

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Final Priority on Alternative Financing Program Technical Assistance (AFPTA) under Title III of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998

AGENCY: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of final priority.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services announces a final priority on Alternative Financing Program Technical Assistance (AFPTA) under title III of the Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) of 1998 that is administered by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The Assistant Secretary may use this priority for competitions in FY 2003 and in later years. We take this action to focus research attention on an identified national need. We intend this priority to provide information and technical assistance to States and outlying areas participating in or interested in participating in the AFP.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority is effective January 27, 2003.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carol Cohen, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 3420, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. Telephone: (202) 205-5666 or via the Internet: carol.cohen@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY), you may call the TTY number at (202) 205-4475.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Description of the Alternative Financing Program Technical Assistance Program (AFPTA)**

Title III of the AT Act established an Alternative Financing Program (AFP), which pays part of the cost for the States and outlying areas to establish or maintain alternative financing projects to increase access to assistive technology (AT) for individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the AFPTA is to provide information and technical assistance to States and outlying areas participating in the AFP. Public or private agencies and organizations, including institutions of higher

education, are the entities eligible for an AFPTA grant award.

This priority reflects issues discussed in the New Freedom Initiative (NFI) and NIDRR's Long-Range Plan (the Plan). The NFI can be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/freedominitiative/freedominitiative.html>.

The Plan can be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/Products>.

We published a notice of proposed priority (NPP) for the Alternative Financing Mechanisms Program (AFP) in the **Federal Register** on August 8, 2002 (67 FR 51744). Except for minor revisions there are no differences between the notice of proposed priority (NPP) and this notice of final priority (NFP).

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to our invitation in the NPP, no parties submitted comments on the proposed priority.

The background for the priority was published in the NPP.

Note: This notice does not solicit applications. In any year in which we choose to use this priority, we invite applications through a notice in the **Federal Register**.

When inviting applications we designate the priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational. The effect of each type of priority follows:

Absolute priority: Under an absolute priority, we consider only applications that meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(3)).

Competitive preference priority: Under a competitive preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by either (1) awarding additional points, depending on how well or the extent to which the application meets the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(ii)).

Invitational priority: Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the invitational priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

Statutory Priority

As required by section 306(a) of the AT Act, the AFPTA project must:

- (a) Provide assistance to States preparing applications for the AFP;
- (b) Assist States to develop and implement the AFP; and

(c) Provide any other information and technical assistance (TA) the Assistant Secretary determines to be appropriate to assist States to achieve the objectives of AFP.

Priority

In addition to the statutory priority, NIDRR is particularly interested in having the AFPTA collect, analyze, compile, and report data provided by the AFP projects. AFP projects currently report data using an instrument that was developed and implemented to assist the State grantees with their data collection obligations. NIDRR will provide this instrument to the grantee upon receipt of award. The AFPTA must:

- (1) Collect data from the AFP projects and assist the projects in this effort;
- (2) Propose strategies for reviewing the AFP data collection instrument to determine what modifications should be made to improve its usability, reliability and validity and suggest strategies to facilitate and expedite the collection of uniform annual data from the AFP projects;

- (3) Provide technical assistance to the State grantees on the data collection instrument that will support and improve the data collection efforts of the States;

- (4) Provide technical assistance and training to State grantees on data collection strategies that will improve the quality of the data collected; and

- (5) Through the technical assistance activities conducted under this priority, the project shall prepare a report on the activities funded under this Title. The report shall include the following: (a) The type of alternative financing mechanisms used by each State and the community-based organization with which each State entered into a contract, under the program; and (b) the amount of assistance given to consumers through the program. Additionally, the consumers should be classified by age, gender, type of disability, type of assistive technology device or assistive technology service financed through the program, geographic distribution within the State, and whether the consumers are part of an underrepresented population or rural population. An executive summary should be prepared which includes a description of data collection procedures utilized, an analysis of the aggregated States' data and a discussion of trends.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

Electronic Access to This Document

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To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at this site. If you have questions about using PDF, call the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), toll free, at 1-888-293-6498; or in the Washington, DC, area at (202) 512-1530.

Note: 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 on GPO access at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/index.html>.

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 3056.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.224C, Alternative Financing Program.)

Dated: December 19, 2002.

Robert H. Pasternack,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 02-32575 Filed 12-24-02; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No.: 84.224C]

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research-Alternative Financing Program Technical Assistance (AFPTA); Notice Inviting Applications for Fiscal Year (FY) 2003

Note to Applicants: This notice is a complete application package. Together with the statute authorizing the program and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), this notice contains all of the information, application forms, and instructions you need to apply for a grant under this competition.

Purpose of the Program: The purpose of the AFPTA is to award a grant to a public or private agency or organization to provide information and technical assistance to States participating in or interested in participating in the Alternative Financing Program (AFP).

For FY 2003, the competition for one new award focuses on projects designed to meet the priority described in the PRIORITY section of this application

notice. We intend this priority to provide technical assistance to the States and outlying areas to establish or maintain alternative financing projects to increase access to assistive technology (AT) services and devices for individuals with disabilities of all ages.

Eligible Applicants: Parties eligible to apply for this grant are States; public or private agencies, including for-profit agencies; public or private organizations, including for-profit organizations; institutions of higher education; and Indian tribes and tribal organizations with sufficient documented experience, expertise, and capacity to assist States in the development and implementation of the Alternative Financing Program carried out under Title III of the AT Act.

Applications Available: December 26, 2002.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: January 27, 2003.

Maximum Award Amount: \$727,000 for year one; \$304,000 for year two and, \$304,000 for year three based on the availability of future appropriations.

Note: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding the maximum amount for each of the three 12 month budget periods.

Estimated Number of Awards: 1.

Project Period: Up to 36 months.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice. Years two and three are subject to the availability of appropriation for this program.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86 and 97.

Priority

This competition focuses on projects designed to meet the Alternative Financing Program Technical Assistance (AFPTA) priority in the notice of final priority for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

For FY 2003, this priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet this priority.

Selection Criteria

We use the following selection criteria to evaluate applications under this program (See 34 CFR 75.210). The maximum score for all of these criteria is 100 points. The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses.

(a) **Significance** (10 points total).

(1) The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project; and

(2) In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

(b) **Quality of the project design** (25 points total).

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project; and

(2) In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (8 points).

(ii) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs (8 points).

(iii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition (6 points).

(iv) The extent to which the proposed project will be coordinated with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, State, and Federal resources (3 points).

(c) **Quality of project services** (15 points total).

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project;

(2) In determining the quality of the services to be provided by the proposed project, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible proposed project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (5 points); and

(3) In addition, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services (5 points).

(ii) The extent to which the technical assistance services to be provided by the proposed project involve the use of efficient strategies, including the use of technology, as appropriate, and the leveraging of non-project resources (5 points).

(d) **Quality of project personnel** (15 points total).

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project;