

Dated: March 20, 2012.

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*Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Applications for New Awards; Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)

**AGENCY:** Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

**ACTION:** Notice.

#### Overview Information

##### *Strengthening Institutions Program*

Notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2012.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 84.031A.

##### *Dates:*

*Applications Available:* March 23, 2012.

*Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:* April 23, 2012.

*Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:* June 21, 2012.

#### Full Text of Announcement

##### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

**Purpose of Program:** The SIP provides grants to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) to help them become self sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the institution's academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.

**Priorities:** This notice includes one competitive preference priority and three invitational priorities. The competitive preference priority is from the Department's notice of final supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs, published in the **Federal Register** on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637).

**Competitive Preference Priority:** For FY 2012 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, this priority is a competitive preference priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i) we award up to an additional five points to an application, depending on how well the application meets this priority.

This priority is:

##### *Supporting Programs, Practices, or Strategies for Which There Is Strong or Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness*

Projects that are supported by strong or moderate evidence. A project that is supported by strong evidence (as defined in this notice) will receive more points than a project that is supported by moderate evidence (as defined in this notice).

**Note:** In scoring this priority, applicants determined to have strong evidence will receive the full five points. Applicants determined to have moderate evidence will receive 2.5 points. The Department will screen applicants' response to this competitive preference priority in accordance with the requirements in this notice and determine which applications have met the evidence standards in the priority.

**Invitational Priorities:** For FY 2012 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, these priorities are invitational priorities.

These priorities are:

##### *Invitational Priority 1—Increasing Postsecondary Success*

Projects that are designed to address the following priority area:

Increasing the number and proportion of high-need students (as defined in this notice) who persist in and complete college or other postsecondary education and training.

##### *Invitational Priority 2—Technology*

Projects that are designed to improve student achievement or faculty effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing faculty to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

##### *Invitational Priority 3—Improving Productivity*

Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, alternative staffing models, competency-based learning, use of open educational resources (as defined in this notice), or other strategies.

**Definitions:** The following definitions are from the notice of final supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs published in the **Federal Register** on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR

27637), and apply to the priorities in this notice:

**Carefully matched comparison group design** means a type of quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice) that attempts to approximate an experimental study (as defined in this notice). More specifically, it is a design in which project participants are matched with non-participants based on key characteristics that are thought to be related to the outcome. These characteristics include, but are not limited to:

(1) Prior test scores and other measures of academic achievement (preferably, the same measures that the study will use to evaluate outcomes for the two groups);

(2) Demographic characteristics, such as age, disability, gender, English proficiency, ethnicity, poverty level, parents' educational attainment, and single- or two-parent family background;

(3) The time period in which the two groups are studied (e.g., the two groups are children entering kindergarten in the same year as opposed to sequential years); and

(4) Methods used to collect outcome data (e.g., the same test of reading skills administered in the same way to both groups).

**Note:** The examples cited in this definition are indications of the types of comparisons applicants could make when designing a carefully matched comparison group study. Applicants might want to consider comparisons that are proper in the higher education context—such as comparing the same entering cohort of students.

**Experimental study** means a study that employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, schools, or districts to participate in a project being evaluated (treatment group) or not to participate in the project (control group). The effect of the project is the average difference in outcomes between the treatment and control groups.

**Note:** The types of random assignment mentioned above are provided as examples. Applicants might want to consider random assignment that is relevant in the higher education context.

**High-need children and high-need students** means children and students at risk of educational failure, such as children and students who are living in poverty, who are English learners, who are far below grade level, or who are not on track to becoming college- or career-ready by graduation, who have left school or college before receiving, respectively, a regular high school diploma or a college degree or

certificate, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who are pregnant or parenting teenagers, who have been incarcerated, who are new immigrants, who are migrant, or who have disabilities.

