

mobile reef species) in just a few months or years that would be equivalent to decades of growth for a similarly-sized naturally-occurring reef.

National Environmental Policy Act

This notice is provided pursuant to NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1506.6 and the draft EA was prepared in accordance with NEPA regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500–1508.

Alternatives Considered

Preferred Alternative: DARPA's proposed action is the deployment of Reefense structures at Baker Point, Florida. Deployment would occur over two phases with multiple components being proposed for each deployment. Components would consist of reef module breakwaters, mosaic oyster habitat structures (varying in height with low, medium, and high relief structures), and intertidal vegetation planting.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not occur. No deployment of Reefense structures would occur within the proposed action area, and the Baker Point area would be left undeveloped unless/until other in-water construction is proposed as part of a future project. The No Action Alternative would not meet the purpose of and need for the Proposed Action because there would be no furthering of research on climate change-related shoreline protection; however, as required by CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1502.14), the No Action Alternative is carried forward for analysis in this draft EA. The No Action Alternative will be used to analyze the consequences of not undertaking the Proposed Action, not simply conclude no impact, and will serve to establish a comparative baseline for analysis.

DARPA will publish a record of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: April 30, 2024.

Aaron T. Siegel,

Alternate OSD Federal Register Liaison Officer, Department of Defense.

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BILLING CODE 6001-FR-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program Early-phase Grants

AGENCY: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education (Department) is issuing a notice inviting applications for fiscal year (FY) 2024 for the EIR program Early-phase Grants, Assistance Listing Number 84.411C (Early-phase Grants). This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1894-0006.

DATES:

Applications Available: May 6, 2024.

Deadline for Notice of Intent to Apply: June 6, 2024.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: July 22, 2024.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: September 20, 2024.

Pre-Application Information: The Department will post additional competition information for prospective applicants on the EIR program website: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/innovation-early-learning/education-innovation-and-research-eir/fy-2024-competition/>.

ADDRESSES: For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the **Federal Register** on December 7, 2022 (87 FR 75045), and available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/07/2022-26554/common-instructions-for-applicants-to-department-of-education-discretionary-grant-programs>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jamila Smith, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20202-5900. Telephone: (202) 987-1753. Email: eir@ed.gov.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and wish to access telecommunications relay services, please dial 7-1-1.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The EIR program, established under section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA), provides funding to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based (as defined in this notice), field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students and to rigorously evaluate such innovations. The EIR program is designed to generate and validate solutions to persistent education challenges and to support the expansion

of those solutions to serve substantially more students.

The central design element of the EIR program is its multitier structure that links the amount of funding an applicant may receive to the quality of the evidence supporting the efficacy of the proposed project, with the expectation that projects that build this evidence will advance through EIR's grant tiers: "Early-phase," "Mid-phase," and "Expansion."

"Early-phase," "Mid-phase," and "Expansion" grants differ in terms of the level of prior evidence of effectiveness required for consideration for funding, the expectations regarding the kind of evidence and information funded projects should produce, the scale of funded projects, and, consequently, the amount of funding available to support each type of project.

Early-phase grants must demonstrate a rationale (as defined in this notice). Early-phase grants provide funding for the development, implementation, and feasibility testing of a program that prior research suggests has promise, for the purpose of determining whether the program can successfully improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students. Early-phase grants are not intended to simply expand established practices or address needs unique to one particular context. Rather, the goal is to determine whether and in what ways relatively new practices can improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students.

This notice invites applications for Early-phase grants only. The notices inviting applications for Mid-phase grants and Expansion grants are published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Background:

While this notice is for the Early-phase grants tier only, the premise of the EIR program is that new, innovative, and promising educational programs and practices can help to overcome the persistent and significant challenges to student educational opportunity and success, particularly for underserved and high-need students. Raise the Bar: Lead the World is the Department's call to action to transform pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) through grade 12 education and unite around what works in promoting academic excellence, boldly improving learning conditions, and preparing our Nation's students for global competitiveness.¹ Consistent with that

¹ U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona laid out his vision for the direction the Department will follow in 2024 to promote academic excellence, improve learning conditions, and prepare our students for a world where global engagement is

call to action, the priorities used in this competition advance Raise the Bar's goals to promote academic excellence and boldly improve learning conditions.

In FY 2024, the Department is particularly interested in projects that propose services and activities that help students recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerate learning and academic achievement, reimagine schools, and transform our education system. Specifically, the Department is focused on improving student achievement and attainment, as highlighted across Administration and Department efforts for the past several years. Building on the Administration's previous efforts, in January 2024, the Administration announced its Improving Student Achievement Agenda,² which aims to drive proven strategies that will support academic success for every child in school. The strategies and evidence discussed in the Improving Student Achievement Agenda focus on (1) increasing student attendance; (2) providing high-dosage tutoring; and (3) increasing summer learning and extended or afterschool learning time. These strategies and the broader Improving Student Achievement Agenda, including a focus on core academic instruction, are well aligned with the EIR program purpose, and the new funding to be released through the FY 2024 EIR competition will help accelerate and scale up sustainable adoption of evidence-based strategies that we expect will improve student achievement and attainment in the school years ahead. The priorities in this competition are designed to create conditions under which students have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities and experiences. For example, projects may include new approaches to instructional design such as through project-based or experiential learning opportunities for students, schoolwide frameworks, such as small schools or learning communities, that support student connection and engagement and increased interagency coordination to improve academic supports for highly mobile students such as students in foster care and students experiencing homelessness.

Note: The EIR program statute refers to "high-need students" but does not

critical to our Nation's standing. In his address Secretary Cardona remarked that "Raise the Bar: Lead the World" is not a list of new priorities, but a call to strengthen our will to transform education for the better, building on approaches that we know work in education. More information is available at <https://www.ed.gov/raisethebar>.

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/17/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-improving-student-achievement-agenda-in-2024/>.

define the term, which allows applicants to define it for purposes of their proposed project, population, and setting. Addressing the needs of underserved students (as defined in this notice) is one way to address EIR's statutory requirement to serve "high-need students." In particular, the Department welcomes innovative and promising projects that serve disconnected youth, students who are in foster care, and students performing significantly below grade level.

