

Dated: May 3, 2000.

Patricia L. Toppings,

*Alternate OSD Federal Register Liaison
Officer, Department of Defense.*

[FR Doc. 00-11394 Filed 5-5-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 5001-10-M

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Notice of Proposed Information Collection Requests

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of Proposed Information Collection Requests.

SUMMARY: The Leader, Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, invites comments on the proposed information collection requests as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: An emergency review has been requested in accordance with the Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 3507 (j)), since public harm is reasonably likely to result if normal clearance procedures are followed. Approval by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has been requested by May 4, 2000. A regular clearance process is also beginning. Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before July 7, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Written comments regarding the emergency review should be addressed to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Attention: Danny Werfel, Desk Officer: Department of Education, Office of Management and Budget; 725 17th Street, NW., Room 10235, New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503 or should be electronically mailed to the internet address DWERFEL@OMB.EOP.GOV.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 3506 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) requires that the Director of OMB provide interested Federal agencies and the public an early opportunity to comment on information collection requests. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) may amend or waive the requirement for public consultation to the extent that public participation in the approval process would defeat the purpose of the information collection, violate State or Federal law, or substantially interfere with any agency's ability to perform its statutory obligations. The Leader, Information Management Group, Office of the Chief Information Officer, publishes this notice containing proposed information collection requests at the beginning of

the Departmental review of the information collection. Each proposed information collection, grouped by office, contains the following: (1) Type of review requested, e.g., new, revision, extension, existing or reinstatement; (2) Title; (3) Summary of the collection; (4) Description of the need for, and proposed use of, the information; (5) Respondents and frequency of collection; and (6) Reporting and/or Recordkeeping burden. ED invites public comment. The Department of Education is especially interested in public comment addressing the following issues: (1) Is this collection necessary to the proper functions of the Department; (2) will this information be processed and used in a timely manner; (3) is the estimate of burden accurate; (4) how might the Department enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (5) how might the Department minimize the burden of this collection on respondents, including through the use of information technology.

Dated: May 2, 2000.

William E. Burrow,

*Leader, Information Management Group,
Office of the Chief Information Officer.*

*Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitative Services*

Type of Review: New.

Title: Alternative Financing Program and the Alternative Financing Technical Assistance Program.

Abstract: The purpose of this program is to increase the availability of and expand opportunities for the purchase of assistive technology by creating State loan programs and to establish one grantee to give technical assistance to the States.

Additional Information: This program is a high priority initiative and a key part of the Administration's overall strategy to increase access to Assistive Technology services and devices for individuals with disabilities.

Frequency: Annually.

Affected Public: State, Local, or Tribal Gov't, SEAs or LEAs; Individuals or households; Not-for-profit institutions.

Reporting and Recordkeeping Hour Burden:

Responses: 57.

Burden Hours: 1,680.

Requests for copies of the proposed information collection request should be addressed to Vivian Reese, Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 5624, Regional Office Building 3, Washington, DC 20202-4651, or should be electronically mailed to the internet address OCIO_IMG_Issues@ed.gov, or should be faxed to 202-708-9346.

Comments regarding burden and/or the collection activity requirements, contact Sheila Carey at (202) 708-6287 or via her internet address Sheila_Carey@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.

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BILLING CODE 4000-01-U

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

AGENCY: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of proposed funding priority for fiscal years 2000-2001 for one Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP).

SUMMARY: The Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services proposes to establish a priority for one DRRP under the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for fiscal years 2000-2001. The Assistant Secretary takes this action to focus research attention on an area of national need. We intend the priority to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This notice contains a proposed priority under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program for a DRRP on information technology technical assistance and training.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before June 7, 2000.

ADDRESSES: All comments concerning this proposed priority should be addressed to Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, room 3418, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2645. Comments may also be sent through the Internet: donna_nangle@ed.gov.

