

Congress submitted pursuant to Section 618(g). Funds provided under Section 618 may be used to fund projects proposed by applicants that are private for-profit agencies only when necessary because of the unique nature of the study.

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(4), funds provided under the Bilingual Education Research, Evaluation, and Dissemination Program must be administered by individuals with expertise in bilingual education and the needs of limited English proficient students and their families. Funds provided under this program must be used to improve bilingual education and special alternative instruction programs for children and youth of limited English proficiency.

As part of the efforts to improve student assessment, the Department made awards in FY 1995 under the Assessment Development and Evaluation Grants Program, authorized by section 220 of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Under this program, the Secretary provides grants to SEAs, LEAs or partnerships of such agencies to help defray the costs of developing, field-testing and evaluating State assessments aligned to State content standards. Applications involving 43 States were received in 1995 and grants were made to support 9 projects. The Secretary expects these projects to develop model strategies for the assessment of student learning that will have a significant impact on State and local level systemic reform efforts.

Depending on the availability of funds in FY 1996 and subsequent years, the Secretary may decide to use funds under the proposed priorities to continue projects initially funded under the Assessment Development and Evaluation Grants program or to fund additional applications considered in the 1995 competition. Alternatively, the Secretary may decide to hold a competition for new awards under the proposed priorities.

The Secretary will announce the final priorities in a notice in the Federal Register. The final priorities will be determined by responses to this notice, available funds, and other considerations of the Department. Funding of particular projects depends on the availability of funds, the nature of the final priorities, and the quality of the applications received. The publication of these proposed priorities does not preclude the Secretary from proposing additional priorities, nor does it limit the Secretary to funding only these priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

Note: This notice of proposed priorities does *not* solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition will be published in the Federal Register concurrent with or following publication of the notice of final priorities.

#### Proposed Absolute Priorities

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to projects that meet one or more of the following priorities. The Secretary proposes to fund only projects that meet one or more of these absolute priorities:

Proposed Absolute Priority 1—Projects that develop, field-test, and evaluate assessments that are aligned to State content standards.

Proposed Absolute Priority 2—Projects that modify, field-test, and evaluate assessments to address the needs of children and youth with disabilities or limited English proficiency. Assessments to be modified must be those developed under priority (1) or similar assessments developed for all students and aligned to State content standards.

All projects must—

- (a) Examine the validity and reliability of the assessment for the particular purposes for which the assessment was developed;
- (b) Ensure that the assessment is consistent with relevant, nationally recognized professional and technical standards for assessments;
- (c) Devote special attention to how the assessment treats all students, especially with regard to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and language proficiency of those students; and
- (d) Be developed by, or under the direction of, an SEA, LEA, or consortia of those agencies.

#### Selection Criteria

With respect to new awards made with funds from Section 618 of IDEA, the Secretary does not intend to use the selection criteria in 34 CFR 327.31. With respect to any new awards made with funds from the Bilingual Education Research, Evaluation, and Dissemination Program, the Secretary does not intend to use the selection criteria in 34 CFR 75.210. The Secretary intends to use the evaluation criteria in 34 CFR Part 700 to select all new awards under these priorities.

#### Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. 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 Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

#### Invitation To Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding these proposed priorities.

All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public inspection, during and after the comment period in OERI, Room 510, 555 New Jersey Avenue, Washington, D.C., between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

#### Applicable Program Regulations

(a) 34 CFR part 327, with the exception of 34 CFR 327.31; and (b) the final regulations for the Standards for the Conduct and Evaluation of Activities Carried Out by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)—Evaluation of applications for Grants and Cooperative Agreements and Proposals for Contracts, published on September 14, 1995 in the Federal Register (60 FR 47808), to be codified as 34 CFR Part 700.

Authority: 20 U.S.C. 8001.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.215L—Fund for the Improvement of Education Program)

Dated: December 5, 1995.

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Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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#### Office of Educational Research and Improvement: National Institutes' Field-Initiated Studies Grant Program

**AGENCY:** Department of Education.

**ACTION:** Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for fiscal year (FY) 1996—Amendment.

On September 14, 1995, the Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement published in the Federal Register (60 FR 47830) a notice inviting applications for new awards for the National Institutes' Field-Initiated Studies Grant Program. This notice amends the original information by adding a paragraph that indicates that the Secretary may fund two cycles of awards from this competition.