*Interrupted time series design* means a type of quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice) in which the outcome of interest is measured multiple times before and after the treatment for program participants only. If the program had an impact, the outcomes after treatment will have a different slope or level from those before treatment. That is, the series should show an "interruption" of the prior situation at the time when the program was implemented. Adding a comparison group time series, such as schools not participating in the program or schools participating in the program in a different geographic area, substantially increases the reliability of the findings.<sup>1</sup>

*Moderate evidence* means evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity), or studies with high external validity but moderate internal validity. The following would constitute moderate evidence:

(1) At least one well-designed and well-implemented (as defined in this notice) experimental or quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice) supporting the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program, with small sample sizes or other conditions of implementation or analysis that limit generalizability;

(2) At least one well-designed and well-implemented (as defined in this notice) experimental or quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice) that does not demonstrate equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry

but that has no other major flaws related to internal validity; or

(3) Correlational research with strong statistical controls for selection bias and for discerning the influence of internal factors.

*Open educational resources (OER)* means teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or repurposing by others.

*Quasi-experimental study* means an evaluation design that attempts to approximate an experimental study (as defined in this notice) and can support causal conclusions (i.e., minimizes threats to internal validity, such as selection bias, or allows them to be modeled). Well-designed and well-implemented (as defined in this notice) quasi-experimental studies include carefully matched comparison group designs (as defined in this notice), interrupted time series designs (as defined in this notice), or regression discontinuity designs (as defined in this notice).

*Regression discontinuity design study* means, in part, a quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice) design that closely approximates an experimental study (as defined in this notice). In a regression discontinuity design, participants are assigned to a treatment or comparison group based on a numerical rating or score of a variable unrelated to the treatment such as the rating of an application for funding. Another example would be assignment of eligible students, teachers, classrooms, or schools above a certain score ("cut score") to the treatment group and assignment of those below the score to the comparison group.

**Note:** The types of regression discontinuity study designs are provided as examples to help applicants. Applicants might want to consider regression discontinuity study designs that are relevant in the higher education context.

*Strong evidence* means evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and studies that in total include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the State, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity). The following are examples of strong evidence:

(1) More than one well-designed and well-implemented (as defined in this notice) experimental study (as defined in this notice) or well-designed and well-implemented (as defined in this notice) quasi-experimental study (as

defined in this notice) that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program; or

(2) One large, well-designed and well-implemented (as defined in this notice) randomized controlled, multisite trial that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program.

*Well-designed and well-implemented* means, with respect to an experimental or quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice), that the study meets the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards, with or without reservations (see <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/iddocviewer/doc.aspx?docid=19&tocid=1> and in particular the description of "Reasons for Not Meeting Standards" at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/iddocviewer/Doc.aspx?docId=19&tocId=4#reasons>).

**Program Authority:** 20 U.S.C. 1057–1059d (Title III, Part A, of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA)).

**Note:** In 2008, the HEA was amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) Pub. L. 110–315. The HEOA made a number of technical and substantive revisions to SIP. Please note that the regulations for the SIP in 34 CFR part 607 have not been updated to reflect these statutory changes.

**Applicable Regulations:** (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 607. (c) The notice of final supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs, published in the **Federal Register** on December 15, 2010 (75 FR 78486), and corrected on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27637).

**Note:** The regulations in 34 CFR part 79 apply to all applicants except federally recognized Indian tribes.

**Note:** The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to institutions of higher education only.

## II. Award Information

*Type of Award:* Discretionary grants.  
*Estimated Available Funds:* \$5,304,964.

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in FY 2013 from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition.

*Individual Development Grants:*

*Estimated Range of Awards:*

\$350,500–\$403,500 per year.

*Estimated Average Size of Awards:* \$377,000 per year.

*Estimated Number of Awards:* 13.

<sup>1</sup> A single subject or single case design is an adaptation of an interrupted time series design that relies on the comparison of treatment effects on a single subject or group of single subjects. There is little confidence that findings based on this design would be the same for other members of the population. In some single subject designs, treatment reversal or multiple baseline designs are used to increase internal validity. In a treatment reversal design, after a pretreatment or baseline outcome measurement is compared with a post treatment measure, the treatment would then be stopped for a period of time; a second baseline measure of the outcome would be taken, followed by a second application of the treatment or a different treatment. A multiple baseline design addresses concerns about the effects of normal development, timing of the treatment, and amount of the treatment with treatment-reversal designs by using a varying time schedule for introduction of the treatment and/or treatments of different lengths or intensity.

