

(Authority: 35 U.S.C. 207, 37 CFR Part 404.)

Dated: August 25, 2005.

I.C. Le Moyne Jr.,

*Lieutenant, Judge Advocate General's Corps,
U.S. Navy, Alternate Federal Register Liaison
Officer.*

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; Technology and Media Services for Individuals With Disabilities—Steppingstones of Technology Innovation for Children With Disabilities; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2006

*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
(CFDA) Number: 84.327A.*

Note: This notice includes one priority with two phases, and funding information for each phase of the competition.

Dates: Applications Available:
September 1, 2005.

**Deadline for Transmittal of
Applications:** See the chart in section II.
Award Information section in this
notice (Chart).

**Deadline for Intergovernmental
Review:** See Chart.

Eligible Applicants: State educational
agencies (SEAs); local educational
agencies (LEAs); public charter schools
that are LEAs under State law;
institutions of higher education (IHEs);
other public agencies; private nonprofit
organizations; outlying areas; freely
associated States; Indian tribes or tribal
organizations; and for-profit
organizations.

Estimated Available Funds: The
Administration has requested
\$31,992,000 for the Technology and
Media Services for Individuals with
Disabilities program for FY 2006, of
which we intend to use an estimated
\$3,000,000 for the Steppingstones of
Technology Innovation for Children
with Disabilities competition. The
actual level of funding, if any, depends
on final congressional action. However,
we are inviting applications to allow
enough time to complete the grant
process if Congress appropriates funds
for this program.

Funding information regarding each
phase of the priority is listed in the
Chart.

Maximum Award: Phase 1: \$200,000
and Phase 2: \$300,000. We will reject
any application that proposes a budget
exceeding the maximum award for a
single budget period of 12 months. The

Assistant Secretary for the Office of
Special Education and Rehabilitative
Services may change the maximum
amount through a notice published in
the **Federal Register**.

Estimated Range of Awards: See
Chart.

Estimated Average Size of Awards:
See Chart.

Estimated Number of Awards: See
Chart.

Project Period: See Chart.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of
the program is to: (1) Improve results for
children with disabilities by promoting
the development, demonstration, and
use of technology, (2) support
educational media services activities
designed to be of educational value in
the classroom setting to children with
disabilities, and (3) provide support for
captioning and video description that is
appropriate for use in the classroom
setting.

Priority: In accordance with 34 CFR
75.105(b)(2)(iv) and (v), this priority is
from allowable activities specified in
the statute, or otherwise authorized in
the statute (see sections 674 and 681(d)
of the Individuals with Disabilities
Education Act (IDEA)).

Absolute Priority: For FY 2006 this
priority is an absolute priority. Under 34
CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only
applications that meet this priority.

This priority is:

*Technology and Media Services for
Individuals With Disabilities—
Steppingstones of Technology
Innovation for Children With
Disabilities*

Applicants must—

(a) Describe a technology-based
approach for improving the results of
early intervention, response-to-
intervention assessment techniques, or
preschool, elementary, middle school,
or high school education for children
with disabilities. The technology-based
approach must be an innovative
combination of new technology and
additional materials and methodologies
that enable the technology to improve
educational, assessment, or early
intervention results for children with
disabilities;

(b) Present a justification, based on
scientifically rigorous research or
theory, that supports the potential
effectiveness of the technology-based
approach for improving the results of
education, assessment, or early
intervention for children with
disabilities. Results studied under this

priority must focus on child outcomes,
rather than on parent or professional
outcomes. Child outcomes can include
improved academic or pre-academic
skills, improved behavioral or social
functioning, improved functional
performance, etc., provided that valid
and reliable measurement instruments
are employed to assess the outcomes.
Technology-based approaches intended
for use by professionals or parents are
not appropriate for funding under this
priority unless child-level benefits are
clearly demonstrated. Technology-based
approaches for professional
development will not be funded under
this priority;

(c) Provide a detailed plan for
conducting work in one of the following
two phases:

(1) *Phase 1—Development:* Projects
funded under Phase 1 must develop and
refine a technology-based approach, and
test its feasibility for use with children
with disabilities. Activities under Phase
I of the priority may include
development, adaptation, and
refinement of technology, materials, or
methodologies. Activities under Phase 1
of the priority must include formative
evaluation of usability and feasibility.
The primary product of a project funded
under Phase 1 should be a promising
technology-based approach that is
suitable for field-based evaluation of
effectiveness in improving results for
children with disabilities.