The EIR program is rooted in innovation; the program is not intended to provide support for practices that are already commonly implemented by educators, unless significant adaptations of such practices warrant testing to determine if they can accelerate achievement or increase the likelihood that the practices can be widely, efficiently, and effectively implemented in new populations and settings. If the evaluation demonstrates that innovations are supported by sufficient evidence of effectiveness, they can be replicated and tested in new populations and settings.

As an EIR project is implemented, grantees are encouraged to learn more about how the practices improve student achievement and attainment, as well as to develop increasingly rigorous evidence of effectiveness and new strategies to efficiently and cost-effectively scale to new school districts, regions, and States. To meet the required evidence level, applicants must develop a logic model (as defined in this notice), theory of action, or another conceptual framework that includes the goals, objectives, outcomes, and key project components (as defined in this notice) of the project.

All EIR applicants and grantees should also consider how they will develop their organizational capacity, project financing, and business plans to sustain their projects and continue implementation and adaptation after Federal funding ends. The Department intends to provide grantees with technical assistance to support dissemination, scaling, and sustainability efforts.

Early-phase grant projects are encouraged to make continuous and iterative improvements in project design and implementation before conducting a full-scale evaluation of effectiveness. Applicants should consider how easily others could implement the proposed practice, and how its implementation could potentially be improved. Additionally, applicants should consider using data from early indicators to gauge initial impact and to consider possible changes in

implementation that could increase student achievement and attainment.

Early-phase grant projects should develop, implement, and test the feasibility of their projects. The evaluation of an Early-phase grant project should be an experimental or quasi-experimental design study (both as defined in this notice) that can determine whether the program can successfully improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students. Early-phase grant evaluation designs should demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes (as defined in this notice) based on moderate evidence (as defined in this notice) from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental design study. The Department intends to provide EIR grantees (including the independent evaluators they contract with as part of their project) with evaluation technical assistance. This could include grantees and their independent evaluators providing to the Department or its contractor updated comprehensive evaluation plans in a format as requested by the technical assistance provider and using such tools as the Department may request. Grantees will be encouraged to update this evaluation plan at least annually to reflect any changes to the evaluation with updates consistent with the scope and objectives of the approved application.

The FY 2024 Early-phase grants competition includes five absolute priorities and two competitive preference priorities. All Early-phase grant applicants must address Absolute Priority 1. Early-phase grant applicants are also required to address one of the other four absolute priorities (applicants may not submit under more than one of the other four absolute priorities). All applicants have the option of addressing the competitive preference priorities and may opt to do so regardless of the absolute priority they select.

Absolute Priority 1—Demonstrates a Rationale establishes the evidence required for this tier of grants. All Early-phase grants applicants must submit prior evidence of effectiveness that demonstrates a rationale.

Absolute Priority 2—Field-Initiated Innovations—General gives applicants the option to propose projects that are field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment.

Absolute Priority 3—Field-Initiated Innovations—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Mathematics (STEM) is intended to support innovations to improve student achievement and attainment in the STEM education field, consistent with efforts to ensure our Nation's economic competitiveness by improving and expanding STEM learning and engagement.

In Absolute Priority 3, the Department recognizes the importance of funding pre-K through grade 12 STEM education and anticipates that projects would expand opportunities for high-need students. Within this absolute priority, applicants may focus on expanding opportunities in STEM education, including computer science, for underrepresented students in STEM education, including students of color, girls, English learners, students with disabilities, youth from rural communities, and youth from families living at or below the poverty line, to help reduce the enrollment and achievement gaps in a manner consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in Federal civil rights laws.

Absolute Priority 4—Field-Initiated Innovations—Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs is intended to promote high-quality social and emotional learning projects. The disruption caused by the pandemic, along with the growth in youth mental health distress, continue to impact student well-being. It is critical to address students' social and emotional needs, not only to benefit student well-being, but also to support their academic success, as student social, emotional, and academic development are interconnected.

Absolute Priority 5—Field-Initiated Innovations—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Educator Recruitment and Retention is intended to elevate and strengthen the educator workforce in ways that prioritize innovation in recruiting and retaining educators to better support high-need students. Applicants are encouraged to address fundamental challenges that schools face in recruiting and retaining fully qualified educators, by addressing the responsibilities and challenges educators continue to face after the pandemic. For example, projects may be designed to improve supports for educators that enhance the ability of schools to recruit and retain staff (*e.g.*, strategies to support educator wellbeing or structuring staffing and schedules to ensure educators and students are appropriately supported, and have sufficient time for planning, collaboration, working with coaches, and observing instruction of other

educators) and increase access to leadership opportunities that can lead to increased pay and improved retention for fully certified, experienced, and effective educators, while expanding the impact of great teachers within and beyond their classrooms. Projects may support the recruitment and retention of all school staff or specific staff with acute recruitment and retention challenges (*e.g.*, personnel serving children or students with disabilities).

Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners is intended to encourage applicants to propose projects that promote partnerships with entities underrepresented under this program. The Department is eager to increase the volume of projects and partners from entities such as community colleges (as defined in this notice), Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in this notice), Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in this notice), and minority-serving institutions (as defined in this notice). The Department expects applicants addressing this priority will raise the bar to reimagine schools through partnerships with underrepresented groups in ways that benefit underserved and high-need students.

Competitive Preference Priority 2—Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports reflects the Administration's ongoing commitment to addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Pre-K through grade 12 education. The pandemic caused unprecedented disruption in schools across the country and drew renewed attention to the ongoing challenges for underserved students. In response to the pandemic, educators mobilized to address the needs of all students. Researchers, educators, parents, and policymakers are continuing to work to understand and address the impact of inconsistent access to instruction, enrichment, peers, services and supports, and the impact of other related challenges. We also know that for students in underserved communities, inequities in educational opportunity and outcomes existed previously, yet were exacerbated by the pandemic.³ The impact of the COVID-

19 pandemic changed the education landscape, especially as students continue to make up for lost classroom instruction. However, it also provides an opportunity to redesign how schools approach teaching and learning in ways that both address long-standing gaps in educational opportunity and better prepare students for college and careers. Over 14 million public school students (31 percent) missed at least 10 percent of school in school year 2021–2022.⁴ According to analysis by the Council of Economic Advisors, absenteeism accounted for up to 27 percent of the test score declines in math and 45 percent of the test score declines in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.⁵ To that end, the Department seeks projects that develop and evaluate evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to address challenges and inequities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed innovations should be designed to better enable students to access the educational opportunities they need to succeed in school and reach their full potential.