Cooperative Arrangement Development Grants:

*Estimated Range of Awards:*

\$300,000–\$500,000 per year.

*Estimated Average Size of Awards:*

\$400,000 per year.

*Estimated Number of Awards:* 1.

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

*Project Period:* Up to 60 months.

### III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:* This program is authorized by Title III, Part A, of the HEA. To qualify as an eligible institution under any Title III, Part A program, an institution must—

(1) Be accredited or preaccredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association that the Secretary has determined to be a reliable authority as to the quality of education or training offered;

(2) Be legally authorized by the State in which it is located to be a junior college or to provide an educational program for which it awards a bachelor's degree;

(3) Be designated as an “eligible institution” by demonstrating that it: (A) Has an enrollment of needy students as described in 34 CFR 607.3; and (B) has low average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate student as described in 34 CFR 607.4.

**Note:** For purposes of establishing eligibility for this competition, the Notice Inviting Applications for Designation as Eligible Institutions for FY 2012 was published in the **Federal Register** on December 15, 2011 (76 FR 77982), and the deadline for submission of the designation of eligibility application was February 10, 2012. Only institutions that submitted the required application and received designation through this process are eligible to submit applications for this competition.

*Relationship Between the Title III, Part A Programs and the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Programs.*

**Note 1:** A grantee under the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Program, which is authorized under Title V of the HEA, may not receive a grant under any HEA, Title III, Part A program. The Title III, Part A programs include the SIP, as well as the Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, and Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions programs. Furthermore, a current HSI program grantee may not give up its HSI grant to receive a grant under SIP or any Title III, Part A program as described in 34 CFR 607.2(g)(1).

**Note 2:** An eligible HSI that does not fall within the limitation described in Note 1 (i.e., is not a current grantee under the HSI program) may apply for a FY 2012 grant under all Title III, Part A programs for which it is eligible, as well as receive consideration for a grant under the HSI program. However, a successful applicant may receive only one grant as described in 34 CFR 607.2(g)(1).

**Note 3:** An eligible IHE that submits more than one application may only be awarded one individual development grant or one cooperative arrangement development grant in a fiscal year. We will not award a second cooperative arrangement development grant to an otherwise eligible IHE for the same award year as the IHE's existing cooperative arrangement development grant award as described in 34 CFR 607.9(b)(1).

**Note 4:** The Department will make five-year awards for individual development grants and five-year awards for cooperative arrangement development grants in rank order from the funding slate according to the average score received from a panel of three readers plus any competitive preference points awarded based upon determination of the evidence.

2. a. *Cost Sharing or Matching:* This program does not require cost sharing or matching unless the grantee uses a portion of its grant for establishing or improving an endowment fund. If a grantee uses a portion of its grant for endowment fund purposes, it must match those grant funds with non-Federal funds (20 U.S.C. 1059c(c)(3)(B)).

b. *Supplement-Not-Supplant:* This program involves supplement-not-supplant funding requirements. Grant funds shall be used so that they supplement and, to the extent practical, increase the funds that would otherwise be available for the activities to be carried out under the grant and in no case supplant those funds (34 CFR 607.30(b)).

### IV. Application and Submission Information

1. *Address to Request Application Package:* You can obtain an application via the Internet using the following address: <http://Grants.gov>. If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact LaTonya Brown or Robyn Wood, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street NW., room 6033, Washington, DC 20006–8513. You may contact the individuals at the following email addresses and telephone numbers: [LaTonya.Brown@ed.gov](mailto:LaTonya.Brown@ed.gov); (202) 502–7619.

[Robyn.Wood@ed.gov](mailto:Robyn.Wood@ed.gov); (202) 502–7437.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), toll free, at 1–800–576–7734.

Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) by contacting the program contacts listed in this section.

2. *Content and Form of Application Submission:* Requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this program.