(2) *Phase 2—Research on
Effectiveness:* Projects funded under
Phase 2 must select a promising
technology-based approach that has
been developed and tested in a manner
consistent with the criteria for activities
funded under Phase 1, and subject the
approach to rigorous field-based
research to determine effectiveness in
educational or early intervention
settings. Approaches studied through
projects funded under Phase 2 may have
been developed with previous funding
under Phase 1 of this priority or with
funding from other sources. Phase 2 of
this priority is primarily intended to
produce sound research-based evidence
that demonstrates the approach can
improve educational or early
intervention results for children with
disabilities in a defined range of real
world contexts.

Projects funded under Phase 2 of this
priority must conduct research that
poses a causal question and must
employ randomized assignment to
treatment and comparison conditions,
unless a strong justification is made for
why a randomized trial is not possible.
If a randomized trial is not possible, the
applicant must employ alternatives that
substantially minimize selection bias or

allow it to be modeled. These alternatives include appropriately structured regression-discontinuity designs and natural experiments in which naturally occurring circumstances or institutions (perhaps unintentionally) divide people into treatment and comparison groups in a manner akin to purposeful random assignment. In their applications, applicants proposing to use an alternative system must (1) make a compelling case that randomization is not possible, and (2) describe in detail how the procedures will result in substantially minimizing the effects of selection bias on estimates of effect size. Choice of randomizing unit or units (*e.g.*, students, classrooms, schools) must be grounded in a theoretical framework. Observational, survey, or qualitative methodologies may complement experimental methodologies to assist in the identification of factors that may explain the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the approach. Applications must provide research designs that permit the identification and assessment of factors impacting the fidelity of implementation. Mediating and moderating variables that are both measured in the practice or model condition and are likely to affect outcomes in the comparison condition must be measured in the comparison condition (*e.g.*, student time-on-task, teacher experience, and time in position).

Projects funded under Phase 2 of this priority must conduct research that is of sufficient power to provide convincing evidence of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the technology-based approach under study, at least within a defined range of settings. Applicants must provide documentation that available sample sizes, methodologies, and treatment effects are likely to result in conclusive findings regarding the effectiveness of the technology-based approach;

(d) Provide a plan for forming collaborative relationships with vendors and/or other dissemination or marketing resources to ensure that the technology-

based approach is widely available if sufficient evidence of effectiveness has been obtained. Applicants should document the availability and/or participation of dissemination or marketing resources. Applicants are encouraged to plan these collaborative relationships early in their projects, even in Phase 1 (if applicable), but should refrain from widespread dissemination to practitioners until evidence of effectiveness has been obtained;

(e) Budget for the project director to attend an annual two-day Project Directors' meeting in Washington, DC, and another annual two-day trip to Washington, DC to collaborate with the Federal project officer and the other projects funded under this priority to share information, and discuss findings and methods of dissemination; and

(f) If the project maintains a Web site, include relevant information and documents in a format that meets a government or industry-recognized standard for accessibility. If the project produces instructional materials for dissemination, it must produce them in accessible formats, including complying with the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) for textual materials.

Within this absolute priority, we intend to fund at least two projects led by a project director or principal investigator in the initial phase of his or her career. For purposes of this priority, the initial phase of an individual's career is considered to be the first three years after the individual completes and graduates from a doctoral program (*i.e.*, for FY 2006 awards, projects may support individuals who completed and graduated from a doctoral program no earlier than the 2003–2004 academic year). To qualify for this consideration, the applicant must explicitly state and document that the project director or principal investigator is in the initial phase of his or her career. At least 50 percent of the initial career researcher's time must be devoted to the project.

Within this absolute priority, we also intend to fund at least two projects focusing on technology-based approaches for children with

disabilities, ages birth to age 3, and to fund at least two projects focusing on technology-based approaches to response-to-intervention assessment techniques.

Waiver of Proposed Rulemaking: Under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) (5 U.S.C. 553), the Department generally offers interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed priorities. However, section 681(d) of the IDEA makes the public comment requirements of the APA inapplicable to the priority in this notice.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1474 and 1481.

Applicable Regulations: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98, and 99.

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 IHEs only.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: The Administration has requested \$31,992,000 for the Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program for FY 2006, of which we intend to use an estimated \$3,000,000 for the Steppingstones of Technology Innovation for Children with Disabilities competition. The actual level of funding, if any, depends on final congressional action. However, we are inviting applications to allow enough time to complete the grant process if Congress appropriates funds for this program.