Through these priorities, the Department intends to advance innovation, build evidence, and address the learning and achievement of underserved and high-need students in Pre-K through grade 12.

Priorities: This notice includes five absolute priorities and two competitive preference priorities. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(ii), Absolute Priority 1 is from the Administrative Priorities for Discretionary Grant Programs published in the **Federal Register** on March 9, 2020 (85 FR 13640) (Administrative Priorities). In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(iv), Absolute Priority 2 is from section 4611(a)(1)(A) of the ESEA. In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(iv), Absolute Priorities 3, 4, and 5 are from section 4611(a)(1)(A) of the ESEA and the Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grants Programs, published in the **Federal Register** on December 10, 2021 (86 FR 70612) (Supplemental Priorities). The

insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (2023, September 15). Raising the Bar for Consistent School Attendance. *ED.gov Blog*. <https://blog.ed.gov/2023/09/raising-the-bar-for-consistent-school-attendance/>.

⁵ The White House. (2023, September 13). Chronic Absenteeism and Disrupted Learning Require an All-Hands-on-Deck Approach | CEA. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/written-materials/2023/09/13/chronic-absenteeism-and-disrupted-learning-require-an-all-hands-on-deck-approach/>.

³ Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2021, July 27). COVID-19 and education: The lingering effects of unfinished learning. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our>

competitive preference priorities are from the Supplemental Priorities.

In the Early-phase grant competition, Absolute Priorities 2, 3, 4, and 5 each constitute a separate funding category. The Secretary intends to award grants under each of these absolute priorities provided that applications submitted are of sufficient quality. To ensure that applicants are reviewed under the absolute priority most relevant to their proposed project, applicants must clearly identify the specific absolute priority that the proposed project addresses. If an applicant is interested in proposing separate projects (e.g., one that addresses Absolute Priority 2 and another that addresses Absolute Priority 3), it must submit separate applications.

Absolute Priorities: For FY 2024 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, these priorities are absolute priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet Absolute Priority 1 and one additional absolute priority (Absolute Priority 2, Absolute Priority 3, Absolute Priority 4, or Absolute Priority 5).

These priorities are:

Absolute Priority 1—Applications that Demonstrate a Rationale.

Projects that demonstrate a rationale (as defined in this notice).

Absolute Priority 2—Field-Initiated Innovations—General.

Projects that are designed to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students.

Absolute Priority 3—Field-Initiated Innovations—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: STEM.

Projects that are designed to—

(a) Create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students; and

(b) Promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

(1) In one or more of the following educational settings:

(i) Early learning programs.

(ii) Elementary school.

(iii) Middle school.

(iv) High school.

(v) Career and technical education programs.

(vi) Out-of-school-time settings.

(vii) Alternative schools and programs.

(viii) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities; and

(2) That examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including computer science coursework.

Absolute Priority 4—Field-Initiated Innovations—Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs.

Projects that are designed to—

(a) Create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students; and

(b) Improve students' social, emotional, academic, and career development, with a focus on underserved students, through one or more of the following priority areas:

(1) Developing and supporting educator and school capacity to support social and emotional learning and development that—

(i) Fosters skills and behaviors that enable academic progress;

(ii) Identifies and addresses conditions in the learning environment, that may negatively impact social and emotional well-being for underserved students, including conditions that affect physical safety; and

(iii) Is trauma-informed, such as addressing exposure to community-based violence and trauma specific to military- or veteran-connected students (as defined in this notice).

(2) Creating education or work-based settings that are supportive, positive, identity-safe and inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status, through one or more of the following activities:

(i) Developing trusting relationships between students (including underserved students), educators, families, and community partners.

(ii) Providing high-quality professional development opportunities designed to increase engagement and belonging and build asset-based mindsets for educators working in and throughout schools.

(iii) Engaging students (including underserved students), educators, families, and community partners from diverse backgrounds and representative of the community as partners in school climate review and improvement efforts.

(iv) Developing and implementing inclusive and culturally informed discipline policies and addressing

disparities in school discipline policy by identifying and addressing the root causes of those disparities, including by involving educators, students, and families in decision-making about discipline procedures and providing training and resources to educators.

(3) Providing multi-tiered systems of supports that address learning barriers both in and out of the classroom, that enable healthy development and respond to students' needs and which may include evidence-based trauma-informed practices and professional development for educators on avoiding deficit-based approaches.

(4) Developing or implementing policies and practices, consistent with applicable Federal law, that prevent or reduce significant disproportionality on the basis of race or ethnicity with respect to the identification, placement, and disciplining of children or students with disabilities (as defined in this notice).

(5) Providing students equitable access that is inclusive, with regard to race, LGBTQI+, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status, to social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses, or mental health professionals and other integrated services and supports, which may include in early learning environments.

(6) Preparing educators to implement project-based or experiential learning opportunities for students to strengthen their metacognitive skills, self-direction, self-efficacy, competency, or motivation, including through instruction that connects to students' prior knowledge and experience; provides rich, engaging, complex, and motivating tasks; and offers opportunities for collaborative learning.

(7) Creating and implementing comprehensive schoolwide frameworks (such as small schools or learning communities, advisory systems, or looping educators) that support strong and consistent student and educator relationships.

(8) Fostering partnerships, including across government agencies (e.g., housing, human services, employment agencies), local educational agencies, community-based organizations, adult learning providers, and postsecondary education institutions, to provide comprehensive services to students and families that support students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs, and that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status.

Absolute Priority 5—Field-Initiated Innovations—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational

Resources and Opportunities: Educator Recruitment and Retention.