*Page Limit:* The application narrative (Part III of the application) is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria and the competitive preference priority that reviewers use to evaluate your application. We have established mandatory page limits for both the Individual Development Grant and the Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant applications. If you are addressing the competitive preference priority you must limit the application narrative (Part III) to no more than 55 pages for the Individual Development Grant application and no more than 75 pages for the Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant application. Please include a separate heading when responding to the competitive preference priority. If you are not addressing the competitive preference priority, you must limit your application narrative to no more than 50 pages for the Individual Development Grant and no more than 70 pages for the Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant application.

**Note:** Applicants should provide information addressing the required evidence standards in Appendix D, under “Other Attachments Form,” of the application. An applicant must either ensure that all evidence is available to the Department from publicly available sources and provide links or other guidance indicating where it is available or include copies of evidence in Appendix D of the application. If the Department determines that an applicant has provided insufficient information, the applicant will not have an opportunity to provide additional information to support the application.

For the purpose of determining compliance with the page limit, each page on which there are words will be counted as one full page. Applicants must use the following standards:

- A “page” is 8.5” x 11”, on one side only, with 1” margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. Page numbers and an identifier may be outside of the 1” margin.
- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative, *except* titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions. Text in charts,

tables, figures, and graphs in the application narrative may be single spaced and will count toward the page limit.

- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger, and no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch). However, you may use a 10-point font in charts, tables, figures, graphs, footnotes, and endnotes.

- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial. Applications submitted in any other font (including Times Roman and Arial Narrow) will not be accepted.

The page limit does not apply to Part I, the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424-cover sheet); the Supplemental Information for SF 424 Form required by the Department of Education; Part II, the budget section, Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), including the narrative budget justification; Part IV, the assurances and certifications; or the one-page program abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, or the letters of support. However, the page limit does apply to all of the application narrative section (Part III), including the budget narrative of the selection criteria and the competitive preference priority. If you include any attachments or appendices not specifically requested in the application package, these items will be counted as part of your application narrative (Part III) for the purposed of the page limit requirement. You must include your complete response to the selection criteria in the application narrative.

**Note:** The narrative response to the budget selection criteria is not the same as the activity detail budget form and supporting narrative. The supporting narrative for the activity detail budget form lists the requested budget line items line by line.

We will reject your application if you exceed the page limit.

### 3. Submission Dates and Times:

*Applications Available:* March 23, 2012.

*Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:* April 23, 2012.

Applications for grants under this program must be submitted electronically using the *Grants.gov* Apply site (*Grants.gov*). For information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, or in paper format by mail or hand delivery if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, please refer to section IV. 7. *Other Submission Requirements* of this notice.

We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements.

Individuals with disabilities who need an accommodation or auxiliary aid in connection with the application process should contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** in section VII of this notice. If the Department provides an accommodation or auxiliary aid to an individual with a disability in connection with the application process, the individual's application remains subject to all other requirements and limitations in this notice.

*Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:* June 21, 2012.

4. *Intergovernmental Review:* This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372 is in the application package for this program.

5. *Funding Restrictions:* (a) General. We reference the regulations outlining funding restrictions in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

(b) Applicability of Executive Order 13202. Applicants that apply for construction funds under the Title III, Part A, HEA programs, must comply with Executive Order 13202, signed by former President George W. Bush on February 17, 2001, and amended on April 6, 2001. This Executive order provides that recipients of Federal construction funds may not "require or prohibit bidders, offerors, contractors, or subcontractors to enter into or adhere to agreements with one or more labor organizations, on the same or other construction project(s)" or "otherwise discriminate against bidders, offerors, contractors, or subcontractors for becoming or refusing to become or remain signatories or otherwise adhere to agreements with one or more labor organizations, on the same or other construction project(s)." However, the Executive order does not prohibit contractors or subcontractors from voluntarily entering into these agreements. Projects funded under this program that include construction activity will be provided a copy of this Executive order and will be asked to certify that they will adhere to it.

6. *Data Universal Numbering System Number, Taxpayer Identification Number, and Central Contractor Registry:* To do business with the Department of Education, you must—

- Have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
- Register both your DUNS number and TIN with the Central Contractor

Registry (CCR), the Government's primary registrant database;

- Provide your DUNS number and TIN on your application; and

- Maintain an active CCR registration with current information while your application is under review by the Department and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.