Maximum Award: Phase 1: \$200,000 and Phase 2: \$300,000. We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding the maximum award for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

STEPPINGSTONES OF TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES APPLICATION NOTICE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

CFDA number and name	Deadline for transmittal of applications	Deadline for intergovernmental review	Estimated available funds	Estimated range of awards	Estimated average size of awards	Estimated number of awards
84.327A—Steppingstones of Technology Innovation for Children with Disabilities: Phase 1—Development	10/18/2005	12/17/2005	\$1,200,000	\$100,000–\$200,000	\$200,000	6

STEPPINGSTONES OF TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES APPLICATION NOTICE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006—Continued

CFDA number and name	Deadline for transmittal of applications	Deadline for intergovernmental review	Estimated available funds	Estimated range of awards	Estimated average size of awards	Estimated number of awards
Phase 2—Research on Effectiveness	10/18/2005	12/17/2005	1,800,000	200,000–300,000	300,000	6

Project Period: Projects funded under Phase 1 will be funded for up to 24 months. Projects funded under Phase 2 will be funded for up to 24 months unless a compelling rationale is provided for funding up to 36 months.

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

III. Eligibility Information

1. **Eligible Applicants:** SEAs; LEAs; public charter schools that are LEAs under State law; IHEs; other public agencies; private nonprofit organizations; outlying areas; freely associated States; Indian tribes or tribal organizations; and for-profit organizations.

2. **Cost Sharing or Matching:** This competition does not involve cost sharing or matching.

3. **Other: General Requirements—**(a) The projects funded under this competition must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities (see section 606 of the IDEA).

(b) Applicants and grant recipients funded under this competition must involve individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities ages birth through 26 in planning, implementing, and evaluating the projects (see section 682(a)(1)(A) of the IDEA).

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. **Address to Request Application Package:** Education Publications Center (ED Pubs), P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794–1398. Telephone (toll free): 1–877–433–7827. FAX: (301) 470–1244. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call (toll free): 1–877–576–7734.

You may also contact ED Pubs at its Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html> or you may contact ED Pubs at its e-mail address: edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

If you request an application from ED Pubs, be sure to identify this competition as follows: CFDA Number 84.327A.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of the application package in an alternative format (e.g., Braille,

large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) by contacting the Grants and Contracts Services Team listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** in section VII of this notice.

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 competition.

Page Limit: The application narrative (Part III of the application) is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. You must limit Part III to the equivalent of no more than 50 pages, using the following standards:

- A “page” is 8.5” x 11”, on one side only, with 1” margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs.

- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).

The page limit does not apply to Part I, the cover sheet; Part II, the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; Part IV, the assurances and certifications; the one-page abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, the references, or the letters of support. However, you must include all of the application narrative in Part III.

We will reject your application if—

- You apply these standards and exceed the page limit; or
- You apply other standards and exceed the equivalent of the page limit.

3. **Submission Dates and Times:**

Applications Available: September 1, 2005.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: See Chart.

Applications for grants under this competition may be submitted electronically using the Grants.gov Apply site (Grants.gov), or in paper format by mail or hand delivery. For information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, or by mail or hand

delivery, please refer to section IV. 6. **Other Submission Requirements** in this notice.

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

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: See Chart.

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 competition.

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

6. **Other Submission Requirements:** Applications for grants under this competition may be submitted electronically or in paper format by mail or hand delivery.

a. **Electronic Submission of Applications.**

We have been accepting applications electronically through the Department's e-Application system since FY 2000. In order to expand on those efforts and comply with the President's Management Agenda, we are continuing to participate as a partner in the new government wide Grants.gov Apply site in FY 2006. Steppingstones of Technology Innovation for Children with Disabilities-CFDA Number 84.327A is one of the competitions included in this project. We request your participation in Grants.gov.

If you choose to submit your application electronically, you must use the Grants.gov Apply site at <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 e-mail an electronic copy of a grant application to us.

You may access the electronic grant application for the Steppingstones of Technology Innovation for Children with Disabilities-CFDA Number 84.327A competition at: <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.