Projects that are designed to—

(a) Create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students; and

(b) Promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

(1) In one or more of the following educational settings:

(i) Early learning programs.

(ii) Elementary school.

(iii) Middle school.

(iv) High school.

(v) Career and technical education programs.

(vi) Out-of-school-time settings.

(vii) Alternative schools and programs.

(viii) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities; and

(2) That examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:

(i) Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-of-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.

Note: All strategies to increase racial diversity of educators must comply with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in Federal civil rights laws.

(ii) Improving the preparation, recruitment, and early career support and development of educators in shortage areas or hard to staff schools.

(iii) Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

Competitive Preference Priorities: For FY 2024 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, these priorities are competitive preference priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award up to an additional 3 points to an application, depending on how well the application addresses Competitive Preference Priority 1, and up to an additional 3 points to an application, depending on how well the application addresses Competitive Preference Priority 2.

These priorities are:

Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting Equity in Student Access to

Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 3 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

(a) Community colleges (as defined in this notice).

(b) Historically Black Colleges and Universities (as defined in this notice).

(c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in this notice).

(d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in this notice).

Competitive Preference Priority 2—Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

(a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Definitions: The following definitions apply to this program. The definitions of “baseline,” “demonstrates a rationale,” “experimental study,” “logic model,” “moderate evidence,” “nonprofit,” “performance measure,” “performance target,” “project component,” “quasi-experimental design study,” “relevant outcome,” and “What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks (WWC Handbooks)” are from 34 CFR 77.1. The definitions of “community college,” “children or students with disabilities,” “disconnected youth,” “early learning,” “educator,” “English learner,”

“historically Black colleges and universities,” “military- or veteran-connected student,” “minority-serving institutions,” “Tribal College or University,” and “underserved students” are from the Supplemental Priorities. The definitions of “evidence-based,” “local educational agency,” and “State educational agency” are from section 8101 of the ESEA.

Baseline means the starting point from which performance is measured and targets are set.

Children or students with disabilities means children with disabilities as defined in section 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1401(3)) and 34 CFR 300.8, or students with disabilities, as defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 705(37), 705(20)(B)).

Community college means “junior or community college” as defined in section 312(f) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA).

Demonstrates a rationale means a key project component included in the project’s logic model is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes.

Disconnected youth means an individual, between the ages 14 and 24, who may be from a low-income background, experiences homelessness, is in foster care, is involved in the justice system, or is not working or not enrolled in (or at risk of dropping out of) an educational institution.

Early learning means any (a) State-licensed or State-regulated program or provider, regardless of setting or funding source, that provides early care and education for children from birth to kindergarten entry, including, but not limited to, any program operated by a child care center or in a family child care home; (b) program funded by the Federal Government or State or local educational agencies (including any IDEA-funded program); (c) Early Head Start and Head Start program; (d) nonrelative child care provider who is not otherwise regulated by the State and who regularly cares for two or more unrelated children for a fee in a provider setting; and (e) other program that may deliver early learning and development services in a child’s home, such as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Early Head Start; and Part C of IDEA.

Educator means an individual who is an early learning educator, teacher, principal or other school leader, specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., school psychologist, counselor, school social worker, early

intervention service personnel), paraprofessional, or faculty.

English learner means an individual who is an English learner as defined in section 8101(20) of the ESEA, or an individual who is an English language learner as defined in section 203(7) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Evidence-based means an activity, strategy, or intervention that—

(i) Demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on—

(I) Strong evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;

(II) Moderate evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or

(III) Promising evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or

(ii)(I) Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and

(II) Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

Experimental study means a study that is designed to compare outcomes between two groups of individuals (such as students) that are otherwise equivalent except for their assignment to either a treatment group receiving a project component or a control group that does not. Randomized controlled trials, regression discontinuity design studies, and single-case design studies are the specific types of experimental studies that, depending on their design and implementation (e.g., sample attrition in randomized controlled trials and regression discontinuity design studies), can meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations as described in the WWC Handbooks (as defined in this notice):

(i) A randomized controlled trial employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, or schools to receive the project component being evaluated (the treatment group) or not to receive the project component (the control group).

(ii) A regression discontinuity design study assigns the project component being evaluated using a measured variable (e.g., assigning students reading below a cutoff score to tutoring or developmental education classes) and controls for that variable in the analysis of outcomes.

(iii) A single-case design study uses observations of a single case (e.g., a student eligible for a behavioral intervention) over time in the absence and presence of a controlled treatment manipulation to determine whether the outcome is systematically related to the treatment.

Historically Black colleges and universities means colleges and universities that meet the criteria set out in 34 CFR 608.2.

Local educational agency (LEA) means:

(a) In General. A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

(b) Administrative Control and Direction. The term includes any other public institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public elementary school or secondary school.

(c) Bureau of Indian Education Schools. The term includes an elementary school or secondary school funded by the Bureau of Indian Education but only to the extent that including the school makes the school eligible for programs for which specific eligibility is not provided to the school in another provision of law and the school does not have a student population that is smaller than the student population of the LEA receiving assistance under the ESEA with the smallest student population, except that the school shall not be subject to the jurisdiction of any State educational agency (SEA) (as defined in this notice) other than the Bureau of Indian Education.

(d) Educational Service Agencies. The term includes educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies.

(e) State Educational Agency. The term includes the SEA in a State in which the SEA is the sole educational agency for all public schools.

Logic model (also referred to as a theory of action) means a framework that identifies key project components of the proposed project (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the theoretical and operational relationships among the

key project components and relevant outcomes.

Military- or veteran-connected student means one or more of the following:

(a) A child participating in an early learning program, a student enrolled in preschool through grade 12, or a student enrolled in career and technical education or postsecondary education who has a parent or guardian who is a member of the uniformed services (as defined by 37 U.S.C. 101), in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, National Guard, Reserves, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or Public Health Service or is a veteran of the uniformed services with an honorable discharge (as defined by 38 U.S.C. 3311).

(b) A student who is a member of the uniformed services, a veteran of the uniformed services, or the spouse of a service member or veteran.