You can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet. A DUNS number can be created within one business day.

If you are a corporate entity, agency, institution, or organization, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service. If you are an individual, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration. If you need a new TIN, please allow two to five weeks for your TIN to become active.

The CCR registration process may take five or more business days to complete.

If you are currently registered with the CCR, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you will need to update your CCR registration on an annual basis. This may take three or more business days to complete. In addition, if you are submitting your application via *Grants.gov*, you must (1) be designated by your organization as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (2) register yourself with *Grants.gov* as an AOR. Details of these steps are outlined on the following *Grants.gov* Web page: [www.grants.gov/applicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp).

### 7. Other Submission Requirements:

Applications for grants under the Strengthening Institutions Program must be submitted electronically unless you qualify for an exception to this requirement in accordance with the instructions in this section.

#### a. Electronic Submission of Applications

Applications for grants under the Strengthening Institutions Program (CFDA number 84.031A) must be submitted electronically using the Governmentwide *Grants.gov* Apply site at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). Through this site, you will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit your application. You may not email an electronic copy of a grant application to us.

We will reject your application if you submit it in paper format unless, as described elsewhere in this section, you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement and submit, no later than two weeks before

the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. Further information regarding calculation of the date that is two weeks before the application deadline date is provided later in this section under *Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement*.

You may access the electronic grant application for this competition at [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). You must search for the downloadable application package for this program by the CFDA number. Do not include the CFDA number's alpha suffix in your search (e.g., search for 84.031, not 84.031A).

Please note the following:

- When you enter the Grants.gov site, you will find information about submitting an application electronically through the site, as well as the hours of operation.

- Applications received by Grants.gov are date and time stamped. Your application must be fully uploaded and submitted and must be date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. Except as otherwise noted in this section, we will not accept your application if it is received—that is, date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system—after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements. When we retrieve your application from Grants.gov, we will notify you if we are rejecting your application because it was date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.

- The amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

- You should review and follow the Education Submission Procedures for submitting an application through Grants.gov that are included in the application package for this competition to ensure that you submit your application in a timely manner to the Grants.gov system. You can also find the Education Submission Procedures pertaining to Grants.gov under News and Events on the Department's G5 system home page at <http://www.G5.gov>.

- You will not receive additional point value because you submit your application in electronic format, nor

will we penalize you if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, as described elsewhere in this section, and submit your application in paper format.

- You must submit all documents electronically, including all information you typically provide on the following forms: The Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), the Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424, Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications.

- You must upload any narrative sections and all other attachments to your application as files in a PDF (Portable Document) read-only, non-modifiable format. Do not upload an interactive or fillable PDF file. If you upload a file type other than a read-only, non-modifiable PDF or submit a password-protected file, we will not review that material.

- Your electronic application must comply with any page-limit requirements described in this notice.

- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive from Grants.gov an automatic notification of receipt that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. (This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by the Department.) The Department then will retrieve your application from Grants.gov and send a second notification to you by email. This second notification indicates that the Department has received your application and has assigned your application a PR/Award number (an ED-specified identifying number unique to your application).

- We may request that you provide us original signatures on forms at a later date.

*Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of Technical Issues with the Grants.gov System:* If you are experiencing problems submitting your application through Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Support Desk, toll free, at 1-800-518-4726. You must obtain a Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number and must keep a record of it.

If you are prevented from electronically submitting your application on the application deadline date because of technical problems with the Grants.gov system, we will grant you an extension until 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, the following business day to enable you to transmit your application electronically or by hand delivery. You also may mail your application by following the mailing instructions described elsewhere in this notice.

If you submit an application after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date, please contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** in section VII of this notice and provide an explanation of the technical problem you experienced with Grants.gov, along with the Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number. We will accept your application if we can confirm that a technical problem occurred with the Grants.gov system and that that problem affected your ability to submit your application by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. The Department will contact you after a determination is made on whether your application will be accepted.