You must include the term "Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers" in the subject line of your electronic message.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Donna Nangle. Telephone: (202) 205-5880. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the TDD number at (202) 205-2742. Internet: donna_nangle@ed.gov

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternate format (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, or computer diskette) on request to

the contact person listed in the preceding paragraph.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Invitation to Comment

We invite you to submit comments regarding this proposed priority.

We invite you to assist us in complying with the specific requirements of Executive Order 12866 and its overall requirement of reducing regulatory burden that might result from this proposed priority. Please let us know of any further opportunities we should take to reduce potential costs or increase potential benefits while preserving the effective and efficient administration of the program.

During and after the comment period, you may inspect all public comments about this priority in Room 3424, Switzer Building, 330 C Street SW., Washington, DC, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Assistance to Individuals With Disabilities in Reviewing the Rulemaking Record

On request, we will supply an appropriate aid, such as a reader or print magnifier, to an individual with a disability who needs assistance to review the comments or other documents in the public rulemaking record for this proposed priority. If you want to schedule an appointment for this type of aid, you may call (202) 205-8113 or (202) 260-9895. If you use a TDD, you may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

This proposed priority supports the National Education Goal that calls for every American to possess the skills necessary to compete in a global economy.

The authority for the Assistant Secretary to establish research priorities by reserving funds to support particular research activities is contained in sections 202(g) and 204 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 762 and 764). Regulations governing this program are found in 34 CFR Part 350.

We will announce the final priority in a notice in the **Federal Register**. We will determine the final priority after considering responses to this notice and other information available to the Department. This notice does not preclude us from proposing or funding additional priorities, subject to meeting applicable rulemaking requirements.

Note: This notice does not solicit applications. In any year in which the

Assistant Secretary chooses to use one or more proposed priorities, we invite applications through a notice published in the **Federal Register**. When inviting applications we designate each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational.

Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects

Authority for DRRPs is contained in section 204 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 764). DRRPs carry out one or more of the following types of activities, as specified in 34 CFR 350.13-350.19: Research, development, demonstration, training, dissemination, utilization, and technical assistance. Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects develop methods, procedures, and rehabilitation technology that maximize the full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, family support, and economic and social self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities, especially individuals with the most severe disabilities. In addition, DRRPs improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Proposed Priority

Under an 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) the Assistant Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Assistant Secretary proposes to fund under this competition only an application that meets this absolute priority.

Proposed Priority: Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center

Background

The emerging digital economy is fundamentally altering the way Americans work. The advent of powerful computers, high speed modems, sophisticated telecommunications networks, fiber optics, broadband network capacity, intranets, the Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), and satellites has enabled computer and information experts to build a global information network that is unparalleled. These technologies, and how we use them, are undergoing rapid changes that result in a new wave of information flow that touches all facets of society, including education, employment and daily living. In this period of rapid technical, economic, and social change, access to electronic and information technologies is essential for everyone. Unfortunately, while the availability of information technology holds tremendous promise to level the

playing field, the proliferation of electronic and information technologies does not guarantee accessibility and usability for individuals with disabilities.

The electronic and information technology industry has been growing at more than double the rate of the overall economy—a trend that is likely to continue (The Emerging Digital Economy II, a report by the U.S. Department of Commerce, June, 1999). Because of the increase in availability of the Internet, 20 million salaried workers telecommuted from their homes last year. That number is expected to reach 130 million by 2003 (InfoTech Trends, Fourth Quarter, 1998). Electronic mail, once considered an elite mode of communication for university-based researchers and scientists, is now routinely used by workers to instantly exchange visual and audible information in readable and reusable formats (e.g., computer files, charts, figures, tables, images, databases, and software packages) using one of the estimated 14,000 Internet service providers worldwide (InfoTech Trends, Second Quarter, 1999).

In today's market, electronic and information technology product cycles are measured in months, not years. The same can be said for product lifetimes. This rapid proliferation of technologies has emphasized the need for universal design—a process whereby environments and products are designed with built-in flexibility so they are usable by as many people as possible, regardless of age and ability, at no additional cost to the user. Given the rapid evolution of each generation, new products often do not include universal design features, thus increasing the need for the expensive process of retrofitting.