Please note the following:

- Your participation in Grants.gov is voluntary.
- 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 time and date stamped. Your application must be fully uploaded and submitted, and must be date/time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. Except as otherwise noted in this section, we will not consider your application if it is date/time stamped by the Grants.gov system later than 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. When we retrieve your application from Grants.gov, we will notify you if we are rejecting your application because it was date/time stamped by the Grants.gov system after 4:30 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 application 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 at <http://e-Grants.ed.gov/help/GrantsgovSubmissionProcedures.pdf>.
- To submit your application via Grants.gov, you must complete the steps in the Grants.gov registration process (see <http://www.Grants.gov/GetStarted>) and provide on your application the same D-U-N-S Number used with this registration. Please note that the registration process may take five or more business days to complete.
- You will not receive additional point value because you submit your application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you submit your application in paper format.
- You may submit all documents electronically, including all information typically included on the Application

for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424), Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications. If you choose to submit your application electronically, you must attach any narrative sections of your application as files in a .DOC (document), .RTF (rich text) or .PDF (Portable Document) format. If you upload a file type other than the three file types specified above 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 an automatic acknowledgment from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. The Department will retrieve your application from Grants.gov and send you a second confirmation by e-mail that will include 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 System Unavailability

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 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 as described elsewhere in this notice. If you submit an application after 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the deadline date, please contact the person listed elsewhere in this notice under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, and provide an explanation of the technical problem you experienced with Grants.gov, along with the Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number (if available). 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 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: Extensions referred to 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 deadline date and time or if the technical problem you experienced is unrelated to the Grants.gov system.

b. Submission of Paper Applications by Mail.

If you submit your application in paper format by mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier), you must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the applicable following address:

By mail through the U.S. Postal Service: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.327A) 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20202-4260; or

By mail through a commercial carrier: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center—Stop 4260, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.327A), 7100 Old Landover Road, Landover, MD 20785-1506.

Regardless of which address you use, 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, or
- (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, or
- (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 submit your application in paper format by hand delivery, you (or a courier service) 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 84.327A), 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 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 4 of ED 424 the CFDA number—and suffix letter, if any—of the competition under which you are submitting your application.

(2) The Application Control Center will mail a grant application receipt acknowledgment to you. If you do not receive the grant application receipt acknowledgment 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

Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 75.210 and are listed in the application package.

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 also notify you informally.

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:* 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 specified by the Secretary in 34 CFR 75.118.

4. *Performance Measures:* Under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), the Department is currently developing measures that will yield

information on various aspects of the quality of the Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program. These measures will focus on: The extent to which projects are of high quality and are relevant to the needs of children with disabilities. Data on these measures will be collected from the projects funded under this competition.

Grantees also will be required to report information on their projects' performance in annual reports to the Department (34 CFR 75.590).

We will notify grantees of the performance measures once they are developed.

VII. Agency Contact

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Hanley, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 4066, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202-2550. Telephone: (202) 245-7369.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request by contacting the following office: The Grants and Contracts Services Team, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202-2550. Telephone: (202) 245-7363.

VIII. Other Information

Electronic Access to This Document: You may 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) on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister>.

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.gpoaccess.gov/nara/index.html>.

Dated: August 29, 2005.

John H. Hager,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Environmental Impact Statement: Site Selection for the Expansion of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve

AGENCY: Department of Energy.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Conduct Public Scoping Meetings.

SUMMARY: The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT), enacted on August 8, 2005, directs the Secretary of Energy to acquire petroleum to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to its authorized 1 billion-barrel capacity as expeditiously as possible, and, no later than 1 year after enactment, to select sites necessary to expand the SPR from its current 727 million-barrel capacity to 1 billion barrels. DOE has determined that the site selection and expansion required by EPACT constitute a major Federal action which may have a significant impact upon the environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For this reason, DOE intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to assess the proposed capacity expansion at three of the four existing SPR storage sites and the development of a new storage site in the Gulf Coast region.

DOE will prepare the EIS in accordance with NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and the DOE NEPA regulations (10 CFR Part 1021).

DATES: DOE invites interested agencies, organizations, Native American tribes, and members of the public to submit comments or suggestions to assist in identifying significant environmental issues and in determining the appropriate scope of the EIS. The public scoping period starts with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register** and will continue until October 14, 2005. Written and oral comments will be given equal weight and DOE will consider all comments received or postmarked by October 14, 2005, in defining the scope of the Draft EIS. Written comments postmarked or sent after this date will be considered to the degree practicable.

DOE invites oral comments and suggestions at public scoping meetings