DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employment and Training Administration

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Vocational and Adult Education

ACTION: Notice of Proposed Priority for School-to-Work Urban/Rural Opportunities Grants for Fiscal Year (FY) 1995.

SUMMARY: The Secretaries of Education and Labor (the Secretaries) propose a priority for FY 1995 under the Urban/ Rural Opportunities Grants authorized by Title III of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (the Act). The Secretaries intend to use this priority, along with the selection criteria published in the November 14, 1995. issue of the Federal Register, to select applications for funding under the FY 1995 Urban/Rural Opportunities Grants competition. The Secretaries propose to take this action to focus Federal financial assistance on implementing School-to-Work Opportunities initiatives in urban or rural areas of high poverty. This proposed priority provides for a preference to be given to applications from local partnerships proposing to implement a School-to-Work Opportunities initiative for youth residing in or attending school in an **Empowerment Zone or Enterprise** Community (EZ/EC) designated under section 1391 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), as amended by Title XIII of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.

Note: This notice is an invitation for comment upon the proposed priority as described; it is not a solicitation for applications for Urban/Rural Opportunities Grants.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before January 5, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Karen Clark, National School-to-Work Office, 400 Virginia Avenue, SW, Room 210, Washington, DC 20024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Karen Clark, National School-to-Work Office, Telephone: (202) 401–6222 (this is not a toll-free number). 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:

Section A. Background

The Secretaries intend to award grants to local partnerships to implement School-to-Work Opportunities initiatives serving youth residing or attending school in urban or rural high poverty areas, as discussed in the solicitation for grant applications published in the November 14, 1995, issue of the Federal Register. As discussed in the solicitation on pages 57276–57282, the Secretaries recognize the particular challenges faced by local partnerships serving youth in urban and rural high poverty areas in preparing them for first jobs in high-skill, highwage careers and in increasing their opportunities for further education and training. Similarly, the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community (EZ/ EC) initiative is aimed at rebuilding communities in America's povertystricken inner cities and rural heartlands. Under the EZ/EC initiative, the Federal Government has designated certain geographic areas as EZs and as ECs in accordance with Internal Revenue Code (IRC) section 1391, as amended by Title XIII of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (Pub. L. 103-66). The selected areas were designated as EZs or ECs based on the quality of their strategic plans addressing how each zone or community would link economic development with education and training, as well as how community development, public safety, human services, and environmental initiatives together would support sustainable communities.

The Secretaries view Urban/Rural Opportunities Grants as well suited for inclusion in a comprehensive approach to economic and community development that addresses the special challenges facing youth in high poverty areas in making the transition from school to work or further education and training. By improving the quality of education and training provided to high poverty area youth, School-to-Work Opportunities initiatives enhance the economic opportunities of such youth and contribute to the improvement of impoverished communities. Communities designated as EZs or ECs have already demonstrated a capacity for the type of collaboration and cooperative planning that is critical to developing and implementing successful School-to-Work Opportunities initiatives.

Interested individuals may contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) at 1–800–998–9999 for additional information on the urban

EZ/EC initiative and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) at 1–800–645–4712 for additional information on the rural EZ/EC initiative. A listing of areas that have been selected as EZs or ECs is included in an appendix to this notice.

Section B. Priority

In addition to the priority in section 302(b)(3) of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, the Secretaries propose to give competitive preference to applications from partnerships that propose to implement a School-to-Work Opportunities initiative serving youth who reside or attend school in an area designated as an EZ or an EC. The Secretaries would select an application for an Urban/Rural Opportunities Grant that meets this priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority.

Invitation to Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding this proposed competitive preference. All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period, at the National School-to-Work Office, 400 Virginia Avenue, SW., Room 210, Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week, except Federal holidays.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 as implemented in 34 CFR Part 79 and 29 CFR Part 17. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Departments' specific plans and actions for this program.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6101. (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 278D: School-to-Work Opportunities: Urban/Rural Opportunities Grants)