Unfortunately, there is a shortage of individuals knowledgeable about the principles of universal design and the benefits of incorporating universal design features into electronic and information technologies. There is also a shortage of individuals trained to educate consumers, customer service professionals, technical writers, web developers, marketers, and other information technology related professionals about accessible and usable electronic and information technologies.

Congress has passed landmark legislation that increased access to electronic and information technology in a range of areas. These laws, and their provisions, include the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988, the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the

Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) of 1998, and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which includes sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires telecommunications service providers and equipment manufacturers to make their services and equipment accessible by persons with the full range of disabilities, if readily achievable. If a manufacturer or service provider claims this is not readily achievable, the manufacturer or service provider must still ensure that the equipment or service is compatible with existing peripheral devices or specialized customer premises equipment commonly used by individuals with disabilities to achieve access. On July 19, 1999, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted rules and guidelines to implement section 255 of the Telecommunications Act.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires access to the Federal government's electronic and information technology. Section 508 applies to all federal departments and agencies when they develop, procure, maintain or use electronic and information technology. Federal departments and agencies must ensure equal access to, and use of, electronic and information technology for Federal employees with disabilities and members of the public seeking information or services from their agency comparable to those who do not have disabilities, unless such a requirement would cause an undue burden. The Access Board published a notice of proposed rulemaking in the **Federal Register** (65 FR 17345) on section 508 standards on March 31, 2000 and will publish final standards after analysis of comments received. Federal agencies will be responsible for complaints related to the procurement of accessible electronic and information technologies as of August 7, 2000. The Assistive Technology Act, 29 USC 3001, also requires that States receiving assistance, including subrecipients, under the State Grants program comply with the requirements of section 508, including the standards developed by the Access Board.

The regulations and standards for section 255 of the Telecommunications Act and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act will have a profound impact on dozens of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, information technology manufacturers, product designers and engineers, technical writers, marketers,

distributors, purchasers of information technologies, web developers and others. Currently there is a dearth of information and technical assistance available for stakeholders and other constituencies on how to comply with these regulations and standards. There is also a limited supply of skilled professionals capable of providing training and support on how to implement the requisite guidelines and standards for electronic and information technology.

A number of Federal agencies are collaborating to promote awareness about accessible electronic and information technologies, the benefits of incorporating universal design into these products, and the need for expanding capacity for training and technical assistance in this field. NIDRR, the General Services Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Access Board are jointly supporting a multifaceted initiative that includes a demonstration center, multiple web pages, and technical assistance and training efforts, in partnership with industrial consortia and professional and trade associations. This priority relates to the need for expanding capacity for technical assistance and training for a broad array of constituents.

Priority: Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center

The Assistant Secretary proposes to establish an Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center to promote the wide spread use of accessible and usable electronic and information technology and to promote the benefits of universal design. In carrying out these purposes, the Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center must:

1. Design and implement a needs assessment that will determine the technical assistance and training needs relative to: a) implementing the final standards under section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act; b) the guidelines for section 255 of the Telecommunications Act; and c) promoting the principles of universal design. The needs assessment should target audiences including, but not limited to, State procurement officers, product designers and engineers, marketers, technical writers, web developers, consumer and disability-related organizations, service providers, human resource professionals, and relevant industrial consortia and professional and trade associations;

2. Based upon the findings of the needs assessment, develop, implement and evaluate relevant training materials and instructional modules that meet the requirements of section 255 of the Telecommunications Act and section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and address the principles of universal design;

3. Develop and disseminate training materials and instructional modules to States receiving AT Act funds on implementing the requirements of section 508 and its standards;

4. Provide information, training and technical assistance about section 255 of the Telecommunications Act, section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the principles of universal design to appropriate constituencies, including the information technology and telecommunications industry, relevant industrial consortia, professional and trade associations, and States receiving AT Act funds;

5. Collaborate with the General Services Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Access Board by contributing information and materials for the Government wide web site on Section 508;

6. Design and implement, in collaboration with the Federal Communications Commission, the Access Board, the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Telecommunications Access and the telecommunications industry, a web site that contains information and instructional materials, including those developed under Activity 2, that can be used by telecommunications designers of equipment and services to develop and fabricate solutions that are in accordance with the guidelines for section 255 of the Telecommunications Act; and

7. Identify, implement, and disseminate strategies, in collaboration with industrial consortia and professional and trade associations, that will expand training capacity of the field and increase the knowledge base about accessible and usable electronic and information technology.

