

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA Number: 84.308B]

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)—Education Research and Development Centers Program (Center on Policy and Teaching Excellence); Notice Inviting Applications for a New Award for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997

Purpose of Program: To support a national research and development center to carry out sustained research that will lead to improvements in policymaking and policies to support excellence in teaching.

Eligible Applicants: Institutions of higher education, institutions of higher education in consort with public agencies or private nonprofit organizations, and interstate agencies established by compact that operate subsidiary bodies established to conduct postsecondary educational research and development.

Deadline for Receipt of Applications: June 6, 1997.

Note: All applications must be received on or before that date. This requirement takes exception to EDGAR, 34 CFR 75.102. In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553), it is the practice of the Secretary to offer interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed regulations. However, this amendment makes procedural changes only and does not establish new substantive policy. Therefore, under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(A), proposed rulemaking is not required.

Applications Available: April 17, 1997

Estimated Available Funds: The estimated funding level over the five-year project period for the national research center on policy and teaching excellence is \$1,500,000 each year. Actual funding will depend upon the availability of funds and needs as reflected in the approved application.

Estimated Number of Awards: 1.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) the regulations in 34 CFR Part 700.

Priority: The absolute priority in the notice of final priority and post-award requirements for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register** apply to this competition.

Selection Criteria

(a) The Secretary uses the selection criteria in 20 U.S.C. 6031(c)(3)(E) (i)–(vi) and 34 CFR 700.30(e) to evaluate applications for new grants under this program.

(b) (1) The Secretary has incorporated the statutory selection criteria into the criteria established under 34 CFR 700.30. The statutory criteria are: (3)(ii)(C), (4)(ii)(D), (4)(ii)(E), (5)(ii)(D), (5)(ii)(E), and (5)(ii)(F).

(2) The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses (34 CFR 700.3(c)).

(3) The maximum score for all of these criteria is 100 points.

(c) The criteria.

(1) *National Significance.* (30 points)

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

(ii) In determining the national significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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 potential contribution of the project to the development and advancement of theory and knowledge in the field of study.

(D) 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.

(2) *Quality of the Project Design.* (30 points)

(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 considers the following factors:

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

(B) 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.

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

(D) The quality of the plan for evaluating the functioning and impact

of the project, including the objectivity of the evaluation and the extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the project.

(3) *Quality and Potential Contributions of Personnel.* (20 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the quality and potential contributions of personnel for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality and potential contributions of personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The qualifications, including training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.

(B) The qualifications, including training and experience, of key project personnel.

(C) Whether the applicant has assembled a group of high quality researchers sufficient to achieve the mission of the center.

(4) *Adequacy of Resources.* (10 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The adequacy of support from the lead applicant organization.

(B) The relevance and commitment of each partner in the project to the implementation and success of the project.

(C) Whether the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the project.

(D) Whether the proposed organizational structure and arrangements will facilitate achievement of the mission of the center.

(E) Whether the directors and support staff will devote a majority of their time to the activities of the center.

(5) *Quality of the Management Plan.* (10 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of the management plan of a proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the project, including the specification of staff responsibility, timelines, and benchmarks for accomplishing project tasks.

(B) The adequacy of plans for ensuring high-quality products and services.

(C) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the project,

including those of parents and teachers, where appropriate.

(D) Whether there is substantial staff commitment to the work of the center.

(E) The contributions of primary researchers (other than researchers at the proposed center) and the appropriateness of such researchers' experiences and expertise in the context of the proposed center activities, and the adequacy of such primary researchers' time and commitment to achievement of the mission of the center.

(F) The manner in which the results of the education research will be disseminated for further use, including how the center will work with the Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination.

For Applications or Information Contact: Ron Anson, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20208-5510. Telephone: (202) 219-2214. Internet address: (ron_anson@ed.gov). 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.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of application notices or discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; on the Internet Gopher Server (at gopher://gcs.ed.gov); or on the World Wide Web (at <http://gcs.ed.gov>). However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6031(c)(1)(B)(i).

Dated: April 7, 1997.

Ramon C. Cortines,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Educational Research and Development Centers Program

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priority for fiscal year (FY) 1997.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces a final priority under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program. The Secretary takes this action to support research on policymaking

and policy structures to achieve excellence in teaching.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority takes effect on May 12, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ron Anson, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20208-5510. Telephone: (202) 219-2214. Internet: (ron_anson@ed.gov). 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: The Office of Educational Research and Improvement, authorized under Title IX of Public Law 103-227, (20 U.S.C. 6001 *et seq.*) supports educational research and development activities. The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policy-Making, and Management is one of five research institutes that carry out coordinated and comprehensive programs of research, development, evaluation, and dissemination activities designed to provide research-based leadership for the improvement of education.

The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policy-Making, and Management supports a range of research, development, and dissemination activities focused on core issues in education. Activities are carried out by national research and development centers, field-initiated studies, and a variety of directed research, development, and dissemination activities.

The Secretary believes that increasing the capacity of the nation's education system to improve the quality of education depends on knowledge generated by an enduring program of education research and development. Knowledge gained from education research and development can help guide the national investment in education and support local and State improvement efforts. The final priority for research on policy and teaching excellence is for a research and development center to be supported by the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policy-Making, and Management.

Because they carry out sustained, long term research and development, centers are a primary mechanism for pursuing new knowledge about education. Center awards are made to institutions of higher education, institutions of higher education in consort with public agencies or non-profit organizations, and interstate agencies established by

compact that operate subsidiary bodies to conduct postsecondary education research and development.

Prior to this announcement and in conjunction with planning for Educational Research and Development Center competitions in fiscal year 1996, OERI engaged in a series of meetings, regional hearings, and **Federal Register** notices that solicited advice from parents, teachers, administrators, policy-makers, business people, researchers, and others to identify the most needed research and development activities. Following these activities and subsequent research priorities planning meetings in which OERI engaged, the Secretary published a notice of proposed priority in the **Federal Register** on February 18, 1997 (62 FR 7218) for a national educational research and development center that would carry out sustained research and development to address problems and issues related to policy and teaching excellence. Written public comments were to be submitted to the Secretary by March 20, 1997.

The Secretary reviewed the written public comments and made no changes to the proposed priority. The reasoning for this decision is explained in the Appendix to this notice.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priorities, eight parties submitted written comments. An analysis of the comments is published as an appendix to this notice of final priority. Major issues are grouped according to subject. Technical and other minor changes and suggested changes the Secretary is not legally authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority are not addressed.

Absolute Priority: Policy and Teaching Excellence

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds only one application that meets the priority listed below. Funding this priority will depend on the availability of funds and the quality of applications received. The Secretary supports a national research and development center on research on policy and teaching excellence.

(A) This center must—

(1) Conduct a coherent, sustained program of research and development to address problems and issues of national significance in the specific priority area, using a well-conceptualized and theoretically sound framework;