(c) A child participating in an early learning program, a student enrolled in preschool through grade 12, or a student enrolled in career and technical education or postsecondary education who has a parent or guardian who is a veteran of the uniformed services (as defined by 37 U.S.C. 101).

Minority-serving institution means an institution that is eligible to receive assistance under sections 316 through 320 of part A of title III, under part B of title III, or under title V of the HEA.

Moderate evidence means that there is evidence of effectiveness of a key project component in improving a relevant outcome for a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive that component, based on a relevant finding from one of the following:

(i) A practice guide prepared by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks reporting a “strong evidence base” or “moderate evidence base” for the corresponding practice guide recommendation;

(ii) An intervention report prepared by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks reporting a “positive effect” or “potentially positive effect” on a relevant outcome based on a “medium to large” extent of evidence, with no reporting of a “negative effect” or “potentially negative effect” on a relevant outcome; or

(iii) A single experimental study (as defined in this notice) or quasi-experimental design study (as defined in this notice) reviewed and reported by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks, or otherwise assessed by the Department

using version 4.1 of the WWC Handbook, as appropriate, and that—

(A) Meets WWC standards with or without reservations;

(B) Includes at least one statistically significant and positive (*i.e.*, favorable) effect on a relevant outcome;

(C) Includes no overriding statistically significant and negative effects on relevant outcomes reported in the study or in a corresponding WWC intervention report prepared under version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, or 4.1 of the WWC Handbooks; and

(D) Is based on a sample from more than one site (*e.g.*, State, county, city, school district, or postsecondary campus) and includes at least 350 students or other individuals across sites. Multiple studies of the same project component that each meet requirements in paragraphs (iii)(A), (B), and (C) of this definition may together satisfy this requirement.

Nonprofit, as applied to an agency, organization, or institution, means that it is owned and operated by one or more corporations or associations whose net earnings do not benefit, and cannot lawfully benefit, any private shareholder or entity.

Performance measure means any quantitative indicator, statistic, or metric used to gauge program or project performance.

Performance target means a level of performance that an applicant would seek to meet during the course of a project or as a result of a project.

Project component means an activity, strategy, intervention, process, product, practice, or policy included in a project. Evidence may pertain to an individual project component or to a combination of project components (*e.g.*, training teachers on instructional practices for English learners and follow-on coaching for these teachers).

Quasi-experimental design study means a study using a design that attempts to approximate an experimental study by identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in important respects. This type of study, depending on design and implementation (*e.g.*, establishment of baseline equivalence of the groups being compared), can meet WWC standards with reservations, but cannot meet WWC standards without reservations, as described in the WWC Handbooks.

Relevant outcome means the student outcome(s) or other outcome(s) the key project component is designed to improve, consistent with the specific goals of the program.

State educational agency (SEA) means the agency primarily responsible

for the State supervision of public elementary schools and secondary schools.

Tribal College or University has the meaning ascribed it in section 316(b)(3) of the HEA.

Underserved student means a student (which may include children in early learning environments, students in K–12 programs, and students in postsecondary education or career and technical education, as appropriate) in one or more of the following subgroups:

(a) A student who is living in poverty or is served by schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty.

(b) A student of color.

(c) A student who is a member of a federally recognized Indian Tribe.

(d) An English learner.

(e) A child or student with a disability.

(f) A disconnected youth.

(g) A migrant student.

(h) A student experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

(i) A lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, or intersex (LGBTQI+) student.

(j) A student who is in foster care.

(k) A student without documentation of immigration status.

(l) A pregnant, parenting, or caregiving student.

(m) A student impacted by the justice system, including a formerly incarcerated student.

(n) A student who is the first in their family to attend postsecondary education.

(o) A student performing significantly below grade level.

(p) A military- or veteran-connected student.

What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks (WWC Handbooks) means the standards and procedures set forth in the WWC Standards Handbook, Versions 4.0 or 4.1, and WWC Procedures Handbook, Versions 4.0 or 4.1, or in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 3.0 or Version 2.1 (all incorporated by reference, see § 77.2). Study findings eligible for review under WWC standards can meet WWC standards without reservations, meet WWC standards with reservations, or not meet WWC standards. WWC practice guides and intervention reports include findings from systematic reviews of evidence as described in the WWC Handbooks documentation.

Note: The What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 4.1), as well as the more recent What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks released in August 2022 (Version 5.0),

are available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 7261.

Note: Projects will be awarded and must be operated in a manner consistent with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in Federal civil rights laws.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The Office of Management and Budget Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. (c) The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3474. (d) The Administrative Priorities. (e) The Supplemental Priorities.

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

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: \$251,000,000.

These estimated available funds are the total available for new awards for all three types of grants under the EIR program (Early-phase, Mid-phase, and Expansion grants).

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

Estimated Average Size of Awards: Up to \$6,000,000.

Maximum Award: We will not make an award exceeding \$6,000,000 for a project period of 60 months. Under 34 CFR 75.104(b) the Secretary may reject, without consideration or evaluation, any application that proposes a project funding level that exceeds the stated maximum award amount. The Department intends to fund one or more projects under each of the EIR competitions, including Expansion grants (84.411A), Mid-phase grants (84.411B), and Early-phase grants (84.411C). Entities may submit applications for different projects for more than one competition (Early-phase grants, Mid-phase grants, and Expansion grants). The combined maximum new award amount a grantee may receive under these three competitions is \$16,000,000. If an entity is within the funding range for multiple applications,

the Department will award the highest scoring applications up to \$16,000,000.

Estimated Number of Awards: 13–23.

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

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Note: Under section 4611(c) of the ESEA, the Department must use at least 25 percent of EIR funds for a fiscal year to make awards to applicants serving rural areas, contingent on receipt of a sufficient number of applications of sufficient quality. For purposes of this competition, we will consider an applicant as rural if the applicant meets the qualifications for rural applicants as described in the *Eligible Applicants* section and the applicant certifies that it meets those qualifications through the application. In implementing this statutory provision and program requirement, the Department may fund high-quality applications from rural applicants out of rank order in the Early-phase grants competition. In addition, from the estimated funds for this competition, the Department intends to award an estimated \$87 million in funds for STEM projects and \$87 million in funds for social and emotional learning projects, contingent on receipt of a sufficient number of applications of sufficient quality.

