\$1,000,000, at least five reviewers will be used.

(b) Each contract proposal shall be read by at least three reviewers unless the contracting officer determines that an adequate peer review can be obtained by fewer reviewers.

(c) Before releasing contract proposals to peer reviewers outside the Federal Government, the contracting officer shall comply with FAR, 48 CFR 15.413– 2(f).

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6011(i)(2)(B))

## §700.21 How are applications for grants and cooperative agreements evaluated?

(a) Each peer reviewer shall be given a number of applications to evaluate.

(b) Each peer reviewer shall— (1) Independently evaluate each

application;

(2) Evaluate and rate each application based on the reviewer's assessment of the quality of the application according to the evaluation criteria and the weights assigned to those criteria; and

(3) Support the rating for each application with concise written comments based on the reviewer's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the application with respect to each of the applicable evaluation criteria.

(c) After each peer reviewer has evaluated and rated each application independently, those reviewers who evaluated a common set of applications will be convened to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of those applications. Each reviewer may then independently reevaluate and re-rate an application with appropriate changes made to the written comments.

(d) Following discussion and any reevaluation and re-rating, reviewers shall independently place each application in one of two categories, either "recommended for funding" or "not recommended for funding."

(e) After the peer reviewers have evaluated, rated, and made funding recommendations regarding the applications, the Secretary prepares a rank order of the applications based solely on the peer reviewers' evaluations.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6011(i)(2)(C))

## §700.22 How are proposals for contracts evaluated?

(a) Each peer reviewer shall be given a number of technical proposals to evaluate.

(b) Each peer reviewer shall—

(1) Independently evaluate each technical proposal;

(2) Evaluate and rate each proposal based on the reviewer's assessment of the quality of the proposal according to the technical evaluation criteria and the importance or weight assigned to those criteria; and

(3) Support the rating for each proposal with concise written comments based on the reviewer's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal with respect to each of the applicable technical evaluation criteria.

(c) After each peer reviewer has evaluated each proposal independently, those reviewers who evaluated a common set of proposals may be convened to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of those proposals. Each reviewer may then independently reevaluate and re-rate a proposal with appropriate changes made to the written comments.

(d) Following discussion and any reevaluation and re-rating, reviewers shall rank proposals and advise the contracting officer of each proposal's acceptability for contract award as "acceptable," "capable of being made acceptable without major modifications," or "unacceptable." Reviewers may also submit technical questions to be asked of the offeror regarding the proposal.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6011(i)(2)(C))

## Subpart D—Evaluation Criteria

## §700.30 What evaluation criteria are used for grants and cooperative agreements?

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, the Secretary announces the applicable evaluation criteria for each competition and the assigned weights in a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

(b) In determining the evaluation criteria to be used in each grant and cooperative agreement competition, the Secretary selects from among the evaluation criteria in paragraph (e) of this section and may select from among the specific factors listed under each criterion.

(c) The Secretary assigns relative weights to each selected criterion and factor.

(d) In determining the evaluation criteria to be used for unsolicited applications, the Secretary selects from among the evaluation criteria in paragraph (e) of this section, and may select from among the specific factors listed under each criterion, the criteria which are most appropriate to evaluate the activities proposed in the application.

(e) The Secretary establishes the following evaluation criteria:

(1) *National significance.* (i) The Secretary considers the national significance of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the national significance of the proposed project, the Secretary may consider one or more of the following factors:

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

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

(C) The scope of the project.

(D) The potential for generalizing from project findings or results.

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

(F) Whether the project involves the development or demonstration of creative or innovative strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

(G) 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.

(H) The extent and quality of plans for disseminating results in ways that will allow others to use the information.

(2) *Quality of the project design.* (i) The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary may consider one or more of the following factors:

(A) Whether the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable.

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

(C) 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.

(D) Whether a specific research design has been proposed, and the quality and appropriateness of that design, including the scientific rigor of the studies involved.

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

(F) The quality of the demonstration design and procedures for documenting project activities and results.

(G) The extent to which development efforts include iterative testing of products and adequate quality controls.