

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**[1885-ZA00]****Bilingual Education: Evaluation Activities, Benchmark Study****AGENCY:** Department of Education.**ACTION:** Notice of final priority and selection criteria for fiscal year (FY) 1995.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces a priority and selection criteria for FY 1995 for program evaluation activities authorized by title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). The Secretary takes this action to conduct program evaluation activities for the purpose of improving the education of limited English proficient (LEP) students. The priority limits this competition to evaluation activities that investigate the dynamics of school change over time in school districts serving LEP students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority takes effect July 13, 1995.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR

APPLICATIONS CONTACT: Milagros E. Lanauze, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue SW., room 5623, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-6510. Telephone: (202) 205-9475. 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.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

Title VII of the ESEA was recently reauthorized and now promotes coherent and comprehensive educational programs for limited English proficient students based on the principle that all children can to achieve to high standards. The ESEA and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000) will now aim at fostering school reform and changing the manner in which all students, including LEP students, receive educational services. Title VII's new grants programs, authorized by subpart 1 of part A, will assist the Nation's school reform efforts for the education of LEP students.

Section 7131 of the ESEA authorizes the Secretary to conduct evaluation activities to improve bilingual education and special alternative instruction programs for LEP children and youth.

In order to examine how school reform efforts are affecting the education of LEP students, the Secretary is establishing an absolute priority under

section 7131 to fund a five-year "Benchmark Study" to evaluate the dynamics of school change in schools that serve LEP students and are undergoing the process of school reform.

Objectives

The priority limits the competition to applications that cover the three objectives listed below.

(a) To evaluate the effectiveness of the Comprehensive School Grants program, which is authorized by subpart 1 of part A of title VII of the ESEA. This program is expected to play a key role in promoting education reform for LEP students.

(b) To study the dynamics of school change in schools that serve LEP students, including:

(1) Establishing salient benchmarks in the process of school reform in schools serving LEP students and in the changes in instruction for LEP students.

(2) Examining how school instructional and organizational changes affect LEP students.

(c) To link or coordinate with other Department of Education evaluation activities.

Selection Criteria

The Secretary has established selection criteria to evaluate the quality of applications for this competition. In awarding a cooperative agreement, the Secretary will consider the technical soundness of the project, the quality of key personnel involved in the project, the quality of the plan of operation and adequacy of resources, the quality of the dissemination plan, and the adequacy of the proposed budget and cost-effectiveness.

The Secretary has included a criterion regarding the quality of the dissemination plan. Yearly dissemination activities that forge links and promote communication between researchers and practitioners will assist in promoting the purpose of this priority:

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds under this program only an application that meets this absolute priority:

An application that—

(a) Proposes a five-year evaluation study to investigate the dynamics of school change over time in school districts serving LEP students through the Comprehensive School Grants program;

(b) Proposes to establish benchmarks reflecting the status of the schools being studied at the beginning of the school

reform process and towards the end of the project period; and

(c) Provides an assurance that the study will link or coordinate with other Department of Education evaluation activities, particularly evaluation activities conducted under title I of the ESEA.

Selection Criteria

(a) The maximum score for all of the criteria in this section is 100 points.

(b) The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses following the heading of the criterion.

(c) The Secretary evaluates each application for a cooperative agreement under this competition by using the following selection criteria:

(1) *Technical soundness* (40 points).

The Secretary reviews each application to determine the technical soundness of the proposed activities, by examining—

(i) The adequacy and quality of the project's design, methodology, instrumentation, and data analysis plan, as applicable;

(ii) The extent to which the application demonstrates a thorough knowledge of current research and development concepts, theories, and outcomes and relates these to the proposed activity;

(iii) If appropriate, the extent to which the perspectives of a variety of disciplines are used;

(iv) The proposed plan for addressing:

(A) Which variables have been selected for study, and which ones will be studied at what level of analysis.

(B) Which educational levels (i.e., elementary, middle, secondary), if any specific levels, will be included in the design.

(C) Which geographical regions, if any specific regions will be used, will be included in the project design.

(D) How the evaluation study will examine LEP students and former LEP students who were reclassified during the project period as proficient in English, to consider the impact of changes in instruction for LEP students.

(E) How the evaluation study will use data from schools receiving title VII grants under the Comprehensive School Grants program and schools not receiving grants under that program.

(v) The extent to which the application demonstrates knowledge of issues relating to the education of LEP students.

(2) *Quality of key personnel* (20 points).

(i) The Secretary reviews each application to determine the quality of key personnel the applicant plans to use on the project, including—