III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:*

- (a) An LEA;
- (b) An SEA;
- (c) The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE);
- (d) A consortium of SEAs or LEAs;
- (e) A nonprofit (as defined in this notice) organization; and
- (f) An LEA, an SEA, the BIE, or a consortium described in clause (d), in partnership with—
 - (1) A nonprofit organization;
 - (2) A business;
 - (3) An educational service agency; or
 - (4) An IHE.

To qualify as a rural applicant under the EIR program, an applicant must meet both of the following requirements:

- (a) The applicant is—
 - (1) An LEA with an urban-centric district locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43, as determined by the Secretary;
 - (2) A consortium of such LEAs;
 - (3) An educational service agency or a nonprofit organization in partnership with such an LEA; or
 - (4) A grantee described in clause (1) or (2) in partnership with an SEA; and
- (b) A majority of the schools to be served by the program are designated with a locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43, or a combination of such codes, as determined by the Secretary.

Applicants are encouraged to retrieve locale codes from the National Center for Education Statistics School District search tool (<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>), where districts can be looked up individually to retrieve locale codes, and the Public School search tool (<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>), where individual schools can be looked up to retrieve locale codes. More information on rural applicant eligibility will be in the application package for this competition.

Note: An applicant that is a nonprofit organization may, under 34 CFR 75.51, demonstrate its nonprofit status by providing: (1) proof that the Internal Revenue Service currently recognizes the applicant as an organization to which contributions are tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; (2) a statement from a State taxing body or the State attorney general certifying that the organization is a nonprofit organization operating within the State and that no part of its net earnings may lawfully benefit any private shareholder or individual; (3) a certified copy of the applicant's certificate of incorporation or similar document if it clearly establishes the nonprofit status of the applicant; or (4) any item described above if that item applies to a State or national parent organization, together with a statement by the State or parent organization that the applicant is a local nonprofit affiliate.

In addition, with respect to IHEs and their affiliates, the following entities may apply for a grant in this competition: (1) As noted above, any IHE that is a partner in an application submitted by an LEA, SEA, BIE, consortium of SEAs or LEAs, or a nonprofit organization; (2) A private IHE that is a nonprofit organization may apply for an EIR grant; (3) A nonprofit organization, such as a development foundation, that is affiliated with a public IHE; and (4) A public IHE with 501(c)(3) status. A public IHE without 501(c)(3) status (even if that entity is tax exempt under Section 115 of the Internal Revenue Code or any other State or Federal provision), or that could not provide any other documentation of nonprofit status described above, however, would not qualify as a nonprofit organization, and therefore would not be eligible to apply for and receive an EIR grant.

2. a. *Cost Sharing or Matching:* Under section 4611(d) of the ESEA, each grant recipient must provide, from Federal, State, local, or private sources, an amount equal to 10 percent of funds provided under the grant, which may be provided in cash or through in-kind

contributions, to carry out activities supported by the grant. Applicants must include a budget showing their matching contributions to the budget amount of EIR grant funds and must provide evidence of their matching contributions for the first year of the grant in their grant applications.

Section 4611(d) of the ESEA authorizes the Secretary to waive the matching requirement on a case-by-case basis, upon a showing of exceptional circumstances, such as:

- (i) The difficulty of raising matching funds for a program to serve a rural area;
- (ii) The difficulty of raising matching funds in areas with a concentration of LEAs or schools with a high percentage of students aged 5 through 17—

(A) Who are in poverty, as counted in the most recent census data approved by the Secretary;

(B) Who are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 *et seq.*);

(C) Whose families receive assistance under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*); or

(D) Who are eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program; and

(iii) The difficulty of raising funds on Tribal land.

An applicant that wishes to apply for a waiver must include a request in its application, describing the exceptional circumstances that make it difficult for the applicant to meet the matching requirement. Further information about applying for waivers can be found in the application package for this competition.

b. *Indirect Cost Rate Information:* This program uses an unrestricted indirect cost rate. For more information regarding indirect costs, or to obtain a negotiated indirect cost rate, please see www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html.

c. *Administrative Cost Limitation:*

This program does not include any program-specific limitation on administrative expenses. All administrative expenses must be reasonable and necessary and conform to Cost Principles described in 2 CFR part 200 subpart E of the Uniform Guidance.

3. *Subgrantees:* A grantee under this competition may not award subgrants to entities to directly carry out project activities described in its application.

4. *Other:* a. *Funding Categories:* An applicant will be considered for an award only for the type of EIR grant for which it applies (*i.e.*, Early-phase: Absolute Priority 2, Early-phase:

Absolute Priority 3, or Early-phase: Absolute Priority 4). An applicant may not submit an application for the same proposed project under more than one type of grant (e.g., both an Early-phase grant and Mid-phase grant).

Note: Each application will be reviewed under the competition in which it was submitted in the *Grants.gov* system, and only applications that are successfully submitted by the established deadline will be peer reviewed. Applicants should be careful that they download the intended EIR application package and that they submit their applications under the intended EIR competition.

b. *Evaluation:* The grantee must conduct an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of its project.

c. *High-need students:* The grantee must serve high-need students.

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Application Submission

Instructions: Applicants are required to follow the Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the **Federal Register** on December 7, 2022 (87 FR 75045), and available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/12/07/2022-26554/common-instructions-for-applicants-to-department-of-education-discretionary-grant-programs>, which contain requirements and information on how to submit an application.

2. Submission of Proprietary

Information: Given the types of projects that may be proposed in applications for Early-phase grants, your application may include business information that you consider proprietary. In 34 CFR 5.11 we define “business information” and describe the process we use in determining whether any of that information is proprietary and, thus, protected from disclosure under Exemption 4 of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended).

Because we plan to make successful applications available to the public, you may wish to request confidentiality of business information.

Consistent with Executive Order 12600, please designate in your application any information that you believe is exempt from disclosure under Exemption 4. In the appropriate Appendix section of your application, under “Other Attachments Form,” please list the page number or numbers on which we can find this information. For additional information please see 34 CFR 5.11(c).

