applications from consortia which are developing effective responses to the learning technology needs of areas with a high number or percentage of disadvantaged students or the greatest need for educational technology.

Note: The Secretary encourages, but does not require, prospective applicants to submit a letter of intent to apply, prior to submitting an application. The Secretary requests the information in this letter in order to help the Secretary identify at the earliest possible stage of the competition the project characteristics for which peer reviewers with appropriate qualifications will need to be enlisted. The Secretary requests that prospective applicants limit their letters to three double-spaced pages. The letter should outline key elements of the proposed effort, including the educational needs and opportunities to be addressed, the concept for responding to those needs, the proposed technologies and applications to be used, and a general estimate of budget purposes. An applicant that does not submit a letter of intent to apply is in no way at a competitive disadvantage with respect to applicants submitting the requested letter. The Secretary requests that letters of intent to apply be submitted for receipt by April 4, 1995.

## **Project Activities**

The statute authorizes the use of funds for activities similar to the following activities:

- (a) Developing, adapting, or expanding existing and new applications of technology to support the school reform effort.
- (b) Funding projects of sufficient size and scope to improve student learning and, as appropriate, support professional development, and provide administrative support.
- (c) Acquiring connectivity linkages, resources, and services, including the acquisition of hardware and software, for use by teachers, students, and school library media personnel in the classroom or in school library media centers, in order to improve student learning by supporting the instructional program offered by such agency to

ensure that students in schools will have meaningful access on a regular basis to such linkages, resources, and services.

(d) Providing ongoing professional development in the integration of quality educational technologies into school curriculum and long-term planning for implementing educational technologies.

(e) Acquiring connectivity with wide area networks for purposes of accessing information and educational programming sources, particularly with institutions of higher education and public libraries.

(f) Providing educational services for adults and families.

## Selection Criteria

In evaluating applications for grants under this program competition, the Secretary uses the following unweighted selection criteria, as described in the notice of selection criteria, selection procedures, and application procedures for this program published elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register and repeated below:

(a) Significance. The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its significance by determining the extent to which the project-

(1) Offers a creative, new vision for using technology to help all students learn to challenging standards or to promote efficiency and effectiveness in education; and contributes to the advancement of State and local systemic educational reform;

(2) Will achieve far-reaching impact through results, products, or benefits that are easily exportable to other settings and communities:

(3) Will directly benefit students by integrating acquired technologies into the curriculum to enhance teaching, training, and student achievement or by other means;

(4) Will ensure ongoing, intensive professional development for teachers and other personnel to further the use of technology in the classroom, library, or other learning center;

(5) Is designed to serve areas with a high number or percentage of disadvantaged students or other areas with the greatest need for educational

technology; and

(6) Is designed to create new learning communities, and expanded markets for high-quality educational technology applications and services.

(b) Feasibility. The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its feasibility by determining the extent to which

(1) The project will ensure successful, effective, and efficient uses of technologies for educational reform that