In addition to the activities proposed by the applicant to carry out these purposes, the Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center must:

- Collaborate with industry, industrial consortia, professional and trade associations, and States receiving AT Act funds on all relevant activities; Coordinate on activities of mutual interest with NIDRR-funded projects including the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers on

Information Technology Access and Telecommunications Access and the Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers; and

- Collaborate with relevant Federal agencies responsible for the administration of public laws that address access to and usability of electronic and information technology for individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, the General Services Administration, the Access Board, the Federal Communications Commission, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and other relevant Federal agencies identified by NIDRR.

Proposed Additional Selection Criterion

The Assistant Secretary will use the selection criteria in 34 CFR 350.54 to evaluate applications under this program. The maximum score for all the criteria is 100 points; however, the Assistant Secretary also proposes to use the following criterion so that up to an additional ten points may be earned by an applicant for a total possible score of 110 points:

Within this absolute priority, we will give the following competitive preference to applications that are otherwise eligible for funding under this priority:

Up to ten (10) points based on the extent to which an application includes effective strategies for employing and advancing in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in projects awarded under this absolute priority. In determining the effectiveness of those strategies, we will consider the applicant's success, as described in the application, in employing and advancing in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in the project.

For purposes of this competitive preference, applicants can be awarded up to a total of 10 points in addition to those awarded under the published selection criteria for this priority. That is, an applicant meeting this competitive preference could earn a maximum total of 110 points.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR Parts 350 and 353.

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Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 761a(g) and 762.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 84.133A, Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects)

Dated: May 3, 2000.

Judith E. Heumann,
Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Arbitration Panel Decision Under the Randolph-Sheppard Act

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of arbitration panel decision under the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that on November 16, 1998, an arbitration panel rendered a decision in the matter of *Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services v. U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force* (Docket No. R-S/97-4). This panel was convened by the U.S. Department of Education pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 107d-1(b) upon receipt of a complaint filed by petitioner, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: A copy of the full text of the arbitration panel decision may be obtained from George F. Arsnow, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3230, Mary E. Switzer Building, Washington DC 20202-2738. Telephone: (202) 205-9317. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the TDD number at (202) 205-8298.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the Randolph-Sheppard Act (20 U.S.C. 107d-2(c)) (the Act), the Secretary publishes in the **Federal Register** a synopsis of each arbitration panel decision affecting the administration of vending facilities on Federal and other property.

Background

This dispute concerns the alleged violation by the U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force (Air Force), of the priority provisions of the Act by the exclusion of the proposal submitted by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the State licensing agency (SLA), from the competitive range for a full food service contract at Maxwell Air Force Base, Gunter Annex, Alabama. A summary of the facts is as follows: On July 2, 1996, the Air Force issued a request for proposal (RFP) for full food service at Maxwell Air Force Base, Gunter Annex, Alabama. The SLA responded to the RFP as the State licensing agency authorized to administer the Act in Alabama. In the SLA's proposal, a blind person was designated as the State's licensee, and Food Service, Inc. was identified as a subcontractor to the SLA.

The RFP specified that the technical criteria of management, production, quality control and safety would be used to evaluate the proposal. Following the technical evaluation of the proposal by the Air Force, the SLA was informed that its proposal was determined to be unacceptable under the management criteria. In excluding the SLA, the Air Force determined that the SLA's proposal had three primary deficiencies: (1) It failed to provide evidence of the