3. *Intergovernmental Review:* This competition 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.

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

5. *Recommended Page Limit:* The application narrative is where you, the applicant, will address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. We recommend that you (1) limit the application narrative for an Early-phase grant to no more than 25 pages and (2) 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.

- 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).

- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

The recommended page limit does not apply to the cover sheet; the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; the assurances and certifications; one-page abstract; evidence form; or appendices (e.g., nonprofit documentation, resumes, letters of support, demonstration of match, matching waiver request, list of proprietary information, eligibility checklist, logic model, indirect cost rate agreement). However, the recommended page limit does apply to the entire application narrative.

6. *Notice of Intent to Apply:* The Department will be able to review grant applications more efficiently if we know the approximate number of applicants that intend to apply. Therefore, we strongly encourage each potential applicant to notify us of their intent to submit an application. Applicants may access this form using the link available on the Notice of Intent to Apply section of the competition website: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/innovation-early-learning/education-innovation-and-research-eir/fy-2024-competition/>. Applicants that do not submit a notice of intent to apply may still apply for funding; applicants that

do submit a notice of intent to apply are not bound to apply or bound by the information provided.

V. Application Review Information

1. *Selection Criteria:* The selection criteria for the Early-phase grant competition are from 34 CFR 75.210. The points assigned to each criterion are indicated in the parentheses next to the criterion. Together with the competitive preference priorities, an applicant may earn up to a total of 106 points based on the selection criteria for the application.

A. Significance (up to 20 points).

The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

B. Quality of the Project Design (up to 30 points).

The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)

(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)

(3) 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. (15 points)

C. Quality of Project Personnel (up to 10 points).

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

D. Quality of the Management Plan (up to 10 points).

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the

management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

E. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 30 points).

The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

(3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Note: Applicants may wish to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) WWC Procedures and Standards Handbooks: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Handbooks>; (2) "Technical Assistance Materials for Conducting Rigorous Impact Evaluations": <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/projects/evaluationTA.asp>; and (3) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/tech_methods/. In addition, applicants may view an optional webinar recording that was hosted by the Institute of Education Sciences. The webinar focused on more rigorous evaluation designs, discussing strategies for designing and executing experimental studies that meet WWC evidence standards without reservations. This webinar is available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Multimedia/18>.

2. Review and Selection Process: 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 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 (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

Before making awards, we will screen applications submitted in accordance with the requirements in this notice to determine whether applications have met eligibility and other requirements. This screening process may occur at various stages of the process; applicants that are determined to be ineligible will not receive a grant, regardless of peer reviewer scores or comments.

Peer reviewers will read, prepare a written evaluation of, and score the assigned applications, using the selection criteria provided in this notice.

3. Risk Assessment and Specific Conditions: Consistent with 2 CFR 200.206, before awarding grants under this competition the Department conducts a review of the risks posed by applicants. Under 2 CFR 200.208, the Secretary may impose specific conditions and, under 2 CFR 3474.10, in appropriate circumstances, high-risk 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 2 CFR part 200, subpart D; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant; or is otherwise not responsible.

4. Integrity and Performance System: If you are selected under this competition to receive an award that over the course of the project period may exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$250,000), under 2 CFR 200.206(a)(2), we must make a judgment about your integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards—that is, the risk posed by you as an applicant—before we make an award. In doing so, we must consider any information about you that is in the integrity and performance system (currently referred to as the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)), accessible through the System for Award Management. You may review and comment on any information about yourself that a Federal agency previously entered and that is currently in FAPIIS.

Please note that, if the total value of your currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from the Federal Government exceeds \$10,000,000, the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII,

require you to report certain integrity information to FAPIIS semiannually. Please review the requirements in 2 CFR part 200, Appendix XII, if this grant plus all the other Federal funds you receive exceed \$10,000,000.

5. In General: In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department will review and consider applications for funding pursuant to this notice inviting applications in accordance with:

(a) Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR 200.205);

(b) Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. 115–232) (2 CFR 200.216);

(c) Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR 200.322); and

(d) Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR 200.340).

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); or we may send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your 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. Open Licensing Requirements: Unless an exception applies, if you are awarded a grant under this competition, you will be required to openly license to the public grant deliverables created in whole, or in part, with Department

grant funds. When the deliverable consists of modifications to pre-existing works, the license extends only to those modifications that can be separately identified and only to the extent that open licensing is permitted under the terms of any licenses or other legal restrictions on the use of pre-existing works. Additionally, a grantee or subgrantee that is awarded Early-phase grant funds must have a plan to disseminate these public grant deliverables. This dissemination plan can be developed and submitted after your application has been reviewed and selected for funding. For additional information on the open licensing requirements please refer to 2 CFR 3474.20.

Note: The evaluation report is a specific deliverable under an Early-phase grant that grantees must make available to the public. Additionally, EIR grantees are encouraged to submit final studies from research supported in whole or in part by EIR to the Educational Resources Information Center (<http://eric.ed.gov>).

4. *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 multiyear 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. 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.

(c) Under 34 CFR 75.250(b), the Secretary may provide a grantee with additional funding for data collection analysis and reporting. In this case, the Secretary establishes a data collection period.

5. *Performance Measures:* For the purpose of Department reporting under 34 CFR 75.110, the Department has established a set of performance measures (as defined in this notice) for the Early-phase grants.

Annual performance measures: (1) The percentage of grantees that reach their annual target number of students as specified in the application; (2) the

percentage of grantees that reach their annual target number of high-need students as specified in the application; (3) the percentage of grantees with ongoing well-designed and independent evaluations designed to provide performance feedback to inform project design; (4) the percentage of grantees with ongoing well-designed and independent evaluations that will provide evidence of their effectiveness at improving student outcomes; (5) the percentage of grantees that implement an evaluation that provides information about the key elements and the approach of the project to facilitate testing, development, or replication in other settings; and (6) the cost per student served by the grant.