**Note:** The extensions to which we refer in this section apply only to the unavailability of, or technical problems with, the Grants.gov system. We will not grant you an extension if you failed to fully register to submit your application to Grants.gov before the application deadline date and time or if the technical problem you experienced is unrelated to the Grants.gov system.

*Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement:* You qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, and may submit your application in paper format, if you are unable to submit an application through the Grants.gov system because—

- You do not have access to the Internet; or

- You do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system; and

- No later than two weeks before the application deadline date (14 calendar days or, if the fourteenth calendar day before the application deadline date falls on a Federal holiday, the next business day following the Federal holiday), you mail or fax a written statement to the Department, explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevent you from using the Internet to submit your application.

If you mail your written statement to the Department, it must be postmarked no later than two weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax your written statement to the Department, we must receive the faxed statement no later than two weeks before the application deadline date.

Address and mail or fax your statement to: LaTonya Brown or Robyn Wood, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street NW., room 6033, Washington, DC 20006-8513. FAX: (202) 502-7861.

Your paper application must be submitted in accordance with the mail

or hand delivery instructions described in this notice.

*b. Submission of Paper Applications by Mail*

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you may mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier) your application to the Department. You must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.031A), LBJ Basement Level 1, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20202-4260.

You must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

- (1) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark.
- (2) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.
- (3) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.
- (4) Any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If you mail your application through the U.S. Postal Service, we do not accept either of the following as proof of mailing:

- (1) A private metered postmark.
- (2) A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

If your application is postmarked after the application deadline date, we will not consider your application.

**Note:** The U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office.

*c. Submission of Paper Applications by Hand Delivery*

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you (or a courier service) may deliver your paper application to the Department by hand. You must deliver the original and two copies of your application by hand, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.031A), 550 12th Street SW., Room 7041, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202-4260. The Application Control Center accepts hand deliveries daily between 8 a.m. and 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, except Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

**Note for Mail or Hand Delivery of Paper Applications:** If you mail or hand deliver your application to the Department—

(1) You must indicate on the envelope and—if not provided by the Department—in Item 11 of the SF 424 the CFDA number, including suffix letter, if any, of the competition under which you are submitting your application; and

(2) The Application Control Center will mail to you a notification of receipt of your grant application. If you do not receive this notification within 15 business days from the application deadline date, you should call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

**V. Application Review Information**

1. *Selection Criteria:* The selection criteria for this program are from 34 CFR 607.22, (a) through (g). Applicants must address each of the following selection criteria (separately for each proposed activity). The total weight of the selection criteria is 100 points; the maximum score for each criterion is noted in parentheses. The complete language of the selection criteria is in the application package for this competition.

- (a) Quality of The Applicant's Comprehensive Development Plan (Maximum 25 Points).
- (b) Quality of Activity Objectives (Maximum 15 Points).
- (c) Quality of Implementation Strategy (Maximum 20 Points).
- (d) Quality of Key Personnel (Maximum 7 Points).
- (e) Quality of Project Management Plan (Maximum 10 Points).
- (f) Quality of Evaluation Plan (Maximum 15 Points).
- (g) Budget (Maximum 8 Points).

2. *Review and Selection Process:* (a) Awards will be made in rank order according to the average score received from a panel of three readers.

*Tie-breaker for Development Grants.* In tie-breaking situations for development grants, 34 CFR 607.23(b) requires that we award one additional point to an application from an IHE that has an endowment fund of which the current market value, per full time equivalent (FTE) enrolled student, is less than the average current market value of the endowment funds, per FTE enrolled student at comparable type institutions that offer similar instruction. We award one additional point to an application from an IHE that has expenditures for library materials per FTE enrolled student that are less than the average expenditure for library materials per FTE enrolled student at similar type institutions. We also add one additional point to an application from an IHE that proposes to carry out one or more of the following activities—

- (1) Faculty development;

(2) Funds and administrative management;

(3) Development and improvement of academic programs;

(4) Acquisition of equipment for use in strengthening management and academic programs;

(5) Joint use of facilities; and

(6) Student services.

For the purpose of these funding considerations, we use 2009–2010 data.