Cumulative performance measures: (1) The percentage of grantees that reach the targeted number of students specified in the application; (2) the percentage of grantees that reach the targeted number of high-need students specified in the application; (3) the percentage of grantees that use evaluation data to make changes to their practice(s); (4) the percentage of grantees that complete a well-designed, well-implemented, and independent evaluation that provides evidence of their effectiveness at improving student outcomes; (5) the percentage of grantees with a completed evaluation that provides information about the key elements and the approach of the project so as to facilitate testing, development, or replication in other settings; and (6) the cost per student served by the grant.

Project-Specific Performance Measures: Applicants must propose project-specific performance measures and performance targets (both as defined in this notice) consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. Applications must provide the following information as directed under 34 CFR 75.110(b) and (c):

(1) Performance measures. How each proposed performance measure would accurately measure the performance of the project and how the proposed performance measure would be consistent with the performance measures established for the program funding the competition.

(2) Baseline (as defined in this notice) data. (i) Why each proposed baseline is valid; or (ii) if the applicant has determined that there are no established baseline data for a particular performance measure, an explanation of why there is no established baseline and of how and when, during the project period, the applicant would establish a valid baseline for the performance measure.

(3) Performance targets. Why each proposed performance target is ambitious yet achievable compared to the baseline for the performance measure and when, during the project period, the applicant would meet the performance target(s).

(4) Data collection and reporting. (i) The data collection and reporting methods the applicant would use and why those methods are likely to yield reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data; and (ii) the applicant's capacity to collect and report reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data, as evidenced by high-quality data collection, analysis, and reporting in other projects or research.

All grantees must submit an annual performance report with information that is responsive to these performance measures.

6. *Continuation Awards:* In making a continuation award under 34 CFR 75.253, the Secretary considers, among other things, whether a grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the project; whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget; and, if the Secretary has established performance measurement requirements, whether the grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the performance targets in the grantee's approved application.

In making a continuation award, 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. Other Information

Accessible Format: On request to the program contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format. The Department will provide the requestor with an accessible format that may include Rich Text Format (RTF) or text format (txt), a thumb drive, an MP3 file, braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc, or other accessible format.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. You may access the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations at www.govinfo.gov. 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 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. Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Adam Schott,

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Delegated the Authority to Perform the Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

[FR Doc. 2024-09797 Filed 5-3-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program Mid-Phase Grants

AGENCY: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education (Department) is issuing a notice inviting applications for fiscal year (FY) 2024 for the EIR program Mid-phase Grants, Assistance Listing Number 84.411B (Mid-phase Grants). This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1894-0006.

DATES:

Applications Available: May 6, 2024.

Deadline for Notice of Intent to Apply: June 06, 2024.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: July 05, 2024.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: September 03, 2024.

Pre-Application Information: The Department will post additional competition information for prospective applicants on the EIR program website: <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/innovation-early-learning/education-innovation-and-research-eir/fy-2024-competition/>.

ADDRESSES: For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the **Federal Register** on December 7, 2022 (87 FR 75045), and available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/>

2022/12/07/2022-26554/common-instructions-for-applicants-to-department-of-education-discretionary-grant-programs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jamila Smith, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20202-5900. Telephone: 202-987-1753. Email: eir@ed.gov.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and wish to access telecommunications relay services, please dial 7-1-1.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The EIR program, established under section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA), provides funding to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based (as defined in this notice), field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students; and to rigorously evaluate such innovations. The EIR program is designed to generate and validate solutions to persistent education challenges and to support the expansion of those solutions to serve substantially more students.

The central design element of the EIR program is its multi-tier structure that links the amount of funding an applicant may receive to the quality of the evidence supporting the efficacy of the proposed project. One of the program's goals is for projects to build evidence that will allow them to advance through EIR's grant tiers: "Early-phase," "Mid-phase," and "Expansion."

"Early-phase," "Mid-phase," and "Expansion" grants differ in terms of the evidence of effectiveness required to be considered for funding, the expectations regarding the kind of evidence and information funded projects should produce, the scale of funded projects, and, consequently, the amount of funding available to support each type of project.

Mid-phase grants are supported by moderate evidence (as defined in this notice). Mid-phase grants provide funding for the implementation and rigorous evaluation of a program that has been successfully implemented under an Early-phase grant or other similar effort, such as developing and testing an innovative education practice at a local level, for the purpose of measuring the program's impact and cost-effectiveness.

This notice invites applications for Mid-phase grants only. The notices inviting applications for Early-phase grants and Expansion grants are published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Background:

While this notice is for the Mid-phase grants tier only, the premise of the EIR program is that new, effective, and innovative educational programs and practices can help to overcome the persistent and significant challenges to student educational opportunity and success, particularly for underserved and high-need students. Raise the Bar: Lead the World is the Department's call to action to transform pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) through grade 12 education and unite around what truly works by promoting academic excellence, boldly improving learning conditions, and preparing our Nation's students for global competitiveness.¹ Consistent with that call to action, the priorities used in this competition advance Raise the Bar's goals to promote academic excellence and boldly improve learning conditions.

In FY 2024, the Department is particularly interested in projects that propose services and activities that help students recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerate learning and academic achievement, reimagine schools, and transform our education system. Specifically, the Department is focused on improving student achievement and attainment, as highlighted across Administration and Department efforts for the past several years. Building on the Administration's previous efforts, in January 2024, the Administration announced its Improving Student Achievement Agenda,² which aims to drive proven strategies that will support academic success for every child in school. The strategies and evidence discussed in the Improving Student Achievement Agenda focus on (1) increasing student attendance; (2) providing high-dosage tutoring; and (3) increasing summer learning and extended or afterschool learning time. These strategies and the

¹ U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona laid out his vision for the direction the Department will follow in 2024 to promote academic excellence, improve learning conditions, and prepare students for a world where global engagement is critical to our Nation's standing. In his address, Secretary Cardona remarked that "Raise the Bar: Lead the World" is not a list of new priorities, but a call to strengthen our will to transform education for the better, building on approaches that we know work in education. More information is available at <https://www.ed.gov/raisethebar>.

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/17/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-improving-student-achievement-agenda-in-2024/>.