If a tie remains after applying the tie-breaker mechanism above, priority will be given in the case of applicants for: (a) Individual development grants to applicants that have the lowest endowment values per FTE enrolled student; and (b) cooperative arrangement development grants to applicants in accordance with section 394(b) of the HEA, if the Secretary determines that the cooperative arrangement is geographically and economically sound or will benefit the applicant institution.

We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)–(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary also requires various assurances including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

3. *Special Conditions:* Under 34 CFR 74.14 and 80.12, the Secretary may impose special conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable; has a history of unsatisfactory performance; has a financial or other management system that does not meet the standards in 34 CFR parts 74 or 80, as applicable; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant (34 CFR 607.24); or, is otherwise not responsible.

**VI. Award Administration Information**

1. *Award Notices:* If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN). We may notify you informally, also.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we notify you.

2. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements:* We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements in the *Applicable Regulations* section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the *Applicable Regulations* section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. *Reporting:* (a) If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition. This does not apply if you have an exception under 2 CFR 170.110(b).

(b) At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multi-year award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118 and 34 CFR 607.31. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to [www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html](http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html).

4. *Performance Measures:* The Secretary has established the following key performance measures for assessing the effectiveness of the Strengthening Institutions Program:

a. The percentage change, over the 5-year period, of the number of full-time degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled at SIP institutions. Note that this is a long-term measure, which will be used to periodically gauge performance;

b. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students at 4-year SIP institutions who were in their first year of postsecondary enrollment in the previous year and are enrolled in the current year at the same SIP institution;

c. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students at 2-year SIP institutions who were in their first year of postsecondary enrollment in the previous year and are enrolled in the current year at the same SIP institution;

d. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate

students enrolled at 4-year SIP institutions graduating within 6 years of enrollment; and

e. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students enrolled at 2-year SIP institutions graduating within 3 years of enrollment.

5. *Continuation Awards:* In making a continuation award, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.253, the extent to which a grantee has made "substantial progress toward meeting the objectives in its approved application." This consideration includes the review of a grantee's progress in meeting the targets and projected outcomes in its approved application, and whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget. In making a continuation grant, the Secretary also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

#### VII. Agency Contacts

##### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

LaTonya Brown or Robyn Wood, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street NW., room 6033, Washington, DC 20006-8513. You may contact these individuals at the following email addresses and telephone numbers: [Latonya.Brown@ed.gov](mailto:Latonya.Brown@ed.gov); (202) 502-7619. [Robyn.Wood@ed.gov](mailto:Robyn.Wood@ed.gov); (202) 502-7437.

If you use a TDD or a TTY, call the FRS, toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

#### VIII. Other Information

*Accessible Format:* Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotope, or compact disc) on request to the program contact person listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice.

*Electronic Access to This Document:* The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. Free Internet access to the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations is available via the Federal Digital System at: [www.gpo.gov/fdsys](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys). At this site you can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the **Federal Register**, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). To use PDF, you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

You may also access documents of the Department published in the **Federal Register** by using the article search feature at: [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov). Specifically through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Dated: March 20, 2012.

**Eduardo M. Ochoa,**

*Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education.*

[FR Doc. 2012-7070 Filed 3-22-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### List of Correspondence From October 1, 2011, through December 31, 2011

**AGENCY:** Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Department of Education.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary is publishing the following list of correspondence from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to individuals during the previous quarter. The correspondence describes the Department's interpretations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the regulations that implement the IDEA. This list and the letters or other documents described in this list, with personally identifiable information redacted, as appropriate, can be found at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/index.html>.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jessica Spataro or Mary Louise Dirrigl. Telephone: (202) 245-7468.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), you can call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of this list and the letters or other Departmental documents described in this list in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotope, or compact disc) by contacting Jessica Spataro or Mary Louise Dirrigl at (202) 245-7468.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The following list identifies correspondence from the Department issued from October 1, 2011, through December 31, 2011. Under section 607(f) of the IDEA, the Secretary is required to publish this list quarterly in the **Federal Register**. The list includes those letters that contain interpretations of the requirements of the IDEA and its implementing regulations, and it may also include letters and other